Introduction

"How Does That Make You Feel?"

Writing about the Familial Occult as Therapy

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Our process of cowriting this edited volume began in the fall of 2019. The chapters explore the authors' experiences growing up in households where the consanguines practiced ritual magic or witchcraft, something that in this volume we call "the familial occult." The development of this particular edited volume has been remarkably long compared to previous experiences we had, or to experiences that our peers in academia have shared with us. Several authors approached us with a desire to contribute to the volume, then withdrew within the next year. While it is not uncommon for potential authors to withdraw during the process of editing a book, it is important to discuss why this happened for the authors who wanted to write on the theme of the familial occult, and how the topic affected their emotional lives.

Some of the authors were met with resistance from their family members, despite having previously shared their intention of analyzing this aspect of the family's life in an academic context. Others realized the topic was too raw to write about. The authors who did make it into the volume had their own issues, too. Some lost the family members who tied them into the familial occult during the process of writing their chapters. Others found the process to be emotionally overwhelming. And still others, despite being well-published scholars, found it particularly difficult to treat this experience like any other academic article they have produced. Most notably, for almost all the authors in the book, this is the first time they have written about this topic. In a workshop we organized on

The Familial Occult
Explorations at the Margins of Critical Autoethnography
Edited by Alexandra Coțofană
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/CotofanaFamilial

11 December 2020,[1] the vast majority of scholars who lived with the familial occult admitted to feeling overwhelmed by the experience of writing about it for the first time. This is significant, considering there are several senior scholars among our authors, including an emeritus professor.

This introduction explores themes that have emerged from the exchanges had in the making of this volume, as well as the current state of the literature. Furthermore, on matters of methodology, the introduction investigates the ways in which the chapters intersect with scholarship that is broadly understood as critical autoethnography. While our volume does not neatly fit the methods and logics of critical autoethnography, we have found most kinship with authors in this academic subfield. The introduction also includes a tribute to Anne Parsons, daughter of sociologist Talcott Parsons and an anthropologist working at the intersection of psychological anthropology and the occult. We find kinship with Parsons and her sense of out-of-place-ness, and like her, we use academic tools to navigate difficult dynamics in our familial contexts. The tribute to Parsons is not just focused on introducing readers to her work but on analyzing the themes of the book through a psychoanalytical lens, which Parsons has extensively employed in her own work. As such, the subthemes of the introduction discuss writing about the familial occult as therapy, focus on themes of parent-child tensions present in all the book's chapters, and use the chapter vignettes to highlight primary emotions—shame, fear, anger—all experienced by our authors when reflecting on the familial occult as a component of their academic and personal lives.

One theme that emerged during the December 2020 workshop was our shared realization that we had not found our lived experience of being tied into the familial occult present anywhere in the academic literature. Instead, as scholars at different levels of seniority and from various ethnoreligious backgrounds, we found ourselves thinking with the work of scholars who did not grow up tied into the familial occult but chose to pursue apprenticeships in the occult away from home. Workshop participants noticed that there is a certain sequence that repeats itself in published work where authors have conducted ethnographies of the occult: such scholars begin fieldwork, usually in a cultural space away from and different than home, often marked by a colonial relationship (meaning a scholar institutionally based somewhere in the First World will travel to conduct research outside this First World). Sometimes before or during the encoun-

ter with the natives, these scholars develop a curiosity for forms of occult practice (witchcraft, magic, divination, geomancy, foretelling, trances, etc.), and throughout their prolonged period of ethnographic observation, they seek (or encounter) a healer/divinator/witch with whom they spend longer and longer periods, often years, and become an apprentice.[2]

These scholars desire and seek this apprenticeship; the knowledge they gain furthers their understanding, research, and career; and—most importantly—they are able to return to a familial context devoid of the occult. This relationship is fraught with colonial dynamics and often marked by extractivism, in which those who grew up tied into the familial occult are treated as provincial, static (both in terms of their global mobility and in terms of their personal growth), and easy to exoticize. The scholar on the other hand, is painted in this dynamic as worldly, able to acquire knowledge from the most diverse cultural contexts, and mobile, both geographically and in his or her ability to grow. These are the obvious anticolonial critiques that can be brought to this model of doing scholarship, which are certainly worth mentioning but are not new.

