

International Conference

# PSYCHOTIC EXPERIENCES, RELIGION, AND SPIRITUALITY

14 - 16 MAY 2012  
UNIVERSITÉ PARIS DESCARTES  
45 rue des Saints-Pères - Paris

## Convenors

**Mônica Nunes**

NISAM - Institute of Collective Health - Federal University of Bahia

**Tiago Pires Marques**

Cermes3 - Paris Descartes University | CEHR - Catholic University of Portugal

## Scientific advisors

**Anne Lovell**

Cermes3 - CNRS/Paris Descartes University

**Pierre-Henri Castel**

Cermes3 - CNRS/Paris Descartes University

**Maurice De Torrenté**

NISAM - Institute of Collective Health - Federal University of Bahia

**Monday, 14 May | Salle des thèses (Bâtiment Jacob, 5<sup>th</sup> floor)**

15h00 – 18h00

Welcome and Introduction

*Religion and madness: argument and projection of documentary extracts*  
**Mônica Nunes and Tiago Pires Marques**

*Remarks on the encounter of psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and religion*  
**Pierre-Henri Castel** (CNRS - CERMES3)

*Documentary "Drugs and Prayers - Indian Psychiatry in the realm of Saints",*  
by **Helene Basu** (Institute of Ethnology - Univ. Münster) - debate with the author

**Tuesday, 15 May | Salle des thèses (Bâtiment Jacob, 5<sup>th</sup> floor)**

9h30 – 13h00

Chair: **Maurice de Torrenté**

Discussant: **Robert Desjarlais** (Sarah Lawrence College, United States)

"Madness and the "work of death" between Quranic healing and the ethics of psychoanalysis (Of crypts, jinns, and the struggle of the soul)"  
**Stefania Pandolfo** (University of California, Berkeley)

Discussant: **Erwan Dianteill** (Univ. Paris Descartes)

"From madness to religion and vice versa in some Senegalese cases: transition criteria and psychosocial effects"  
**Andras Zempleni** (CNRS - A.Z., Laboratoire d'Ethnologie et de Sociologie Comparative de l'Université Paris-Ouest, Nanterre)

"On the edge of comprehension: articulating the experience of madness through the idiosyncratic games and the idiom of Candomblé"  
**Mônica Nunes** (NISAM - Federal University of Bahia)

14h30 – 18h00

Chair: **Pierre-Henri Castel**

Discussant: **Richard Rechtman** (EHESS - IRIS)

"Affiliate with a religion in adolescence. A clinical and transcultural approach"  
**Marie Rose Moro** (Univ. Paris Descartes) and **Rahmeth Radjack** (Univ. Paris Descartes)

"Navigating at the limits of the experience in India. Psychosis, religion, and asceticism"  
**Ellen Corin** (McGill University)

"Sorcery, mental illness, and personhood in India"  
**Helene Basu** (Institute of Ethnology - Univ. Münster)

**Wednesday, 16 May | Salle des conférences, R 229 (Bâtiment principal, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor)**

9h30 – 13h00

Chair: **Pierre-Henri Castel**

Discussant: **Robert Desjarlais** (Sarah Lawrence College)

"The writing of painful experiences of God in late medieval Portugal: problems around the fixation of liminal experiences and their historical interpretation"  
**Maria de Lurdes Rosa** (IEM/ FCSH-U. Nova de Lisboa; CEHR- Catholic Un. Portugal)

"Melancholy, vicarious suffering, and the end of religious scapegoats: experience and narratives of religion and madness in 20<sup>th</sup> century Portugal"  
**Tiago Pires Marques** (Cermes3 - Un. Paris Descartes; CEHR - Catholic Un. Portugal)

"How individual psychotic experience becomes transformed into a shared religion"  
**Roland Littlewood** (Univ. College London) in collaboration with **Yemi Oloyede** (Univ. College London)

14h30 – 17h00

Workshop: *Fieldwork notes on religious psychotic episodes in psychiatric facilities*

Chair: **Maurice de Torrenté**

Discussants: **Anne Lovell** (Cermes3 - INSERM - Un. Paris Descartes)

