

Biography of Franek Kluski (1873-1943)

Franek Kluski was the pseudonym for Teofil Modrzejewski, a Polish journalist and banker who began developing as a somewhat reluctant materialization medium at age 45. He is best remembered for the spirit hand and foot paraffin-wax molds produced through his mediumship under strictly controlled conditions in the laboratory of Dr. Gustave Geley, a French physician and leading psychical researcher. These molds are widely considered the most objective evidence of spirit life on record.

Among many other scientists observing Kluski and attesting to his mediumship were Dr. Charles Richet, a professor of physiology and a Nobel Prize winner in medicine, and Camille Flammarion, a world-renowned astronomer. "All of us who participated in the experiments know full well that there has been no fraud, and that our confidence in the obvious honesty of Mr. Franek Kluski has never been abused," Geley wrote. "We know, too, that our close control did not permit trickery."¹

Born in Warsaw, Kluski is said to have had visions of distant events and to have seen and talked with "phantoms" as a child. However, it was not until the winter of 1918-1919 that his gift of mediumship was recognized. While attending a séance with friends, some phenomena centered around him. Initially, he refused to acknowledge his part in the phenomena, but the friends eventually convinced him to experiment with his mediumistic abilities. In 1920, he was studied on 10 occasions at the International Metapsychic Institute managed by Dr. Geley in Paris. Three of the sittings were considered failures, apparently due to

the "overwrought" state of Kluski, but the other eight sittings produced significant phenomena.

As detailed by Geley, the sittings in his laboratory were behind locked doors and in red light. Kluski was searched and required to empty all of his pockets before being seated in an ordinary chair in front of a dark cabinet, the curtains of which were open, but Geley reported that the cabinet, which is generally used to permit the condensation of ectoplasm, was not necessary. Kluski's hands were held by Geley's assistants on each side of him. Geley pointed out that he was fully aware of the well-known trick of substitution of hands and they were alert to it. Moreover, the red light permitted the experiments to see any movement by Kluski. Kluski would fall easily into a semi-trance condition and was usually conscious of what was taking place, but there were times when his trance would deepen into complete unconsciousness.

Ectoplasm would appear as gaseous, although occasionally as solid. A strong odor of ozone accompanied the development of ectoplasm. "Then in weak light, slightly phosphorescent vapour floats round the medium, especially above his head, like light smoke, and in it there are gleams like foci of condensation," Geley explained. "These lights were usually many, tenuous, and ephemeral, but sometimes they were larger and more lasting, and then gave the impression of being luminous parts of organs otherwise invisible, especially finger-ends or parts of faces. When materialization was complete, fully formed hands and faces could be seen."²

Geley went on to explain that the lights usually floated around the medium, but at times went some distance from him. Flammarion reported: "Lights like stars appeared here and there, moving above the medium to the right and to the left. They shone and moved and vanished in the half-dark. They looked like will-o-the-wisps. Some were more diffuse and spread out to form nebulous discs of various sizes."³

In one of the sittings, Professor Richet was holding Kluski's left hand when Geley observed a white mass emerge from Kluski's side, then take the form of a hand, which touched Richet's arm and startled him. At another sitting, Geley was holding Kluski's left hand while Count Jules Potocki held his right hand. "I saw a hand at the end of an arm form under my own eyes, cross the circle in front of Mr. Kluski and touch Mme. Geley, who was facing me," Geley recorded. "It was a masculine hand very well formed. The wrist was slender, the forearm and upper arm were enveloped in white tissue with regular longitudinal folds. Immediately after the contact felt by Mme. Geley, the hand disappeared."⁴

At their sitting on November 20, some manifestations showing mental intelligence took place. The sitters were asked to sing, and they sang "Marseillaise," at the conclusion of which they heard hand clapping from behind the medium. "We made some experiments to obtain messages by automatic writing – for Kluski is an excellent automatist – but gave this up when we found that it was only to be had at the cost of the materializations," Geley explained. "These latter were weaker or absent if the medium did not concentrate his whole power on them."⁵

Geley observed that the mentality of some of the "entities" was similar to that of Kluski and sometimes to the chief experimenters. And while some researchers theorized that everything came from the medium's subconscious, Geley had doubts, as much of what came through seemed to be an independent will. He reported on dialogue

between Count Potocki and his deceased cousin, Thomas Potocki, stating that it took place as if a real conversation and wondering how Kluski's subconscious could summon up a deceased cousin which he knew nothing about and then carry on a very personal conversation.

Many researchers observed Kluski in his hometown of Warsaw and were reported on in a book by Colonel Norbert Okolowicz. According to Okolowicz, many of the phantoms were identified by participants as persons known to them during their lifetimes. Okolowicz reported: "Over the course of the three periods of séances eighty-four persons who recognized a deceased one, identified a total of eighty-eight persons. In many cases several participants identified the same person. Only the appearance of specific phantoms has been accounted for here and not the total number of times the phantoms made a repeat appearance, which totaled about 260 manifestations – over one quarter of the total number of manifestations ascertained in the course of Modrzejewski's séances from December 1918 to the end of March 1925."⁶

According to Okolowicz, the phantoms would appear as they were known in life, although there were times when they looked much younger. They seldom spoke and most of the communication came by the sitters reciting the alphabet and the spirit entity responding with a knock at the desired letter. At times, however, the phantoms wrote. One of the phantoms penciled, "A child reaching for the moon is closer to the goal than you are." Another one spelled out on a typewriter, "Animal instinct senses truth better than the human."⁷

A number of experiments were devoted to obtaining paraffin wax molds of materialized hands. "The procedure is to set a bowl containing paraffin wax, kept at melting-point by being floated on warm water, near the medium," Geley reported. "The materialized 'entity' is asked to plunge a hand, a foot, or even part of a face into

the paraffin several times. A closely fitting envelope is thus formed, which sets at once in air or by being dipped into another bowl of cold water. The envelope or 'glove' is then freed by dematerialization of the member. Plaster can be poured at leisure into the glove, thus giving a perfect cast of the hand."⁸

In all, they obtained nine molds – seven of hands, one of a foot, and one of a mouth and chin. One of the hand molds was that of a child and was complete to the wrist.

