

Testimony and Narrative on the Supernatural in the Work of Catherine Crowe, the  
London Dialectical Society and Edward William Cox.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is an exploration of the role of testimony and the production of narrative in supernatural research in the mid to late Victorian period (1848-1879). It focuses on the work of Catherine Crowe and Edward William Cox as two examples of amateur researchers into a discipline dismissed by a rising materialist physiology that had cemented its institutional authority, largely dismissing objective validity of supernatural occurrences. It also examines the role of the Committee of the London Dialectical Society's work on Spiritualism as a remarkable example of a new method of investigating Spiritualist phenomena. Crowe as specialist in writing and Cox as a legal expert, sought to use their specialisms of expertise in human behaviour to argue for the experiential validity of supernatural phenomena. This was done by adopting a scientific model but also by a defense of testimony as a reliable form of evidence, especially when put in an accumulative narrative of many similar testimonies.

A large part of the thesis is taken with non-fiction with the exception of Crowe where realist methods of investigation and supernatural narratives are incorporated into her fictional work. This is done to show Crowe's method of portraying veridical supernatural phenomena as part of a realist narrative.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century also witnessed the rise of societies and increasingly specialized disciplines of knowledge. This thesis will chart the concurrent rise of this amongst the aforementioned as a unique example of non-spiritualist or skeptic researchers seeking a new method through language and methods. From Crowe one saw the domestic

researcher, the Committee showed the rise of a group of researchers and finally with the Psychological Society, an actual society devoted to exploring the phenomena outside of Spiritualist and skeptic discourses. It is a study of testimony as data and how that data became narrative and information.

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Most of all my wife Raze and sons Kreshnik and Aidinn for their support. I hope I have not wasted their time.

## Table of Abbreviations

**SAS** Edward William Cox. *Spiritualism Answered by Science*. New York: Henry L. Hilton, 1872.

**SAS 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.**— . *Spiritualism Answered by Science: with Proofs of a Psychic Force*. 2nd. London: Longman and Co., 1872.

**MoM/What Am I?** —. *The Mechanism of Man: An Answer to the Question What Am I? A Popular Introduction to Mental Physiology and Psychology*. Vol. I The Mechanism. London: Longman and Co., 1876. II vols.

**MoM** —. *The Mechanism of Man: An Answer to the Question What Am I? A Popular Introduction to Mental Physiology and Psychology*. Vol. II The Mechanism in Action. London: Longman and Co., 1879. II vols.

**NSN** - Crowe, Catherine. *The Night Side of Nature or Ghosts and Ghost Seers*. II vols. London: George Routledge and Sons, 1848.

**JSPR** - *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*. Vols. 1 1884-1885. London: The Society's Rooms, 1885.

**PPSGB** Francis K. Munton, ed. *Proceedings of the Psychological Society of Great Britain*. London: Privately Published, 1880.

**PL**- F.W.H. Myers, Edmund Gurney and Frank Podmore. *Phantasms of the Living*. II vols. London: Trubner and Co., 1886.

**PSPR** - *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*. Vol. 1. London: Trubner and Co., 1883.

**RCLDS/RLDS** - *Report on Spiritualism of the Committee of the London Dialectical Society*. First. London: Longmans, Grenn and Dryer, 1871.







## Introduction

Yet is it true that we do not believe in ghosts? There used to be several traditional tales repeated, with their authorities, enough to stagger us when we consigned them to that place where that is which “is as though it had never been.” But these are gone out of fashion...But do none of us believe in ghosts?

Mary Shelley<sup>1</sup>

According to Mary Shelley, the answer was, simply, no. It was a shrinking world that had been almost completely mapped with physiologists slowly mapping the largely uncharted territory of the brain.<sup>2</sup> Yet, what about the supernatural? She bemoaned the fate of ghosts but challenged whether they have been explained away as well. She cited two cases that she has heard from two credible witnesses and her own eerie experience.<sup>3</sup> Though she rightly pointed out that the understanding of optics had made the supernatural problematic, there was still something that could not be totally explained away. She was not alone. As the century progressed this refusal to be

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Shelley. “On Ghosts.” *The London Magazine*. March (London; Taylor and Hessey) 253.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Shelley, 253.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Shelley, 254-255.

placated by an expanding materialist theory advocated on the supernatural continued. Not all were satisfied that physiological explanations being formulated by skeptics, from monomania to side-effects of fevers, at mental asylums and infirmaries. Supernatural narratives became framed under the subject headings of mental illnesses and testimony became a case study.

The nineteenth century saw the further rise of a professional class of physicians and medical specialists, approved by the state and given authority to adjudicate and bear expert witness in trial. This newly found social and institutional power coupled with a growing approval of material causation further exorcized the ghost and the supernatural and bottled up the genie in discursive derision at worst and a symptom of mental illness at best. It was part of a post-Enlightenment, post-Kantian, reason-centred discourse that would evolve during the century into what is termed the “objective” based model based on the scientific method. It was one that saw the supernatural as the last vestiges of superstition, daemonology and the shortfalls of the subjective experience. Its testimony was only a witness to a physiological symptom. Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison in *Objectivity* (2010) chart this move away from empiricism to an attempt at a supposed objective method and the controversies over data and interpretation that followed, showing that that method was among several epistemologies in use.<sup>4</sup>Physiological explanations failed to convince many that they had done away with the veridical supernatural episode. Shelley’s essay is one famous instance of that. Portrayal of the mode of transmission and authority remained, a testimony to the role

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<sup>4</sup> Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison. *Objectivity*. (New York: Zone Books, 2010).

that testimony and personal narrative still held among people. For Shelley and others, natural philosophy said one thing, but people still heard and saw another.

However, as the century progressed, many people remained unconvinced by the increasingly materialist-physiological discourse of thought headed by a growing and empowered institutionalized professional groups especially in the medical field. Animal magnetism, started by Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) in the late eighteenth century, was a therapeutic process that involved healing and altered states induced usually by the use of hand movements over the body, challenged it by claiming that immaterial causation on the material world existed, and the varied practitioners of the movement attested to its popularity. However, it was supernatural phenomena such as ghost-seeing that proved the most contentious. With the rise of the spiritualist movement, adherents postulated that not only could the dead be seen but that they could be contacted as well. Both animal magnetism and spiritualism advocated a more democratic epistemology even if their own specialists of expert mesmerists and mediums commanded authority as well when explaining the phenomena. Their popularity as alternative epistemologies, heterodox therapies and cultures showed that the growing medic-scientific disciplines could not count on blanket support though given institutional validity.

One serious area of contention of these discourses was the role of testimony. The nineteenth century in Britain saw the growing enfranchisement of voters by the Reform Bills of 1832 and 1868, the greater availability of the press and greater access to education. More people learned to read, read and even voted. At the same time, the role of personal testimony as authoritative became more constrained in both scientific

and jurisprudential fields. Jan-Melissa Schramm in *Testimony and Advocacy in Victorian Law, Literature and Theology* (2000) wonderfully elucidates these changes and how they influenced other disciplines.<sup>5</sup> This thesis will incorporate her insights on the changing role of representation, evidence and testimony. English common law based on the jury system came under increasing specificity with the introduction of a defense counsel for felons in 1836. Though this gave defendants more legal help, and as the century progressed non-Anglicans could take the oath, it took the focus away from the jury and defendant's narrative to the interplay between prosecution and defence. Evidence and rhetorical strategy began to take precedence over testimony. Even the oath and character credibility gave way to the presentation of evidence and the proper people who could infer upon it. Cross examination began to play a greater role. This adversarial aspect to jurisprudence of lawyer against lawyer was further complicated by the rising importance of expert witnesses who went from being general witnesses who possibly knew the defendant to experts who need never have interviewed the person. Even though character credibility became more merit than based on the ideas of a gentleman, credit became associated with the middle class. This would impact both skeptical and supportive discourses of the supernatural. This thesis engages with Schramm by applying these insights to Crowe and Cox's use of both the expert and lay witness in creating a discursive space for the individual to defend their own narrative, where even scientists like Crookes use a literary-jurisprudential method to challenge their "expert" detractors.

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<sup>5</sup> Jan-Melissa Schramm. *Testimony and Advocacy in Victorian Law, Literature and Theology*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp.12-20.

Something similar was happening to the medical and scientific fields. Doctors and natural philosophers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century came from gentlemanly backgrounds where the ethos of research and practice were not tied to salaries. As the nineteenth century progressed, the medical and scientific field still saw the amateur researcher make strides until late in the century, but the disciplines started taking institutional shape in qualification based on merit. The Medical Reform act made the doctor accredited and with state approval. This allowed a new group of doctors and scientists from marginalized backgrounds to not only gain status but authority. This took place along a larger backdrop of the rise of the expert and expert testimony. Where before the expert had largely been considered as someone who had “gained from experience,” it began increasingly to mean one whose skills made him to be considered an authority, as Freemon has elucidated.<sup>6</sup> Before the Prisoner’s Counsel Act in 1837, the members of the jury were considered the experts but this became increasingly transferred to the expert witness.<sup>7</sup> Tal Golan in *Laws of Man Laws of Nature: The History of Scientific Expert Testimony in England and America* (2004) provides a comprehensive look at the rise in expert testimony away from an impartial part of the court to one that became an advocacy role for whichever side hired them.<sup>8</sup> This put against the backdrop of the rise of the adversarial growing nature of the court made experts as adversaries to experts. It brought forth the problematic nature of scientific and medical interpretation over facts when opposing experts reached different

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<sup>6</sup> Frank. R. Freemon. “The Origin of the Medical Expert Witness: The Insanity of Edward Oxford.” *The Journal of Legal Medicine*, 22 (2001:349-373) 349.