Less obvious perhaps is what happens when such scholars switch off the apprentice mode and return to their own familial context. The workshop attendants noted that the narratives told by scholars who write ethnographies of the occult from this perspective focus on the relationship of the apprentice-scholar to the shaman-teacher (often also referred to as an adoptive teacher-parent), but rarely have we found in this literature a reflection on the complexities that the shaman must navigate in being tied into their own familial occult. This is one gap that our volume attempts to fill: as scholars tied into the familial occult, there is no off button to push. The context of the family is always there, as older generations die and new generations take on a role in the practice.

Methodological Notes

This edited volume is a collection of chapters from scholars in the social sciences and humanities who have experiences of the occult (witchcraft, ritual magic, divination, charms, conjuring of spirits, etc.) within their families, which is what we call *the familial occult.* The main question that the volume seeks to address is: How has the presence of the occult in one's family life affected one's epistemo-

logical and ontological worlds, as well as one's identity as a scholar? We are less interested in issues of the occult's "legitimacy," which can divert attention away from the myriad ways the familial occult can shape hierarchy, power, and knowledge in scholarly practice and daily life.

As we began the process of writing the chapters of this edited volume together, we found ourselves at a loss with regards to the scholarship we would be using, especially as this is a book about a perspective that is currently lacking in the literature. The scholars whose work we felt most connected to were critical autoethnographers, whose perspective is best crystalized below:

> Critical autoethnographers contest the possibility of achieving the objectivity and neutrality touted in most social science research, reclaiming perspective (what some might call "bias") in order to identify and challenge oppressive cultural beliefs, norms, and practices. They use the subjective turn in ontology (how we understand/apprehend and experience "reality") and epistemology (how we create knowledge) to argue that it is impossible to stand or act outside of world-building and meaning-making processes. These researchers argue that we have a relational and ethical obligation to acknowledge our positions, views, and commitments in scholarship, claiming the language of "I" and "we" and "us" in their representations. (Adams, Jones, and Ellis 2021: 6)

This makes clear that autoethnography prefers the discomfort of revealed intimacy to the falsehood of objectivity. Assumptions of neutrality and objectivity are rooted in the colonial origins of ethnographic methods and have become increasingly problematic in the social sciences and humanities, as more and more researchers acknowledge the need to think with the researcher's positionality.

The Handbook of Autoethnography (2021), edited by Tony Adams, Stacy Jones, and Carolyn Ellis, elaborates on this perspective in which autoethnography rejects the objective "view from nowhere" and instead adopts a view in which personal experiences and perspectives are always present in social life. While some of the chapters in their book are situated at the intersection of memoir, anthropological narrative, and autoethnographic account, they all present personal and hidden aspects of everyday life with the familial occult that are often messy, traumatic, and challenging. As such, we see the chapters in the book using affect as an analytical tool, and through this, the book manages to explore, critique, and expand the relationship that the social sciences and the humanities have with the topic of the

occult, revealing the concept of the familial occult, which has been, until now, obscured and left out of scholarship.

During our workshop in December 2020 and in subsequent conversations, we have openly discussed matters of ethics and of writing these pieces with respect toward those involved in our storytelling. The work of all the authors who contributed to the manuscript is grounded in the principle of beneficence, with the focus of writing these chapters being not to harm but to heal (Tullis 2021). In all situations where one or several members of the family are or were practitioners of the occult, their role was known in the community, so the chapter did not reveal occulted information. Furthermore, all authors in the manuscript analyze their context of living within the familial occult responsibly and maturely. Where possible, authors have informed family members of their intentions and process. Many of the chapters in the edited volume are written about the relationship of the chapter's author with a parent or grandparent, often dead, which simplifies issues of informed consent. Also, living family members and other participants are not named and, where possible, have been made aware of the nature of the manuscript.

