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THE CASE OF IRIS FARCZADY - A STOLEN LIFE

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ABSTRACT

In 1933 a 15 [online correction of: 16]-year-old well-educated Hungarian girl, Iris Farczády, who had dabbled extensively in mediumship, suddenly underwent a drastic personality change, claiming to be reborn Lucía, a 41-year-old Spanish working woman said by her to have died earlier that year. Transformed into 'Lucía', Iris spoke thereafter in fluent Spanish, a language she had apparently never learnt or had the opportunity to acquire, and could not understand any other language. Lucía has remained in control ever since and, now aged 86, she still considers Iris to have been a different person, who ceased to exist in 1933. The three authors of this paper met Lucía in 1998, and a camcorder cassette of interviews with her are lodged with the SPR. Attempts have been made to locate Lucía's claimed Spanish family, but these have not been successful. While the reincarnation aspect of the case has not been supported, there remains the puzzle of how Iris acquired her knowledge of the Spanish language, customs and popular culture, and why Iris should have willed or submitted to her 'replacement' by Lucía.

INTRODUCTION

In a paper dating from 1989, Dr Hubert Larcher, former Director of the Institut Métapsychique International (IMI) in Paris, mentioned a long-forgotten case of apparent possession involving Iris Farczády, a Hungarian girl who, in August 1933, at the age of 15 [correction of: 16], underwent a dramatic change of personality (Larcher, 1989). The person who, on the face of it, took possession of Iris claimed to be Lucía Altarez de Salvio, a Spanish working woman who said that she had died three months earlier in Madrid, leaving behind a widower and the survivors of her 14 children. The astonishing feature of the case is that the girl thus taken over now spoke fluent Spanish and no longer understood Hungarian or German. The case, which hitherto has not found its way into SPR literature, was written up in 1935 by Karl Röthy, an ethnic German Hungarian researcher, whose reports cover many pages of the Journal, *Das neue Licht* (Röthy, 1935). He concluded, having made various inquiries, that Iris had never learned Spanish or associated with any Spanish-speaking people. This key issue will in due course be explored in detail.

Larcher's reference was not to Röthy, but to a fairly detailed summary of the case, taken from Röthy's reports, by René Warcollier (Warcollier, 1946). Warcollier concurred with Röthy's judgment that Iris had not learned Spanish in any normal way, and concluded that she had acquired her convincing grasp of the language by telepathy. A member of the IMI would not be expected to be sympathetic to an interpretation that savoured of reincarnation; especially as no Spanish woman

corresponding with Lucía had ever been identified. (In France there seems to have been a strict separation between scientists, who treated the paranormal somewhat as a branch of biology, and spiritualists, who concerned themselves with survival-related issues). But however dubious the reality of Spanish Lucía may have been, the acquisition of a language by telepathy sounds just as unlikely.

The case of Iris Farczády might be seen as an extreme member of a wide class of phenomena that fall under the general heading 'change of personality'. In trance mediumship the ostensible replacement of the medium's identity by that of a 'communicator' claiming to have survived death is very familiar, but the (apparent) total replacement of the host personality by a persistent 'guest' for the remainder of the original person's life, which appears to have occurred in the case presented here, may be unique. On this point time will tell, because the case of Sumitra/Shiva (Stevenson, Pasricha & McClean-Rice, 1989), discussed below, may be another example. Assuming that other lifelong replacement personality cases may become known, or are known already (though not to us), this feature must still rank as highly unusual.

Closely related to a case of this sort are those in which the host personality appears to be replaced on a limited time basis, as is said to have taken place in the Lurancy Vennum/Mary Roff case, reported as the Watseka Wonder (Stevens, 1887). The circumstances at Watseka resemble those of the *dáy* case in that the 'spirit' Mary Roff was invited at a *séance* to take possession of Lurancy Vennum, just as Iris laid herself open to what one might call psychic invasion by practising mental mediumship. Another variation on this theme is long-term alternation between the host personality and the intruder, this being a feature of the Uttara Huddar/Sharada case (Akolkar, 1992), where a similar invitation to intrusion was offered by Uttara practising automatic writing. The Sharada case also has the crucially notable feature in common with Iris/Lucía that the incoming personality speaks a language, described as an archaic form of Bengali, apparently not (to any useful degree) known or knowable by the original person. The reality of the xenoglossy, together with other aspects of the Sharada case, has been challenged (Braude, 2003), but the language acquisition may still carry more conviction than most cases of alleged xenoglossy (see Stevenson, 1974, 1984).

Where possession presents itself as an explanation for the observed behaviour one must also consider the related phenomena of reincarnation and multiple personality. Reincarnation typically manifests as memories of an alternative life, the claimant remaining fully aware of his or her current situation (see, for example, Stevenson, 2001, 2003). Reincarnation memories also seem typically to arise in the mind of the host uninvited, though, as in the above mentioned possession case of Sumitra/Shiva, a close brush with death may count as an invitation to psychic invasion. While Sumitra seems to have willed or at least predicted an imminent and very premature death, Jasbir Lal, a three-year-old seemingly dead from entirely exogenous smallpox, revived claiming to have been Sobha Ram, giving sufficient detail about the latter to enable identification to take place, but evidently being aware that he was describing events in a previous life (Stevenson, 1974).

Multiple personality, or dissociative identity disorder, might be considered the leading explanation by virtue of not requiring any assumption of survival or indeed any paranormal hypothesis. The limits of multiple personality are as indeterminate as the limits of super-ESP, but its typical manifestation appears to be the expression of distinguishable personalities with separate memory trains each claiming to be the true owner of the entity they inhabit, as in the Beauchamp case (Prince, 1905). Some of the personalities are aware of the alternative contenders, while others are aware only of blank periods when time is found to have passed without their having experienced it. It is arguable in the present case that Lucía was such a contender, unaware of the previous proprietor Iris, and that she untypically remained in control on a permanent basis, though she was definitely not the original incumbent of Iris Farczády. However improbable, the only feature that could not be accounted for on this basis would be acquisition of the Spanish language, and this has to be regarded as the decisive factor in assessing whether we have here a prodigious case of identity disorder/role playing or a case where, if all other explanations have been exhausted, the residual explanation points to possession.

It is sometimes mooted that there are far too many coincidences to be accounted for by chance, especially in a context involving the paranormal, though this is a contention unlikely ever to be supported by sound scientific arguments. If a distinction may be drawn between meaningless chance and meaningful synchronicity, our investigation of this case was preceded by an accumulation of incidents that might well qualify as purposeful.

Mary Rose Barrington (MRB) was strongly motivated to find out more about this case, and also to make some belated and last-minute efforts to trace the alleged 14 children while there was a good chance that many of them, if real, would still be alive. Röthy's reports were written only two years after the transformation of Iris into Lucía, and MRB was consumed with curiosity to find out if Iris ever returned to reclaim her stolen life. The desire to find out more came to be realised by a chain of coincidences.

The first of these occurred at the joint PA and SPR conference held in Brighton in 1997 when MRB sought to interest Carlos Alvarado in helping to trace the survivors of the hypothetical Lucía's hypothetical children, who would now be aged between 65 and 90. While they were talking about it an Austrian member, Peter Mulacz (PM), came over to talk about something else. MRB had in her hand the only English-language account of the case, which is a chapter in a book by Cornelius Tabori (Tabori, 1951), who personally interviewed members of the Farczády family in 1935. MRB asked if PM happened to know about the transformation of Iris Farczády, and he said that he had indeed read Tabori's book and knew the case. He might well have been the only other person in the room who would have known it. MRB asked if he would be kind enough to look in the back numbers of the *Neue Freie Presse* to see if he could locate the original reports, and in due course he sent photocopies.

Within a few weeks of this conversation PM received a totally unrelated letter from Dutch SPR member Titus Rivas (TR) asking if he was aware of the case of Iris Farczády, as TR wished to know more about it. And so the three of us fell into correspondence. A crucial item to come out of the TR connection was that his father

was Spanish, so TR has always been largely bilingual in Dutch and Spanish, and a native Spanish speaker was essential to the further investigation of the case. But that was not the end of the synchronicity web. The crucial chance meeting was still to come.

Soon afterwards PM attended the Psi Tage conference in Bale, and found that there were some Hungarians present. He asked one of them if he happened to know the case of Iris Farczády, and to PM's astonishment the Hungarian, who was Zsolt Banhegyi (ZB) said that he knew 'Frau Lucía' personally. She was alive and reasonably well, nearly 80 years old, living in a village near to Budapest, and she was still Spanish Lucía. And so through the chance encounter with ZB, and with his help and co-operation (and a grant from the SPR), the three of us were able to go to Budapest and interview Iris Farczády/Lucía Krebsz on 3rd and 4th April 1997, the second meeting being on her 80th birthday.

There are several aspects to this report, and in each case the material falls into two sections, firstly, the data contained in the original reports of Röthy, as amplified by Tabori, and secondly, further material derived in 1997 from ZB and from Lucía Krebsz herself. As it is difficult and mostly impossible to differentiate between the 'Lucía' personality who first manifested through Iris's mediumship on the one hand and, on the other, the elderly woman interviewed by us in Hungary she will be referred to simply as Lucía, as this is the name by which she chooses to be known (though on her passport her name appears, Hungarian style, as Krebsz Iris). Referring to her as Lucía does not imply any view taken of her ontological status as a separate entity from the apparently extinguished Iris.

