

The World's First Clear Presentation: When Hubbard Met Sonya Bianchi at the Shrine Auditorium

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ABSTRACT: On August 10, 1950, L. Ron Hubbard presented to a crowd of 6,000 in Los Angeles' Shrine Auditorium the first "clear" in the history of Dianetics, a college student called Sonya Bianchi. Anti-Scientology literature insists that the event was a fiasco, Bianchi behaved strangely, and the crowd left ridiculing Hubbard. This tale has been passed from one Scientology critic to another. However, it is not supported by contemporary evidence, from which the opposite conclusion may be reached. The event at the Shrine Auditorium was successful, and in the following weeks the sales of Dianetics and the interest in Hubbard's theories continued to grow.

KEYWORDS: Ann Singer, Arthur Jean Cox, Cy Endfield, Dianetics, Fake News, Forrest J. Ackerman, L. Ron Hubbard, Richard de Mille, Scientology, Shrine Auditorium, Sonya Bianchi.

Introduction

The first Dianetic Clear was not Scientology founder, L. Ron Hubbard (1911–1986), but a college student named Sonya Bianchi (b. 1926)—sometimes called Sonia Bianca, Sonja Bianca or Ann Singer—whom he presented to 6,000 people at the Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium on August 10, 1950. Two years later, skeptic Martin Gardner (1914–2010) published a portrayal of the event as one where people interrupted, laughed and left (Gardner 1957, 270–72). Several others would repeat and expand on Gardner's claims, such as George Malko and Russell Miller (Malko 1970, 56; Miller 1987, 163–66 and 378). In turn, both Gardner's and Miller's books were cited by Janet Reitman and Lawrence Wright (Reitman 2011, 31 and 380; Wright 2013, 69–70 and 383). Likewise, Jon Atack cited not only Miller's book (Atack 1990, 114–15 and 399) but also

Christopher Evans' (1931–1979: Evans 1973, 49). Harriet S. Mosatche also cited Evans as her sole source (Mosatche 1983, 134 and 407).

This public failure narrative can be traced to three people: science fiction writer Arthur Jean Cox (1929–2016), film director Cy Endfield (1914–1995), and Hubbard's literary agent Forrest J. Ackerman (1916–2008). Nevertheless, while each story had some truth, when compared against one another, various interview transcripts, the absence of negative press regarding this event, and the Church of Scientology's own transcripts of that night, it becomes obvious that the narrative is a modern myth, and in fact nothing controversial actually occurred.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to “JC Denton” for bringing to my attention this issue, by mentioning the lack of negative press regarding the event, despite oft repeated claims that dozens of reporters and cynics were present. Gratitude goes to Jon Atack for pointing me to the UCLA Special Collections Department, where Simon Elliott provided the letters from A.J. Cox to Martin Gardner and all of Russell Miller's interview transcripts. Many thanks go to Romy Light at Bridge Publications, who provided some additional background and history regarding the Church of Scientology's transcripts. Likewise, Max Hauri of the *True Source Scientology Foundation* provided the 1987 edition of the *Research and Development Series*, and Randy Smith and Kay Christenson provided the 1994 edition. Both also proofread earlier drafts of this analysis along with my lovely wife Olga.

Setting The Stage

As author Martin Gardner was not present at the Shrine Auditorium event, he referenced science-fiction writer Arthur Jean Cox's 1952 letter (Gardner 1957, 272). Miller also cited an “Interview with Cox and letter to Martin Gardner, 30 April 1952” as his primary source (Miller 1987, 378). Indeed, the Shrine Auditorium story originated with Cox's letter to Martin Gardner on April 30, 1952:

It's too bad you weren't here in Los Angeles when Hubbard spoke here at the Shrine Auditorium. What a fiasco! The “clear” he introduced, who was supposed to have “full

and perfect recall for every moment of all her life, including all perceptics,” not only couldn’t recall a single page from one of her textbooks (she was a college student), further not only couldn’t remember a single formula (she was majoring in physics), but couldn’t remember the color of Mr. Hubbard’s tie when her back was turned to him! I think that that one false note, alone, alienated most of the huge audience who had come to see him, some 6000 people. Hundreds started leaving, even before Hubbard finished speaking. The “clear’s” name, incidentally, was Sonya Bianca. Naturally, there was a dianetic explanation for her lapses of memory: When Hubbard called her out from the wings, he said, “Will you come out here now, Sonya?” The “..now..” stuck her in present-time. Later, she performed perfectly in private, I’m told. There were Life reporters present at that session, but nothing about her ever appeared in the magazine.

The audience was extremely vociferous. It was like a meeting of the German-American Bund.

On the stage with Hubbard, there was about a dozen other people (including Mr. [Alfred Elton] van Vogt [1912–2000]). [...] The reason I tell you all of the above is because I’ve seen no published accounts of that speech. The date was August 10, 1950.

Gardner shared this story in his book *In the Name of Science* in 1952, later renamed as *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science* in 1957, which included a rather critical review of Dianetics and first mentioned the Shrine event:

In 1950, speaking to an audience of 6,000 in the Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles, Hubbard introduced a coed named Sonya Bianca as a clear who had attained perfect recall of all “perceptics” (sense perceptions) for every moment of her past. In the demonstration which followed, however, she failed to remember a single formula in physics (the subject in which she was majoring), or the color of Hubbard’s tie when his back was turned. At this point, a large part of the audience got up and left. Hubbard later produced a neat dianetic explanation for the fiasco. He had called her from the wings by saying, “Will you come out here *now*, Sonya?” The “now” got her stuck in present time (Gardner 1957, 270–71).

Next, author George Malko took this story and added a few details not found to be claimed elsewhere, such as purported kinetic abilities. Although he listed no sources, it became obvious that he used Gardner’s story as his only source, as per the verbatim definition of perceptics:

He said he had already submitted proof to several scientists and associations, and expressed total agreement with the notion that the public was entitled to proof. He said he was ready and willing to give it in detail. And then he made what I can only charitably call a tactical blunder.

Speaking to 6,000 people in the Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium, Hubbard introduced a girl named Sonya Bianca and said she was a *clear*, possessing total recall of all *perceptics*

(sense perceptions) for her entire past, as well as kinetic abilities. It was a disaster. Miss Bianca not only could not remember basic formulas in physics, the subject she was supposedly majoring in, but could not give the color of Hubbard's tie when his back was turned, and certainly could not, exercising her kinetic powers, knock off somebody's hat at fifty feet. In a matter of minutes the audience was streaming out of the hall in moods ranging from gagging hilarity to plain disgust. But Hubbard, with a sense which suggested anticipation, explained the whole thing away as having been his fault. He had, he said, called Miss Bianca on stage by saying, "Will you come here *now*, Sonya?" and in doing so, using the "now," trapped her in present time (Malko 1970, 56).

Author Russell Miller would add several dramatic flourishes for maximum effect and to paint Hubbard, Bianchi and the entire event in the worst imaginable light:

[Hubbard] was to attend a rally on Thursday 10 August at the Shrine Auditorium. It promised to be Dianetics' finest hour, for on that evening the identity of the world's first 'clear' was to be announced.

The Shrine was a vast, mosque-like building with white stucco castellated walls and a dome in each corner, unforgettably characterized by the music critic of the *LA Times* as being of the 'neopenal Bagdad' school of architecture. Built in 1925 by the Al Malaikah Temple, it was the largest auditorium in Los Angeles and could seat nearly 6500 people under a swooping ceiling designed to resemble the roof of a tent. When the Hubbard Dianetic Research Foundation booked it for the meeting on 10 August, few people expected more than half the seats to be filled.

Arthur Jean Cox, the young teletype operator who had met Hubbard at the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, left early for the meeting by streetcar and was surprised how crowded it was. 'More and more people got on at every stop,' he said. 'I couldn't believe that *everyone* was going to the meeting but when we arrived at the Shrine on Royal Street, everyone got off. I was absolutely amazed. By the time I got inside there were only a few seats left' [1].