While the book can be considered at the margins of autoethnography, since it does not rely heavily on interviews (Paxton 2018), all the chapters in the book tick the three boxes of autoethnography: the auto, the ethno, and the graphy (Adams, Jones, and Ellis 2021):

- Auto—the chapters usually center the personal experience of the authors, using memory work. The authors employ photos, diaries, meaningful objects, life stories, and interviews to analyze relevant experiences. This is done with the hope of challenging current practices and logics within the social sciences and the humanities with regard to how scholars have positioned themselves in relation to the occult.
- Ethno—an autoethnographic project is meant to describe and even critique cultural beliefs and practices by doing fieldwork and using field notes, interviews, textual analysis, memory work, and archival material. Because the personal experiences of our authors are infused with cultural norms, the analytic rigor of their self-reflection is used to tease out culture from personal experience.
- Graphy—the autoethnographer strives to responsibly represent the experiences and perspectives of those discussed in their project.

A Note on the Occult

We broadly understand the occult as ritual attempts to affect the future by invoking the supernatural, which is usually frowned upon in several religious traditions, where fate is ordained by God and should not be tampered with in such a way (Gottlieb and Graham 2012). As the chapters reflect on diverse contexts and traditions, we use magic/occult/witchcraft/divination interchangeably throughout the introduction and conclusion, while the individual chapters provide context that is specific to each tradition. The book is less about debating the lines between magic, witchcraft, religion, the secular, and their intersections, as this work has been generously covered by anthropologists and religious studies scholars since the early work of E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Bronisław Malinowski (Jones 2017). Instead, we see the main role of the book as an exercise in thinking with the familial occult, and how this affects scholars and their analytical lens. Although we can all attest that writing on the topic has been an uncomfortable and painful academic exercise, we hope to plant a seed for a kind of anthropology of the personal that has the potential to start productive conversations in our fields and beyond.

Witchcraft as a term is powerful, has destructive potential, and has fascinated anthropologists since the early days of the discipline. Most recently, it has been discussed as a force for modernity and globalization (Geschiere 1997; Federici 2008), but rarely is it discussed in the context of the family. We acknowledge Geshiere's ethnographic account (2013), which contained themes reminiscent of those found in the familial occult. In it, the author analyzes stories of witchcraft performed by one close family member on another. Technically, what Geshiere calls here "the dark side of kinship" (1997) is the occult, and it is familial, or consanguine. Unlike what anthropology has traditionally painted as characteristic of the family and the home (see Marshall Sahlins's understanding of the three concentric circles in his 1974 model of primitive exchange), the two are not always a space for trust and stability. Sometimes, familial intimacy sprouts from an obligation to keep secrets that are too big to share. Illustrative of this point is the fact that most of our authors' chapters are the first time they have discussed these aspects of their familial lives, and the weight they have all felt in doing so.

In the twenty-first century, the discourse of linear progress and singular modernity has not entirely gone away. The conceptual legacy of the occult relies on, and heavily reflects, Western categories. From postcolonial studies to critical intersectionality, academia is

constantly faced with its own limitations in being truly critical of its lens. As a long-standing ubiquitous other to academia, the occult needs to be understood and employed as a conceptual tool that implies plurality, especially when thinking about ontology and epistemology. As such, academics do not only need to continue dialogue on important themes like variations in practice, colonial and postcolonial encounters, gender, and race, but they ought also to explore the many ways in which we have come to understand the occult as being, at the same time, integral to and marginalized in society. By employing critical theory and looking at familial history as a place for making and unmaking discourses of the occult, the edited volume invokes personal and family life as a space of knowledge-making.