**Richard Rechtman** (EHESS - IRIS)

**Pierre-Henri Castel** (CNRS - CERMES3)

**Livia Velpry** (Cermes3 - Un. Paris Descartes)

**Annika Strauss** (Institute of Ethnology - Univ. Münster)

**Mônica Nunes** (NISAM - Federal University of Bahia)

**Tiago Pires Marques** (Cermes3 - Un. Paris Descartes; CEHR - Catholic Un. Portugal)

17h30 – 18h00

Final discussion

The conference will take place in English  
Please register with: [tiagopmarques@yahoo.com](mailto:tiagopmarques@yahoo.com)  
Limited number of places

## Argument

Recent research in the history and anthropology of mental illness and healing have opened new perspectives on the relation between psychotic experiences, on the one hand, and religion and spiritual idioms, on the other. They have highlighted the manifold varieties of that relationship: religion and spirituality as resources for the verbalization of psychotic experiences; their use as self-healing through bricolage procedures; their legitimizing role for patients and their entourage in the mediation of experiences of otherness; and, finally, their therapeutic potential, which is much valued today by a number of mental health practitioners, as well as their claimed ability to foster the social integration of patients. We should notice here that these studies tend to develop constructivist and pragmatic views of religious experience and spirituality, against the background of psychosis viewed as an invariant. In this sense, they show a certain conventional psychiatric bias. It would thus be important to confront these approaches with studies rooted in current psychiatric practices, namely in the domain of transcultural psychiatry, as far as they show an interest in the religious beliefs and the spirituality of patients.

This conference aims to further analyze these topics through in-depth accounts of cases and clinical and fieldwork-based research. Papers are centered on reported or observed psychotic experiences and discuss the ways in which religious and spiritual idioms are mobilized by patients, as well as by medical and psychological practitioners and religious healers in their therapeutic relations. Overall, the workshop covers a significant variety of social, institutional and cultural contexts. As an expected result, we should be able to better understand the ways in which culture and social institutions contribute to the shaping of individual psychotic experience, and how they create dynamics of integration and exclusion. In addition, by inviting social scientists and medical practitioners to confront their perspectives, we would like to question what appears to be the underlying constructivist stance on many recent perspectives on religious experience and spirituality linked to psychotic states.

## The participants

**Helene BASU** is Professor of Social Anthropology at Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster. She is currently acting as head of the department and as principal investigator of the project “Mental Health in India” in the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics in Pre-Modern and Modern Cultures” at WWU. This project deals with religion, psychiatry and ritual healing in India. Her earlier projects in India, Pakistan and Tanzania focused on Hindu and Muslim socio-religious practices, possession and identity formations, migration across the Indian Ocean and the “African diaspora” (Sidi) in Gujarat. She has published and edited several books (*Habshi-Sklaven, Sidi-Fakire*, 1995; *Von Barden und Königen. Ethnologische Studien zur Göttin und zum Gedächtnis*, 2004; ed. *Journeys and Dwellings – Indian Ocean Themes in South Asia*, 2008; ed. With Pnina Werbner *Embodying Charisma*, 1998). She is co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (Brill).

**Pierre-Henri CASTEL** is a historian and a philosopher of mental medicine. He also is a psychoanalyst in private practice, and he teaches clinical psychology at the Ville-Evrard mental hospital. He received his PhD in philosophy from the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris in 1992, and his PhD in psychology from Paris XIII University in 1995. He has been a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique since 2008. He works at the University Paris Descartes in which he is in charge of the sociology of mental health group of the Cermes3. He has written six books on various topics, such as hysteria, transsexualism, Freud's Traumdeutung, the philosophy of mind, and neuroscience in psychiatry. His last published book is *Âmes scrupuleuses, vies d'angoisse, tristes obsédés : Obsessions et contrainte intérieure de l'Antiquité à Freud* (Ithaque, Paris, 2011). He is currently completing a systematic cultural and epistemological history of obsessions and compulsions from Freud to contemporary neurobiology, to appear in 2012.

**Robert DESJARLAIS** is a sociocultural anthropologist who has taught anthropology at Sarah Lawrence College since 1994. He received his PhD in anthropology from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1990, and was a NIMH post-doctoral research fellow at Harvard University from 1990 to 1992. He has been the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and the Victor Turner Prize for Ethnographic Writing. Robert has conducted anthropological research in several distinct settings, ranging from a Tibetan Buddhist people in the Nepal Himalayas to a shelter for the homeless in downtown Boston. He is the author of four books, and is currently working on a fifth, entitled “Subject to Death: Yolmo Buddhist Engagements with Life, Loss, and Mourning.” His most recent book is “Counterplay: An Anthropologist at the Chessboard,” published by the University of California Press.