The headings under which this report will be made are as follows:-

- (1) The biographical narrative; relating the transformation of Iris into Lucía and the later developments as related to us. This will be a summary with limited comment, as matters of appraisal will be reserved until the final section, where the three authors will draw their conclusions, based on the facts as known or surmised.
- (2) Attempts made to trace the Madrid family
- (3) The Spanish connection
 - (a) Lucía's behaviour and knowledge of Spain and its customs
 - (b) Lucía's mastery of the Spanish language
 - (c) Whether Iris could have learnt Spanish normally

We shall end with our separate conclusions.

(1) The Biographical Narrative

Iris Farczády was born on 4th April 1918, the second child of four born to parents who were married in 1914. She had a brother, Zsolt, two years older, and a younger sister, Renée, 15 months younger. There was also a younger brother, Attila, apparently mentally retarded, and nothing more is known about him. The Farczády family was upper middle class, the father, Gerö Farczády, being a chemical engineer and the director of a large factory. According to Tabori he was at one time chief government chemist. Mr Farczády is described as having had a 'foster mother' who was a Spiritualist who had a collection of spirit drawings that Iris may or may not

have seen. Mrs Farczády was somewhat older than her husband; her father was an army officer, aide to the Archduke, and she was educated at a high-class school in Paris. She probably had rather higher social status than her husband. Tabori gives their address as 8 Lepke-Utca, Budapest.

Despite an upper-class and presumably monied background, in the early 1920s, when Hungary was suffering from the after-effects of being on the losing side in the 1914 war, Zsolt, Iris and Renée were sent for two years to a Dutch village, Zevenhuizen, under a charitable trust set up by the Dutch Reformed Church that took children from countries where food was scarce and relocated them for a year or two in more prosperous countries, placing them with foster families. Between the ages of 5 and 7, Iris, together with Renée, lived in the house of the Pastor of Zevenhuizen, while Zsolt was looked after in a different household. During her two years in the Netherlands Iris became a Dutch speaker and forgot Hungarian.

On her return to Hungary she seems to have re-acquired her native Hungarian without difficulty and Dutch was forgotten. She attended junior and secondary schools, where she seems to have distinguished herself as a brilliant pupil at schools in Sopron (ödenburg) and in Buda, with a particular talent for mathematics and, significantly, languages; the languages that she was taught were German and French, not Spanish. However, at the age of 15 [correction of: 16] her attendance at school became erratic, owing to her participation in family Spiritualist circles, an activity encouraged by her mother and also, possibly, by a prediction made a year earlier that she would undergo 'a great psychic miracle'.

This picture of family life comes somewhat more into focus if we add the information derived from Lucía herself that Iris's father had in fact set himself up in an independent household with a younger woman. Exactly when Iris's father deserted the family is not known, and Röthy's reports avoid the subject altogether. When Tabori interviewed Mr Farczády in 1936 he had apparently lost his job and taken a rather menial post connected with milk products, and Tabori was obviously rather puzzled by his appearing not to be fully integrated into the household. Presumably her father's defection had an effect on Iris, but what that effect was we can only speculate, because Lucía professes no insight into the mind of Iris.

The information we have about the sittings was given to Röthy by a Mrs Csipkai, the wife (or widow?) of a judge and a friend of Iris's mother of 30 years' standing. It is fairly startling. According to her the entranced Iris had a vast repertoire of communicators, her speciality being exotic foreigners who spoke various languages or appeared to Mrs Csipkai to do so; there is nothing to suggest that she was a linguist of widespread ability, though Röthy described her as a highly cultured and sensible woman, whose word could be relied on. She told Röthy that communicators would also claim to be from other planets and speak in languages that Mrs Csipkai would certainly not have been able to identify. Like her father's foster mother, Iris made a lot of automatic drawings, allegedly several hundred, which were examined by Röthy, but we have no description of their contents except for the cases of 'inhabitants' of other planets and stars who were said to have drawn maps of their homes and written in their languages.

What makes Iris's mediumship extraordinary and alarming is that frequently the

communicators remained in possession of her after the sitting had been terminated, and she would continue to act as if possessed, or role-play, for hours or even days. Significantly, a character who remained in residence for a week claimed to be a Spanish girl, though she was called Letitia, not Lucía. Whether or not the Letitia entity spoke identifiable Spanish is not known, and apparently she spent the week crying and complaining that she wanted to be released.

Another disturbing feature is that some of Iris's entities were hostile to her mother, beating and biting her, and on one occasion throwing a pair of scissors at Mrs Csipkai's face, which fortunately missed. Mrs Csipkai also relates how Iris, lying on her bed while possessed by an entity claiming to be Mrs Csipkai's mother, asked her to bend down and kiss her, whereupon Iris seized her by the throat, crying "Now I have you, you rotten bitch, that's the only reason I wanted you near me!" During her episodes of post-sitting possession Iris could not attend school; apart from the likelihood of impaired intellectual functioning she would not, Mrs Csipkai said, have recognised other pupils or teachers. Her absences were attributed to some sort of illness. According to Guido Kassal (Kassal, 1935, and see below), Iris also practised mediumship when she was at school in Sopron, but as he places this school in Holland, a fact manifestly wrong, he cannot be regarded as an accurate informant. He was in fact described by Röthy as a dreamer and unreliable as a witness. That Iris's mother could have allowed these prolongations of the trance state to happen, and recklessly continued with the sittings, passes understanding were it not for her belief in the 'high mission' of her child. Mrs Csipkai's belated realisation that she was to blame for Iris's 'ousting' by Lucía resulted in a bowdlerised account of Iris's transformation being given to Röthy, or perhaps given by him to protect Iris's mother. According to the original report, Iris went to bed one night in August 1933 suffering from 'flu' and her father complained to Tabori that no one told him about this (a strange state of affairs unless he had by that time moved out of the house) and her mother sat beside her before she went to sleep. According to her mother, she seemed at one moment to stop breathing; but then her breathing became normal. Next morning a very different sort of girl was found shouting and crying, and rather curiously asking "Wo bin ich?", this being German for "Where am I?" Replying to this question in German would not have been effective, because in her present state Iris appeared not to understand German or Hungarian, and when spoken to she replied in a language no member of the family could understand. It must have been clear that Iris was having one of her episodes, and it must have been presumed that in due course Iris would return as she had done before to take control of her mind. From ZB we learnt that the transformation did not in fact take place over-night in this way. Lucía took possession of Iris in the course of a sitting; he had this information from a now aged journalist, Laszlo Raton, who, together with another young colleague, was sent in 1935 to report on the case for the news-paper *As Est*. One can see why Iris's mother did not want the world and Iris's father to know the active role she had taken in the replacement of her daughter by an uneducated foreign woman who spoke only Spanish and whose interests now were cooking, cleaning, washing dishes and performing Spanish songs and dances.

Returning to the story as related by Röthy, when the voluble intruder apparently inhabiting Iris's body showed no signs of going away, Iris's mother brought various people to listen to the language that was being spoken, and eventually Spanish was identified. Lucía was ecstatic at finding someone who could understand her, and this was when she wrote down her name as Lucía *Altares de Salvio*, and claimed to have been a working woman from Madrid, wife of Pedro and mother of 14 children. She said that she had died three months ago, aged 41, and further asserted that she was a communist and hated the upper classes!

When it became apparent that Lucía was not going to go away as other persistent communicators had done, Iris's mother made efforts to get rid of her and retrieve Iris. To this end she brought in Guido Kassal, described as a Spiritualist, and also as a Professor of theology, who put Lucía into a hypnotic trance, whereupon Iris made her one and only post-transformation appearance. She complained bitterly about this woman who had taken her body, and whom she regarded with great distaste, and said that she wanted her body restored to her. But then she seems to have changed mood and become resigned to her displacement. She reflected that geniuses die young, and that no one had understood her.

Kassal tells us, infuriatingly, that after this they had a long and illuminating philosophical discourse, and they discussed the lamentable state of the world, but he does not tell us anything further about what we have to regard as Iris's farewell to the world. Perhaps this is all she said on the subject. It sounds as if Iris, the misunderstood genius, was giving way to Lucía, the cleaning woman with no intellectual pretensions.

As Lucía continued to remain in control, she had to be taught a language known to the family. Hungarian was reckoned to be a very difficult language to learn starting from a sole basis of Spanish, so Zsolt and Renée taught her German, this being until 1919 the official language of Austria-Hungary, and the upper classes mostly continued to be bilingual. Lucía could speak passable German by the time her story was expounded to press and public at a meeting held in 1935. By that time she had also been taught middle-class manners, but Iris's schooling and interest in mathematics and other intellectual pursuits had evidently vanished.

So far as the biographical narrative goes, that is the point at which the reports of 1935 leave us, Iris's mother bemoaning what she accepted as the death of her daughter. She also accepted that the Spanish woman who looked like her daughter must be treated as a member of the family, even though, taking reincarnation as a fact of life, she took advice from the Spanish Embassy as to whether she needed to register the existence of a Spanish national, and wondered about registering the death of Iris and obtaining a residence permit for Spanish Lucía!

The story can now be further amplified by subsequent developments we learnt about in 1998. The answer to the crucial question has already been revealed; Iris never came back, and Lucía continued to live as a daughter of the family. Though Renée told Röthy that Lucía made some early attempts at 'escape', assumed to be motivated by her claim to be grief-stricken over her separation from her children, she seems to have become reconciled to living under the care of 'the Seora', as she called Mrs

Farczády, and the Farczádys were reconciled to accepting Lucía as a family member. In reply to our questioning, Lucía said that (apart from her wartime adventures, which we shall come to) she had not been hypnotised again, and it would appear that no further steps were taken to restore Iris by this method.