The audience was predominantly young, noisy and good-humoured. Many people carried well-thumbed copies of 'The Book,' in the hope of getting them signed by Hubbard, and there was much speculation about 'the world's first clear' and what he or she would be able to do. Dozens of newspapers and magazines, including *Life*, had sent reporters and photographers to cover the event and those cynics who had predicted a sea of empty seats looked on in astonishment as even the aisles began to fill.

When L. Ron Hubbard walked on to the stage, followed by A. E. van Vogt, whom he had recently recruited, and other directors of the Foundation, there was a spontaneous roar from the audience, followed by applause and cheering that continued for several minutes. Hubbard, totally assured and relaxed, smiled broadly as he looked around the packed auditorium and finally held up his hands for silence.

The meeting opened with Hubbard demonstrating Dianetic techniques. With the help of a pretty blonde, he showed how to induce Dianetic reverie and then he ‘ran a grief incident’ on a girl called Marcia. While the audience obligingly responded when Hubbard spread his arms for applause at the end of each demonstration, it all seemed a little too well rehearsed and there was a murmur of approval when someone stood up in the audience and called out: ‘Ladies and gentlemen, somehow I can’t help but feel that all this has been pre-arranged.’

Immediately people began shouting for Hubbard to demonstrate on someone from the audience and when a young man jumped on to the piano in the orchestra pit, a chant went up: ‘Take *him!* Take *him!*’ Hubbard, not in the least flustered by this turn of events, invited him up on to the stage. The young man introduced himself as an actor whose father had studied with [Sigmund] Freud [1856–1939], which fortuitously gave Hubbard the opportunity of mentioning his own connection with the great analyst, through his old friend [Joseph Cheesman] ‘Snake’ Thompson [1874–1943].

Sitting on facing chairs at the front of the stage, Hubbard made a determined attempt to audit the man, but he proved an unresponsive subject, answering almost every question in the negative. The audience soon became bored and restless and began calling, ‘Throw him out, throw him out!’ Hubbard, perhaps somewhat relieved, shook the man’s hand and he stepped down.

The atmosphere throughout had remained perfectly cordial, even if the shouted comments from the audience were increasingly irreverent. When Hubbard was explaining the multitude of mental and physical benefits arising from successful auditing, someone yelled, ‘Are your cavities filling up?’ and caused a good deal of laughter.

As the highlight of the evening approached, there was a palpable sense of excitement and anticipation in the packed hall. A hush descended on the audience when at last Hubbard stepped up to the microphone to introduce the ‘world’s first clear.’ She was, he said, a young woman by the name of Sonya Bianca, a physics major and pianist from Boston. Among her many newly acquired attributes, he claimed she had ‘full and perfect recall of every moment of her life,’ which she would be happy to demonstrate. He turned slowly to the wings on one side of the stage and said: ‘Will you come out now please, Sonya?’

The audience erupted once more in applause as a thin, obviously nervous, girl stepped out of the wings and into a spotlight which followed her to centre stage, where she was embraced by Hubbard. In a tremulous voice she told the meeting that Dianetics had cleared up her sinus trouble and cured her ‘strange and embarrassing’ allergy to paint. ‘For days after I came in contact with paint I had a painful itching in my eyebrows,’ she stammered. ‘Now both conditions have cleared up and I feel like a million dollars.’ She answered a few routine questions from Hubbard, who then made the mistake of inviting questions from the audience: they had clearly been expecting rather more spectacular revelations.

‘What did you have for breakfast on October 3 1942?’ somebody yelled. Miss Bianca understandably looked somewhat startled, blinked in the lights and shook her head. ‘What’s on page 122 of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*?’ someone else asked. Miss Bianca opened her mouth but no words came out. Similar questions came thick and fast, amid much derisive laughter. Many in the audience took pity on the wretched girl and tried to put easier questions, but she was so terrified that she could not even remember simple formulae in physics, her own subject.

As people began getting up and walking out of the auditorium, one man noticed that Hubbard had momentarily turned his back on the girl and shouted, ‘OK, what colour necktie is Mr Hubbard wearing?’ The world’s first ‘clear’ screwed up her face in a frantic effort to remember, stared into the hostile blackness of the auditorium, then hung her head in misery. It was an awful moment.

Hubbard, sweat glistening in beads on his forehead, stepped forward and brought the demonstration swiftly to an end. Quick-witted as always, he proffered an explanation for Miss Bianca’s impressive lapses of memory. The problem, Dianetically speaking, was that when he called her forward, asking her to come out ‘now,’ the ‘now’ had frozen her in ‘present time’ and blocked her total recall. It was not particularly convincing, but it was the best he could do in the circumstances.

Forrie Ackerman, who was at the Shrine that night to see his client perform, summed up the feelings of many people who were there: ‘I was somewhat disappointed not to see a vibrant woman in command of herself and situation. She certainly was not my idea of a “clear”’ [2] (Miller 1987, 163–66).

Miller listed two primary sources for his version: “[1] Interview with Cox and letter to Martin Gardner, 30 April 1952” and “[2] Interview with Ackerman” (Miller 1987, 378). Likewise, Jon Atack’s book *A Piece of Blue Sky* told a similar tale:

The first signs came in August 1950, when Hubbard exhibited a “Clear” at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. Despite claims of “perfect recall,” and the fact that she was majoring in physics, the “Clear” was unable to remember a simple physics formula. When Hubbard turned his back, she could not remember the color of his tie.

The Shrine Auditorium lecture has been published by the Scientologists as part of Hubbard’s immense collected works. The girl is renamed “Ann Singer” in the Scientologists’ version. The transcript has been edited, but the question about the tie remains, as does one about physics, with a vague answer. A Scientology account says Hubbard “spoke to a jammed house of over 6,000 enthusiastic people.” According to author Martin Gardner, when Ann Singer could not remember the color of Hubbard’s tie, “a large part of the audience got up and left.” The incident had a marked effect on Hubbard’s credibility, and he became cagey about declaring more Clears, avoiding public demonstrations of their supposed abilities from then on (Atack 1990, 114–15).

Atack referenced not only Gardner's book but also Christopher Evans' as sources (Atack 1990, 399). The difference in Evans' version, however, was that he also mentioned Cy Endfield, whose account published twenty years after Cox's:

The well-known film director, Cy Endfield—*Zulu*, *Hide and Seek* and, more recently, *de Sade* are some of his best known films—was at that time working in California. Like many others in the movie business, he had been intrigued by the impact Dianetics was making in Hollywood, and was sufficiently curious to attend one or two meetings in Los Angeles where the well-known science fiction writer, A.E. van Vogt, lectured warmly on the topic. Endfield found it all a bit unconvincing, but when it was announced that shortly the founder himself would be lecturing and *presenting the world's first Clear* to a public meeting, he decided that this was too good an opportunity to miss.

The venue was the famous Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, a huge hall capable of accommodating six thousand. This was packed to capacity, for good—or at least interesting—news travels fast. Endfield recalls that a stir of excitement ran through the audience when Hubbard, after speaking at some length on various matters, called out on to the stage a pretty college student named Sonia Bianca, whom he introduced to the audience as the world's first Clear. Miss Bianca, who seemed somewhat overcome by it all, answered a few routine questions from Hubbard without revealing any spectacular powers, and it is possible that Hubbard thought that no more formal demonstration than this was necessary. But it was not to be, for Mr. Endfield, remembering that Clears were currently supposed to have perfect recall of all sense perceptions and knowing Miss Bianca was a major in physics, decided to ask her some simple questions in her own topic. Amazingly, she seemed unable to remember even rudimentary formulae, such as Boyle's Law, and fell down completely when asked to give the colour of Hubbard's tie when his back was turned. It was an awful moment. There was improper laughter and sections of the audience got up and left (Evans 1973, 49).

Harriet S. Mosatche, the only scholar to describe the event, used Evans' book as her sole citation (Mosatche 1983, 407):

One of Hubbard's earliest difficulties with promoting Dianetics to the public occurred when he permitted the observation of Sonia Bianca, a college student majoring in physics, whom he considered to have attained the state of clear. Cy Endfield, a film director, was present at the demonstration and asked Bianca some simple formulas, but she was unable to pass even these simple memory tests (Mosatche 1983, 134).