**Erwan DIANTEILL** is an anthropologist, and the director of the Centre for Cultural Anthropology/ Centre d'anthropologie culturelle – CANTHEL (EA 4545). His research focuses on the anthropological and sociological theories of religion, the relationships between political and religious powers, and symbolic resources of domination and resistance. He develops his work on Afro-American cultures (Cuba, United States, Brazil), the evolution of native religions in Western Africa (Benin), and new Christian movements. Currently he carries out fieldwork research in Porto Novo on the transformation of an African religion in the context of urban modernity: the cult of Fa. His last book (in collaboration with Michèle Chouhan) is entitled *Eshu, dieu d'Afrique et du Nouveau Monde* (Larousse, 2011).

**Ellen CORIN** is Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Anthropology based at the Psychosocial Research Unit of the Douglas Hospital and psychoanalyst. She is a co-founder and leading scholar of the Canadian School of Transcultural Psychiatry. She did her graduate work at the Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium, and has extensive fieldwork experience in Central Africa and Canada. In Quebec, she examined the dynamic aspects of the lived world of persons diagnosed with psychotic problems and the pathways they follow for attempting to reconstruct a habitable world. For the last ten years, she also pursued collaborative research in India. Throughout her research projects, she has developed methodological benchmarks for exploring subjective experiences in culture and identifying points of convergence and divergences between various actor narratives. Her research projects revolve around the articulation of personal experience by culture, particularly in the case of psychosis. Among her last publications, one may notice “Psychanalyse et anthropologie, l'ébranlement d'une rencontre”, a thematic issue of *Anthropologie et Société*; a commentary in *Ethos*: “Interdisciplinary dialogue: a site of estrangement”; and a chapter in *L'Esprit d'insoumission*, edited by Ghyslain Lévy: “Sur l'horizon de la Kultur, une écoute plurielle”. She has also co-authored *Le mouvement de l'être. Paramètres pour une approche alternative du traitement en santé mentale*, in collaboration with alternative community groups in mental health.

**Roland LITTLEWOOD** is a leading scholar and medical practitioner in transcultural psychiatry in Great Britain. Both a clinical psychiatrist and a social anthropologist, he is Professor of Anthropology and Psychiatry at University College London. His fieldwork has been carried out in the Caribbean (Trinidad, Haiti), Albania and Britain. Roland Littlewood is the co-author of the book *Aliens and Alienists. Ethnic Minorities and Psychiatry* (Routledge, 3rd ed. 1997), and author of the books *Pathologies of the West. An Anthropology of Mental Illness in Europe and America* (Cornell University Press, 2002), and *Pathology and Identity. The Work of Mother Earth in Trinidad* (Cambridge University Press, 2006). He was President of the Royal Anthropological Institute from 1994 to 1997.

**Anne M. LOVELL**, Senior Research Scientist at the French national health institute (INSERM) and CERMES3 (University of Paris-Descartes), received her PhD in Medical Anthropology from Columbia University, where she was also an NIMH research fellow. She brings narrative analysis, anthropology of experience and theories of publics and urban space to the understanding of mental illness. Her forthcoming book concerns disaster imaginary, illness and health care restructuring in post-Katrina New Orleans, and her edited volume, *Aller vers la folie* (Ithaque), will be published in late 2012.

**Marie Rose MORO** is a child and adolescent psychiatrist and Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at University Paris Descartes. After completing a degree in Philosophy, she obtained degrees in Medicine and Psychology. Doctor in Medicine and in Human Sciences, she is also a psychoanalyst and writer. For twenty-five years, first in Avicenne Hospital in the suburbs of Paris, and then in the centre of Paris, in Cochin Hospital, she has been developing a transcultural clinic that tries to adapt our mental health care settings, techniques, and research methods to immigrant families and their children. She is also developing a new pluridisciplinary way of taking care of adolescent. Head of the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry of Cochin Hospital, Technical Advisor

for Doctors Without Borders, director of a research team in transcultural psychiatry at Unité INSERM 669 and at the Laboratoire de psychologie of Paris Descartes University, Editor-in-Chief of the journal *L'autre*, she is one of today's leading figures in transcultural psychiatry in France. Besides her many articles, we can highlight, among her books, *Les enfants de l'immigration : une chance pour demain* (Paris: Bayard, 2012); *Nos enfants demain. Pour une société multiculturelle* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2010); and, with C. Lachal, *Psychotherapies. Models, methods and indications* (Prentice-Hall: 2010).