This is a useful point at which to interpose some further information given to ZB by the journalist Ratoní, whom we saw participating in a Hungarian film made for ZB by the television team that he brought to Lucía's house on our second visit. Ratoní said that he and his journalist colleague decided to test the claim of Lucía that she no longer understood any Hungarian. They found a pretext to get Mrs Farczády out of the room, leaving Lucía alone with them, whereupon they embarked on some very obscene dialogue, using language that they thought must bring a blush to the cheek of a sheltered schoolgirl, and that she would not be able to conceal her embarrassment. According to Ratoní, Lucía survived this test, apparently taking no interest in their conversation.

From the time of Iris's transformation onwards it was possible to learn from Lucía what life was like in the Farczády household. Iris's father was hardly to be seen, and when he came to the house one day a servant reported that there was a burglar in the house! He admitted to Tabori that he was not told about Iris's transformation until months after the event. In reply to Tabori he said that he missed his clever daughter, but since her transformation she was much less nervy, and was now quite a good cook; so presumably he did sometimes stay for dinner. Between the lines one may possibly read that Iris, the genius, had been a difficult girl, and her uneducated replacement was more docile, despite her more florid tastes.

Lucía did not seem to have greatly enjoyed her life as Miss Farczády, as she still maintained her adherence to communism, with its antagonism to the class in which she now found herself. In the course of our interviews Lucía could not be drawn to say much about her life as daughter to the family, and tended to change the subject so as to talk about her Hungarian children, as she called them, rather than about the Farczády children. In a murmured aside she said how unkind her older brother Zsolt had been to her, and spoke of his hitting her, which may be normal when a brother and sister are 8 and 6, but not when they are 18 and 16. She gave the impression that she liked her father more than she did the 'Sefiora'. Mr Farczády intimated to Tabori that he was not so convinced as was Mrs Farczády that Iris was in effect dead and that the girl who looked like her was Spanish Lucía.

Lucía talked to us a lot about dancing, saying that her Spanish style had been greatly admired and she had been taught ballet. At some time in her later teenage years she took part in staged performances, both in the chorus line and as a soloist, and performed at a well-known nightclub called Arizona. Apart from these surprising activities Lucía also before her marriage taught Spanish to private pupils. At the age of 21 she married an ethnic German Hungarian officer, who had been a priest, by the name of Krebsz. How much he knew about her history remains unknown to us. He must have been aware of the Spanish connection, though of course he married Iris Farczády, not Lucía Alvarez de Salvio. It sounds like the marriage of two rather unusual people. It is a great pity that Lucía's brother and sister are both dead (and

apparently childless according to Lucía); otherwise we might have been able to learn more about Lucía's pre-war life than we were able to learn from her rather sparse accounts.

War was soon to break out, and this would have been the time when she was occupied with bearing three children, two boys and a girl. All three of her children were implacably opposed to the attentions of psychical researchers, and the day we arrived in Budapest her second son, a schoolteacher, falsely claimed that his mother was in hospital and could not see us. We did not learn much about these early days in her marriage, but she was much more forthcoming about the years when Hungary was occupied by the Russians. The communist Lucía welcomed this development, and became an enthusiastic officer in the occupation.

-She is now disillusioned about the realities of communism and declares that Stalin was 'a bad man'. Her earlier devotion to the Russian cause was apparently not undermined by being, as she told ZB, the victim of rape by Russian soldiers. It was during the war that she had her second hypnotic session: a handsome Russian officer put her into a trance and asked her to visit a location in London, and report on the contents of a secret drawer. He seems to have been pleased with the outcome. There is, unsurprisingly, no independent confirmation of this event.

Everything about Lucía is surprising, including her determination after the war to take her education in hand, with the result that she qualified as an electrical engineer. It was actually quite difficult to look at Lucía, who fitted very well into the mould of a Spanish dancer, with her still quite graceful movements and rather flirtatious manner, and to try to imagine her as an engineer. When we put it to her that Iris had been very talented at mathematics, and that perhaps she had profited by that part of Iris's brain, she was very scornful of schoolgirl maths; not at all the sort of thing that she had had to master as an engineer. She also referred to her professional abilities to assure us, in reply to questioning, that she had never 'lost time', i.e. lost awareness in such a way as to allow a window of opportunity for Iris to re-possess her for a short time; she pointed out that engineers have to keep their wits about them, and she would have known if time had passed without her being able to account for it. She felt sure that Iris had never come back spontaneously.

We asked how she felt about displacing Iris from her own life. Lucía found it difficult to deal with this, and shed some tears. She pointed out that she had not asked to supplant Iris, and had not in fact asked to be re-born at all. She remembered floating happily in space, rather like a small boat on water, in a state of contentment, and then suddenly there she was in the body of this attractive young girl, a virgin again, as she put it, after having given birth to 14 children; and when she looked down she saw lovely young hands, not the worn-out hands of a 41-year-old washer woman. She was pleased with her new body, and she felt that the ousting of Iris was not her fault.

Lucía lives now in the not very attractive village of Gyal, about 15 miles outside Budapest, in the annexe of the adjoining house, her quarters consisting of one room, kitchen and bathroom, the accommodation being fairly basic and low in amenity. Her granddaughter lives in the next house but one. On the whole she does not seem to enjoy happy family relations. Her elder son, Rafael, is a dental surgeon in Munich,

which suggests a prosperous lifestyle, quite unlike his mother's, but her other son, Roland, is a badly-paid maths teacher in Budapest. His wife calls Lucía a witch, and keeps her granddaughter, Renata, away from her. Lucía's daughter does not sound as if she is deeply devoted to her mother. Our visit coincided with Lucía's 80th birthday, but there was no sign of presents or cards, nor was anything said about impending visits from family members. And yet seeing the amiable way she treated TR as her 'little friend' it was easy to imagine her as an affectionate mother. It seems a rather sad conclusion to an amazing life.

Reviewing our efforts, we came to the conclusion that there were only two ways forward, one, to make contact with Rafael Krebsz, who might be able to shed some further light on the case from his own knowledge and from any information he might have received from his uncle and aunt, Lucía's siblings Zsolt and Renée. The other would be to obtain the services of a German-speaking hypnotist, who would be prepared, if permitted, to put Lucía into a hypnotic trance and call on Iris to speak. The outcome of these proposals might have been anticipated: no response was received from Rafael Krebsz to polite and cautious letters written to him by PM; we presume that he received them, though it is possible that for some reason he did not. Lucía is now somewhat intimidated by her immediate family, on which she feels herself to be dependent, and PM did not succeed in visiting her when he visited Budapest for a second time. She has even turned her friend ZB away from the house. TR has written her friendly letters, and she has obviously been very happy to hear from him, but in writing back she discloses nothing that would shed light on her true identity. She will be 87 on her next birthday, and one hopes that some member of her family will mark the occasion.

This concludes our summary of the biographical narrative outlining the supplanting of Hungarian Iris by 'Spanish' Lucía, and the subsequent 72 years during which Lucía became, or reverted to being, a lively member of Hungarian society. We must now go back to 1935 to examine the issues that bear on Lucía's claims to be an entity separate from Iris, and to add any material that we can contribute from later inquiries to throw some further light on the question.

(2) Attempts Made To Trace The Spanish Family

Lucía told Prof. Jümpfer, the linguist who was brought in to identify the language she was speaking, that she had lived at l Calle Oscura, a street not listed in current guides to Madrid, and which no one seems to have traced at the time. She also gave an address, Calle de la Virgen, where her sister, married to a hairdresser called Emilio Andro, was said to live, and another detailed address where her children were said to have gone to school, viz. Escuela de las Primeras Lettras, Lixta strada, near the Rosbausos plaza. In fact, most of these names can be recognized as un-Spanish. The closest real Spanish words would be: Escuela de las Primeras Letras, calle de Lista and plaza de los Rebanos. It may well be that some of these errors are due to the investigators rather than to Lucía's statements, because there are also strange inconsistencies in the writing of names such as plazza instead of plaza and Pedro rather than Pedro.

A Consul described as Zomborg wrote to these two addresses, and the letters were

both returned marked 'Disconido' (not known). Again, this is not the authentic Spanish word, which in this case would be 'desconocido'. This seems to be the extent of contemporary attempts to locate the families of Lucía Altares de Salvio, and no recorded attempts were made either by Lucía or her mother.

Lucía used to recite the names of her 14 children, which included Octavio and Monica (deceased), José, Theresa and Emilio still at school. It was the 14 children who seemed to offer some possibility, 65 years after the event, of tracing this family, and we have a lot of activity to report about these endeavours, which did not however lead to any useful outcome. The value in describing the steps taken lies in enabling an appraisal to be made as to how probable it is that the family might exist despite our failure to attract the attention of any surviving member.

We determined three strategies, (1) to place an advertisement in a popular Madrid newspaper, (2) to write to anyone in or around Madrid, and possibly elsewhere in Spain, who bore the name of Altarez or Salvio, and (3) to publicise the case, by some means not apparent to us, so as to attract some degree of general attention. To achieve any of these goals it seemed very desirable to seek the co-operation of someone resident in Madrid who would take enough interest in the case to assist us.

In this third goal we had more luck than we could ever have anticipated. MRB consulted the membership list of the Scientific and Medical Network for residents of Madrid, and lighted upon the name of Dr Robert Goodman, and wrote to him. He turned out to be an American journalist who found the case fascinating and joined in the search for Lucía's family in more ways than we could have hoped. He wrote up the case, including our experiences with Lucía in Hungary, in an excellent, colourfully illustrated article in *Mas Allá* (Over There/Beyond), a popular magazine devoted to paranormal and occult themes. It ended with a request to readers to bring our search to the attention of anyone connected with Lucía's family.