<sup>7</sup> Freemon, 353.

<sup>8</sup> Tal Golan. *Laws of Man, Laws of Nature: The History of Expert Scientific Testimony in England and America*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

conclusions based on the same evidence. This new class worked for a salary and represented a class of workers in law courts, engineering projects, popular journals and teaching posts. Both doctors and scientists had to make a living while spreading their specialism representative of the scientific method and objectivity. In a post-Enlightenment world, they increasingly saw themselves as the educated and trained observers of reality. This would impact the role of testimony, making experience secondary to supposedly impartial methods of passive observation combined with the power of inference.

Literature also changed. Writers, of both fiction and non-fiction, interpreted the growth of the jurisprudential adversarial role of representation, importance of circumstantial evidence and objectivity in their work. These discourses played themselves out in an increasingly cheaper press after the repeal of the Stamp Tax. Specialist journals, magazines and papers catered to specialists and the public. Authors of literature developed new genres of realism, mystery and sensationalism to narrate the interactive social map of society providing testimony of marginalized groups. Supernatural stories gained popularity, especially the ghost story, which allowed authors such as Dickens, Crowe and Gaskell to represent and challenge social norms, portray psychosis and provide alternative epistemological options. Here testimony and narrative became the rhetoric of authenticity or disruption of accepted realities.

The scholarship on supernatural or psychical research and phenomena in Victorian period is vast. Janet Oppenheim's *The Other World: Spiritualism and*

*Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (1985) is a seminal, comprehensive work.<sup>9</sup> However, it deals sparingly with the role of testimony and narrative, dealing with it only when discussing trials and famous spiritualists such as Wallace.<sup>10</sup> This thesis will bypass famous trials focusing more on the use of jurisprudential methods in psychical research instead. Where Oppenheim rightly points out the preponderance of urban professionals in psychical research, this thesis goes into greater detail on how these urban professionals used their own specialism to study the supernatural.<sup>11</sup> Other important works include Alex Owen's *The Darkened Room* (1989), Alison Winter's *Mesmerized* (1998), Srdjan Smajic's *Ghost Seers* (2010), Andrew Smith's *The Ghost Story: A Cultural History* (2010), Vanessa Dickerson's *Victorian Ghosts in the Noontide* (1996), Tatiana Kontou's *Spiritualism and Women's Writing* (2009) and Melissa Edmundsun Makala's *Women's Ghost Literature in Nineteenth Century Britain* (2013).

Shane McCorristine's *Spectres of the Self* (2013) deals quite often with testimony, stressing its empirical importance from the eighteenth century to the period of the SPR.<sup>12</sup> McCorristine elucidates the epistemological debate between the evidence of testimony as gathered from the senses and the perspectives advanced by the medical establishment, which sought a better explanation for supernatural phenomena in hallucination and prepossession.<sup>13</sup> The great bulk of his work on testimony deals with the SPR.<sup>14</sup> This thesis will explore an earlier time period to show the nuanced approach

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<sup>9</sup> Janet Oppenheim. *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914*. (Cambridge: CUP, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> Oppenheim, 23, 32, 297-99.

<sup>11</sup> Oppenheim, 7-8, 67, 235.

<sup>12</sup> Shane McCorristine. *Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghost and Ghost Seeing in England, 1750-1920*. (Cambridge: CUP, 2010): 31, 44, 119.

<sup>13</sup> McCorristine, 75-78.

<sup>14</sup> McCorristine, 121-130.

to testimony and narrative of the supernatural as it progressed from the individual work of Catherine Crowe to the increasing complexity of a committee and finally to the Psychological Society of Great Britain, showing the complex and contradictory growth of psychical research. McCorristine upholds testimony's importance but this thesis will help show just how that testimony and narrative were received and accepted as part of a polemic for veridical supernatural research that reflected the social-historical and gender backgrounds of its collectors.

McCorristine also deals well with the "factionality" of supernatural literature in fiction, the blurred line of the fictional and factual in portrayal of the supernatural, by focusing on Le Fanu, Scott and Dickens. For McCorristine the "evidential implications" of testimony and empiricism led to a "golden age" of ghost literature. The "liminal" existence of the ghost provided a template to represent the workings of the mind and to explore the reliability of experiential knowledge.<sup>15</sup> He extends this term to Crowe, and though he rightly sees Crowe as advocating for a serious investigation of the supernatural through a Baconian method, he calls her magnum opus "factional" as well.<sup>16</sup> This thesis disagrees with McCorristine's assessment. It argues that Crowe's method of collecting testimony was done under the premise that the testimonial data was based on objective phenomena and that Crowe used a multitude of sources. However, it does agree with his insight that she was Baconian. Indeed, it will be seen that the Baconian method utilized by Crowe, Cox and Crookes sought this experiential methodology and their research shows a continuation of an experiential, inductive

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<sup>15</sup> McCorristine, 14-19.

<sup>16</sup> McCorristine, 10-11.



epistemology that survived the both the post-enlightenment and era of objectivity. These researchers saw themselves as heirs to Bacon's belief of gathering data, no matter how heterodox to established opinion, and looking at new, possible laws of nature based on such facts. Crowe and Cox, along with the culturally important animal magnetism and spiritualist movements sought to validate their epistemology by continuing the experiential, inductive model.

This use of the ghost story to question empiricism and psychosis has been dealt with in criticism. Another aspect that has garnered a lot of scholarly work has been the use of the ghost story to call attention to gender relations, patriarchal systems of power and social exclusion. Ruth Heholt has written the most extensive criticism of how Crowe sought an epistemological space for women through intuition. She argues that Crowe's work was at "core a folklore narrative," where Crowe was attempting to advocate "feminized" modes of story-telling, gossip and hearsay as valid.<sup>17</sup> She has also rightly pointed out that Crowe's collection of testimony was mundane as it was meant to reflect its mundane, objective reality.<sup>18</sup> Heholt further argues that Crowe's work advocates intuition over reason and that her ghost stories show an emasculated ghost that mirrors the position of woman and is in need of verification by women to be seen and helped.<sup>19</sup>

Though this thesis agrees that Crowe did indeed seek an epistemological space for women, and for tales and gossip as part of the historical process, it argues that Crowe's work was one where no one epistemological method is given a monopoly, that

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<sup>17</sup> Ruth Heholt. "Science, Ghosts, and Vision. Catherine Crowe's Bodies of Evidence and the Critique of Masculinity." *Victoriographies* (2014) 49, 52.

<sup>18</sup> Ruth Heholt. "Seeing Ghosts: Visions of the Supernatural in the Tales of Catherine Crowe." Schenkel, Elmar. *Ghosts of the (Nearly) Invisible: Spectral Phenomena in Literature and Media*. Peter Lang, 2016. 25-34) Loc 490.

<sup>19</sup> "Science, Ghosts and Vision," 53-57.

any method was liable to error and that men were just as capable of intuition as women were of reasoning. It also argues that Crowe's collection was not folkloric but a unique attempt by a woman writer to spearhead supernatural research using an investigative method that looked to the most modern media at the time to collect data. Crowe was an example of an amateur but also a professional using her skill as a writer in classifying and collecting data for future psychical research. This thesis argues that her ghost stories were never meant to be read as fiction, in contradistinction to writers such as Gaskell, Bronte or Dickens, but veridical episodes where the interpretive act of the reader was given prominence in the text. In this respect Crowe's work was analogous to Daniel Defoe, another writer who sought to do the same a century earlier. Crowe never saw herself as a writer of ghost stories, but her fiction does contain the supernatural and the hallucinatory. In an era of increasingly realism, Crowe wished to show that the supernatural was a natural part of life. Crowe wished to bring her own specialism of writing, delineating people, to show a seriousness to the supernatural that she felt others had ignored.

Scholarly research on the London Dialectical Society is scarce as it is on E. W. Cox. However, the rising complexity between heterodox and orthodox sciences and the nuances between such concepts in psychical research have been well explicated by scholars such as the afore mentioned and others such as Noakes, Lightman, Brock and Luckhurst. Many of these scholars focus on the role of the sciences and Spiritualism with special emphasis on the investigations of Crookes and other prominent scientists. This thesis will deal with the polemic between skeptics and believers. However, it will do so by looking at the Committee on Spiritualism of the London Dialectical Society. This

thesis will show a sub-culture of legal professionals who sought to apply a jurisprudential method to the supernatural in tandem with controlled experimentation. This committee presented a watershed moment in psychical research where both methodologies attempted to come together, where testimony and narrative attempted to provide a median course between skeptical and Spiritualist ideologies.