While much has been written on encountering the occult during fieldwork or becoming an apprentice in an occult practice, little has yet been published in the academic literature about growing up with the occult from a first-person perspective. This is in part because those tied into the familial occult have often been spoken for, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's words (2010), by scholars who lacked this experience and whose translation of their experience often lacked essential details. By contrast, having a book written by scholars tied into the familial occult gives power to those traditionally exoticized by scholarship, and it recognizes the scholar as a humanized figure, who exists not solely in the service of idealized objectivity.

Those with backgrounds in the familial occult often experience a series of conflicting relationships and different ways of interacting with binaries such as the subjective and objective, a powerful conceptual pair that still governs academic thinking. When the familial occult is delegitimized as a frame of reference for knowledge making, such binaries can remain both intact and unquestioned. This is because the literature on the occult is generally written by those living outside of its ontological world, that is, by those who have observed it from some distance rather than by those for whom the occult has always been part of daily domestic life.

In this volume, we intend to follow the path of Spivak (2010) and Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) by investigating the critical value of often excluded experiences of the familial occult. These experiences have the potential to challenge and expand understandings of the world by adding complexity to some of the standard binaries in anthropology, academia, and Western society at large. The occult is still one of the most important unvoiced cultural others of the West, so often spoken about, but rarely listened to. While experiences of gender, race, religion, nationhood, and their many intersections have found their

way into the academic literature, the occult has often only been given a space as it is understood by its academic outsiders. In the scholarship currently available on the topic, scholars have encountered the occult most often during their fieldwork, and it has been analyzed mainly through that angle. The lens offered by someone from another culture who has "become native" is of course very important. Yet, the question remains of what has been lost in the absence of an anthropology, autoethnography, or ethnography of the familial occult. What could we learn, and how could we rethink social science and what it defines as worthy of study, if we explored the stories of those born native, not just those who became native, in their interaction with the occult?

Anthropologists and Their Familial Troubles: Inescapability and the Occult

While we may not find a lot of literature on the familial occult per se, we have found kin in Anne Parsons (1930–1964),[3] who is best described as a clinical anthropologist. A trained ethnographer as well as a trained psychoanalyst, she dedicated her tragically short life to bridging the methods of the two fields. Although her career ended abruptly, we know she was interested in the familial and was curious about the similarities and differences between the ways in which the occult and mental disease are experienced. Her life was dominated by the theme of inescapability, which she often referred to in her work and in letters to family. What little we know of Parsons comes to us via a volume edited by her colleagues after her demise, *Belief, Magic, and Anomie: Essays in Psychological Anthropology* (1969), as well as from the biographical work done by Winifred Breines.

Breines recovers Parson's story by using letters that the scholar sent to her parents and to a few friends, as well as reports and diary pages. In these, Breines is able to show Parsons's personal negotiations with the familial, especially the pressure of living up to her father's academic legacy and the many social pressures of the 1950s. As a white Protestant woman, Parsons was considered deviant, faced backlash, and experienced social isolation because of her status as unmarried, childless, and interested in an academic career. She felt out of place in her professional life as well, as her attempts to combine anthropological fieldwork and psychoanalytical categories drew backlash from her clinician colleagues, and eventually the psychotherapy community, which ultimately led to her demise. Although

not alone in her gendered and generational tragedy—as Sylvia Plath and Ann Sexton, for instance, also committed suicide—Parsons has been far less the subject of academic inquiry.

Brilliant but struggling to find a permanent academic position (in part because of her interdisciplinarity), Parsons spent considerable intervals of her last few years of life as a patient in mental institutions,[4] where she did clinical research on other patients and increasingly critiqued psychiatric methods, explaining her struggle as a misunderstood patient through her clinical training and understanding of the practice. During this time, she also became increasingly critical of the West and its ways of life. Parsons understood the logics of psychiatry to mimic Western society's belief that it could smother and delay human instincts in order to turn them into Protestant work ethic later in life. Put another way, her anthropological sensitivities led her to define the techniques of therapists as cognitive colonialism over the emotional self of patients, instead of the former trying to become familiar with the cultural beliefs and understandings of the latter. Her fieldwork with southern Italians made her acutely aware of the cultural differences between the ways the two societies understand and deal with human emotions, and as a consequence she felt less and less at home in her native American East Coast.