If an article in a popular magazine amounted to shooting an arrow in the air, a newspaper advertisement was even less likely to reach a target; if we had been prepared to invest in a daily advertisement over a prolonged period the chances would have been a little higher, but the cost would have been considerable. Two advertisements, mentioning the names of Lucía, Pedro and some of the named children, brought no takers. Letter-writing, however, though tedious in terms of enveloping and stamping, seemed more likely to reach a family member, if any existed. Fortunately telephone directories available on the Internet provided names and addresses both in Madrid and in other areas of Spain, though a search had to be made of all 51 provinces.

Lucía was asked at a fairly early stage after her transformation to write her name, and the name appears as Lucía Altarez de Salvio.

TR took the view that Altarez, spelt with a 'z', which is certainly how the signature appears, had to be wrong, because Altarez was not a proper Spanish name; it should be spelt with an 's' at the end. The 'z' is slightly ambiguous, so we could not ignore the possibility that it was a scribbled 's.' There are indeed a lot of Spaniards called Altares, 93 of them in the Madrid area. They all had a letter sent to them, as did 15 others in various provinces, and five in various regions of Spain who actually were

named Alvarez. Alvarez(s) was Lucía's father's name, so it would not in fact be the surname of any of Lucía's children, but Lucía claimed to have had five siblings, so we might have expected a letter to reach nephews, nieces and cousins who would recognise the names and description of Lucía, Pedro and their children.

Unfortunately, Salvio is also un-Spanish, and that presented quite a problem. TR had never come across 'Salvio' as a Spanish surname, and speculated that Lucía might have had her memories contaminated by bits of Iris's knowledge of other languages such as Italian, and probably meant Salvo. Bearing in mind that Eusapia Palladino, another uneducated woman, could not remember whether her name should have one or two 'l's (but see Alvarado, 1984), she might have mis-spelled her name; but there was a big difference between doubling or not doubling a consonant and inserting an intrusive 'i' that would change the pronunciation.

There were an alarming 261 Salvo entries in all, and there were actually five Salvio's. The Salvio's of course got letters very quickly, and after that 10 ' Salvo's in Madrid. There were 93 Salvo's listed in Barcelona, and 24 of them got letters. Such was the concentration of Salvo's in Barcelona (though also to some extent in Zaragoza) that TR came to the conclusion that Salvo was probably a Catalan name, and therefore not likely to be the name of a Madrid workman. So there remain a great number of Spaniards named Salvo who did not receive a letter. But hearing in mind that however indeterminate the 'z' in 'Altares' Lucía indisputably wrote her name as 'Salvio,' and if she could make a mistake so fundamental as to insert an 'i' into 'Salvo' she might have made an even more fundamental mistake about her name.

There was a further development when Dr Goodman attended an exhibition devoted to old photographs of the city in his locality; he saw a photograph of a dark and dilapidated street entitled '*La Calle Oscura*'. This was the name of the street where Lucía claimed to have lived, though in conversation with us she said that she had lived in a very poor district in 'una calle oscura', i.e. a dark street. The 'Calle Oscura' shown in the gallery had been renamed, but it was in Pozuelo, a salubrious suburb rather than an inner city slum area, or former slum area. In view of this discovery it was thought worth while for TR to visit Madrid to see if there were other re-named streets; he did find that there had been a Calle Lista, which might be equated with the one described by Röthy as *Calle Lixta*, but nothing was found that could be identified as places where Lucía's family or her sister were supposed to have lived.

(3) The Spanish Connection

(a) *Lucía's Behaviour and Knowledge of Spain and its Customs*

Conflicting opinions on Lucía's acquaintance with Madrid and Spanish customs were reported by Röthy. Prof. Jümpter, the Hungarian specialist in Spanish who questioned Lucía when she first manifested, said that she was not familiar with some well known 'sights' of Madrid, but she did correctly describe some Madrid churches. Further on this subject, Röthy reports that a Cistercian father, a professor of theology, who was visiting relations of the Farczádys, questioned Lucía, in the absence of her mother, for three hours. He obtained from her specific information about the interior of a church she claimed to be 'her church', including details about statues, altars and the

embroidery on the altar cloth, all things that the Cistercian professor said that he remembered exactly. He must have been familiar with many churches, and details about this interesting item are entirely lacking, so that unfortunately we have no means of judging whether they were really talking about one and the same specific church.

Other informants also spoke of Lucía's failure to recognise Madrid's public buildings. She was interviewed by the Hungarian ambassador to Spain, who wanted to see if she might be one of several Spanish girls who had gone missing. He was unimpressed by her mastery of Spanish and by her knowledge of Madrid. In a similar test of building recognition Ido Ruttkay, who had been the Hungarian Consul General in Barcelona, showed her 10 engravings of Madrid; he said that she was wrong about everything and had never been in Madrid. Despite being a communist Lucía always claimed to have been a very religious Catholic, so it might make sense that she would be familiar with churches rather than tourist sight buildings.

When, however, she was put to two practical tests by the sceptical Consul Ruttkay, she surprised him by showing familiarity with things that he did not expect from a non-Spaniard. She was shown a contraption consisting of a metal pot suspended within a tripod, and she approached it saying '*Bracero* ,' (*sic*-the correct spelling is *brasero*) and placing her hands over it. The appliance was in fact a brasier, and when the pot was filled with hot coals it was used as a heating device by impoverished Spaniards.

Another test consisted of the Consul mishandling a vessel with an unusual sort of spout that had to be used in a way normally known only to Spaniards, otherwise the drink would be poured down the front rather than taken into the mouth. She seized it, named it and showed how it should be handled. (Though she is said to have named the cup correctly, Röthy records the name as *durro*, whereas it should have been described as a *porrón*, and this is in fact the word used by Lucía in conversation with us in 1997.) A Hungarian girl who was not familiar with these articles would probably have assumed the *Brasero* to be used for cooking rather than hand-warming, and the technique for drinking confidently from the unusual spout savours of Lucía rather than Iris.

Lucía was introduced by Röthy to G. Gyárfás, a Hungarian businessman who had spent 15 years in Spain, and he concluded that she was indeed Spanish. At a *soirée* attended by him and 40 other guests Lucía was persuaded to speak after dinner, and asked to describe a bullfight. She did this with great enthusiasm but surprised everyone by describing the *toreador* provoking the bull with a lilac-coloured cape, and dispatching it with a dagger. Her listeners all shouted out that the cape would be red and the weapon would be a sword. Unabashed, Lucía insisted that she was correctly reporting what she had seen. It is a very curious episode, because anyone who had read up on the subject, and indeed almost anyone who had ever heard of bullfighting, would know about the red cape. She was equally insistent about the dagger. So had she once seen a bullfight in which a mauve cape and a dagger were used -perhaps in a local arena where any devices ready to hand were used? Or had she imagined seeing one? As with so much of the reported facts, one does not know with any confidence what to make of them.

Bringing matters up to date, TR spoke to Lucía at some length, trying to draw her out on her knowledge of Madrid, but it must be said that she volunteered nothing and disclosed very little in reply to questions. In nearly every case TR had to initiate a subject, and Lucía seldom took the opportunity to expand on it.

The constant theme was that she had forgotten things that happened a long time ago. Pressed about locations, she said she had no more idea about the layout of Budapest streets and statues than she had now or ever had of those in Madrid.

TR tried to draw Lucía out on religion, and found that she was quite unable to recite the Lord's Prayer in Spanish, except for a few phrases. She said that when she prayed she used her own words. Attempting to get her to cast her mind back to her claimed Spanish family, TR asked her about children's games, and she confirmed that her children had played at 'el parchís', a popular children's game; but when asked to describe how it was played she launched into a confused description of hide and seek, which had been mentioned before. TR asked her what films she remembered seeing in Madrid; this was mainly with a view to seeing if her replies were consistent with life in the early 1930s, in case she was mistaken about the time in which she remembered living; she protested that she did not remember any particular films, but she did finally, on our second visit, confirm that she had seen sound films as well as silent ones. When asked about contemporary politics and what she thought of Primo de Rivera she said that Pedro had called him a bad man, because he was responsible for workers such as himself losing their jobs. These experiences place Lucía's claimed memories in the 1930s, as she had asserted, rather than any other time.

TR and Lucía carried on extensive conversations on general lines – parks where she went walking with children, songs at Christmas, Spanish food and cooking and other topics, but there was no subject on which Lucía showed any initiative that had a bearing on her claims to have had a life in Madrid. She was very ready to volunteer information about her present life, the occasional visits and letters from her children and the frosty relationship with her granddaughter. She contrasted the warmth of Spaniards with the coldness of Hungarians, and though she responded to TR's questions with minimal information content she showed obvious delight in speaking to someone she regarded as a young Spaniard.

In replies to PM, who questioned her in German, the language she has been using on a daily basis since 1933, she was equally reluctant to talk about Madrid. She made confusing remarks about Primo de Rivera, saying he came to power after she was in Hungary, but also saying how 'we' (presumably family and friends) were all communists and hated him. She told PM that she did not go to school, and did not learn to read or write (though on arrival as Lucía she had written her name). She said that Pedro was a bricklayer, she was a washerwoman, and they worked, and danced, in the courtyard. The 'brasero' did not give much warmth in winter, but they were all cheerful and happy. She said that at the time she married Pedro, when she was 14 or 15, the King was Alfonso XII and the Queen was Isabella. But she could not remember the names of her children– they were, she said, the usual Spanish names, María, Juanita; she would have to think hard to remember the others. In fact, María and Juanita were not among the 14 names recited by Lucía in 1933.