Before their experiment on December 27, Geley and Richet added some blue coloring matter to the paraffin, giving it a bluish tinge. "This was done secretly, to be an absolute proof that the moulds were made on the spot and not brought ready-made into the laboratory by Franek or any other person and passed off on us by legerdemain," Geley explained, pointing out that the operations lasted from one to two minutes.⁹

Geley added that they verified that the lines of the hand did not resemble those of the medium by submitting casts to a distinguished criminologist. Richet noted that the gloves of paraffin wax were those of living hands, showing the texture of the skin, the veins, and the creases of the skin and that a normal human hand could not have released itself from the glove.

F. W. Pawlowski, professor of aeronautical engineering at the University of Michigan, provided a detailed account of his observations of Kluski, confirming the strict controls, while pointing out that when no ladies were present Kluski was entirely naked. Doors were locked and sealed and strips of waxed paper bearing secret marks and signed by those present were passed over the crevices. Secret trap doors were ruled out before the sittings.

Pawlowski observed many apparitions, commenting that "the most impressive and convincing feature of these apparitions when they came toward us were the eyes and the faces with their lifelike expressions. When questions were

addressed to the apparitions the facial expression was always perfectly suited to the answer, while an amiable smile played constantly about their lips."¹⁰

He reported that the most astonishing and interesting part of the phenomena was the absolutely human behavior of the apparitions. "They acted precisely like guests at a party," he wrote. "As they passed around the table they greeted those persons with whom they were acquainted with a smile of recognition, whereas they studied any new faces attentively. The inquisitive look in their eyes is hard to describe. I could see from their efforts to understand our expression, our smiles, our questions and answers, as well as from their actions, that they were particularly anxious to convince us of the fact that they actually existed and that they were not illusions or hallucinations."¹¹

On one occasion, Pawlowski reported, Kluski disappeared from the locked and sealed room, and was later found sound asleep in another room of the apartment. He apparently had been dematerialized and then rematerialized by the spirits.

A very unusual manifestation reported by Geley and confirmed by others, including Pawlowski, was that of specters of animals, including squirrels, dogs, and cats. Most strange in this class was a specter of a creature Geley called "pithecanthropos," a hairy man or ape figure which frightened a number of sitters. According to those present, it smelled like a wet dog.

"It is impossible for anyone to deny or to reject these phenomena, or to explain them by ascribing them to sleight-of-hand performances," Pawlowski concluded. "I realize perfectly that it will be difficult for most people to believe them; that it is hard to conceive of the possibility of the coming into existence, within a few minutes, of living human beings, whose bones can be felt through their flesh, whose heart-beats can be heard and felt. ... I admit that all of these things are beyond our comprehension. We have been

spoiled by the marvels of modern science. We believe only in natural happenings, presented to us in all their beauty; but we do not believe in the secret of Universal Life; in that Divine secret which is so carefully guarded from us. To admit the possibility of these things would revolutionize our entire viewpoint of life and death as well as our entire attitude toward philosophy and science.”¹²

Because the séances appeared to have a detrimental effect on his health, Kluski, withdrew from further experiments sometime in 1925.



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Editor's Note

Some so-called skeptics have claimed that they have the “secret” to the creation of the paraffin molds. First, they claim, the medium, under cover of total darkness, tricks those holding his hands into actually holding each other's hand. Then he plunges his hand into the wax, removes it and — while the wax is still warm and pliable — carefully and tediously loosens the wax from his skin and works the hand out. This, they claim to have done themselves with practice. All such claims conveniently ignore several facts about the molds made in Kluski's presence, including:

1. The researchers were well aware of the hand-switching trick and on guard against it.
2. The mold creations were accomplished in under two minutes, leaving no time for careful extractions.
3. The molds produced were of various sizes and body parts. None were of Kluski's hands.
4. The séances were held in rooms lit by red bulbs, so that Kluski and his actions were visible to the researchers. ◀

¹ Geley, Gustave & DeBrath, Stanley, *Clairvoyance and Materialization: A Record of Experiments*, T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., London, 1927

² _____ 213

³ _____ 215

⁴ _____ 218

⁵ _____ 260

⁶ Imich, Alex, *Incredible Tales of the Paranormal*, Bramble Books, New York, 1995, 144

⁷ _____ 145

⁸ Geley--221

⁹ _____ 223

¹⁰ Greber, Johannes, *Communication with the Spirit World of God*, Johannes Greber Memorial Foundation, Teaneck, N.J., 1979, 224-225 (as quoted from *Zeitschrift fuer Parapsychologiic*, 1926, p. 5-22)

¹¹ _____ 228

¹² _____ 234