Most interesting to our volume is Parsons' work with south Italian, specifically Neapolitan, families in Italy and Neapolitan immigrants to the US. She frequently drew parallels between them and American Protestants. Specifically, her examinations of Neapolitan schizophrenic women reflect extensively on concepts of culture and personality, as she maps out connections and differences between being women who are the victims of witchcraft and the feelings of persecution experienced by women suffering from paranoid psychotic episodes. Her keen interest in the differences between these two forms of ailment is notable, considering this made her simultaneously someone trained in the methods of psychoanalysis and someone who took the occult seriously, a rare combination in the 1950s.

On the topic of the occult, the author's analysis and her bifocal training are essential. Parsons urges that both psychotic delusions of persecution and beliefs in witchcraft should be taken seriously by the researcher, as important social and cultural dynamics can be teased from both. Furthermore, Parsons insists that the two are not the same, despite Western and disciplinary tendencies to see them as manifestations of empirically unsound, unmodern, and unsecular thinking, and she offers a clinical example to this effect. Parsons observed a schizophrenic patient accuse a neighbor woman of using

witchcraft against her and her family, and in doing this, she reveals how psychosis can disturb the normality of a witchcraft ritual, as it is understood culturally.

While the patient uses terminology and a course of logic intelligible to others in the culture (the accused stared longingly at the patient and her child, then took some of another child's belongings, presumably to use them in a ritual), the clinical anthropologist notices that from a point on, the patient's narrative does not follow the logic of how bewitching and unwitching would happen in a Neapolitan context. Significantly, as the patient initially suspects the neighboring woman of jealousy and witchcraft, she soon begins to speak of a collective, unnamed group of entities who follow her, watch her, hide or steal her things, and even speak to her. While she does follow the symbolic function characteristic of being bewitched by seeking a cure from a fortune teller, Parsons notices she breaks the pattern by diagnosing the issue and naming the culprit herself, a task customarily entrusted to the fortuneteller. Initially, as she follows the fortuneteller's advice, her state becomes stable once more, only to spiral out of control in the following months, when the unprovable presence of the collective evil other drives her to the edge and she dies after setting herself on fire.

Parsons's lens as a clinical anthropologist shows the great importance of being both a good clinician and literate in the culture of the subjects under study. A clinician lacking Parsons's ethnographic experience would not have understood in detail the complex symbolic meaning of witchcraft for the southern Italians and would have reached an impoverished set of conclusions, at best. Also worth a discussion from Parsons's reflections is the fact that witchcraft—its logics, its fairly stable cultural categories, its technicians, and so on—is culturally legible to the people of a place. This points to the fact that Parsons recognizes witchcraft to carry complex symbolic constructs. It is a language in which the people of the community are fluent, whether they share a belief in the occult or not.[5]

"So, Tell Me about Your Parents": Autoethnography as Therapy

As a tribute to Anne Parsons, this next section will analyze themes in the book's chapters through the lens of a clinical anthropologist. First, we will explore connecting themes, then chapter vignettes. Marked by consanguinity, all authors are the children and grandchil-

dren of people working with the occult, and all recount memories, often from early childhood, from that vantage point. As children, many of our authors were mentored into the familial occult by a family member from an early age, without having a full understanding of what that means or what the implications of such a process might be. Almost exclusively, the PhD pursuit is the space where the authors explore the familial occult. As adults, they make use of the distance and the language offered by academia to help make sense of their lived experience.

In almost all the chapters, themes of intimacy and occulting come to the fore, as the home is understood by the child-cum-scholar as a vessel of secrets, closed to the outside world. In more than one instance, the authors report having felt responsible for keeping these secrets into adulthood. As proof, this volume is the first account of these memories and analysis for most of the authors. Several authors experienced grief and loss, writing this into their chapters. At the time of writing, both Feriali and Coțofană lost the parent that most tied them into the familial occult.