E.W. Cox is often mentioned in scholarly works on psychical research but usually as an extra in the lives of prominent researchers such as Crookes or mediums such as Slade. For Oppenheimer, he is an example of legal professionals who were interested in Spiritualism.<sup>20</sup> He is seen as a transitional figure who sought to leave the vestiges of Spiritualist research for something more akin to the SPR.<sup>21</sup> McCorristine rightly credits him with providing the paradigm for the SPR's methods.<sup>22</sup> Graham Richards has done the most detailed work on Cox and the Psychological Society of Great Britain, showing that it has been overlooked in the modern era because of ideological cliques that ignored it during its existence.<sup>23</sup> This thesis looks at the jurisprudential method used by Cox and the Society, a method that Richards alludes to but doesn't explain. This thesis argues for the central importance of Cox, goes into detail on how he utilized jurisprudential methodology in a transitional period of psychical research, and argues that Cox used his legal expertise to provide a template for the defence of the supernatural in both his writings and the PSGB. It will also show that Cox sought to

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<sup>20</sup> Oppenheim, 29-31.

<sup>21</sup> Roger Luckhurst. *The Invention of Telepathy 1870-1901*. (Oxford: 2002): 47-51.

<sup>22</sup> McCorristine, 103.

<sup>23</sup> Graham Richards. 'Edward Cox, The Psychological Society of Great Britain and the Meanings of an institutional Failure.' In *Psychology in Britain: Historical Essays and Personal Reflections*, ed. G.C. Bunn, A.D. Lovie and G.D. Richards (Leicester, 2001)

create an epistemological space for the research, just as Crowe did with intuition and different forms of testimony, by seeking to create an institution and society to collect testimony and experiment on supernatural topics. Both sought to make testimony the base of their data, to be compiled and serve as an indicator for further research that would be available to all.

Thus, this thesis will show the growth of psychical research from the solitary investigations of Crowe to the Committee of the LDS, until finally reaching that of a society that sought a neutral based approach to the supernatural. At the forefront will be testimony and narrative tied to a complex polemic of democratic epistemology and the expert. Psychical research and redactive imposition would increase as the field became more specialized and they will culminate in the SPR which sought to make the discipline a respected field of research. Both Crowe and Cox wanted to defend an ontology beyond a physiological or Spiritualist one, an ontology where the empirical was still valid, that could work alongside the modern scientific method.

This interplay of epistemologies represented a debate between the increasing specialization of physiological disciplines that were slowly becoming authoritative at the time, disciplines which increasingly ruled out immaterial causation, and sub-cultures of dissent that were attempting to counter such a discourse concerning supernatural phenomena. This thesis provides three culturally significant examples of such interaction between physiologists and dissenters by focusing on the role of epistemology, narrative methodology and testimony in the work of Catherine Crowe (1806-1876), The Committee of the London Dialectical Society (1870-1871) on Spiritualism and Edward William Cox (!876). Their work will be contrasted with that of

the skeptical discourse from physiological disciplines, which became increasingly materialistic as the century progressed. All three chosen subjects present one with important liminal stages of research on supernatural phenomena, allowing three “micro-historical enquiries” where epistemologies and narrative methods were changing. Crowe’s work presents one with a unique example that predates the rise of Spiritualism and continues with its growth. Writing between Scott and anti-Spiritualist polemics, Crowe’s work resides in a period of shifting epistemologies from Enlightenment and Romantic thinking to a growing influence of the Objective. Crowe’s work is also situated between the gothic, picturesque and the popular emergence of the realist novel: Crowe’s work is proto-detective, proto-sensationalist with a realist attempt to delineate social and epistemological relations of class, gender and the supernatural. The Committee of the LDS took place in 1870-1871, an era when both spiritualists and skeptics wished to use the scientific method in relation to phenomena. *The Report* offers a unique example when the divergent epistemologies of Baconian empiricism and growing objectivity under the trained observer, the jurisprudential and medical disciplines all interacting in a committee and the issuant text represents arguments over testimony, experiment, observation and even textual representation that were rife at the time period after Darwin’s *Origin of Species*.

In chapter one, the skeptical context is given in the work of John Ferriar (1761-1815), Samuel Hibbert (1782-1848) and Walter Scott (17771-1832). Ferriar and Hibbert’s work was representative of a natural theology based on Lockean associations: a world created by God that operated according to natural law, where the miracles of scripture no longer occurred, grounded in Lockean philosophy of associationism, where

being and identity were linked between memory supplied by the experiential supply from the outside world unto the human body, or sensorium. Ferriar and Hibbert especially supported the imposition of testimony and narrative by the patient to control the narrative on supernatural phenomena. This quarantining of supernatural validity to phenomena was part of a wider debate about rationality and normative behaviour. It presented itself in the growing need to ensure public order through asylums, infirmaries, urban planning and a rise in public health. Yet, as Davies points out, it led to a fear by many educated individuals that this “blurring the boundaries between subjective and the objective, between reason and madness” and ‘moral insanity by ‘mad-doctors’ was a abuse of authority.<sup>24</sup> The personal space of inner life became intertwined with that of public spaces and the need to contain a growing working class and order considering disease, insurrection and superstitious behaviour which impacted each other. Both Ferriar and Hibbert (trained as a doctor – he cites himself as an MD, although he never practiced) saw fit to contain patient testimony into preconceived narratives, limiting the ability of the non-specialist to validate their own experience outside the authority of the expert. They and Scott also enclosed historical enquiry and testimony into a narrative of progress from superstition and disorder to one of growing order, enlightenment and efficiency grounded on a natural theology entrenched in natural theology and British dominance. Scott used his discourse as both a lawyer and writer to enclose supposed veridical supernatural phenomena in a grand narrative of jurisprudential folly that produced social chaos and propagated a historical narrative in fiction that tried to limit the gothic, seen as a foreign German discourse of literature. All three provide a look at

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<sup>24</sup> Davies, 151.

the role narrative and increasingly specialist observation was recycled between intellectuals brought up or educated in Edinburgh and Manchester, of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Lit and Phil societies of a growing class of intellectuals seeking validity to a new discourse of merited testimony based on qualification over birth. Yet this fact alone is not why these three have been specifically chosen. They have been chosen because their publications on the supernatural would influence the discourse of the remaining nineteenth century and Crowe's magnum opus was in large part a rebuttal aimed at all three authors, counteracting their narrative method with her own more democratic use of testimony and looking at ethnological phenomena in a more complex manner than a logical progression from superstition to enlightenment.

This growing specialization of physiological discipline will be contrasted with the dissenting sub-culture of animal magnetism which challenged the supremacy of the doctor as sole specialist. It provided the patient and the lay person to partake personally in roles increasingly reserved for physicians, it validated personal experience, personal testimony and narrative without the approval of an institution. This produced ideological friction between the skeptics, who sought a physiological explanation to phenomena related to the human body. Animal magnetists themselves can be put into two main groups of those like Ralph Eliotson who saw magnetism as valid but still physiologically based on the body and others like John Colquhoun who saw animal magnetism as proof of the soul. This thesis will focus on Colquhoun's *Isis Revelata* as it provides an example of a lawyer arguing in a jurisprudential discourse on not only the validity of magnetism but for somnambulism and other mental states and phenomena as proof of the soul. Colquhoun as lawyer sought to convince the general reader, not only the

medical world, of magnetism validity by arguing with the narrative rhetoric of an advocate and using medical authorities as his specialist witnesses in his two-volume text. This format would be taken up by Crowe who enlarged upon it by expanding the discourse to include public testimony and veridical supernatural attestations.

This polemic is then taken into a literary perspective. Catherine Crowe, a writer of novels and short stories, wrote *Nightside of Nature* in 1848. This treatise on the supernatural had been the most extensive of its kind since Colquhoun and Defoe's work. It not only contained traditional reports of anomalous phenomena but also reports gathered from the writer herself. However, it did not focus only on the phenomenon of apparitions but a wide spectrum of anything supernatural. Though not ruling out physiological explanations outright, it was also appealed to a democratic form of epistemology that sought to give objective validity to personal testimony. It sought to level the epistemological discursive field of authority over personal narrative between the specialist and the common person through an approach that advocated experimental empiricism.

Crowe was not a physician but was a writer. Her specialism was narrative creation based on a careful study of human behaviour, very much as physicians studied human behaviour, and while her work tended to a different end, both resulted in narrative enclosure. Her fiction often made the supernatural a part of everyday life, to incorporate it into the realist method of fictional narration that was gaining in popularity at the time. Thus, her narrative method in both her fictional and non-fictional work and democratic epistemology concerning testimony will be studied at length and will be shown to continue in other sub-cultures and writers later in the century.



Chapter two will focus on Crowe's narrative method. Crowe's advocacy for democratic epistemology concerning supernatural phenomena sought to end the dichotomy between specialist and non-specialist, crossing cultural, economic and gendered lines. However, it will be shown that Crowe indeed sought specialist help from German researchers, arguing that British thinkers and doctors were ignoring a serious study of the phenomena based on ideological grounds, and that other nations did not suffer from such impediments. Though she appealed to specialists, Crowe's method was to allow several specialists to help make hypotheses which are placed side by side but seldom advocated as a final word, with the exception that Crowe did support a spirit hypothesis behind supernatural phenomena. She also created chains of transmission and authority, like Shelley, from a cross-spectrum of society – the testimony and narratives of servants was placed beside those of aristocrats. Crowe's desire to not advocate a singular theory was a conscientious decision to distance herself from Ferriar and Hibbert, skeptics who to her ignored the peculiarities of case by imposing their discursive imposition on narrative. It will show Crowe as an example of the amateur researcher, collecting testimony through multiple media and personal contacts, and conducting her own supernatural experiments in a domestic setting. Crowe realized the shortcomings of testimony, but she asserted that when seen in its accumulative amount it showed a qualitative nature that had to be studied and not ignored or ridiculed.