Miller directly lifted the quote "It was an awful moment" from Evans while citing his book as a source for something else. Likewise, Lawrence Wright had lifted most of Miller's claims as it was his sole source, including details such as the audience asking about what Sonya had for breakfast years prior and a specific

page number of *Dianetics* (Miller 1987, 166; Evans 1973, 49; Wright 2013, 383). Wright also mimicked Gardner's earlier use of "fiasco"—itself taken directly from Cox—whose work he cited elsewhere (Gardner 1957, 270):

In August 1950, Hubbard presented the "World's First Clear" at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. Sonia Bianca, a very nervous physics student from Boston, was brought to the stage. Hubbard claimed that through Dianetics, Bianca had attained "full and perfect recall of every moment of her life." The audience began peppering her with questions, such as what she had had for breakfast eight years before, or what was on page 122 of Hubbard's book, or even elemental formulas in physics, her area of specialty. She was incapable of responding when someone asked the color of Hubbard's necktie, when he briefly had his back turned to her. It was a very public fiasco (Wright 2013, 69–70).

Janet Reitman also provided two new witnesses: "Just out of college, [Richard] De Mille [1922-2009] was present at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles on 10 August, 1950, the night of the Clear disaster. He'd brought his girlfriend, who'd dismissed Hubbard as a fraud; De Mille, though, was unswayed" (Reitman 2011, 31). Reitman listed only two secondary sources: "The account of the Shrine Auditorium event draws from Gardner's *Fads and Fallacies* and from Russell Miller's *Barefaced [sic] Messiah*" (Reitman 2011, 380). As one can observe, her two sources have appeared in virtually all retellings of this event.

Per these accounts, it appears that Hubbard was publicly humiliated and exposed. Yet despite repeated versions of this event, the available evidence showed a very different account.

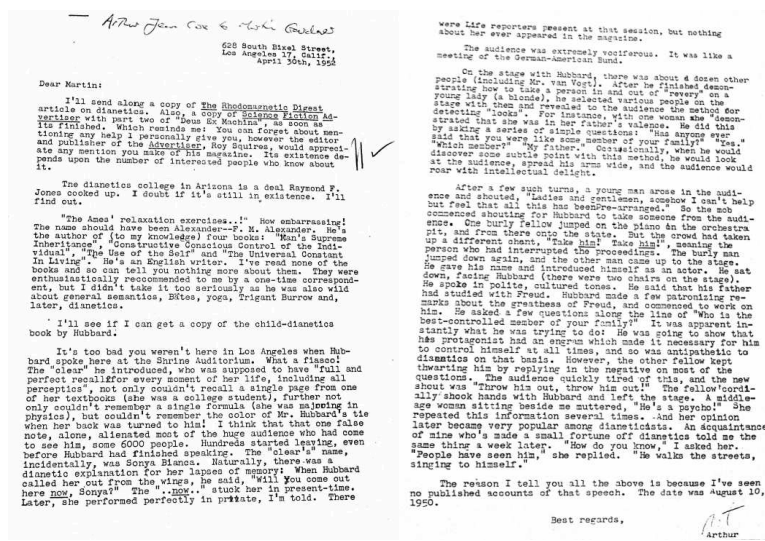


Figure 1. Arthur Jean Cox's letter to Martin Gardner on 30 August 1952.

An Auditor, an Author and an Oddity Walk into an Auditorium ...

The clear demonstration definitely occurred at the Shrine Auditorium. An advertisement even showed that Hubbard would lecture at the Shrine Auditorium at 8 PM on 10 August 1950.

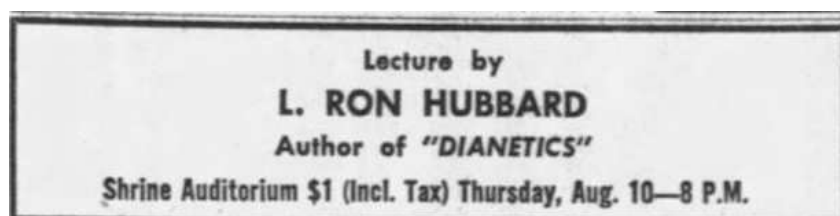


Figure 2. Ad for Dianetics Event at Shrine Auditorium on 10 August 1950.

The Church of Scientology confirmed the event in a recent press release:

L. Ron Hubbard himself lectured to an audience of six thousand at the Shrine Auditorium on August 10, 1950, shortly after releasing *Dianetics* on May 9th, 1950. Since its release, *Dianetics* (<http://www.dianetics.org>) has appeared on over 600 bestseller lists, including 100 weeks on the *New York Times*' list (Polo and Ricketts 2011).

Sonya Adelaide Bianchi was a graduate student with a B.S. in physics who worked as a Teaching Assistant at Wellesley College from 1949–50 (Wellesley College 1949, 15). She had graduated from Bates College the prior year (Bates College 2018). Scientology critic Tony Ortega even tracked her down through her son, Chris Hulswit, who confirmed this:

“That’s her. That’s my mom,” he said. “I know there was an event. It was never really explained to me. But I think that’s what prompted my dad to go out and get her. She had graduated from Bates with a BS in chemistry [sic: physics] [...] She was that woman, but she doesn’t have any real solid recollections of it. I got the distinct impression that she didn’t want to talk about it” (Ortega 2018).

Indeed, she had married Frank T. Hulswit (1924–2018: Burns 2010, 33). Bianchi also briefly mentioned Hulswit in the lecture transcript:

Who gets the credit for this clearing effort?

Sonia: Well, Mr. Frank Hulswit (L. Ron Hubbard Library 1994, 35).

This confirmed that she was the same person in the lecture and the two were dating at the time as well. Her statement passed on vicariously through her son, however, yielded little insight regarding that event's outcome either way.

Stick To The Script

There were also two versions of the transcripts which the Church of Scientology published; the first version appeared in 1987 and the other in 1994. The first used the pseudonym “Ann Singer” for reasons unstated, presumably to protect her privacy or more likely because Bianchi was no longer a Dianeticist or Scientologist at publication. Atack noted that the 1987 transcript was edited, although how he knew this was unclear. The church's position is that the later edition is more accurate. Indeed, the 1994 edition referenced Frank Hulswit well before Ortega researched him, it presented the questions that others referenced about Hubbard's teeth, tie color and a specific *Dianetics* page. Furthermore, it unfolded in the same sequence that Cox described. Aside from Atack's observation about the 1987 edition edits, other critics have not disputed the authenticity of these transcripts.

It is worth noting, however, that the 1987 edition stated that “the author gratefully acknowledges the editorial assistance of” John Lichtensteiger and Rosemary Delderfield Goding, among several others (L. Ron Hubbard Library 1987, vi). Both had compiled and edited the *Organizational Executive Course* books from 1970 to 1974, which included several Hubbard Communication Office (HCO) Information Letters of questionable authenticity, with the typist initials “rd” for Rosemary Delderfield (Hubbard 1974a, 169–71; Hubbard 1974b, 193–94; Hubbard, 1974c, 172) and sometimes “jl” for John Lichtensteiger on the same document (Hubbard 1974d, 196–99). Given Hubbard's location at the time of their alleged 1961 publications—in fact, they did not appear in print before 1974—it appeared that someone else wrote them (Camacho 2018, 52–3; Camacho 2019, 147–48). Although suspected authorship was initially attributed to Peter Greene (1929–1991), that these same two were involved with the obviously edited 1987 transcript suggests that they may have also altered the HCO Information Letters.

Thus, in defense of Atack, the only transcript released before his book was the 1987 edition which referred to Sonya Bianchi as “Ann Singer” (L. Ron Hubbard

Library 1987, 20–4). Regarding the key points in question, however, they remained virtually the same in both versions:

All right, what do you normally study?

Physics.

All right, shut your eyes. (Of course this type of examination actually means very little). Read me something out of the physics textbook—something complicated.

Very complicated?

Yes, very complicated. Just look at the physics textbook and read it.

Which one?

Which one do you want to read?

Well, let's look at Electromagnetic Theory.