**Mônica NUNES** is a psychiatrist and sociocultural anthropologist who teaches medical anthropology and mental health at the Institute of Collective Health in Federal University of Bahia, Brazil, since 2002. She received her PhD in anthropology from the University of Montreal in 1999 and did a senior postdoctoral at Paris V - Descartes University from 2010 to 2011. Mônica has conducted anthropological research in different settings, mostly with Afro-Brazilian people, and recently studied the uses and dependence of alcohol and others drugs among the Pataxó Amerindians of Southern Bahia. In public health, her main subject of research is the analysis of the regional mental health system after the implementation of an alternative psychosocial model in Brazil and the process of social reinsertion of users in this context. She is chair of a multiprofessional residency program for mental health professionals and is now starting on a technical cooperation project in solidarity economy for mental health users.

**Stefania PANDOLFO** is Professor of Anthropology at University of California, Berkeley. Her anthropological works unfolds at the interface of psychoanalysis, critical theory, poetics, Islamic thought, and local and reformed Islamic healing traditions. In recent years her research and writings have addressed new forms of the subject, ethics and aesthetics, at the interface of psychical, political, and religious processes and discourses. Among her publications, *Impasse of the Angels. Scenes from a Moroccan Space of Memory* (The University of Chicago Press, 1997) an experimental ethnography of memory, dreaming and oral poetry in Morocco, and her forthcoming book, *Knot of the Soul* (The University of Chicago Press), on the experience of trauma, madness, and the imagination in the context of psychiatry and contemporary Islamic therapies. Her recent research has focused on political spirituality and practices of the imagination in the reproduction and transmission of medical knowledge and spiritual physiologies in Islamic practice in their confrontation with trauma, violence and social crisis, and in the wider context of the Islamic revival.

**Tiago PIRES MARQUES** is a historian (PhD, European University Institute) and sociologist (Masters degree in Historical Sociology and Economy, New University of Lisbon) working on criminology, psychiatry and religious identities in historical contexts of 20th century Southern Europe and France. He is currently a postdoctoral researcher at Cermes3 (U. Paris Descartes) and the Center of Studies in Religious Studies (Catholic University, Portugal), with a project entitled « Psychiatry, Religion, and Subjectivity » (FCT, Portugal), on the relationships between different normative frames of religious experience and mental illness in France and Portugal. He has published articles and two books (one as editor) on politico-theological normativities, juridical and medical ethics, and religious experience. He also edited and co-authored an issue of the *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* on the work of Michel de Certeau (« Michel de Certeau et l'anthropologie historique de la modernité », vol. 23, 2010). Currently, he works on the edition of a book on the history and sociology of liminal experiences since the 15th century (« Deus, Diabo, Doença. Paixões Religiosas na Europa »). Lisbon: Cavalo de Ferro), to appear in 2012.

**Rahmeth RADJACK** is child and adolescence psychiatrist at the Maison de Solenn, Cochin Hospital (Paris). For the last five years, he has worked with unaccompanied migrant children in collaboration with Marie Rose Moro.

**Richard RECHTMAN** is a psychiatrist and an anthropologist. Director of Studies at the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, Director of the Laboratoire d'Excellence LabEx-TEPSIS and Deputy Director of the Institut de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les enjeux Sociaux (Iris), he is also the Editor in chief of *L'Evolution psychiatrique*. From 1997 to 2010 he directed the Centre Hospitalier Spécialisé de la Verrière (MGEN) and took on the role of Manager of the Department for Adolescent Psychiatry, which he created in 1999. His current research is focused on the anthropology of subjectivity and the anthropology of psychiatry and mental health.