Crowe's literary method of the portraying the supernatural is contrasted with those of contemporary skeptics in chapter three. It will be contrasted with Gaskell, Le Fanu and Dickens' skeptical views, by looking at how her handling of supernatural cases differed, taking the full complexity of phenomena into consideration and

employing jurisprudential methods. Crowe tried to portray herself as being more empirical and objective in looking at more of the details of cases and not imposing her narrative on the testimony but letting it speak for itself. Her reality, the veridical episode was a part of everyday life. Skeptics wished to make hallucinations a common occurrence and Crowe did likewise for both such hallucinations and veridical anomalous phenomena. Crowe's fictional work showed the veridical and hallucinatory as co-mingling in narrative and life. She also took the role of storytelling, testimony and transmission of supernatural data seriously crossing socio-economic classes and gender. Experience of the supernatural and its dissemination in narrative gave place to discursive arguments over what supposedly occurred. Her purpose was to make the supernatural a serious subject for further research, portray it as common as other experiences, and advocate for research she did not have the resources to continue at the needed level, and for groups that embraced the epistemological validity of reason, intuition, and experimentation in tandem to give validity to supernatural phenomena.

Crowe's experiments and investigation with her friends may have represented a sub-culture of alternative discourses but it would be a while until a more organized, communitarian approach would be adopted. Chapter Four will examine the Committee for the London Dialectic Society on Spiritualism as one of the first attempts at an investigation of supernatural phenomena by a society. The Society's Committee was created out of a dissatisfaction with the lack of proper research into the subject, the blanket skepticism of Faraday based on his experiments, and the phenomena of D.D. Homes that had so far not been proven as fraudulent. The unsanctioned publication of its *Report* (1871) shows a committee of neutral, skeptical and believers in the spirit

hypothesis engaged in a triangular dialectic which, even though the Committee found there was objective validity to the occurrences that warranted further research, showed these differences erupting into a denial of the findings by the chairman of the committee and fellow skeptics. It offers a textual witness into the nuances between legalists who wished to investigate the phenomena with a mixture of witness examination and experimentation, medical experts who viewed the experiments and findings as flawed, and spiritualists who saw the spirit hypothesis as the only valid explanation.

Chapter Five looks at the career and writing of Edward William Cox and his founding of the Psychological Society of Great Britain. Cox was a prolific writer and editor, legal expert and one of Britain's three last Serjeants-at-Law. Like Crowe, he hoped to create a large database of accumulated facts and experiment on all phenomena that could not be physiologically explained. He chose to call this Psychology in order to carve out a discursive space away from spiritualists, materialist physiologists and mental philosophy. This allowed him to employ a legal epistemology while slowly incorporating a scientific one of experimentation, but in a manner suited to a discipline that did not belong wholly to either. He set out to study many facets of the supernatural in the setting of a society and disseminate its findings to make them available to the public. The chapter will show he sought to validate this nascent discipline by a mixture of his legal expertise in witness testimony and scientific experimentation. Within his society, the supernatural would be rebranded in neologisms and researched in setting free from ideological imposition on its findings. The Society lasted only four years, but its influence continued far beyond.

From 1848-1880, the supernatural had gone from domestic, amateur investigators, to scientific professional investigating in small social gatherings or alone to a Committee of a society until it finally had a society devoted exclusively to it. This is mainly due to the popular rise of spiritualism post-1848. As with animal magnetism, spiritualism focused on the immaterial, even supposedly contacting the dead. It created epistemological alternatives to specialized knowledge, alternative routes to status and social power for marginalized people based on class and gender. Not since millenarian and revolutionary fervor had the establishment had to contend with such competition over the proper structuring of society. Both skeptics and proponents developed more sophisticated ways of testing their hypotheses and presenting their evidence to both their selected audience and the greater public. Spiritualism was a social force which either held a path to societal progression or regression to a superstitious age. It could not be ignored. Proponents had a “story” to tell, they had many such “stories” and held they pointed to a narrative of objective experience. This dissertation follows three instances, building on previous scholarship, to show just how advocates and writers sought to tell theirs and others in an increasingly specialized world of disciplines.

McCorristine already pointed out that the SPR sought validation through accumulative rather than single testimony.<sup>25</sup> This view towards accumulated testimony was very much in line with that of Cox and Crowe in that it did not stand for proof but was a sure indication that the phenomena should be studied in earnest.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the SPR had separate committees to collect testimony on apparitions and haunted houses

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<sup>25</sup> McCorristine, 117; See *PL*, Vol.I.136; *PSPR*, Vol.I.33, 61.

<sup>26</sup> *PSPR*, Vol.I.3, 12, 68-69; *JSPR*, Vol.I.8-9, 71; *PL*, Vol.I.186.

and another just to collect material already published on psychical subjects.<sup>27</sup> This call, as with Cox, was made to the public for testimony. This testimony was to be cross-examined, as Cox had wished to do but had been prevented from doing by his lack of resources. Sources that could not be cross-examined were to be classified as less trustworthy. The SPR, though avowedly “scientific” still upheld jurisprudential methods when accumulating testimony. As with Cox, hearsay and second-hand narratives were not to be put level with first-hand accounts that could be investigated.<sup>28</sup> However, they maintained that the very universality of accumulative testimony showed an essential truth that made coincidence implausible.<sup>29</sup>

In this context, it is worth noting not only the SPR’s classification of which kinds of testimony were important, but from whom they came. As with the LDS, they preferred unpaid mediums as they came from more respectable, middle class backgrounds without a pecuniary motive.<sup>30</sup>

Like Crowe, the LDS theorized that the onslaught of death is conducive to mental communion.<sup>31</sup> Willpower – so important to Crowe in explaining supernatural phenomena - was also entertained as a possibility in the agent-participant relationship of crisis apparitions.<sup>32</sup> In *Phantasms*, the LDS urged dreamers to either relate their dreams to someone of good memory, or to write them down for possible later validation.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *PSPR*, Vol.I.4.

<sup>28</sup> *PSPR*, Vol.I.30; *JSPR*, Vol.I.35; *PL*, Vol.I. 128, 149, 162, 170.

<sup>29</sup> *Phantasms*, Vol.II.167.

<sup>30</sup> *JSPR*, Vol.I.11.

<sup>31</sup> *PL*, Vol.I.231.

<sup>32</sup> *PL*, Vol.I.292.

<sup>33</sup> *PL*, I.299.

Like Crowe, the SPR went to lengths to explain that they tried to reproduce evidence to the letter with any omissions due only to them not being needed in the portrayal of the evidential point.<sup>34</sup> They also did not wish to impede a narrative, only investigate it, and tried to allow it to stand on its own merit, in their case an “intelligent witness” which in most cases stood for an educated individual. The narratives of personal acquaintances would be excluded due to the impropriety of cross-examination on personal matters and the “uneducated” even if it were satisfactory based on their supposed lack of judgement.<sup>35</sup> In this, the methods of the SPR represented a sharp departure from Crowe, but demonstrated an unsurprising affinity with the criteria of the Committee of the LDS and Cox, according to which educated middle-class members were held to be more trustworthy. In defending their Census on Hallucinations utilized in *Phantasms*, the SPR pointed out, without showing how they did so, that only a negligible section of its Census was filled by people from an uneducated, lower-class background.<sup>36</sup> McCorrstine has discussed the controversy over the Census, and pointed out that the SPR even allowed the testimony of the uneducated to be given authority if it was validated by a clergyman.<sup>37</sup>

Though Crowe continued to be mentioned in supernatural publications such as those already mentioned and her work never went wholly out of circulation, it may come as a surprise that the SPR’s *Phantasms of the Living* and Myer’s *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* both employ a template used by Crowe.

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<sup>34</sup> *PL*, I.160.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 160-161.

<sup>36</sup> *PL*, Vol.II.9

<sup>37</sup> McCorrstine, 119.

*NSN* is filled with cases designed by theme, supposedly unedited, and followed by commentary. Though the SPR made use of modern techniques of statistics, probability and census taking, Crowe had also employed ideas about probability, had also delineated the difference between first and second-hand testimony, and had sought narratives on themes that went beyond simple ghost seeing.<sup>38</sup>

One sees an introduction of a respectable witness known to the writer, their narrative, corroborating testimony, and a commentary citing other cases before going on to another one, what Crowe would refer to as an “embarrass de richesses” as the stories were so many.<sup>39</sup> This was wholly Crowe’s format in its essentials: preface of transmission, text, commentary, and linkage to next datum which resembled the former. It is true the SPR stayed away from old cases and secondhand testimony, but as communication had become easier and cheaper during that late Victorian age and the SPR had connections beyond Crowe’s ability, one can still see Crowe’s methodology at work. In his Introduction to *Phantasms of the Living*, Myers gives an interesting analogy to the work of the SPR:

It is this: that our increased vividness of conception of the physical side of mental life, while it cannot possibly *disprove* the independence of the physical side of mental life, may quite conceivably *prove* it. I will again resort to the (very imperfect) analogy of a partially illuminated body. Suppose that one hemisphere of a globe is strongly lit up, and the other is lit up by faint and scattered rays...Now, no clearness of marks on the bright hemisphere can disprove the existence of corresponding marks on

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<sup>38</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.15-16

<sup>39</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.233.

the dim one. But, on the other hand, it is conceivable that one of the few rays which fall on the dim hemisphere may reveal some singular mark which I can see that the bright hemisphere does not possess.<sup>40</sup>

Not only is this essentially Cox's argument of the demarcation between psychology and physiology but it is an appropriation of Crowe's Nightside analogy and argument for dimly understood supernatural phenomena.