Electromagnetic Theory, now that's a nice book for a young lady to have been studying.

It's by Hugh Skilling [1905–1990].

Okay, and let's go over to the middle of the book and read something complicated out of it.

All right.

How about [Isaac] Newton's [1642–1727] formula of gravity?

In vector notation?

Yes, in vector notation.

All right, yes, there's a vector notation in the book I'm using. It is written in darker ink. It is equal to M , which is not in dark ink, times Λ , which is also in the dark ink.

Can you see the page number in it?

This is my mechanics book.

Okay. Actually, we could probably do a lot of that sort of thing. Your eyes are closed there, what color suit do I have on?

A sort of grayish blue.

And what's the color of my tie?

I'm afraid I didn't look at it (L. Ron Hubbard Library 1987, 22–4).

The 1994 edition replaced “Ann Singer” with Sonia (instead of Sonya) and filled in several gaps, which made for a smoother, fuller read. When asked about the differences between these versions, Romy Light at Bridge Publications stated that, although she did not know why the 1987 version differed, the 1994 version

should be used as the official version as it was the latest one. She also mentioned that it was quite likely that either no audio copy of the lecture existed, or if it did exist it was of such poor quality, due to being so early in Scientology history, that it still needed restoration, or that the latest transcript was possibly compiled from all available handwritten notes by the transcribers in the audience (Romy Light, phone call with author, 25 February 2019). Romy also mentioned a note in the Scientology materials chart:

Complete chronological listing of the LRH lecture library: The lectures shown on this chronology are available in written form in the Research & Discovery volumes or as a special audio release.

An arrow leads from 1948 to 1950, which then shows the lecture “Public and Professional Course Lectures Los Angeles, California August-September 1950” (CSI 2010).

Nevertheless, the disputed points did not change in the updated, corrected version:

[To Sonia] What do you normally study?

Sonia: Physics.

All right, shut your eyes. (Of course, this type of examination actually means very little).

Read me something out of the physics textbook—something complicated.

Sonia: Very complicated?

Yeah, very complicated. Just look at the physics textbook and read it.

Sonia: Which one?

Well, which one do you want to read?

Sonia: Well, let's look at Electromagnetic Theory.

Electromagnetic Theory. Now that's a nice book for a young lady to have been studying.

Male voice: Author.

Second male voice: By whom?

Sonia: Hugh Skillings. [sic: Skilling]

Okay, and let's read something complicated out of it.

Sonia: Well, when you open it up there's the Chapter One.

Chapter One, well there usually is. Well let's go over to the middle of the book and read something.

Sonia: All right.

Male voice: "Thirty-six."

Sonia: I'm sorry, I can't do that because I'm not conscious of page numbers when I read.

Open it up to the middle someplace, the moment you're reading it. Now, what are you reading? (*pause*) Anywhere in the middle of the book.

How about Newton's formula of gravity, something that these people know.

Sonia: In vector notations?

Yes, in vector notations.

Sonia: All right, yup, there's a vector notation in the book I'm using. It is written in darker ink—is equal to M , which is M which is not in dark ink, times A , which is also in the dark ink.

Do you see the page number in it?

Sonia: This is my mechanics book.

Oh, this is a mechanics book?

Sonia: Yes.

Okay, actually, we could probably do a lot of that sort of thing. Your eyes are closed there, what color suit do I have on?

Sonia: It's sort of grayish blue.

Okay, and what's the color of my tie?

Sonia: I'm afraid I didn't look at it.

[...]

Male voice: Recite a page from Dianetics.

Sonia: I read the book only once and was—afraid it was quite a while ago.

All right.

Sonia: I'm afraid I couldn't do it.

Afraid you couldn't do it? Okay, let this young lady get tested tomorrow. We're not going to use her up tonight. Okay.

Thank you very much Miss Bianca. And thank you very good people for coming here tonight (L. Ron Hubbard Library 1994, 37–9).

No News Is Good News

Despite the claim that “Dozens of newspapers and magazines, including *Life*, had sent reporters and photographers to cover the event,” *Life* published nothing about it (Miller 1987, 164). Cox had even mentioned this omission in his letter to Gardner: “There were Life reporters present at that session, but nothing about her ever appeared in the magazine.” Given that several reporters were purportedly present, that none criticized the event does not match these accounts given that Hubbard’s book was on top of the *New York Times*’ bestseller list and in the public eye.

Indeed, negative reviews about *Dianetics* followed soon after, including one in *The New Republic* on 14 August (Gumpert 1950, 20–1) and another on 3 September in the *New York Herald Tribune Book Review* (Fromm 1950, 7), but none mentioned the Shrine Auditorium event. In fact, a news article published three weeks later also gave a snide review of Hubbard and *Dianetics*, but even this had noted that Hubbard had packed the auditorium and would continue to do so:

Hubbard rushed from New Jersey to Los Angeles, much as Dale Carnegie [1888–1955] had done at an earlier date, to supplement his written message by word-of-mouth exposition.

It is no trick at all for Hubbard to fill the Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium, at a dollar a head, to its 6,400 capacity and turn other thousands away. Undoubtedly, when the summer season of music under the stars is over, he will be found filling the 25,000-seat Hollywood Bowl (Foote 1950, 35).

That even a cynical reporter stated that there would be more sell-outs did not indicate any public fiasco. Likewise, a series of articles with a purportedly objective view about *Dianetics* and Hubbard ran from September 6–9 in the *Los Angeles Daily News*. These also never mentioned the Shrine Auditorium event (Clarke 1950a; Clarke 1950b; Clarke 1950c; and Clarke 1950d).

Thus, Cox believed that nothing published about the event, or at least nothing negative. This fueled his motivation to write Gardner: “The reason I tell you all of the above is because I’ve seen no published accounts of that speech.” Unbeknownst to him, however, *PARADE* published an article two months later with a favorable report from that night:

Other reports are even more impressive. Sonya Bianchi, a favorite student of founder Hubbard, and a winsome graduate student at Wellesley College, made this report to

6,000 dianetics enthusiasts in Los Angeles: “I had violent sinus trouble. I also had a strange and embarrassing allergy to fresh paint for days after I came in contact with it. I had a painful itching in my eyebrows. Both conditions have cleared up, and I feel like a million dollars.” End of Bianchi’s report (Sprague and Wild 1950, 6–7).

Russell Miller took her words and spun them to fit Cox’s narrative:

In a tremulous voice she told the meeting that Dianetics had cleared up her sinus trouble and cured her ‘strange and embarrassing’ allergy to paint. ‘For days after I came in contact with paint I had a painful itching in my eyebrows,’ she stammered. ‘Now both conditions have cleared up and I feel like a million dollars’ (Miller 1987, 165).

The problem with his version was that it was entirely fictional; Miller plagiarized a *written* report to the newspaper magazine, the only publication to issue her statement. Indeed, it does not appear in the transcript published by the Church of Scientology in 1987, when his book was published, nor in the 1994 edition—which came out later. When asked about whether he had heard the audio or obtained this information some other way, Miller stated that he could not recall, as it was over 30 years ago and he had given all of his records to Jon Atack (Miller, email to author, 29 April 2019). Atack in turn stated that the UCLA Special Collections Department would have his work as “all of my collection is copied there” (Atack, email to author, 26 April 2019). Yet no such statement, record or mention appeared in that collection. The closest statement to appear on either transcript was when Hubbard asked Sonya if she used to have psychosomatic conditions, to which she replied “Yes, I had hay fever, several types of allergies plus chronic sinusitis” (L. Ron Hubbard Library 1994, 35). Evidently, Miller based his version of that night on both Cox’s and Ackerman’s interviews and added supposed nervousness and stammering to Bianchi’s written report. In fact, the transcripts showed the opposite:

Now did you use to have any psychosomatic illnesses?

Sonia: Yes, I had hay fever, several types of allergies plus chronic sinusitis.

Yes, and were you happy or normally...

Sonia: Well, I was considered a rather moody person.

Moody?

Sonia: Mm-hm.

Were you ever nervous?

Sonia: Oh, very.

And by the way, was this a record of psychometry which was available?