Our authors' accounts reveal that there is almost always identification with one parent more than with the other, and often we find familial triads: grandmother-father-daughter in Coțofană's article; mother-sister-son for Jimenez; husband-wife-parents for Kuznetsova and Kuznetsov, and for Sjölander-Lindqvist; and father-uncle-son for Cheung, to name a few.

All authors reflect on the traditions of the practice: for Nyce and Feriali, we notice a primary tradition, while for the other authors, the familial occult mixes traditions, either because of the colonial context (Jimenez, Sjölander-Lindqvist, Khokholova, Kuznetsova and Kuznetsov), or because of some personal reason of the practitioner (Coțofană). Jealousy is another important theme emerging in the dynamics of the familial occult. For Coțofană, the father directs jealousy toward his daughter when his mother denies him access to the familial occult. For Sjölander-Lindqvist, the author experiences jealousy when her father makes gendered decisions about whom he offers the gift of knowledge. Connected to this, both taboo and desire also come up. In some accounts, the desire to be tied into the familial occult is present (as for Nyce, Sjölander-Lindqvist, Cheung, Jimenez), while in other accounts, the familial occult is uncomfortable and taboo (Khokholova, Coțofană, Kuznetsova and Kuznetsov).

The volume opens with Kin Cheung's chapter, "A Chinese American Religious Healer: Toward Filial Ethnography." In his case, the

familial occult is a shared practice between father, son, and uncle. What Cheung calls "filial autoethnography" works as a methodological intervention, revealing the gaps in literature at the nexus of Asian-American communities and religious studies, where scholarship is focused on religious conversion. The chapter is rich in reflections on the intimacy of writing about a parent and on negotiating one's rationalized agnosticism in light of the somatic experience of occult rituals. Later, the teacher-student dynamic flips, as Cheung becomes the teacher, and his father the pupil. The reader will encounter themes of feeling out of place in the familial spiritual practices. One of the strengths of Cheung's autoethnographic reflection is his understanding of how *qi* represents standard practice in the space of emigration but is understood as a backward occult belief in the space of immigration.

Earl Clarence L. Jimenez' chapter, "I Am My Mother's Son: Revelations of the Divine," traces the author's academic work with religious soundscapes and his academic fears of revealing more about the familial occult. While an accomplished academic, Jimenez is also the son of and successor to a female spiritual leader, whose trances and practices were considered heterodox by many Catholic figures in the Philippines. Jimenez and his sisters lead the community after their mother's death. But the group experiences a schism, and the followers are divided between them. The uniqueness of the experiences recounted by Jimenez lies in the fact that all six siblings became involved in the mother's practice, which began with an astonishing spiritual trance that Jimenez describes in vivid detail.

Alexandra Coțofană's contribution, "Of Bibles and Broads: The Familial Occult as Academic Lens," is marked by two deaths in the span of a decade. The road to and from home is fraught with shame and has been for decades, as she explores the forms of social isolation experienced by someone with several generations of consanguines tied into the familial occult. The author's focus is to bring attention to the experience of social scientists living with the occult and to contrast it with the experience of peers who have engaged with the occult while lacking a familial history. Using terminology borrowed from medical practice, Coțofană likens the familial occult to a chronic disease in order to point to its inescapable nature.

Kamal Feriali's beautifully written chapter, "Facing My Genies: A Commute between Self, Familial Spirits, and Anthropology," is a lucid account of the balance one must keep between the secularism often associated with academia and living with the familial occult. The constant back-and-forth between somatic experiences and the

pressure to think rationally as an academic seems insurmountable and leads, as Feriali rightfully points out, to experiencing a great amount of vulnerability. Feriali's chapter is marked by death and, remarkably within the context of the volume, by the fact that both parents experience engagements with the occult.

