

An Excerpt from *Surviving Death*

Polish medium Franek Kluski (1873–1943) was also a Warsaw banker, author, playwright, and poet—intelligent and well-educated. In the interest of science, he willingly subjected himself to study by Richet and physician Gustave Geley (1860–1924), another outstanding investigator from the French Institut Métapsychique International who is well known for his studies of physical mediumship. Alan Gauld wrote that Kluski must have been “the most remarkable medium of his time, probably of any time.”

Kluski’s mediumship was witnessed by over three hundred people, which included the Polish intelligentsia, experts from the Polish Society for Psychological Research, and, in addition to Geley and Richet, Everard Feilding from Eusapia Palladino’s “Fraud Squad.” Most important, Geley and Richet and others working with them brought Kluski to a windowless laboratory at the institute in Paris, where in

1920 they conducted eleven successful séances. The strictest controls were in place—the simple room was inaccessible, except during experimentation, with no possibility of confederacy; a red light was on; and the medium's hands were held by an investigator on either side at all times. While the investigators linked hands, the medium remained completely still and was in a trance throughout the sittings. Under these conditions, fraud was physically impossible. In this context, as well as during many other séances with Kluski, materialized forms with “human” faces were observed.

These forms were similar to the hands in that they were solid and “alive.” In situations without red light, the forms became visible when they picked up radiant luminous plaques that were available in Kluski's séance room; other times they were self-illuminating. In sittings involving additional visitors, the entities were often recognized as friends or relatives of those present—eighty-four people confirmed such recognition. They would touch people and sometimes respond to the unexpressed thoughts of sitters.

F. W. Pawlowski, professor of aeronautical engineering at the University of Michigan, attended several séances with Kluski in 1924. In a published paper he said:

It is impossible for anyone to reject or deny these phenomena, and it is impossible to explain them by clever trickery. I realize perfectly that it is difficult for anyone to accept them. To accept the possibility of creating in a few minutes live and intelligent human beings, whose bones one can feel through their flesh, and whose heartbeat one can hear and feel, is beyond our comprehension.

Pawlowski wrote a chilling description (they were *not* “apparitions” according to today's terminology; they were solid):

The light from the plaque was so good that I could see the pores and down on the skin of their faces and hands. On the nose of an older man-apparition I could see clearly the complicated pat-

tern made by the crooked, tiny red blood vessels; I could examine closely the texture of the material of their clothes. I examined a number of them at such close distance that I could hear their breathing and feel their breath upon my face.

Through ingenious experiments that may provide the most convincing evidence ever for the reality of materialized forms, Geley and Richet created a permanent record of their existence. For the Paris sittings and later in a series of sittings in Warsaw in 1921, the researchers placed a circular tank containing a layer of hot liquid paraffin wax floating above electrically heated water in the center of the séance circle. They then asked the beings to dip their materialized hands into the hot wax, making thin gloves around them. The sitters could hear the sound of something splashing in the wax, and wax would splatter on the floor and onto people nearby. Sometimes a wax-covered hand would touch them after dipping into the hot pot. The forms would then dissolve their hands from the dried wax, dropping the empty gloves in the sitters' laps or onto the table. They were fragile—thinner than a sheet of paper. Geley writes:

We had the great pleasure of *seeing* the hands dipping into the paraffin. They were luminous, bearing points of light at the finger-tips. They passed slowly before our eyes, dipped into the wax, moved in it for a few seconds, came out, still luminous, and deposited the glove against the hand of one of us.

It was not possible for Kluski or anyone else in the room to have produced these seamless gloves. A human hand could not slide out of the narrow wrists because the necessary movement would damage the very thin layer of wax. In the Warsaw experiments, gloves were produced with interlocking fingers, with two hands clasping one another, and with the five fingers spread wide apart. Needless to say, removal of a human hand from such formations would be impossible. Dematerialization was the only method that would leave the molds intact. The investigators also made sure that no wax gloves could have been

smuggled into the room ahead of time. Unknown to anyone else, in one instance Geley and Richet added a bluish coloring agent to the paraffin just prior to the séance; for another experiment they secretly added cholesterin. These additions assured the identity of the specific wax as being from the séance room only.

After the gloves dried, the investigators poured plaster into them, and once this hardened, they submerged them in boiling water and stripped away the thin wax layer. The Paris experiments yielded nine molds—seven of hands, one of a foot and one of a mouth and chin. The hands and foot were the size of a five- to seven-year-old child and had no resemblance to those of the medium. Although miniature, the perfect anatomical details of the hands were those of adults, and not smooth and round like a child. The molds were extensively photographed for publication, and they remain to this day at the Institut Métapsychique International in Paris.

“We were able to obtain objective and formal proofs, absolutely incontrovertible, of the reality of the materializations,” Geley states, and “to secure absolute certainty of the supernormal origin of the moulds.” I find these molds to be so compelling—physical copies of materialized entities whose nature is a profound mystery—that I spent much time staring at the photographs and reading Geley’s descriptions of their formations. If one studies the literature on this, it is impossible to refute the authenticity of the molds. How wondrous is this? Even Geley let his scientific guard down at one point: “In these rough forms the enigma of universal life—the relations of the Idea to Matter—is revealed in the splendour of its beauty,” he wrote.

But does this documentation of full-form materializations tell us anything about survival past death? Zofia Weaver, a contemporary expert who has researched Kluski in his native language, likens his manifestations to those of sophisticated poltergeist cases, simply involving more advanced, refined, and spectacular phenomena. Like the physical phenomena resulting from conjuring up the fictional Philip, the manifestations might have been created by the thoughts, moods, focus, and intention of the sitters—“a group mind at work . . . united by enthusiasm, mutual rapport, lack of inhibition, and a common

goal,” as Weaver describes it. But in addition, they “interact with the world in a very physical way that requires physical energies.” It is impossible to explain or interpret them with any certainty.