He has conducted field research on the political and psychological consequences of the Cambodian genocide, and the invention of new psychiatric categories such as posttraumatic stress disorder, psychological suffering and adolescent psychopathology. Among his latest publications, we can highlight: "La psychiatrie à l'épreuve de l'altérité". In *Les nouvelles frontières de la société française*, D. Fassin (ed.), Paris: La Découverte, 2010; and "Souffrances psychiques et évolutions de la psychiatrie". *Etvdes, Revue de Culture Contemporaine*, (2011) Février, (4154), pp329-339. He co-authored, with Didier Fassin, the book *The Empire of Trauma. An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

**Maria de Lurdes ROSA** is a historian, PhD in Medieval History by the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales and the New University of Lisbon. Professor at the History department of the Institute of Medieval Studies (New University of Lisbon), of which she was the director until recently, she is also member of the Center of Studies in Religious History (Catholic University, Portugal). Specialized in medieval culture, she has devoted most of her research to the issues of sainthood, hagiographies, the religiosity of the laypersons, devotions and religious practices in the Medieval and Modern Periods in Portugal. Her latest published book is entitled *Santos e demónios no Portugal medieval / Saints and Demons in Medieval Portugal* (Fio da Palavra, 2010.)

**Annika STRAUSS** graduated (Magistra Artium) in Social Anthropology (Main Subject), Political Science (1st Subsidiary) and Economic Policy (2nd Subsidiary) in October 2010. Her final thesis is titled "Homeless Madmen/women – Ethnography of a Rehabilitation Project for Mentally Ill Roadside Destitutes in Western India" and is based on a field research conducted from September 2008 till February 2009 in an NGO near Mumbai/India. Since November 2010 she is doctoral candidate in Social Anthropology at the *Institut für Ethnologie / Westfaelische-Wilhelms- Universitaet Muenster* (doctoral adviser: Prof. Dr. Helene Basu). Her research project "Sex-Gender and Psychiatry in Mumbai" is once more placed in the field of Transcultural Psychiatry. It focuses on the question how the category "sex-gender" moulds biomedical practice in two cosmopolitan (public and private) psychiatric institutions in Mumbai/India.

**Maurice de TORRENTÉ** is an anthropologist. He is now Tutor and Associate Researcher at the Institute of Collective Health, Federal University of Bahia, in Salvador (Brazil). After his graduate training at the Institute of Ethnology at the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland, he received his MSc (Medical Anthropology) at the University of Montréal. His main current research interests are psychiatric reforms, anti-asylum movements, and the interface of social science and mental health intervention.

**Livia VELPRY** is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the Université Paris 8-Saint Denis and is affiliated at the Cermes3 research unit. Her research focuses on mental health and psychiatric practices as well as on the social experience of severe mental illness. She has examined care practices in French community mental health services, exploring the uses of the notion of autonomy among care providers and persons with severe mental illness. Her more recent projects explore how constraint practices are reshaped in contemporary mental health care and involve fieldwork in high-security units. She is the author of "Le Quotidien de la Psychiatrie: Sociologie de la Maladie Mentale" (Armand Colin, 2008).

**Yemi OLOYEDE**, BSc and MSc in Psychology, and MSc in Intercultural Therapy. Yemi is an intercultural psychotherapist and Doctoral Candidate at University College London. She is Chair of the Nafsiyat Intercultural Therapy Centre (London) and lecturer on the UCL/Balm Seminars in Cultural Psychiatry, Chennai, India.

**Andras ZEMPLÉNI** is co-founder of the Dakar school in ethnopsychiatry. He wrote his PhD thesis on traditional interpretations and therapies of mental disorders among the Wolof of Senegal. Trained in ethnology, psychology and linguistics at the University of Paris, his publications in this field focus on therapeutic dimension of possession rituals, traditional concepts of "autism", the socializing properties of projective interpretations of illness, socio-political uses of sickness, the path leading from symptom to sacrifice, the borderline states between persecution and guilt in Ivorian prophetic therapies etc. After a book on divination, medicine and spirit possession among the Mundang of Chad, he published several comparative essays on possession, divination and initiation rituals. Later, he has conducted long term fieldwork among the Nafara of Ivory Coast: he has notably analyzed their visiting husband system, male initiation rite and secret society called *poro*.