The chapter by James M. Nyce, titled "On Familial Occultism," focuses on German Mennonite communities in the US. Nyce reflects on the seeming freedom experienced by anthropologists who study the occult without having grown up with it, many of whom he considers flaneurs, and differentiates them from ethnographers tied into the familial occult. Nyce analyzes multigenerational genealogies of the familial occult and reflects on their role in accusations of practicing with the occult made against the anthropologist. The author reflects candidly on belief in the occult: "The question many people want to ask is, does magic really work? The answer I discovered through my web of familial magic is that it does."

Natalya Khokholova's chapter, "The Familial Occult in Yakutia: Changeling Children and Tricking Demons," explores the tensions of living with the familial occult in Yakutia, an area long colonized by Russia in its various political forms. Here, more than in any other chapters in the book, the theme of extractivism is potent with political critique, as the geographical space is used by the colonizing powers for its natural resources, while the people of Yakutia are treated as invisible, backward others. In the particular context of the author's life, communism, Orthodox Christianity, and the occult blend together to form unique ontologies. Khokholova's reflection on how the familial occult has affected her life as an academic are centered precisely around this fact: that divergent elements can constitute a worldview.

From the Western end of the former Russian Empire comes Rita Kuznetsova and Igor Kuznetsov's chapter, "Can Ethnography of the Occult Really Be Transformed into Occult Ethnography? Contextualizing a Local Religious Practice in Abkhazia." Cowritten by a husband and wife, the chapter is bifocal and bivocal and presents the family's involvement with a marginal spiritual practice as well as the complexities of Kuznetsova's early life. Born in a mixed Georgian-Abkhazian family, her parents' love story was lived in broken colonial Russian. Through her lens, Kuznetsova decries the early 1990s, when she grew up observing "the fratricidal war of our Abkhazian and Georgian relatives against each other." Kuznetsova depicts Abkhazia as a complicated space where privacy and suspicion are the social standard, not just between ethnic groups but also between

consanguines. The multilayered ethnic, religious, and linguistic dynamics of Abkhazia may feel dizzying to readers who are used to defining their ethnoreligious selves monochromatically, but they are vital to understanding the inner workings of the familial occult presented in the second half of the chapter.

Lastly, the chapter authored by Annelie Sjölander-Lindqvist and Johan Wedel and titled "'My Father Was a Reader': Practices of Folk Medicine in Northern Sweden" has a unique narrative structure. The chapter is built around an interview, where the first author is interviewed by the second. This structural choice adds a layer of intimacy, as the reader is left with the sense of witnessing a private confession, and at the same time an extra layer of distance, creating a sense of the deliberate building of mediation through the interviewer. In Sjölander-Lindqvist's memories, both parents are tied into the familial occult, the father as a healer, the mother experiencing foreboding. In attempts to learn from her father, the author is rejected on account of her gender.

The manuscript concludes with a reflection from James M. Nyce, dedicated to Jeanne Favret-Saada, an ethnographer of the occult who defends intimate ethnographies of one's own culture.

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Notes

1. Of the workshop attendants, 60 percent remained in the project, the rest withdrew. We have since received other requests from scholars who wanted to tell their stories, most of whom are present in the book.
2. A more comprehensive literature review on this pattern can be found in Coțofană's chapter in this volume and for the sake of brevity will not be repeated here.
3. Parsons committed suicide at the age of thirty-three while a patient in the Yale Psychiatric Institute in New Haven, Connecticut.

4. The political tensions of the 1960s and talks of nuclear war triggered a panic attack for Parsons, leading to a prolonged period of therapy, which she increasingly saw as needless. Her undiplomatic antagonism against the methods of psychotherapy (including her protests and attempts at unionizing patients) only furthered her suffering, her sense of failure, and her captivity (Breines 1986).
5. Also relevant to the volume is the fact that witches tend to represent a negative symbolic complex in the sense that the community often describes them as the moral opposite of the imagined collective self. This is a theme that our authors have encountered time and again and have discussed at length throughout the chapters.

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