Sonia: Yes, at the university.

All right. And how do you feel now?

Sonia: Fine.

Fine.

Sonia: Certainly (L. Ron Hubbard Library 1994, 35).

Considering that this was a very recent, well-publicized, local, relevant event apparently covered by multiple reporters, the absence of negative mentions in any publications until Cox's letter seems unusual. Given the general negative reception of *Dianetics* from news outlets, the event that Cox described should have provided ample material for criticism and ridicule for any reporter, yet neutral or positive depictions appeared for some time until his 1952 letter.

Furthermore, if the event were witnessed by 6,000 people and was the rowdy catastrophe that Cox and Endfield described, then surely word would have spread and hurt book sales. After all, "good—or at least interesting—news travels fast" (Evans 1973, 49). Instead, *Dianetics* remained in the top spot for four more weeks with only a slight dip for two weeks and then returned to the top spot, remaining in the top ten books for months afterwards according to the *Los Angeles Times* (Meepthorp 2017). In short, what known available data that was found did not match either of their claims.

A Brief Inter-Omission

Another problem that these stories have are their unreliable source notes. For example, Reitman's claim that de Mille and his girlfriend witnessed the event contradicted her notes: "The account of the Shrine Auditorium event draws from Gardner's *Fads and Fallacies* and from Russell Miller's *Barefaced* [sic] *Messiah*" (Reitman 2011, 380). Gardner's book never mentioned de Mille or his girlfriend, and Miller's book made no reference to either at Shrine (Miller 1987, 182). Although contacted repeatedly about the sources for her claims, Reitman did not respond. Her uncited source, however, was a 1986 interview transcript between Miller and de Mille:

I first saw him in t Shrine Auditorium giving lecture in 50. Remember someone yelling “Are your cavities filling up?” Hubbard hd v bad teeth, he ws always hving trouble with dentists, fit in w engram thing they were always giving him laughing gas.

First impression. My girlfriend (now wife) ws I don’t want anything to do with this rube, this slob. I thought this is t great man who made this grt discovery and whatever his shortcomings may be hey must be discpouted because he has t answer. He ws fluent, informal, his tricks worked on t people they worked on. Packed mtg. Its enormous bldg (de Mille 1986, 4).

De Mille was correct as an audience member had asked a similar question:

Male voice: A personal question in the balcony.

[Hubbard:] Okay!

Male voice: I have read a little sheet of paper and I can’t—you’ve had some teeth trouble and that the cavities have begun to heal themselves. Is there any degree of truth in that?

Announcer: The question is “Are the holes in Mr. Hubbard’s teeth filling in?” (L. Ron Hubbard Library 1994, 10).

The rest of the interview did not support Reitman’s claims whatsoever. Richard de Mille’s girlfriend and eventual wife Margaret Belgrano van Fossen (1925–2014) may have disliked Hubbard’s appearance, but nothing suggested that she thought he was a fraud or that the event was a failure. Reitman’s claim that de Mille “was unswayed” actually countered “the Clear disaster” narrative, as de Mille had stated, “his tricks worked on the people they worked on,” which suggested that Hubbard’s “tricks” worked as intended and there were no issues at Shrine.

It also was apparent that Endfield and every author who referenced “the color of Hubbard’s tie when his back was turned” got this from Gardner’s book (or one another’s) and not any primary sources (Gardner 1957, 271). The giveaway was that Cox had actually stated in his letter to Gardner that Bianchi “couldn’t remember the color of Mr. Hubbard’s tie when *her* back was turned to him!” When Gardner transposed the order, however, this error carried forth and repeated despite being contradicted by Cox’s own account. This further demonstrated a complete lack of investigation as well as prior incorrect claims working their way into future ones, such as with this one which Endfield obviously made up. If this were not enough, what further discounted their claims was the fact that in both transcripts her eyes were closed:

Your eyes are closed there, what color suit do I have on?

Sonia: It's sort of grayish blue.

Okay, and what's the color of my tie?

Sonia: I'm afraid I didn't look at it (L. Ron Hubbard Library 1994, 38).

Another example of omitted information appeared in the 18 August 1986 transcript notes of Miller's interview with Cox. According to him, A. E. van Vogt made the claim, not Hubbard:

Climax of t mtg ws t clear called her on t stage. Supposedly she hd total recall—a phrase tt ws much used at t time—She cld supposedly recall any page of any text book she ws studying physics. She cldnt remember a thing. Van Vogt explained tt she ws asked “Sonja will you come out here nw” and the “now” froze her in present time (Cox 1986, 1).

Cox's statement that “van Vogt explained” and not Hubbard did not make it into Miller's book. In Miller's interview transcript with van Vogt, neither man brought up the Shrine Auditorium event, so there is no confirmation either way. However, Cox's letter to Gardner underscored that van Vogt was on stage, a detail that all other witnesses not only omitted, but also one that Cox let slip, which countered his entire story.

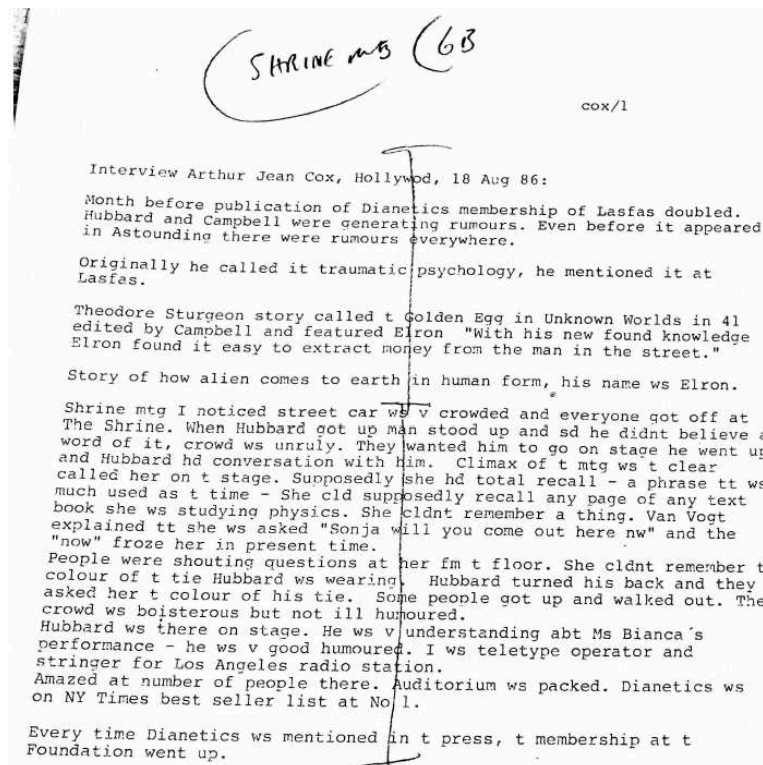


Figure 3. 18 August 1986 Arthur Jean Cox interview transcript by Russell Miller.

An Evening to Misremember

Cox made another claim in his letter to Gardner, which Miller repeated as a fact:

After a few such turns, a young man arose in the audience and shouted, “Ladies and gentlemen, somehow I can’t help but feel that all this has been pre-arranged.” So the mob commenced shouting for Hubbard to take someone from the audience. One burly fellow jumped on the piano in the orchestra pit, and from there onto the state [sic]. But the crowd had taken up a different chant, “Take him! Take him!” meaning the person who had interrupted the proceedings. He gave his name and introduced himself as an actor. He sat down, facing Hubbard (there were two chairs on the stage). He spoke in polite, cultured tones. He said that his father had studied with Freud. Hubbard made a few patronizing remarks about the greatness of Freud, and commenced to work on him. He asked a few questions along the line of “Who is the best-controlled member of your family?” It was apparent instantly what he was trying to do: He was going to show that his protagonist had an engram which made it necessary for him to control himself at all times, and so was antipathetic to dianetics on that basis. However, the other fellow kept thwarting him by replying in the negative on most of the questions. The audience quickly tired of this, and the new shout was “Throw him out, throw him out!” The fellow cordially shook hands with Hubbard and left the stage (Cox letter to Gardner 30 April 1952).