Like Crowe, the SPR went to investigate cases. Of course, unlike Crowe, they had an institution to work from that Crowe could only have imagined. Yet, for all that, their recourse to a case was based on the personal narrative, validated by other narratives, newspapers and other textual sources. If the SPR isn't considered folkloric, then Crowe should not be either. Both represented a modern method of collection. Crowe, Cox and the SPR also investigated phenomena that went beyond ghost seeing. Indeed, Crowe and *Phantasms* are both filled with audio and tactile experiences, double-dreaming, telepathy, and crisis apparitions. Crowe the writer wove the narratives where the SPR cut into paragraphs, Crowe called them stories whereas the SPR numbered theirs and referred to them as cases, but where Crowe placed data under theme, the SPR did likewise with only greater specificity to a more complex classification of cases. Testimony and narrative were central to both.

Given that Crowe and Cox had influenced the SPR it seems surprising that both were forgotten in the early writings of the society. Crowe shows up as part of the SPR library, as does Cox, but there is little beyond that. The little that does remain is

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<sup>40</sup> *PL*, Vol.I.



interesting: cases from the Committee for the LDS and cases from the PSGB that never made it into publication were reinvestigated by figures such as Podmore, in some cases they were based on Cox's own handwritten notes of events, and following up on its authenticity and cases from *Mechanism of Man* as well.<sup>41</sup> The SPR based its organizational principles on the ideas of Cox and its testimonial format on Crowe but relegated them to the role of data in their literature. Could this have been done to make a proper break with past psychical research? The SPR itself looked upon the past researchers as neither cyclical in reasoning nor as failed. In placing themselves in history, Sidgwick proclaimed at the first address:

Why should this attempt succeed more than so many others that have been made during the last thirty years? To this question there are several answers. The first is, that the work must go on. The matter is far too important to be left where it now is...so that even if we were to grant that previous efforts had completely failed, that would still be no adequate reason for not renewing them. But again, I should say that previous efforts have not failed; It is only true that they have not completely succeeded. Important evidence has been accumulated, important evidence has been gained, and important effects have been produced upon the public mind.<sup>42</sup>

The SPR thought that it would be the society to finally provide answers. It could be that Crowe and Cox were shelved in their library with the other material as useful but only in their new enterprise guided by the latest methods, statistical work and experimental psychology. However, both Crowe and Cox's methods, even that of the

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<sup>41</sup> *PL*, Vol.I.314; Vol.II.335, 347, 387-388,555, 602

<sup>42</sup> *PSPR*, Vol.I.8.

Committee of the LDS, led to the SPR more so than the methods and writings of Crookes and Wallace.<sup>43</sup> Sedgwick argued that previous events have not failed. Perhaps he was right, but these previous efforts have been failed in not being given their proper analysis, both as examples of nineteenth century discourses at work in a popular subject but also as testimony to the enduring power of personal narrative that escapes ideological editing. This thesis seeks to listen to those voices.

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<sup>43</sup> For one example, see: *PL* Vol.II.222-225. The debates between Edmunds and Wallace resurface again in the debates between Gurney, Sidgwick and Myers within *Phantasms* where all three have differing views on both theory and the weight of cases.

## Chapter 1: The Debate

'You have answered some hypothetical questions put to you by my learned friend opposite. I beg to ask you whether you give the answer from your knowledge as a physician, or from your experience as a coroner, or as a magistrate, or merely as a member of society?'

'I answer as a physician.'<sup>44</sup>

Dr. Thomas Hodgkins being accused of overtaking the role of the jury.

Testimony from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century began to become problematic. As the enlightenment took hold, testimony and narrative became tied to a rising scientific discourse that tied credibility less with the process of oath taking and more to a rational approach on ascertaining facts based on probability.<sup>45</sup> This brought forth the need to accumulate facts and to make sure they were separated from opinion. Witness competence and the debate over evidence inclusion occurred at the same time in an increase in expert witnesses. Discourse over presentation of facts and the role of testimony was also changing in the medical world. Physicians at asylums

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<sup>44</sup> 9 Carrington & Payne (1840), at 533 reprinted in Eng. Rep. 941; Freemon, 368.

<sup>45</sup> Schramm, 5.

encountered patient testimony in either a suppressive one where the patient's testimony is ignored or one of endorsement where it is reported, though through the redaction of a physician's inference.<sup>46</sup> These two methodologies both sought to reach conviction of "facts" through proper inference based on rational probability but their discourses were guided by ideas of normative behaviour and belief that would influence their reasoning and presentation of supposed evidence. This chapter will look at examples from writers of the medical, jurisprudential and literary world to provide a textual portrayal of how their discourses overlapped and how the role of testimony and specialist were used by both sides of the debate over the supernatural.

At the same time, expert testimony began to gain To look at both sides of the debate over the validity of the supernatural, this chapter will investigate the role of testimony and narrative method in the work of skeptics from the medical and literary world in the early nineteenth century (specifically 1791-1835). It will focus on the work of John Ferriar, Samuel Hibbert-Ware and Walter Scott as their writings sought to restrict the role of testimony and classify the supernatural into emerging fields of institutionalized knowledge. Their work also reignited and provoked many responses from proponents of the validity of testimony and narrative of supernatural events. One such response came from Catherine Crowe, who took issue with their work and NSN is largely a rebuttal of all three authors. There is a chain of textual advocacy and rebuttal that runs throughout each of their seminal texts.

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<sup>46</sup> Ingram 18.

Their writings are representative of an age in British science and thought during which one can see the beginnings of specialization, and in which the works of amateur researchers intersect with those of the emerging voices of specialized professionals. Within this context, testimony and personal narrative still existed as forms of acceptable evidence, but on a par with rock samples and ancient ruins: as things to be evaluated and classified by an educated class that followed an accepted paradigm of natural theology. Ferriar, Hibbert and Scott allowed for the fantastical, but only in its right setting: literature. In the real world, belief in the fantastical or supernatural induced wrong beliefs and behavior, and at worst could lead to heresy and madness.

The early to mid-nineteenth century was a period of great epistemological change, in which experiential data gathered from the senses and testimony becoming ever more problematic.<sup>47</sup> Coming on the heels of the enlightenment, the world was increasingly viewed by physiologists and natural philosophers as operating to fixed laws that could be ascertained through research and reasoning. It was a Lockean world, for established institutions and authority, where ontology was associatively based on memory functioning in a linear manner. Reason based on these laws led to a proper trained inference. Experience was not enough. It was Newtonian world where fixed laws governed the cosmos under a natural theology where God was the world's primal mover and natural philosopher. This was the world view of the skeptics in this chapter. It was a world view that explained both the progress of knowledge but also the workings of society and validated their authority. Any abnormality that went against accepted natural

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<sup>47</sup> Iwan Rhys Morus. "Illuminating Visions, or the Victorian art of seeing things." *Early Visual Culture* 10.1 (2012) pp. 37-50: 38

law and natural theology, especially those tied to the belief systems of earlier ages, were to be dismissed as vestiges of a backward era unless corroborated by accepted modes of reason. As a post-Hobbes and post-Revolutionary France discourse, superstition and popular belief whether from non-conformists, enthusiasts or Catholics, threatened not only right opinion but society itself, the society being a rising middle class tied in most cases to the Anglican church or Episcopalians. “The wonderful century” as spiritualist and co-discoverer of evolution Alfred Russel Wallace saw it, was witnessing a declining belief in supernatural wonders in scientific and natural theological circles.<sup>48</sup>

Natural philosophy was becoming more complex in this period. Experience and sight were no longer regarded as a reliable source for objective knowledge, and became less authoritative as instruments such as the kymograph and stethoscope came to be utilized more and more in research and medical practice to measure what the unaided senses could not.<sup>49</sup> Experiential knowledge was still seen as the strongest basis for discovering natural laws. However, by the early nineteenth century supernatural experiences and testimonies of apparitions were increasingly labeled by philosophers and the intelligentsia as ‘phantasmata’, which signified nothing but a mind that did not function properly.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Alfred Russel Wallace. *The Wonderful Century: Its Successes and Failures*. (London: Swan and Co., 1899) ii-v.

<sup>49</sup> Susan Faye Cannon. *Science in Culture: The Early Victorian Period*. (New York: Dawson & Science History Publications, 1978) 75. Cannon distinguishes between Baconian science and Humboldtian methods of instrumentation.

<sup>50</sup> Srdjan Smajic. *Ghost Seers, Detectives, and Spiritualists: Theories of Vision in Victorian Literature and Science*. (Cambridge: CUP, 2010) 22-23.

In *Science and Culture in the Early Victorian Period*, Susan Faye Cannon revisited the rise of the “professional” during this period. She noted that many natural philosophers of the day were not always holders of a degree or “specialists”, and pointed to the rise of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) in 1831 and the emergence of degrees and certificates as the beginnings of modern professionalism.<sup>51</sup> This chapter deals with the period right before, when the concept of specialization was still more fluid, and disciplines less demarcated, and when the amateur professional was still able to make official inroads. Alison Winters has also elucidated the fluidity of what constituted normative natural philosophy and later disciplines in the sciences during this period in her essay “The Construction of Orthodoxies and Heterodoxies in the Early Victorian Life Sciences.”<sup>52</sup> She posits how established institutions and scientific systems of belief were shaped by their historical context, especially amongst groups of fellow natural philosophers. This sociological impact of skeptical theories and acceptance amongst close-knit intellectual and institutional groups will figure prominently in this chapter when it considers the Manchester-Edinburgh connection between the skeptics Ferriar, Hibbert and Scott.

