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Dr. Shelia O'Brien Quinn speaks about hypnotism at the Psychology Colloquium in the Cancer Prevention Research Center yesterday.

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## Visiting professor lectures on hypnosis [P]

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02/6/07 - Have you ever found yourself in a trance-like state? You may wonder where this hypnotic state comes from. How did it start?

As part of the spring Psychology Department Colloquium, Dr. Sheila O'Brien Quinn, assistant professor of Psychology at Salve Regina University, visited the University of Rhode Island yesterday to explain how mesmerism first got its footing in the United States through Rhode Island.

"It came to Rhode Island in the 1830s. It was introduced to the United States by Rhode Island," Quinn, a 1987 alumna, said.

A scholar of the history of psychology, Quinn explained how hypnotism was introduced to America by the arrival of a 20-year-old from the French West Indies, Charles Poyen de St. Sauveur to Rhode Island in 1834.

Poyen began lecturing about mesmerism and giving demonstrations of animal magnetism across New England, introducing the technique to others.

Phineas Parkhurst Quinby, a clockmaker and inventor attended Poyen's lecture in Maine, where he became inspired. Following the lecture, Quinby became an expert mesmerist.

Quinn said Quinby started the belief that magnetism has nothing to do with electricity, but with faith.

"This is Christ's science," Quinn said, quoting Quinby.

Quinn explained how Poyen traveled to Pawtucket, R.I., where he found a female Slater Mill worker susceptible to animal magnetism, which began the start of women using magnetism to have some voice.

Following his visit in Pawtucket, Poyen ventured to Providence, where he encountered Francis Wayland, the president of Brown University. Wayland furthered Rhode Island's influence on hypnosis by experimenting on clairvoyance, an intuitive knowledge on things and people.

"He believed in clairvoyance and that his mom knew when he was hurt when he was younger," Quinn

said.

Medical treatment through hypnosis arose in America through two doctors operating on Weybosset and Brownell Street in Providence and Esten Street in Pawtucket. The two men performed dental work on a woman in a hypnotic trace, who did not react during the procedure.

As more mesmerists used women as clients, people began to question the women's honor, claiming they followed through with the hypnotic experiments to get free services.

Quinn based much of her speech on information given by Lorraine Bracket, who she said was a respectable woman in the science of mesmerism.

"People said there was no way she [Bracket] was doing this for attention or money," Quinn said.

Mesmerism eventually became spiritualism, a religious movement in America, prominent in the 1840s, where it is believed that mediums can contact the deceased.

Mesmerism's effect on pain tolerance and behavior led to many medical and religious uses, highlighting the technique's significance.

Thus, if you ever wondered how hypnosis came about in America, know that the ways it evolved in the United States are closer to home than you may think.

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