Throughout she was much more interested in telling us about her present family difficulties, and it was difficult to divert her from her Hungarian preoccupations back to her pre-Iris take-over. It was clear that she was not trying to impress us with her memories of her claimed previous life, and one could get the impression that she was bored with the whole subject of Lucía Altarez de Salvio and her life in Madrid.

(b) Lucía's Mastery of the Spanish Language

Widely differing views were expressed by people brought in to assess Lucía's fluency and familiarity with the Spanish language. A dramatic claim was made by a Dr Zoltan Vegh, who taught Spanish at Madach College, that he recognised Iris from a photograph as one of his private pupils. This was hotly denied by Lucía, and, supported by her older brother Zsolt, she confronted Dr Vegh, who then said that he did not recognise her, and he withdrew the allegation. Röthy pursued this matter in depth, requiring Dr Vegh to sign a formal declaration that he had never seen Lucía before she was brought to confront him, and this was published on 24th May in two newspapers, *Visti Nayko* and *Uysag. A Reggel*, which had published Dr Vegh's original statement on 15th April [1935] refused, however, to publish the retraction, and at the time of reporting was threatened with legal action by Mr Farczády, acting as head of the family.

Dr Vegh added that Lucía spoke Spanish perfectly, with the sing-song tones of a native, and that he would expect it to take five years' residence in Spain for someone to speak as fluently as she did. One has to suspect, however, that Dr Vegh was apprehensive about the possibility of being sued for libel, and might have been ready to say anything that would placate the Farczády faction; so his expressed opinion cannot be taken at face value. Nor should we lose sight of the statement made by him originally that he taught the words 'calle' and 'oscuro' by using them together in one sentence, the sentence having been taken from a Spanish newspaper; the implication being that this was the source of Lucía's *Calle Oscura*. If true, it is a curious though not overwhelming coincidence. On the other hand, Vegh said that the whole of the newspaper story had been fabricated.

It will be remembered that the Spanish embassy representative, Count Carlos Arcos, was not impressed by Lucía's knowledge of Madrid's buildings, and he was equally scornful of her Spanish. The encounter seems to have been fraught with considerable hostility on his part, for mistakes made by Lucía were met with accusations of "You're lying!" rather than "You're wrong!" Her poor performance may have been due to his bullying approach.

It is difficult, however, to see why Lucía should have been demoralised when she was introduced to the wife and daughters of Consul Ruttkay. His wife was Spanish-born and her three Spanish-speaking daughters were very friendly towards Lucía. She spoke to them in a low voice, and seemed inhibited. After this bad start one of them said to Röthy, in Hungarian, that she did not speak like a real Spaniard, and Lucía by that time (7th June 1935) understood enough Hungarian to know what had been said. She then retreated into her shell, and when asked to say anything at all, whether to recite the names of her children or to give the recipe for 'cocido', she would respond by saying "No, not today". In view of the tests already carried out by Consul Ruttkay

(the buildings, the brasero and the porrón) it could be that she felt herself to be undergoing a further examination, and reacted against it.

Certainly, the favourable judgments on her Spanish derive from occasions when she used the language to converse rather than to respond to a test. At a social gathering that took place in the autumn of 1934 at the home of a Mrs Wonzak, 11 Horthy Miklós, No. 40, she was introduced to a Mrs Karl Jordan, wife of a university professor, of 8 Maria Utca 46. Mrs Jordan was a Spaniard from Seville who spoke little Hungarian and no German, and she took simple pleasure in being able to talk with what she took to be a compatriot. They chatted together all the evening, and arranged to meet again— though when Mrs Jordan discovered the reason for the encounter she decided that she did not want further meetings. She told Röthy that Lucía spoke Spanish fluently; she had made some mistakes, but these might have been local to Madrid.

Röthy was given a similar reply when on 1st May 1935 he questioned a journalist, Falk Miksagasa, whom he met at the Farczady home. He said that right from the start he had assumed that he was conversing with a woman from Madrid, where he had lived for many years. Five days later, on 6th May, Röthy was again chez Farczady with Consul Stefan Zombary. Lucía was in good form and talking with great animation. Zombary was absolutely convinced that she was from Madrid and that certain typical faults in speech were decisive in support of this belief. A few weeks later, when Röthy was there again with Lucía Renée and Zsolt, Zombary repeated that he found it inconceivable that anyone could have the slightest doubt about her Spanish nationality.

Following the meeting with Zombary Lucía expressed a strong desire to talk to a Spaniard. Röthy knew that there was a circus in the vicinity, and that there were some Spaniards, including an elephant trainer from Barcelona; Röthy said that they chatted together with the joy of compatriots who take pleasure in speaking their mother tongue. They spoke with amazing rapidity, and Lucía never found herself lost for words. Then they passed on to a native of Cuba, and after an hour and a half of conversation Röthy had some difficulty in bringing this encounter to an end. When he finally succeeded he asked the Cuban if Lucía spoke Spanish well. He did not understand the question and replied, "From Madrid".

On 11th May Lucía, together with her mother and sister, attended a meeting hosted by Röthy, at which there were 40 guests, among them a Spaniard called F. Poffé, who was a professor of languages. Röthy commented that everyone could see how effortlessly Lucía talked with him, carrying on an animated conversation as they strolled round the garden. Röthy did not cite any statement on the subject from Señor Poffé himself, but it seems fair to line him up with those who gave favourable testimonials.

Where should one align Albin Körössy, a college professor specialising in Spanish studies? He stated after examining Lucía that if she were his student he would mark her work as 'perfect.' This seems like the ultimate compliment, except that he went on to say that he thought her Spanish had been learnt, and recommended that she should be introduced to G. Gyárfás, who had spent 15 years in Spain.

Gyárfás seems to have been present on the same occasion as Señor Poffé, and he gave

Röthy a detailed opinion as to why he was convinced that Lucía was a genuine Spaniard. Among his reasons were the mistakes she made when speaking Hungarian, typical in his view of mistakes commonly made by Spanish people learning Hungarian. A week later Gaston Lanys, of Iranya 21, who had lived for many years in Montevideo, also considered that Lucía spoke the Spanish of a native, though he thought, with consummate subtlety, that some of those mistakes in Hungarian were made deliberately by Lucía.

Allowing some discount for well-wishers wanting to please Röthy and tell him what he wanted to hear, the balance is strongly in favour of the view that Lucía spoke fluent Spanish and on occasion might have passed for a native speaker.

We come now to the conversations that took place between Lucía and TR in April 1998. TR made lengthy and comprehensive notes about Lucía's vocabulary, identifying a quite considerable body of words introduced into the dialogue by her, and discussing various errors of grammar or misunderstanding of questions. These analyses are filed in the SPR archives for anyone who wants to study the matter in depth. The following paragraph, however, gives his general view of her competence in the Spanish language.

Lucía's Spanish is good and fluent enough to consider it as a possible remnant or quite extensive rudiment of a mother tongue she used to speak about 60 years ago. The errors she made can all be ascribed to her having lived so long in Hungary that her Spanish has become influenced by Hungarian and German. For example, the Spanish sound *ce* or *zeta* (harsher than the English *th* in truth), which is prominent in any Madrileña's speech, was completely absent and replaced by a sharp *s* which does not occur in this form in the Spanish of Madrid. If she sounded as a woman from Madrid in the thirties, we must assume the *zeta* was certainly present then. We should also note she used certain words in a very idiomatic way, such as *hijito* (little son), when addressing TR. Finally, she used rare, uncommon words, notably the word '*chorrera*' (a hole in the *porrón* through which the fluid leaves the vessel) correctly. Two native Spaniards whom TR confronted with this word were unfamiliar with its relevant meaning.

From the viewpoint of a spectator MRB and PM were able to form some opinion on what they saw and heard in person and could study later on the camcorder tape recorded by MRB. It was apparent that Lucía could converse in Spanish without any of the concentration or anxiety usually betrayed by some-one speaking a learnt foreign language, especially if that language had hardly been used for some 60 years. TR is very softly spoken, and most 80-year-olds would probably look at him for some unconscious assistance with lip-reading and gestures, even when both were using their native language. It was noticeable that Lucía needed no such help. In general she looked down while he was asking questions, looking up at him to give her replies. It is true that she seems sometimes to have misunderstood the question – perhaps in some cases not wanting to answer it – but this could have been due to careless listening rather than any difficulty in understanding spoken Spanish.

This brings us to the key question – if Lucía was no more than an alternate personality of Iris, how could she have acquired her fluent acquaintance with the Spanish language?

(c) Whether Iris could have Learnt Spanish Normally

The failure to locate Lucía's hypothetical family may be considered by many people to be virtually conclusive so far as a claim to a past-life interpretation is concerned; but we must bear in mind that in many cases of reincarnation type the overshadowed person is not able to specify the exact name and address of the person identified as predecessor in title; Jenny Cockell, one of the strongest past-life claimants of recent years (Barrington, 2002), could say with certainty that she was Mary and that she had been Irish, but it took some research to ascertain a surname and address. So a person exhibiting characteristics consistent with a past-life memory should not have the claim dismissed because she is unable to give these particulars, or if she gives details that do not correspond with any ascertainable facts. Her claim may be weakened, but by no means destroyed.

In Lucía's case – which is a purported case of possession rather than of reincarnation – she exhibited familiarity with a foreign culture and language for which there is no clear explanation, so the crucial question to ask is how Iris, if a victim of dissociation rather than possession, could have acquired the Spanish language, and with it a certain amount of cultural background. It is clear that Iris's parents were not aware of any Spanish lessons, and it is difficult to see any way in which Iris could have been attending such lessons without this being known to them and paid for by them. If lessons were taken without their knowledge or financial backing, one must ask what possible reason Iris could have had for keeping her interest in Spanish a secret.