When compared against the transcripts, a very different course of events unfolded. In fact, Hubbard segued from a prior demonstration to explain his intentions in dealing with the man. The dialogue does not suggest any sort of interruption or failure:

“You’re just like your mother.” This has a tendency to shift valence. And the person will stay in the shifted valence because there might have been other people around and mother also said to them “You’re just like your mother.” It may be in the engram bank somewhere. This is a valence shifter.

Another type of valence shifter is “I have to pretend I am somebody else; I can’t be myself around you.” Now, that valence shifter puts a person, you might say, in another valence. That is to say, he is not himself, he thinks of himself as his father, that he is his father. A complete identification with another human being.

By straight line memory we can sometimes *part* the identification so that a person comes off from being just like Father and is himself, and at that moment will attain a greater perceptic range. In other words, he’ll be able to hear, see, feel better as he returns on the track to old incidents.

Some people have sonic—that is to say, he can hear things which are said to him. Some people cannot, and the valence is one of the reasons why people can't. Now, we are trying to discover what valence people are in. You follow me? Okay.

LRH: [to pc (pre-clear)] Tell me your name, sir.

PC: *Harry Wasserman.*

LRH: Harry Wasserman. Very pleased to meet you.

PC: *How do you do, Mr. Hubbard.*

LRH: I was demonstrating here and would like to demonstrate just this straight line memory. It is important as a diagnostic technique. We're trying to discover somebody's dramatization—somebody in the family's dramatization on the theory that that dramatization will appear in an engram. Once you know the words in the dramatization it is, of course, very easy to find the engram. So in straight memory we force the person, as best we can, by various questions to recover memory of one of these dramatizations.

[to pc] For instance, did your father used to get angry?

PC: *Very.*

LRH: He used to get very angry?

PC: *Very.*

LRH: What'd he used to say?

PC: *He's told my mother to hold her mouth!*

LRH: Yeah, "Hold your mouth."

PC: *Yeah, in German.*

LRH: In German.

PC: *Yeah.*

LRH: How'd he say it?

PC: *Halt den mund!*

LRH: Halt den mund.

PC: *Yes.*

LRH: My German is not so good.

PC: *(laughs)*

LRH: [to audience] That's nothing. I was running a case the other day in Chinese!

That's a very brilliant boy, by the way, who is in charge of Honolulu now, he's making things hum out there.

[to pc] Now tell me, did he ever punish you very much?

PC: *Oh, extensively.*

LRH: What did he say to you when he punished you?

PC: *“Dummkopf!”*

LRH: Mm-hm, “dummkopf.” Did he ever tell you to control yourself?

PC: *No. He figured that the punishment would do the job.*

LRH: Uh-huh. Whoever said you were like your father?

PC: *My wife.*

LRH: Your wife said you were like your father?

PC: *Yes.*

LRH: Have you been happy about this?

PC: *No.*

LRH: Now, let’s remember a specific moment.

PC: *Right.*

LRH: Can you remember a moment when she said this? Not reverie, just remember it straight. Remember a moment when she said, “You’re just like your father.”

PC: *I was very angry.*

LRH: Uh-huh. Do you remember when she said it?

PC: *Yes.*

LRH: Where was she standing?

PC: *She was standing next to me in the kitchen.*

LRH: Uh-huh, and what did she say?

PC: *She said, “You’re just like your father!” Like this.*

LRH: Uh-huh. How do you feel when you contact that?

PC: *Well, I-I sort of get a mingled emotion, I sort of feel strange, a little elated, and strange, a little disappointed.*

LRH: Why?

PC: *Well, I don’t admire my father too much.*

LRH: You don’t admire him too much.

PC: *Not too much.*

LRH: Did your mother ever say you were like your father?

PC: *Never!*

LRH: Who does your wife remind you of?

PC: *(pause) (laughing) Well, she's unlike any other person that I've ever met before.*

LRH: She is completely?

PC: *Yes, yes.*

LRH: You get along well with her though?

PC: *After therapy.*

LRH: Ah, ho! All right. Now, tell me this then, was your mother well self-controlled and so forth, very self-controlled?

PC: *Quite self-controlled.*

LRH: Did she ever tell you to control yourself?

PC: *No.*

LRH: Never did?

PC: *No.*

LRH: All right, did your father punish you very often?

PC: *Yes.*

LRH: Did you have an elder brother?

PC: *No.*

LRH: Only child?

PC: *No, I was the only male child.*

LRH: Was there an older sister?

PC: *Older sister, yes.*

LRH: Did he ever call her a dummkopf?

PC: *Yes.*

LRH: Yes.

PC: *A great deal.*

LRH: Yes, a great deal. How much older?

PC: *Year and a half.*

LRH: Year and a half older. When she was a little baby would he have called her a dummkopf?

PC: *Would he have?*

LRH: Yeah, would he?

PC: *I don't think so. He's partial towards girls.*

LRH: Partial, huh.

PC: *Yes.*

LRH: When did he say he was partial toward girls?

PC: *He never said so.*

LRH: He just acts that way?

PC: *Yes.*

LRH: All right. What would your mother say if she were very angry with you?

PC: *(pause) She would say "Why?"*

LRH: And what else?

PC: *(pause) "That is not right!"*

LRH: She would say what?

PC: *"That is not right."*

LRH: How would she say this?

PC: *Well, she'd say it in English.*

LRH: She would say "That is not right"?

PC: *Yes, "That is not right."*

LRH: Mm-hm. Would she tell the daughter this, your elder sister?

PC: *Yeah, she would say that.*

LRH: "That is not right."

PC: *"That is not right."*

LRH: What are you doing in therapy?

PC: *Auditing and being audited.*

LRH: Yes, but in auditing do you ever have trouble with your data?

PC: *Sometimes.*

LRH: You change it sometimes as you're running it?

PC: *Yes. (pause) Jeez! (laughing)*

LRH: Thank you.

PC: *Thank you very much. (laughing)*

[to audience] Just showing you the mechanics of this. They are very simple. We're trying to establish first, does he have control circuitry (L. Ron Hubbard Library 1994, 20–5).

To summarize: Hubbard asked Wasserman about a time when he was very upset, to which Wasserman replied when his wife said that he was like his father, a very angry person that punished and belittled him. He also added that his mother when angry would say, “That is not right!” In short, Wasserman’s parents when angry called him “Dummkopf!” or said “That is not right!” Wasserman noticed that this comparison to his angry father by his wife when she was angry resulted in an odd “mingling” sensation. He also stated half-jokingly that he got along with her after therapy. Anger in others was present in all events, as his wife’s angry attitude reminded him of both parents’ anger. Not wanting to be made wrong (“Dummkopf!” “That is not right!”) or be like his angry, uncontrolled father, then during Dianetics sessions he would change the information so as to seem like his “quite self-controlled” mother, to avoid anger and be “right.” Upon this realization, Wasserman laughed and the demonstration ended.

Notably, almost none of Cox’s claims checked out as they would have also made great news. No mention of Freud or Commander “Snake” Thompson occurred at any point. Wasserman never mentioned being an actor. Most answers were in the affirmative, and some negative ones were actually confirmations of upsets:

LRH: Have you been happy about this [being called your father]?

PC: *No. [...]*

LRH: You don’t admire him too much.

PC: *Not too much.*

There was no sudden removal of Wasserman with a failed outcome, nor wild crowd interruptions before or after the demonstration. In fact, quite the opposite occurred, as apparently Wasserman had a sudden realization “Jeez!” and laughter, indicative of the end of a Dianetics session. Additionally, Hubbard explained at the outset how valences can shift due to phrases such as “You’re just like your mother” and negative emotions, which he then proceeded to demonstrate with Wasserman. In short, Cox’s recollections were again incorrect.

Story Problems

Ackerman also mentioned the event in his interview with Miller:

There ws big big mtg packed at Shrine Auditorium and there ws girl Sonja Bianca she ws supposed to be t first clear. and people put her on spot, what is on page 355 second line fm top. Course she cld not do these things, so we were not v convinced.

[...]