It was the circulation of such theories amongst restrictive and closed groups that acceptance of ideas gave the aura of authority. The debate over the veracity of ghost seeing was such a locus of contention over the role of testimony where differing opinions were represented by those who wished to maintain the normative status of

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<sup>51</sup> Cannon, 149-151, 202-205.

<sup>52</sup> Alison Winter. “The Construction of Orthodoxies and Heterodoxies in the Early Victorian Life Sciences.” *Victorian Science* Ed. Bernard Lightman (Chicago: UCP, 1990). See especially the Preface by Lightman and Part One: Defining Knowledge which deals with the early Nineteenth Century.

natural theology and natural philosophy (skeptics) and those who wished to expand it into the supernatural (proponents). This contention is symptomatic of the rise of the specialist and the attempt of some who held an opinion that natural law and specialized knowledge in a discipline allowed one to continue the progression of both natural philosophy and science in general. Testimony of the supernatural had to be addressed and redressed under the appellation of regressive superstition and a physical malady. For that to happen, the non-specialist could no longer be able to be fully trusted with interpreting what they saw when it contravened conceptions of institutionally accepted natural law.

### **Not a Spirit but a Sickness**

The early nineteenth century saw the implementation of vaccination and quarantines, and the rise of new medical infirmaries according to newer methods of restraint and therapy. A diseased mind would hallucinate, which called for what a diseased body would need: a specialist who was able to discern how to handle the abnormality using the latest, accepted methods.<sup>53</sup> It was the medical professional who could sift through the effects and root out the cause. They were to do this, no longer by simple medical therapy and counsel, but by the closed settings of the infirmary and the progress of physiological knowledge. The patient was to be studied as any other

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<sup>53</sup> McCorristine, 52.



specimen would be by a naturalist. The patient's words now had import, unlike the previous century, in that it was an expression of symptom.<sup>54</sup> It could be used to tie one case to another or demarcate different mental diseases. However, this meant a patient had no ability to decide what was real and what wasn't. Narratives of patients' experiences of the supernatural and fantastical abound with testimony, but such testimony was regarded as being rendered null and void if it did not conform to inferential reasoning and accepted natural laws. If a patient spoke it was only in testimony to sickness. Hallucinations were effects to be read as symptoms. Testimony became more and more proof, not of a supernatural cause, but of a disease.

### John Ferriar

Patient testimony and the narratives of former ages of the supernatural were appropriated as case studies to be classified considering new and institutionalized concepts. The first major work in Britain offering such an explanation of apparitions as mental projections was by John Ferriar (1761-1815) in 1813: *An Essay Towards a Theory of Apparitions*.<sup>55</sup> A senior physician at the Manchester Infirmary, he took part in new methods of treating those deemed mentally and/or physically ill by using drugs such as opium and asafoetida and changing habits.<sup>56</sup> He represented an educated and trained professional who was also a "gentleman of the urban renaissance" who pursued

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<sup>54</sup> Allen Ingram, *The Madhouse of Language*. (London: Routledge, 1991) 105-107.

<sup>55</sup> John Ferriar. *An Essay Towards a Theory of Apparitions*. (London: C. Cadell, 1813)

<sup>56</sup> "John Ferriar." <http://www.thornber.net/cheshire/ideasmen/ferriar.html>

many avenues of knowledge.<sup>57</sup> He is an example of the rising “professional” intertwined with the amateur whose philanthropy intertwined with many avenues of research. His studies ranged from studying the properties of Foxglove to archeology.<sup>58</sup> He was also a secretary of The Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, a group of Manchester’s growing intellectual elite trying to solidify Manchester’s role culturally as the city was growing in economic importance.<sup>59</sup>

Ferriar held the belief that an inductive systemization of knowledge and the progress of science and medicine would put “living Nature” in the hands of a “chemical physician.”<sup>60</sup> This entailed a philanthropical role combined with medical work. Ferriar and Percival were instrumental in creating Manchester’s Board of Health and Fever Hospital in 1796.<sup>61</sup> Ferriar viewed the growing population of Manchester as part not only of the political economy but of the moral one as well. He subscribed to the role of atmosphere in the spread of disease, calling for new city planning, denouncing the abject quarters and conditions of the poor. Medical experts increasingly saw themselves as reformers where urban planning and conditions could alleviate not only abject conditions but also the threat of disorder brought about those conditions. “Contagion” referred to the spreading of disease and it is interesting Ferriar would use the same word when referring to supposed hallucinations that involved one or more persons. Bodily disease and mental maladies were intertwined.<sup>62</sup> The doctor as expert could read

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<sup>57</sup> Leonard Smith. *Lunatic hospitals in Georgian England, 1750-1830*. (Routledge, 2014) 88-92.

<sup>58</sup> “Dr. John Ferriar: Biographical Memoirs.” *The Literary Panorama and National Register*. (London: C. Taylor, 1815) 1042

<sup>59</sup> Robert H. Kargon. *Science in Victorian Manchester: Enterprise and Expertise*. (Manchester: MUP, 1977) 6-10.

<sup>60</sup> John Ferriar. *Medical Histories and Reflections*. Vol. II (London: Cadell & Davis, 1795) x.

<sup>61</sup> Donald Sheehan. The Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. *Isis*, 33, 1941. 520.

<sup>62</sup> Hamlin, 66. Ferriar. *Medical Histories and Reflections*, I, 78.

the human body, the body politic and increasingly the mind and proscribe reform and remedy.

In his earlier essay *Of Popular Illusions, and Particularly of Medical Daemonology*, Ferriar viewed hallucination and private illusion as possessing the ability to affect the public order.

There are two classes of reader, who will probably expect little entertainment from the subject of this essay; those who are not acquainted with it as a branch of literature, will think it an idle talk to attack the forgotten follies of the nursery; those who know the number, the ingenuity and importance of writers in this controversy, may suppose that little can be added to their labours. To the first I acknowledge, that we should hardly expect that extravagant conceptions, frequently originating in the imbecility of obscure and frantic individuals, should interest political as well as literary bodies, should be defended and supported with the most turbulent clamours, and should endanger the safety and order of society; yet such have been the effects of popular illusions.<sup>63</sup>

Ferriar here gives a synopsis of his whole intent that would also reappear in his larger work. The topic of the supernatural is part of the world of literature, the infantilized locus of childhood, the “idle talk” to no pragmatic purpose. However, the idea of “little entertainment” it will be shown might have been half disingenuous as will be shown when analyzing *A Theory*. Here one is at the opposite of adulthood and scientific seriousness and back into the domestic space of the past. Others think no more can be added. However, this was itself an illusion for Ferriar, and possibly a dangerous one. As

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<sup>63</sup> John Ferriar. “On Popular Illusions. *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester* (London: W. Eyres, 1790) 23-24

with public planning, the personal and public complement one another. These supernatural beliefs threatened society. Ferriar remonstrated the upper classes for thinking that the conditions of the poor were not important: "The safety of the rich is intimately connected with the welfare of the poor" that, "minute and constant attention to their wants is not less an act of self-preservation than of virtue."<sup>64</sup> Likewise, erroneous belief systems impact not just the lower classes represented by popular belief but established society as well. Ferriar's essay was not a cheap, readily available pamphlet. It was directed to other members of his Lit & Phil society. It was an admonition to the educated for it then continues to show a tradition of error by history's most revered physicians.

He held this based on past situations of destructive religious fervor and the extreme visionaries of radicals in his own time. The essay is almost Hobbesian in its ethnological study designed to make characters like Descartes appear as heroes in their demystification of cause and effect.<sup>65</sup> What is most important is his portrayal of physicians and the medical world as tasked with maintaining society:

It would have been happy with Europe, if physicians, after the revival of letters, had followed the wise and temperate dictates of their great master (Hippocrates), with as much care as they investigated his uncertain hypotheses. As medical men generally determined the nature of the diseases imputed to fascination, some spirited decisions the side of common sense might have checked the sanguinary proceedings, which disgraced all the sixteenth, and great part of the seventeenth centuries. But a passion

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<sup>64</sup> Ferriar, "Origin of Contagious Diseases and New Diseases," 125-127.