The claim of Dr Vegh, as we have seen, collapsed, and whereas his very enthusiastic endorsement of Lucía's Spanish may have been influenced by his taking fright at having made a mistaken claim – though he asserted that his claim had been invented by the newspaper journalists – it does not seem likely that he would have been intimidated into withdrawing the allegation if he knew that he had indeed taught Iris; and had the claim been justified he would almost certainly have been able to adduce some form of evidence in support. If there had been any other private tutor it is difficult to imagine that the press would not have got to know about it and taken great pleasure in exposing the Lucía possession case as a hoax.

Leaving aside private lessons, the areas to investigate were her schools and, above all, the childhood years that she spent in the Netherlands away from her parents. Up to a point, Röthy was very assiduous in his inquiries, and wrote to both secondary schools attended by Iris in Hungary.

His report about schools was as follows: –

In reply to my request for information I received from Dr Tibor Marisek, head-master of the Ladies' College at ödenburg [Sopron in Hungarian] where Iris and Renée spent three years up to 1932, and also from Bela Meller, assurances that neither her teachers, nor her numerous former colleagues, were ever aware that she had learnt to speak Spanish, and this could never have escaped their notice. She had shown a considerable aptitude for French. I received the same information from the principal of the Ladies' College at Szent-Margit, where Iris had also been a pupil up to 22 March 1933, the date at which she had to leave on account of her disorder.

He also took the trouble to write to the Pastor of Zevenhuizen to ask if there was any way Iris could have come into contact with a Spanish speaker. The Pastor was absolutely certain that there was no way that this could have happened in Zevenhuizen. Zevenhuizen means in Dutch *seven houses* and while the village certainly had more than seven houses it was a village rather than a town, and (as ascertained by TR) it took refugee children only from the former Austria-Hungary. The presence of a Spanish child in this village who would be unknown to the Pastor seems highly unlikely, as would the presence of a young Spanish working woman. TR asked his friend historian Pieter van Wezel to consult the local municipal archives at Leek and found that there were no natives of Spain living in Zevenhuizen in the period concerned.

We have the further testimony of Iris's brother, Zsolt Farczády, given to Röthy that Iris could not have learnt Spanish in Zevenhuizen. Zsolt would then have been between the ages of 7 and 9, and would be expected to have had a good recollection of the years spent in the Netherlands, and though he was lodged with a different household from Iris and Renée, it is difficult to imagine that he would not have known if Iris, in addition to Dutch, had acquired Spanish. Renée during this period would have been somewhere between 3 and 6; being only 15 months younger than Iris it seems very likely that the two girls would usually have been in the company of one another, and if Iris had learnt enough Spanish to speak it fluently some 10 years later, then surely Renée, at an age when language absorption would come even more easily, would have known and remembered the elements sufficiently not to be baffled at the newly 'arrived' Lucía's Spanish.

Certainly the sojourn in the Netherlands, away from parental supervision (though no doubt kept under watchful eyes in the Pastor's house) seemed the most likely place where a foreign language might have been acquired by a child in association with another foreign child. But between leaving the Netherlands and being sent with Renée to the boarding school at Sopron there is a gap covering the junior school years between the ages of 7 and 12.

All we are told about this period comes in one sentence from Renée in a statement made to Röthy on the first day of his investigation, viz. that Iris completed her elementary education in Budapest. Renée on this occasion does not say 'we' so we cannot even be sure that Renée attended the same school. It is a curious fact that this period was completely passed over by Mr Farczády in speaking to Cornelius Tabori; Tabori reported him as saying that when Iris returned from the Netherlands she was sent to boarding school at Sopron. But know from Röthy's inquiries and Renée's testimony that the Sopron school years were 1929-1932. There is therefore an unexplored black hole that Röthy appears to have ignored in his report.

Fortunately PM has found some detailed correspondence between Röthy and Countess Zoë Wassilko-Serecki, a leading and well respected Austrian searcher, well known for her investigation of the Zugun poltergeist case and the driving force behind the foundation of the then Austrian Society for Psychical Research back in 1927. After telling her in a letter dated 9th May 35 how he had written to the school in Sopron, Röthy went on to say that he intended to investigate Iris's Budapest school in person, and that he had already telephoned the principal and asked if Iris had

learned Spanish at the school. She had said that she would have to speak to the teaching staff, and would telephone him with the answer. Röthy said he was not going to rely on that, but would seek a personal interview, and let the Countess know the result of his inquiries.

In three subsequent letters written in June and July, however, the matter is not mentioned, nor, as we have seen, was it referred to in the report. If Röthy had learned that Iris had indeed learnt Spanish then it would have been highly deceptive to suppress this information, and Röthy appears to have been a conscientious researcher. If he received positive assurances one would have expected them to be in his report. What seems likely is that a definitive reply had to wait on something such as the return of teachers from school vacations, and the matter was not pursued to a conclusion in time for publication.

How large is this loophole? In view of the publicity given to the case we can probably discount the possibility that Iris learnt Spanish at her Budapest school. If she had, one would expect some teacher, parent or pupil to speak up to point this out to newspapers eager as ever to field an exclusive exposé, especially of a case purporting to demonstrate possession or reincarnation. We can also, surely, discount the idea that a primary school child could arrange private lessons for herself without this being known, and paid for, by her parents. Perhaps there was a Spanish pupil at her school, and she learnt to speak the language fluently from her; if so, why should she have kept this a secret from her family? Iris seems to have had a high opinion of her intellectual prowess, and it is difficult to imagine that she would not have boasted about this accomplishment.

There remains the possibility that there was a Spanish cleaner, a person of such negligible status as not to have attracted notice of her existence, and Iris picked up Spanish from her. It is conceivable that this would have counted as a naughty childish secret. But children of that age usually lead fairly regimented lives under the supervision of teachers, and are then handed back to mothers or nannies. The idea of this upper middle class academically inclined child getting on friendly terms with a Spanish working woman, picking up her Madrid accent, learning about Spanish churches and Spanish songs, dances, cooking; and how to handle a strange drinking cup does not seem very plausible. But, however improbable, it still has to be weighed against another improbability, viz. the possession of Iris by a deceased Spanish cleaner.

CONCLUSIONS

We shall end this summary of the case by giving our individual conclusions.

MRB Conclusion

It may be that despite various efforts to locate the family of Pedro Salvio the survivors of the 14 children do indeed live somewhere in Spain, and that Lucía once lived a previous life as their mother. Like most people, I would rate the likelihood of this being the case at somewhere close to zero. Apart from the non-productive names and addresses, there is the matter of Lucía's attitude to her claimed children. One can understand that as a minor under the control of her parents she would not have been

in a position to take herself off to Madrid to find them. The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, followed by the World War, in which Hungary was again on the losing side, succeeded by the Russian domination, all militated against travel to Spain. In addition, all signs point to her Hungarian children, and presumably their father, regarding Lucía's reincarnation story as a manifestation of mental illness – certainly the verdict given by contemporary experts. A visit to Spain would not have been encouraged.

She is now very impoverished and not in good health, and probably her earnings as an engineer were not very substantial, so that in the freedom afforded by the retreat of the Russians and the onset of widowhood travel may still have been a practical option. Assistance from her presumably moneyed son, Rafael, was not likely to be forthcoming for a visit to Madrid, and up to a point one can understand the passing of years without any attempt being made by Lucía to seek out her children. And yet, one would expect, despite these difficulties and discouragement, that she would have made the effort, had those children been as real to her as her Hungarian children.

When questioned by TR she could no longer name her children. At 80 years of age her brain seemed to be in reasonably good shape, and the names of her children were frequently on her tongue when she talked about them during her early years with the Farczádys some 65 years earlier; but while the names of writers, painters, researchers and mediums may hover in the lower recesses of the mind and refuse to rise to the surface, there are things that people do not forget. If anyone asked me to name some 25 cats that have been members of my household at various times since 1929 I should be able to do so without hesitation. If Lucía no longer wants to know what happened to the young children she thinks she left behind it may be because she is not at heart convinced about their reality.

Does that entirely dispose of reincarnation-type explanations? It seems to me that *if* there is no plausible way for Iris to have acquired Spanish normally, then these possibilities remain open, and are certainly to be preferred to Warcollier's rather breathtaking assumption that she must have learned this by telepathy. For while there is no precedent for telepathic language acquisition there are cases analogous to the ousting of Iris by Lucía, the case of Shiva/Sumitra (Stevenson et al., 1989) bearing a close resemblance and that of Sharada (Akolkar, 1992) having in common the acquisition of a language not readily explained in terms of learning.

At one explanatory pole we have (a) possession of Iris by Lucía Altares de Salvio of Madrid, and at the other pole we have (b) a secretly Spanish-fluent Iris dissociating permanently and replacing her identity with that of Lucía. There is also a third possibility: that Spain-obsessed Iris was ousted by a deceased drop-in Spanish entity who took possession of Iris's mind and body, and adopted the persona created by Iris in her mediumistic trance state as her true identity. The one possibility that I am inclined to exclude entirely is that Iris consciously connived at her replacement and that the Lucía of today knowingly maintains a lifelong masquerade that brings her no visible advantage. :There is perhaps a variant on this theme, that what began as Iris's fiction has been adopted by her as a reality, so that she now believes in the independence of Lucía; I find this equally unconvincing.