Ws v interested to be present when Life ws interviewing t world's furst clear, Sonja Bianca, in little room in LA before she ws to make an appearance tt evg in the Shrine. The presentatio of a dianetic clear ws a great disappointment. She ws handed a book, asked to glance at page at random and it ws thought w eidetic memory she cld repeat page and she cldnt do it v well. Explanation givern ws tt she ws not public spkr, hd fgaced an audience befroe and ws kinda nervous. That ws not my idea of a clear – I thought clr wld be in command of audience/ It ws audience of believers who werer waiting to see t miracle. I ws somewhat disappointed not to see a vibrant woman in commamd of herself and t situation.

LIFE interview did not impress either.

Shrine mtg. The tie story is familiar.

Don't think anyone walked out (Ackerman 1986, 1 & 7).

Ackerman said that “The tie story is familiar” but did not confirm it. Nor did he confirm people walking out or a rowdy audience as they were “an audience of believers” waiting to see the miracle. In fact, no other witnesses supported Cox's statement until *after* he wrote it. Bianchi actually had stated, “I'm afraid I didn't see it” but not that she could not remember it. Atack had even confirmed this in his book: “the question about the tie remains, as does one about physics, with a vague answer” (Atack 1990, 115).

Ackerman also had claimed things not in either transcript, such as “She ws handed a book, asked to glance at page at random and it ws thought w eidetic memory she cld repeat page and she cldnt do it v well.” Not only did this not happen, but this was not what Hubbard claimed, at least not at the lecture, but that it was a trained process:

Male voice: Mr. Hubbard, one question please?

You bet.

Male voice: You say in your book that a clear has eidetic memory, sonically and visually. Is this true of this young lady? Does she have eidetic memory?

You say I say it in my book; yes, it is true that those things which a person has actually looked at are recorded. The photographic type of memory where one looks at a page, a whole page, and has that whole page on record is a trained process. But what a person has looked at, that is, actually *has* read, *has* done, is a matter of record (L. Ron Hubbard Library 1994, 36–7).

Ackerman's comment also contradicts all the other accounts in which she was asked to remember a page of something that she had once read, whether *Dianetics* or a physics textbook. Similarly, Jack Horner, who was interviewed for Miller's book but whose story did not make it in for this segment, gave a different account and backed up Hubbard's answer:

I ws hired as instructor to teach first course in LA. He hd big demo at Shrine auditorium. 5,000 people showed up to see Hubbard. I ws on stage w stage when he gave a demo except t girl he presented as clear did not match expectations.

Sonja Bianca ws pianist. Purpose ws to introduce Hubbard and first clear. Tie story something like tt. That ws an expectation tt a clear wld hv total recall – but he never sd it wld be instantaneous. He never claimed clear wld be like a computer. It went disastrously fm tt standooint. She ws presented as first public clear but she invalidated concept because she cld not answer questions like this. She ws pianist fm Boston. Those who came to find something wrong found something wrong, more objective dont necessarily think one demo is a failure.

Hubbard presented her and said he had cleared her. He also gave a demo session o girl called Marcia who ws on staff. He ran a grief incident. Then Sonja ws first clear. Hubbard invited questions fm audience and it quickly went wrong fm standpoint of being able to instantly asnwer questions like exactly what did you hv for breakfast of morning of Oct 3 1942? (Horner 1986, 2).

Miller used only the last line of Horner's interview, which he embellished and added in his retelling: “What did you have for breakfast on October 3 1942?” somebody yelled” (Miller 1987, 165). Even this, however, was uncorroborated in the transcripts or by other witnesses. Cox would later make the forgotten breakfast claim with a different date in the 1997 *Secret Lives* interview, but only *after* it came out in Miller's book a decade before.

Likewise, Endfield did not ask Bianchi for “simple formulas” or “Boyle's Law,” which she could not recite. Aside from no audience members asking this, Endfield's statement conflicts with Hubbard's request: “Read me something out of the physics textbook—something complicated [...] How about Newton's formula of gravity, something that these people know.” To which she responded, “All right, yup, there's a vector notation in the book I'm using. It is written in

darker ink—is equal to M, which is M which is not in dark ink, times A, which is also in the dark ink” (L. Ron Hubbard Library 1994, 37–8). M times A is the vector form of mass times acceleration, known as $F=MA$ or Newton’s Second Law, a simple formula.

And “Now” for a Clear and “Present-Time” Danger

Cox’s claim that Hubbard’s alleged excuse “‘now’ had frozen her in ‘present time’ and blocked her total recall” was fabricated. In both the 1987 and 1994 transcript versions of the event, Hubbard not only explained that this could not happen, well before Sonya appeared onstage, but the example he gave was for a different woman altogether:

LRH: [to pc] All right, Lynn, close your eyes. Now, anytime in the future that I utter to you the word “cancelled,” anything which I have said to you while you are lying here is to be cancelled and will become completely nonaberrative, okay?

PC: *Mm-hm*

LRH: [to audience] All right, we installed a canceller because sometimes people do go to sleep and we don’t know it.

[to pc] All right, let’s find out now something very important. How old are you? (*snap*)

PC: *Thirty-two.*

LRH: [to audience] Ah, hah! She’s in present time. This is so unusual, I have to stop here. This stops the whole show.

It says in the book, if the preclear is stuck in present time ... Now, the editor of the book erroneously took the quotations out from around the words “present time” since no one could possibly be stuck in present time and he’s *always* stuck in past time. He isn’t stuck at the end of his time track, he is stuck *on* his time track somewhere and it is up to you to find out where he is (L. Ron Hubbard Library 1994, 27).

True enough, the first edition of *Dianetics* has a subsection entitled “STUCK IN PRESENT TIME” which explains that this is an apparent, but incorrect, diagnosis:

But the case which seems to be stuck in present time and on whom no repeater phrase works is very often quite puzzling to an auditor [...] when a case is stuck in present time either when it is opened or during progress, it is highly charged with occluded emotion and it is obeying a restimulated engram to the effect that it must go all the way to now and

stay there [...] Even a “stuck in present time” case will eventually begin to return on the sole principle of repeater technique (Hubbard 1950, 283 and 285).

Two other segments underscore this technique: “If he is stuck in present time, start him on repeater technique again, suggesting bouncers” and, “He can be stuck in present time, which would mean he has a bouncer thrusting him all the way up the track” (Hubbard 1950, 277 and 292–3). In other words, people unable to run *Dianetics* and seemingly stuck in the present moment do so because a mental trauma so intense keeps them in the present instead of allowing them to remember the past experience. Thus, they are “bounced” into the present and “stuck” there by something from their past, rather than being in the present of their own accord. Whether Hubbard’s claim is actually true here is moot, however, but it remains more consistent with his lecture comments on the book, which mentioned cases that “seem to be” in present time and referred to the term “stuck in present time” in quotes. Given that Cox had already mentioned van Vogt in his letter to Gardner, his later slip to Miller that van Vogt also made the “stuck in present-time” claim was a revelation as it aligned with the other available evidence.

In fact, neither transcript has Hubbard ask Bianchi to come out “now.” There are uses of “now,” but no commands appear, aside from “Now tell me something about yourself.”

Now, I want to show you one thing before we get out of here, just one thing only. The goal of Dianetic therapy is the Clear.

The psychometry on a Clear demonstrates him to be without aberration. Now, I would be very pleased if you would give your attention to a young lady whose case has this great interest to us. She was cleared by an auditor who knew no more of Dianetics than the book. She was a relatively easy case, this is true, but all he knew was the handbook. He took the handbook and he ran out the engram bank. And as a result, the case checks out as Clear.

Now, the technical definition of Clear is merely a case which has been returned all the way up and down the time track; we don’t find any engrams. Psychometry on this case demonstrates the person to be without aberration.

Tomorrow morning a well-known psychometrist in this city is going to give this lady complete psychometry. It was set up for this morning but things mixed up so I haven’t the data to hand here. And any of you who would be interested in this young lady, if they seem interested in this psychometry (which I assure you is disinterested psychometry, so signed, by somebody wholly qualified) or actually is interested in meeting this young lady (if that person is a professional like a psychiatrist who wishes to examine her in any way),

arrangements will be made for that tomorrow at the office. It would be tomorrow afternoon—she has to take this psychometry in the morning.