<sup>65</sup> Ferriar "An Essay on Popular Illusions," 30-31

for mysticism, which in one shape or other haunts the infancy of literature, as well as of society, seized the faculty, and they dictated. At their ease, those wretched absurdities, by the authority of which hundreds of fellow creatures were subjected to imprisonment, tortures, and an agonizing death.<sup>66</sup>

The subject here are the witch trials. Ferriar portrays the physicians in a revisionist sense of failing to follow enlightenment principles, supposedly the proper principles, going back to Hippocrates. Again, one sees a coupling of infantile connotations with early literature along with mysticism. What went wrong was a subservience not to reasoned experience and inference but succumbing to emotions, the fantastical, the imagination of a superstitious world view. And early writers were to blame. Hippocrates' views of occultic agency kept the possibility alive for such beliefs amongst the better educated. This "occultic agency" of a revered authority would reappear with Newton, as will be shown, and his concept of the ether and imponderables. It was this unknown discursive space which threatened science and order when the major object of study should have been the reasoned, practical investigations of the workings of the human body. The "passion" that "haunts" is the inverse of the proper method of the physician where reason enlightens on a temperate path. The imaginative faculty was an apparition, an illusion and Ferriar's almost gothic use of language to make a historical inference. This historical inference was a warning to future practitioners and an advocacy for an impartial passion-less ethos.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 41

## An Essay Towards a Theory of Apparitions

In 1813, Ferriar publish *An Essay Towards a Theory of Apparitions*. It is an attempt to explain supernatural sightings and phenomena through the lens of Lockean thought and is a good example of enlightenment philosophy through a growing physiological-centered basis. Ferriar was not a materialist. Like many natural theologians, scripture and its miracles were not up for scientific explanation or rebuttal. However, outside the text of scripture, he discounted supernatural phenomena, regardless of the credibility of the witness or the “authenticated report.” It is this essay which would go on to influence subsequent skeptical literature both fictional and non-fiction.

For Ferriar, all hallucinations could be explained by memory recalling itself to the mind in vivid form through the imagination.<sup>67</sup> Ferriar applied this to many categories, from the after-effects of strained eyesight to the supernatural. He held that the brain and the improper working of memory declared its sickness by the symptom of a hallucination. This did not necessarily mean madness, just a problem analogous to any other physical one, different in degree and liable to affect anyone, even Ferriar.<sup>68</sup> He even suffered from seeing an apparition while in a fainting fit but knew it was a physiological side-effect.<sup>69</sup> Ferriar wanted to make hallucinations a part of everyday life,

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<sup>67</sup> Ferriar, “An Essay Towards a Theory of Apparitions,” 20, 28, 41,123.

<sup>68</sup> Ferriar, *An Essay Towards*, 17.

<sup>69</sup> Ferriar, *An Essay Towards*, 123.

a common place phenomena that crossed class and gender lines. In the true spirit of reform, he saw his treatise as a way to help those who had suffered to know that their malady was neither supernatural nor totally uncommon. The same call for reform of Poor Laws and urban planning is echoed under the rubric of personal and public overlap where the moral economy dependent on right, rational thinking for the proper functioning of society.

The imaginative faculty created hallucinations by being stimulated by emotions and the outside world. Once the diagnosis had been made the physician could then help the patient, by helping them develop inferential abilities that would allow them to resist viewing their hallucinations as objectively real; and by administering different treatments, medical and mental counselling by a trained specialist.

Ferriar saw mental illness as based in the brain and body and that medicine and habit could alleviate symptoms and even affect a cure. An irritated brain could hallucinate everything from motes to spiders.<sup>70</sup> Hallucination was not only used for those considered mentally ill, but also for those accused of enthusiasm, and especially against non-conformists.<sup>71</sup> This made it a possible threat to public order as many sought to propagate radical ideas through the testimony of visions and prophecies.

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<sup>70</sup> Ferriar, *Towards a Theory*, 32.

<sup>71</sup> Sasha Hendley. *Visions of an Unseen World: Ghost Beliefs and Ghost Stories in Eighteenth Century England*. (New York: Routledge, 2016) loc 3561.

This narrative act of classification allowed skeptical physicians to describe any anomalous phenomena as a form of mental abnormality. In his writings, Ferriar redacts the testimonial process, making the narratives in his book analogous to his authority to admit or reject patients to asylums.<sup>72</sup> Two examples are quite telling in that it shows Ferriar as physician and comedic writer of the rational supernatural:

I have been forced to listen with much gravity, to a man partially insane, who assured me that the devil was lodged in his side, and that I should perceive him thumping and fluttering there, in a manner which would perfectly convince me of his presence.

Another lunatic believed that he had swallowed the devil and had retained him in his stomach. He resisted the calls of nature during several days, lest the foul fiend be set at liberty. I overcame his liberty, however, by administering an emetic in his food.<sup>73</sup>

This recalls the closed case narratives of his *Medical Histories and Reflections* and other medical writing from physicians at asylums that encapsulate a patient's narrative into a case format where the supposed raving is usually paraphrased or kept out. The small case narrative usually ended with a prescription and cure/no cure. Here Ferriar retains that format of the physician/author/editor format but also portrays a comical take

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<sup>72</sup> Leonard Smith, 108,111-112.

<sup>73</sup> Ferriar, "An Essay Towards," 34.



on the rational supernatural. Here the physician is the exorcist and gothic author, the narrative ending in a cure and a figurative and literal catharsis.

Ferriar's theory explained why almost all sightings were singular and multiple witnesses were a rarity. When they occurred, hallucinations by multiple people were the product of contagious hallucination, as he argued had been seen in the witch trials.<sup>74</sup> This happens due to fixed notions latently in the brain that are stimulated by an event or disequilibrium in the body. Ferriar referred to this as "latent lunacy" which was difficult to diagnose. It is because of this that religious people are more likely than others to suffer from enthusiasm, ecstasy or demonic oppression.<sup>75</sup> Because of the liability of imaginative minds towards hallucination, the testimony of many witnesses or even competent witnesses was simply not enough to establish the real existence of supernatural phenomena, especially given the superstitious context, imagination or credulity of many such witnesses.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, Ferriar noted that the apparitions and demons which people saw were not particularly creative. The very ghosts people saw were mundane. The demons always resembled those seen at churches or spoken of in folk tales. Ferriar saw them the same way he looked at Sterne's writing: one had to find the strands of origins for ideas and see the imagination plagiarizing memory. This betrayed a mundane sociological explanation for their very hallucinations: their minds were simply

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<sup>74</sup> Ferriar, *An Essay Towards*, 37.

<sup>75</sup> Ferriar, *An Essay Towards*, 111.

<sup>76</sup> Ferriar, *On Popular Illusions*, 46.

reproducing the familiar in an unfamiliar manner. Citing the *Daemonolatreia* of Remy (1583), Ferriar remarks that Remy sought to question people accused of witchcraft about the very features of demons, “yet, nothing transpired...which varied from the usual figures exhibited by the gross sculptures and paintings of the middle age.”<sup>77</sup> As a result, testimony on its own was worthless. It needed the redaction and narrative context only the specialist could give it.

Being a proponent of natural theology, Ferriar’s use of testimony only deals with profane history. His book cites in long sections of reproduced narratives of testimony of advocates of ecstasy, enthusiasm, witchcraft and second sight. Ferriar was born along the Scottish borderland and studied at the University of Edinburgh. That a member of the “urban renaissance” and student of the Scottish enlightenment chose such narratives is not surprising. Hibbert and Scott would do the same, as would Crowe, to the opposite purpose, who spent several years in Edinburgh. Ferriar explains away second-sight and gives two instances from the testimony of a friend and narratives.<sup>78</sup> This leads him to cite narratives and examples of enthusiasm and prophecy, most of which take place during times of great political upheaval: Joan of Arc, Kotter, a Polish Prophetess and the royalist Seer Arise Evans.<sup>79</sup> For Ferriar, there was a definite correlation between religious morbidity and hallucinations. When this was compounded with other diseases such as epilepsy, it could accentuate the symptoms. What so many took as visions of the divine and communication from God were a diseased body. In early nineteenth century Britain, such testimony and experiences of divinely inspired

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<sup>77</sup> Ferriar, *An Essay Towards*, 38.

<sup>78</sup> Ferriar, *An Essay Towards*, 63-70.

<sup>79</sup> Ferriar, *An Essay Towards*, 76-86.

political upheaval were still being disseminated through publication and meeting.

Ferriar's argument against the prophecy and demonology of the past was directed toward the present conflicts taking place in Britain.

Indeed, even a scholar like Beaumont, described by Ferriar as a hypochondriac, wrote a book which Ferriar regarded as totally credulous, and only important in that it served as a case book for,

Physicians have sometimes occasion to regret the prolixity of the statements which they receive from their patients...It is, however very much to my purpose, for it exhibits the disease of spectral vision, in its full strength and permanency.<sup>80</sup>

The blanket dismal of Beaumont and others was spurred by what Ingram claims was, "the self-confidence of the professionals" who created a "new rhetoric for the expanding theories about madness and its cure, but in doing so, also helped to silence what the mad could have to say for themselves."<sup>81</sup> In Ferriar's work, Beaumont is allowed to speak but it is an excerpt and placed against a supposed better witness. Sydenham heavily influenced Ferriar and he was also dismissive of taking patient testimony as anything but as a symptom of madness based on a mechanistic explanation.<sup>82</sup> This blend of suppressive narrative was totally in line with many physicians at asylums and here Ferriar carried it over into his work.

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<sup>80</sup> Ferriar, *An Essay Towards*, 69.

<sup>81</sup> Ingram, 17.

<sup>82</sup> Ingram, 24.

Based on his theory, Beaumont was simply witnessing an outward materialization of his fancy, further evidenced by the fact that he is the only one who sees it. For Ferriar, he was a hypochondriac who read too much of Plato.<sup>83</sup> Ferrier wanted to show the mind as the epicenter of the phenomena which Beaumont described: any philosophy which posited an outside spiritual intermediary was simply condoning ancient superstition and, more dangerously, helping to create more hallucinatory episodes. Natural philosophy and natural theology looked upon Platonic thought and metaphysics as being outside the knowable realm of enquiry.