If Iris did in fact learn the Spanish language and customs normally, then possession

by an external entity is manifestly less probable than an obsession with Spain leading to dissociation and change of personality. But if Iris's personality change was not due to intervention by a separate entity, then it was presumably self-induced, and this raises questions about her motivation. Iris's dramatic mediumship, her automatic drawing, her post-séance role-playing her aggressive outbursts, her implied self-assessment as a genius, her father's view of her as nervous (one suspects he means difficult) all taken together suggest a possible candidate for some degree of instability and dissociative tendency; but there is nothing to suggest that outside her adventures in mediumship she suffered from alternating personality. And after the transformation there was no alternation, except on the one very early occasion when Iris spoke in response to a hypnotic suggestion put to Lucía. Iris would have had to have some deep-seated and powerful motivation to want to eradicate her own personality and take on a character almost as different from herself as it was possible to be.

We have to ask why a clever and successful schoolgirl should want, even subconsciously, to be transformed into an uneducated, middle-aged Spanish cleaning woman. Was she tired of her mind? Many people under constant intellectual strain feel tired of their minds and fantasise about how much pleasanter life would be if they could be gardeners or carpenters, make models or run a tea-shop. Through mediumship Iris may have found it a relief to be someone other than herself, and her trance state offered an opening for personalities opposed to her own. And though she clearly had a high opinion of herself one must bear in mind that in the 1930s the prospects for a young lady who was brilliant at mathematics were not as inviting as they would have been for her brother; performing as a Spanish dancer would probably have been much more enjoyable than life as a 'bluestocking' at a university, where she might meet with more hostility than admiration from the male students, who would mostly have taken the view that she did not belong in their province, competing with them.

For this same reason I should doubt that she was under pressure to shine academically. Upper-class girls of the 1930s were more likely to be told, *'Be good little girl, and let who will be clever.'* We see that her mother was quite happy to see Iris dropping out of school (when her trance personalities lingered on she had to send in a sickness note for obvious reasons) and her father remarked to Cornelius Tabori that, though he missed his clever daughter, Lucía was much less nervy than Iris, and a good cook too; it does not sound as if they were pushing Iris into more intellectual stardom than she wanted. So intellectual over-strain does not seem to provide sufficient motivation for Iris to want to wipe out her life as Iris, and we have to look further.

From Lucía in 1998 we learnt the very important fact that Iris's father had set up home with a younger woman, though no one seems to have mentioned this either to Röthy or to Tabori. It does, however, explain some peculiar features of the narrative, such as Mr Farczády's admission that he was not told about Iris's transformation for several months. We have no record of when he left the household, and whether there was a confusing period of semi-detachment; but Lucía related how she remembered a servant reporting the presence of a strange man in the house, who turned out to be Mr Farczády. Her father's defection would be unusual and scandalous in the 1930s, and

his loss of professional status would be a further humiliation reflecting on the family. Presumably these circumstances would have had some effect on Iris, and may have accounted for the hostility displayed by her in her trance state towards her mother, who perhaps was blamed by her for the loss of her father.

The transformation of her daughter from a clever young girl into a foreign working-class slum-dweller must have been very painful for Iris's mother. The entire package of floor-scrubbing, cleaning, washing up, cooking, popular singing and dancing, a proletariat history of teenage marriage, 14 children, poverty and hatred of the upper classes, were all features that her mother could not wish to see associated with a daughter of the house. Was Iris motivated to punish her mother? Not only by turning into Lucía, but ensuring that the transformation was manifestly her mother's fault. Yet the greatest punishment was inflicted on herself. Iris had had a very comfortable lifestyle, and apparently took pleasure from her intellectual life. Since she excelled in them she presumably enjoyed languages, literature and mathematics. For a girl who had presumably not hitherto undertaken rough domestic chores an imposed regimen, dishwashing and house cleaning would have ranked as a severe penance. But this is what the transformed Iris/Lucía inflicted on herself. It could of course be argued that she obtained some benefit in turning from a thoughtful, studious, imaginative, moody, nervy intellectual into an uneducated, unthinking, crude, practical and cheerful domestic toiler, because these changes probably increased her general level of happiness; for while intelligence and sensitivity often lead to sadness and sorrow for the misery of the world, stupidity and lack of imagination usually make a good basis for placid contentment. Scrubbing floors was the sort of activity to divert the mind both from personal cares and from the troubles of society.

Perhaps rather than being tired of her cultivated mind Iris had some more deep-seated reason for self-hatred, something that made her choose to re-cast herself as a creature from the bottom of the pile, so as more efficiently to destroy and blot out her former self. As to the hypothetical reason one can only resort to unsupportable speculation. But when Iris made her one post-Lucía communication casting herself as a genius ready to die young the tenor of her discourse does not fit in with the sort of self-mortification scenario one might expect if she had been, to take an extreme possibility for which there is no evidence, subjected to sexual abuse. Another thing that does not fit in with the notion of a fragile Iris who could not take the strain of being her clever self is the photograph of her published by Röthy as a very robust-looking girl posing with a beach ball, and giving the impression that she saw herself as an athlete, cheerful and extrovert. The girl who looks rather timid and unsettled is the transformed Lucía, in a photograph taken together with Röthy and Renée. Before seeing photographs of Iris I had wondered if she was brilliant but plain, and would have preferred to be stupid and pretty. But she was quite attractive, and an exchange with a 41-year-old mother of 14 children could hardly be seen as fulfillment of a wish dream. Our main, and almost sole, informant about the case is Röthy, who did not think in terms of dissociative disorder, and information about Iris's background that might support or contest this hypothesis is not likely to be found in his reports, so we are not in a position to form a judgement as to why Iris should have suffered this self-imposed annihilation, if this is what really happened.

The nearest we have to character assessment comes from Pastor Veltman, of Zevenhuizen, who describes her as a good child, clever, appreciative of everything done for her, and lovable. Her sister Renée speaks of her in affectionate terms, saying how close they were, and how she still loved her replacement-sister. If Iris wanted to extinguish herself, the reason for this remains obscure, so obscure that one is justified in considering the possession alternative.

Iris complained to Guido Kassal that the invading woman had taken her body. Instances of apparent possession, such as the Mary Roff/Lurancy Venum case (Stevens, 1887) are sufficiently documented to make this a precedented hypothesis. In her role as medium Iris put herself into a state where, like all trance mediums, she invited temporary occupation of her mind by other entities, including, no doubt, discrete segments of her own subconscious. According to Mrs Czipkay there were dozens or even hundreds of takers, claiming to come from all directions and speak assorted languages, real or imaginary. One must assume that these personalities were creatures of Iris, who probably had the makings of a fertile novelist in her had she continued in her own persona. She obviously had some strong penchant for Spain, perhaps because it was one of the most remote and therefore exotic countries in Europe, starting from Hungary. Lucía, with her 14 children, is more original than a Gypsy dancer or toreador, but still something of an archetype.

Supposing deceased persons to persist in some state, let us imagine that a Spanish entity, seeking some conduit linking her with living humans, was attracted to the vacancy created by Iris and took possession of her, being welcomed by the circle and assumed to be the character sketched out by Iris.

The entity, who had only unstable memories of her real past life, accepted the role and believed herself to be Iris's Lucía. She remembered her language, she remembered how life used to be, but names, places and other memories were taken from Iris, and therefore had no reality. The idea of opportunist deceased entities cruising around looking for the offer of a vacant mind may sound like science fiction, but there is a possible precedent for this in the case of Sumitra Singh and Shiva Tripathi, one of the cases reported by Stevenson and colleagues (Stevenson et al., 1989).

In this case we have the reciprocal of Iris and Lucía. Sumitra was a fairly uneducated Indian girl, who was only just able to read and write, and the entity who responded to her implied offer of a vacant mind was college-educated Shiva. Sumitra, who probably had every reason to be tired of her life, as would many Indian girls, more or less advertised a vacancy by saying that in three days' time she was going to die; three days later she went into what was thought to be a coma and the onset of death, but it was more probably a trance state. She woke up as Shiva, who effectively replaced her, and incidentally took over the duty of looking after Sumitra's children. After a few weeks Sumitra made a brief return, and, apparently satisfied by Shiva's performance, departed for good (though as this is an ongoing case the balance may change).

It will be remembered that when Lucía was hypnotised by Guido Kassal, Iris responded, and after a brief protest about the invasion by Lucía she seemed to accept her ousting, because geniuses commonly died young, and she was a misunderstood

genius. After a long discourse on what Kassal described as philosophical matters and world affairs, Iris then departed and never came back. (It will be remembered that Lucía strenuously denied to us that she had ever 'lost time' when Iris might have taken over). It seems that, like Sumitra, she was willing to go. Though Lucía may have been a fiction created by Iris and infiltrated into the mind of the possessing entity, the claimant who displaced Sumitra identified herself clearly as Shiva and gave veridical information about her life and death; she also gave many details that were verified by Shiva's father, who accepted her as his daughter. Sumitra/Shiva sounds like an actual case of possession, and Lucía just could be another Shiva but with false recovered memories.

As there is no reasonable explanation in normal terms for Lucía's Spanish, and as possession is the only plausible paranormal explanation, the logical conclusion is that this is the true explanation. A logical argument is not necessarily a convincing one, and though I prefer possession to dissociation, it is by a narrow margin.

PM Conclusion

Before entering the discussion a few remarks on the personality of two of the witnesses might be appropriate.

Guido Kassal: indeed he was a Spiritualist, but definitely not a Professor of Theology (I have no idea how this wrong description has entered the story). In fact, he was a magnetizer or magneto-therapist. Röthy's description of him as a "dreamer" appears to hit the nail on the head when Kassal is judged by his publications (in German only) on various topics related to the field: he appears to have been inclined to believe in almost everything. In modern terminology, he belonged to esotericism rather than to parapsychology.