Now I want to introduce you to a young lady of Boston, a Dianetic Clear who has come here tonight to show you that there are such things. Miss Sonia Bianca.

How are you, Sonny?

Sonia: Fine.

Well, I was sorry to keep you back of the wings all this time but I'm sure that now you've walked out, that people like to see this. Now tell me something about yourself here. Are you in a university? (L. Ron Hubbard Library 1994, 34–5).

A Narrative Controlled by the Cox-swain

Cox repeated and modified the story he had originally sent to Gardner in his interview with Miller only to further embellish it in a 1997 interview on BBC Radio 4's *Secret Lives*:

Well, later in 1950, Hubbard who had been back east all this time, came to Los Angeles and present—apparently there was going to be a huge presenta...—he was going to speak at the Shrine Auditorium, which is a large auditorium in Los Angeles. Of course, I had to attend it. I caught a street car there, going there. And the street car was very crowded, more and more people got on at every stop and it was like the New York subway at rush hour, but I thought that not everyone could be going to this—to this talk. But when we got to the Shrine Auditorium, everyone got off, except the driver. They were all going to hear L. Ron Hubbard. I managed to get in and get a seat at the very back of the auditorium. Hubbard came out followed by A.E. van Vogt, they made various remarks and claims about *Dianetics*, what it could do. They brought in a—somebody, they audited and cleared of a—of a grief engram and uh, somebody in the audience stood up and said—shouted that he thought all of this had been prearranged. So Hubbard invited this man—rather I should say that Hubbard was going to invite somebody from the audience onto the stage to talk about—to talk to him. And the audience, which was extremely rowdy—it's been described as good-humored but it seemed to me very noisy and rowdy, kept shouting that this particular man who had made this objection to be brought up. So he was and Hubbard sat down with him and—a couple of chairs face to face, talked to him for a while but didn't come to anything. In fact it was very—very anti-climactic. But then the climax of the evening was when he brought out a Clear. One of the claims of *Dianetics* is that a person could be cleared of all engrams, which would mean that they would be cleared of all neuroses, all illnesses, all incapacities. And he brought out this woman, Sonya Bianca who was a student at some eastern college, and she was supposed to be a Clear. She was supposed to have total recall. She could uh—

recollect with photographic clarity everything she'd ever read, everything she'd ever experienced, and so forth. So various members of the audience called questions at her: could she remember what was said on page 217 of her physics textbook? She couldn't. Could she remember what she had had for breakfast the morning of August 17, 1946? She couldn't. Then various people called out for Hubbard to turn his back on her and see if she could remember the color of his tie. She couldn't and um, so that was—at that moment the whole business sort of collapsed. People started leaving the auditorium. A few days later, we were told that what had happened is that when Hubbard had called Sonya out from the wings, he had said to her—he said to her, “Would you come out here *now*, Sonya?” And so when he used the word “now” he stuck her in present time so that she was unable to remember these things from the past.

So that was the great excuse?

That was the great excuse, yeah (Cox 1997).

Conversely, on the same series Ackerman told a completely different version of events:

Well the presentation of the first Clear had started earlier in the day when *Life* magazine came and—and interviewed this young lady, and when she was up on the stage the expectation was that anyone in the audience could uh, take a dictionary and turn to a page and—and read three or four words or something and—and uh, she could repeat it all, was supposed to have an eidetic memory. And she was a total disappointment. Afterwards the explanation was that she was just a, I guess a little farm girl and she had never uh, in the—in public on a stage, and was—had kind of stage fright and I felt “that shouldn't happen to a Clear person, they shouldn't have stage fright.” Here was a whole auditorium, nobody was ready to throw rotten eggs at her or anything, every—everybody was just on tenterhooks waiting with belief for the—for the wonderful presentation, so it was quite a letdown.

Did the audience start walking out? Did they react?

Nobody walked out or anything, but there was just kind of a lot of mumbling, a low hum around the auditorium of disappointment.

How did Ron react to it?

I didn't, uh—I'm trying to think if Ron was even present at that time, I don't draw back any—any memory of him (Ackerman 1997).

At this point, the reporter changed topics, ignoring that either Cox, Ackerman or both were incorrect about that night, given that both presented contradictory stories and incorrect information. Cox described mass walkouts, rowdiness and constant interruptions while Ackerman said that nobody walked out and people were respectful, and did not even recall Hubbard being there. That Ackerman

claimed that Hubbard was not present is definitely false, whereas Cox's claim that Hubbard later used the excuse of freezing her in "present time" with the word "now" entirely contradicts *Dianetics*, the lecture transcripts, and even Miller's dramatized fictional version, where Hubbard immediately gave the excuse onstage to the crowd. Nevertheless, these contradictions were neither noticed nor further investigated.

What's more, in May 1951, Ackerman had claimed that he had seen a clear:

P.S.: AND HUBBARD'S AGENT—FOREST [sic] J. ACKERMAN, ONE OF THE LEADING STF FANS, AGREES WITH HIS TOP CLIENT 100%! [...] I have seen a clear, and at least 6000 other people in Los Angeles have seen a clear. Her name was given publicly, so I do not see why I should not repeat it here: Sonya Bianca [sic]. I do not know what her fate may be—eventually she may change her name to escape publicity! (Hubbard 1951, 113).

If Hubbard wrote this part of the article, then Ackerman never disavowed it, which meant that he either felt it was true or did not mind his name being used to sell books (as he was Hubbard's literary agent at the time), in which case this casts doubts on his credibility. If Ackerman fabricated this story to sell copies of *Dianetics*, then this also casts doubt on his later interview credibility with Miller in 1987 and with *Secret Lives* in 1997, possibly when he felt that he could speak more freely after Hubbard's death, as there could also be financial motive for all anecdotes. If Ackerman actually wrote this part of the article, however, then this was the earliest, most recent eyewitness commentary after the event, surpassing even Cox's by a year. This suggests that in 1951, Ackerman felt that he had seen a clear at Shrine, contradicting his later interviews that contained some factual errors. Either way, this made him a rather unreliable witness as he was either dishonest and said whatever was needed to fit the popular narrative and profit, or more likely he told the truth initially but over time his memory and recollections became less reliable.

Conclusion

There was some truth to all three stories. Endfield correctly noted that Bianchi studied physics, Cox correctly noted that she was from an eastern college and didn't know the color of Hubbard's tie—although she stated this was because she had not looked at it—while Ackerman noted that the audience was respectful and

calm. To know for certain what actually occurred one would need to hear the audio tape, but even without it none of the various accounts matched, as a new detail from one person tended to work its way into later versions of others' stories. As with any myth, the tale grew over the decades with various retellings.

The problem with memories, whether from 2, 34, 36, 37, 47, or 68 years before, is that they are generally unreliable when compared to recorded materials such as audio and transcripts. Even if the transcripts were edited, what they presented refuted virtually every claim. Even if one dismissed the transcripts as fabricated, then this would fail to explain the absence of negative press about the event until after Cox's letter. After all, there were allegedly dozens of reporters present. All three stories also failed to explain the increased sales of *Dianetics* in Los Angeles for weeks after or the sold-out classes which followed immediately. Given that both Endfield and Cox mentioned how quickly word spread in Los Angeles, which resulted in a full Shrine Auditorium, word should also have spread quickly enough to affect sales and classes if so many people had felt that it was a scam. Lastly, the stories also contradict one another and the authors' own later recollections.

In reality, these three men were unimpressed with what they witnessed at Shrine Auditorium and also had unreliable memories. When writers and journalists eager to smear Hubbard and *Dianetics* not only copied each other's notes but also failed to compare the claims and available materials against each other, they produced a nearly seventy-year rumor. This example may help to explain why Hubbard made such a point to record and transcribe his lectures, not only for future preservation, but also for others to verify claims such as these for themselves. Hopefully, the Church of Scientology will release the audio of the event soon, if any indeed exists, but until then, this examination of available data concludes this tale of the theater of the mind.

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