Although Karl Röthy (Röthy Karol) had a deep and genuine interest in parapsychology, he was not trained as a scientist and appears to have been rather uncritical. He was a sympathizer of the spiritualist persuasion and was always after convincing phenomena and 'positive' outcomes. He was not the person who would serve as a devil's advocate, actively searching for observations that would cast some doubt on the case in question or on alternative viewpoints in order to get the 'pro' and the 'con' balanced – on the other hand he is described (by Countess Wassilko and others) as absolutely honest, which means that he would not have suppressed any 'negative' evidence if he happened to come across such. He might have exaggerated a case but by and large his testimony can be trusted.

As to interpretation, one preliminary point needs to be emphasized: the difference between knowledge (information) and skills. An example of 'knowledge' in the present context would be when an ostensible communicator during a séance makes remarks such as "on page so-and-so of a certain volume found on this-or-that shelf in my library the text reads as follows ..." Such book tests are found frequently in the older spiritualistic literature. Cases of this kind may easily be explained by ESP—actually this is what ESP is about, to obtain knowledge/information by paranormal means. Another incident of 'knowledge', coming closer to our topic, is the kind of tests a boy contender for the position of the new Dalai Lama has to undergo, such as to identify a number of items that have been in the possession of the deceased former

Dalai Lama or, in other words, in 'his own' possession during 'his previous life'. Lucía's case, her knowledge of the interior details of various Madrilène churches (not very convincing, though, as statues of saints and details of altar cloths may well follow standard patterns), her knowledge of how to use a certain vessel, and her ability to name all its parts fall into this category. All the above are pieces of information that may – theoretically at least – be learned and memorized easily, by normal means as well as by ESP.

Skills are different. Skills need to be trained and exercised for long periods in some instances for years. For playing the piano it is by no way sufficient to be able to identify the keys of the keyboard and to associate them with different tones on a sheet of music. Playing the piano needs much more, i.e. training of different muscle groups in order to hit several keys simultaneously (the correct ones, of course), acquiring a 'feeling' where those keys are on the keyboard without watching them as the eyes follow the notes on the sheet, etc. Yet the piano is a comparatively easy instrument; playing a stringed instrument like a violin or – in deference to MRB – a cello requires much more ability and training. Speaking a foreign language falls into the same category (Note 1). Just learning the vocabulary would not do, one needs grammar in addition, idioms and phrases, etc. The pronunciation, too, is an obstacle that needs to be overcome, whereby the voice box needs to be trained to produce the sounds particular to the new language (actually the hearing must adjust first in order to perceive minute nuances). On top come the regional variants (the Madrilène dialect in the Lucía case). ESP cannot explain all this. If we stretch our imagination the knowledge of even a large number of words of a foreign language could perhaps be attributed to ESP (to telepathy, as Warcollier had it); however, the mastering of a language to the degree Lucía achieved most certainly could not. At least there is no precedent in the history of parapsychology of acquiring skills such as correct pronunciation of a language or a dialect by means of ESP. Mastering the choreography of Flamenco and other Spanish (or Gypsy) dances falls clearly into the same category of 'skills'.

Secondly, I am very reluctant to discuss hypotheses such as 'possession' and 'overshadowing', as these hypotheses make sense only on the basis of the supposition of the existence of discarnate entities, spirits, etc., the way the followers of the spiritualistic belief system have it. There are a number of sound arguments in favour of a dualistic world view (John Beloff is the best advocate of this approach in our time – e.g. Beloff, 1976); however, it must be admitted that *empirically* we encounter mental activities only in the context of a functional neural basis. Future research on the OBE phenomenon might widen this view; however, as of now there is still no evidence for the independent existence of a soul – a 'shin' as I am inclined to call it following Thouless & Wiesner (1947) – and the mind-body-problem is not yet solved. Hence as the very existence of an entity able to 'possess' or 'overshadow' a human being is not proven it cannot be accepted as a '*causa vera*' in order to base further argumentation on it. This would entail explaining one unexplainable by another unexplainable, which must – from a meta-theoretical point of view – be strongly rejected.

Some minor Issues:- Eighty-year-old– Iris/Lucía has forgotten the names of her 14 children, though MRB is able to memorize 25 or more cats? I have met old people who were no longer able to quote the names of their grandchildren. In Lucía's very particular case the same could be true for her 'Spanish children'. I don't feel that her forgetting of names is a strong argument.

On the other hand, it must be borne in mind that during the early stages pure fantasy productions such as communicators from other planets (cf. Mrs Csipkai's report) have taken place. This indicates that the role of imagination must by no means be underestimated.

Summarizing, the crucial point of the case is Lucía's mastering the Spanish language in its local Madrilené dialect. All other issues, interesting as they may be, pale beside that. Her mastery of the Spanish language goes way beyond what could be explained away by normal means, or even standard-paranormal (telepathy). Her Spanish identity might very well be fictitious, but her language skills have been assessed as real; nevertheless the two are apparently connected to one another. My personal conclusion is that her case is truly inexplicable and remains an enigma.

Immanuel Kant once remarked that the words 'we don't know' are rarely heard in academia. Yet I prefer this straightforward statement, 'we simply don't know', to hypotheses that are based on suppositions which in turn are highly questionable or unfounded.

TR Conclusion

On one hand there are certain aspects of Lucía's knowledge about Spain that are correct and at the same time quite specific and non-trivial.

1. Altarez and Salvio cannot be considered as stereotypical names anyone would recognize as Spanish. Therefore I was surprised to learn that the names do indeed occur in Spain, something that in my view cannot be ascribed to mere coincidence: either Iris read about these names in connection with Madrid, say in a novel, or her knowledge of them should be considered paranormal.

2. Lucía talked about an Indian impresario who was connected to a dancing company called Nemaka [Correction of: an Indian impresario called Nemaka who was connected to a dancing company] in the thirties and who, according to her, saw similarities between her Flamenco dances and Indian classical music.

Flamenco dances are related to an early phase of the Kathak dancing tradition of India, which was part of the cultural heritage the gypsies brought to Spain. Flamenco dancing has a difficult choreography that cannot be imitated just by watching performances.

3. She told us that there were local gypsy healers in Madrid who were only known as 'las tías' (the aunts), an expression which is reminiscent of the habit of the Spanish gitanos to refer to each other as relatives: primos/as (cousins) for individuals of the same age, and tíos/tías (uncles/aunts) for who are older.

4. Calle de Lista (the street name now replaced by calle Ortega y Gasset) seems to have been named after a minor Spanish poet and is not a common name, nor is it one likely to have figured in a travel agency brochure in the thirties. So Lucía may have had at least some knowledge of Madrid.

These items, though far from conclusive, suggest real experience of life in Madrid rather than knowledge derived from a written source such as a novel, travel guide or encyclopaedia. Therefore I agree that unless we find a normal source for Lucía's knowledge and skills, the paranormal hypothesis of some kind of possession or 'postnatal' reincarnation cannot be excluded.

On the other hand, the weakest points in this case are that Iris had an extraordinary gift for languages, that she had been a trance medium who apparently created a lot of secondary personalities, and that Lucía Altarez and Pedro Salvio cannot be found anywhere in the municipal archives of Madrid, as was confirmed once more by the Registro Civil Unico in 2002. For anyone unfamiliar with or sceptical of ostensibly paranormal cases such as that of Shiva/Sumitra, mentioned by MRB, it will seem obvious that the case should be explained psychologically.

As long as we have no additional confirmation of Lucía's statements, I am personally inclined to adhere to the (ab)normal hypothesis of dissociation plus cryptomnesia. My reason for this is not that I want to be a sceptic (or perhaps more accurately 'debunker'), because I have a strong 'rational belief' – as Stevenson terms this – in reincarnation and related matters, based on the considerable scholarly evidence available.

The problem here is that this specific case resembles cases of mediumistic dissociation such as that of Helene Smith (Flournoy, 1900) because it also includes fictitious secondary personalities. Thus, a hypothesis in terms of multiple personality seems more plausible than average. However, I realise that this feature is in itself inconclusive, as most cases of possibly authentic drop-in communicators also occur within a spiritualistic context and mediums often have imaginary 'controls'. Apart from facilitating dissociation, it is quite conceivable that the practices of mediumship sometimes also attract real discarnate personalities. I therefore certainly would not want to exclude the hypothesis of a real possession case with xenoglossy. Had the case been more thoroughly researched in the 1930s I might even have been convinced of this interpretation.

All in all, our research has been fascinating but also quite frustrating as no definitive conclusions seem possible as yet, and perhaps this awkward situation will not change any more. I ascribe it to the lack of experience among the original researchers of the case and the general sceptical climate in which it was investigated. If we discovered a similar European case today we would certainly go about it differently. We would try to exhaust any possible normal hypotheses and verify every single statement made by the subject. We would also try to reconstruct an extensive psychological profile of the original personality and to trace possible psychodynamic factors that might underly a hypothetical process of dissociation. Let us hope that the story of Lucía Altarez inspires many scholars to acknowledge that meticulous research into spontaneous European cases of reincarnation and possession is certainly worth the effort (Barrington, 2002; Rivas, 2003, 2004; Stevenson, 2003).

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Note

1. Not only Flournoy's Helene Smith (Flournoy, 1900) comes into one's mind when considering this language issue, also the 'Ancient Egypt Speaks' case should not be forgotten. The issue of pronunciation is not of course present in either case, as the purported inhabitants of the planets do not exist and the ancient Egyptians failed to leave behind audiotapes containing voice samples.

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Also see:

- [Het geval Iris Farczády/Lucía Altares: een voorlopig verslag](#)(Dutch), by Titus Rivas

- [The beautifully strange mystery of Iris and Lucia](#), by Chris Laursen