The best way to combat such phenomena was to find recourse to the medical and religious establishment. Ferriar saw belief in apparitions and the supernatural the same way he looked upon typhoid and fever, as something that had to be quarantined. It was this, and not speculation and recourse to abstruse metaphysics, that produced results. He admitted years earlier in 1792 that it was dangerous to develop a theory based on too few cases in such a young field of experiential research, and that developing such a system could in fact be dangerous.<sup>84</sup> It seems that by 1813 he felt confident enough in having accumulated enough cases to decide that there was nothing in a supernatural experience that could not be traced back to the mind. By this time he had partly inspired Percival's *Medical Ethics*, a joint venture with Percival in opening a hospital for poor people suffering from mental health and successfully set up Manchester's Board of Health in 1796.<sup>85</sup> His writings on the supernatural was an extension of his professional status of the gentleman physician. Fighting for shorter

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<sup>83</sup> Ferriar, *An Essay Towards*, 66.

<sup>84</sup> John Ferriar. *Medical Histories and Reflections*. (London: W. Eyres, 1792) v-ix.

<sup>85</sup> Smith, Leonard. *Lunatic hospitals in Georgian England, 1750-1830*. (Routledge, 2014) p. 95.

working hours, like fighting against testimonial-based societal superstition, both helped create a more progressive society and staved off discontent within the mind and by extension the state.<sup>86</sup>

### **Nicolai the Bookseller**

A case employed by Ferriar, and later by Hibbert and Scott, was that of Nicolai the Bookseller.<sup>87</sup> Christoph Friedrich Nicolai (1733-1811) was a bookseller in Berlin who moved amongst the top German literati and philosophical circles. In 1790-1791 he had a period of visual hallucinations which he noted down in detail. Being of a skeptical bent and shunning scholastic and ecclesiastical tradition, Nicolai concluded that his hallucinations were a product of his own mind coupled with a fever. His testimony shows a careful self-introspection which allowed his fellow skeptics to learn about the experience in depth. Ferriar's book is only 150 pages long but he reprints almost the whole of Nicolai's narrative, which takes up fifteen pages.

The narrative is important: it shows that once one takes away superstition from the event then it becomes clear there is nothing supernatural about it. It is medical treatment which heals the mind and exorcises spirits. It is the physician, trained and gentlemanly, whose ability to hear and inspect the words and body of the patient and create the medical miracle of the cure. Ferriar places it as proof of the saving power of advancements in physiology and science. In seeking to call the objective validity of testimony into question, Ferriar uses testimony. It is a testimony that upholds his theories of a physiological explanation and ends in a verifiable outcome. Testimony had

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<sup>86</sup> "Jon Ferriar." <http://www.thornber.net/cheshire/ideasmen/ferriar.html>

<sup>87</sup> McCorry, 40.

its place but only where the trained professional places it. Ferriar cites Beaumont, Bovet and Remy but he endorses Nicolai's narrative. Nicolai's testimony is one that results in medical closure and a cure, whereas the others end up in uncontrolled madness, violent persecutions or religious mania: their testimony are a narrative of chaos and regression.

Outside of sacred history, anything supernatural could not possibly happen as it contravened natural law which was divine in nature. This was reinforced by Ferriar pointing out the impact of surroundings and the importance of context for the proclivity of the mind to hallucination, which "must be powerfully aided, and increased, by peculiar circumstances of time and place."<sup>88</sup> A hallucination was not occultic knowledge but simply the hidden working of an unbalanced brain. Indeed, even culture had a role, as the proliferation of host sightings during the inter-regnum period was chiefly to be blamed on the strict and melancholic disposition of Puritan fervor - such an ambience could make delusions contagious. This was an extension of Locke's ideas of association whereby arbitrary events, concepts and images get connected through no rational connection. Ferriar is employing the testimony of experiential philosophy's pioneer. Locke and Nicolai can be trusted to interpret such events and their testimony added in favour of right-thinking as opposed to the incoherent narratives of those who accept their experience of the supernatural as objective.<sup>89</sup> He described Nicolai's testimony as the "most remarkable and decisive narrative of its kind."<sup>90</sup> Nicolai does not end up a prisoner to his visions or narrative, however creative it might be. Nicolai seeks

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<sup>88</sup> Ferriar, *An Essay Towards*, 117.

<sup>89</sup> For a short but comprehensive look at the optical nature of the argument as set by Ferriar, Hibbert and Scott, see Srdjan Smajic. *Ghost Seers, Detectives and Spiritualists: Theories of Vision in Victorian Literature and Science*. "Chapter 2. The Rise of Optical Illusions." (Cambridge: CUP, 2010).

<sup>90</sup> Ferriar, *An Essay Towards*, 41.

help in the proper channels and is helped. For Ferriar, returning to be a productive, rational member of society was the goal of the infirmary.

Ferriar placed Beaumont and Nicolai together for a very good reason: discursive juxtaposition. Beaumont the platonic philosopher who represents an older period when physicians studied demonology and Nicolai, the enlightened, rational one who looks to the proper medical authorities while judicially writing his own experience down in the protestant ethos of self-introspection. His madness represented a growing philosophy by some physicians that the patient bore responsibility to heal one's self, of publishing narratives of patients who realized that they were insane during the time of the mental malady.<sup>91</sup>

*An Essay Towards a Theory of Apparitions* is written in the essay form, contains the medical history-case format, and abounds in secondary testimony to argue Ferriar's case. There is, however, another aspect to Ferriar's work that was touched upon earlier in a comic-Gothic aspect. Ferriar begins his book by lamenting the literature of the period, where machinations provide the explanation of supernatural occurrences. He then proceeds to make the ghost a middle-class, quotidian phenomenon:

Another great convenience will be found in my system; apparitions may be evoked, in open day, -at noon, if the case should be urgent, in the midst of a field, on the surface of water, or in the glare of a patent-lamp, quite as easily, as in the 'darkness of chaos or old night.' Nay a person rightly prepared may see ghosts, while seated comfortably by his library fire, in

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<sup>91</sup> Ingram, 141.

as much perfection, as amidst broken tombs, nodding ruins, and awe-inspiring ivy.<sup>92</sup>

Here Ferriar becomes the physician, the conjurer of the dead, the gothic author offering “rational amusement.”<sup>93</sup> The apparition, conjured by an excited imagination upon the sensorium makes the observer a gothic text to be read by the physician. His “system” becomes the proper place to read the sensorium as expressed in experience. Ferriar here is picturesque, gothic but even realist. His apparitions are the kind real people do see. This playful matter-of-fact take and comic attitude is almost Dickensian in its use of the everyday supernatural occurrence as indicative of a faulted mental state. Crowe would look at this common-place aspect of sightings and draw separate conclusions from both Ferriar and Dickens.

Ferriar’s contribution to the polemic of ghost-seeing and testimony would prove highly influential. It would be referenced throughout the nineteenth century in discussions of the supernatural.<sup>94</sup> Being an authority on quarantining diseased areas of a city<sup>95</sup> and the mentally ill in institutions, he wished to extend his skills into the chaotic predisposition to hallucinate. One major way to do that was to attack the ability of the untrained to testify to the verity of what they encountered. The most judicious testimony was analogous to pious educated people of the past, and the crowds of multiple testimony to witch hunts. It is for that reason that Ferriar cites at length trained judges

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<sup>92</sup> Ferriar, *An Essay Towards*, viii.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> See John Abercrombie. *Inquiries Concerning the Intellectual Powers and the Investigation of Truth*. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed. (New York: J&J Harper, 1832) 64-65, 132, 288-292.

<sup>95</sup> See John Eberle. *A Treatise of the Materia Medica and Therapeutics*. 2 Vols. (Philadelphia: Grigg & Elliot) 34-35, 154-155, 170-172, 363-364.



and their past acceptance of testimony that resulted in violence and hangings. As a trained physician, he made a claim for natural philosophy over the shortcomings of testimony and the legal profession in what he saw as the domain of medical science.<sup>96</sup>

He also had a gothic sense of humour:

Take courage, then, good reader, and knock at the portal of my enchanted castle, which will be opened to you, not by a grinning demon, but by a very civil person, in a black velvet cap, with whom you may pass an hour not disagreeably.<sup>97</sup>

Literature, medical and jurisprudential formats intersect. It was Ferriar the physician and author who gives the reader the, “key which I have furnished, the reader of history is released from the embarrassment of rejecting evidence, in some of the plainest narratives, or of experiencing uneasy doubts, when the solution might be perfectly simple.”<sup>98</sup> The “key,” “system” is the physician’s therapy for not only a healthy body but also a healthy mind.

### **Sir Walter Scott**

Members of the medical profession were not the only group interested in seeing spirits laid to rest. Sir Walter Scott joined in the polemic with *Letters on Daemonology and Witchcraft* (1830). Scott approached the problem from his area of expertise of law

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<sup>96</sup> Ferriar, *An Essay Towards*, 40.

<sup>97</sup> Ferriar, ix.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

and writing by attacking the problematic nature of testimony and the ability of the imagination to be destructive when outside its literary discipline.<sup>99</sup>

Scott ascended to the Bar in 1792 and became Clerk of Scotland in 1806. What is interesting during this period is it ran concurrent with Scott's romantic verse and a push to limit English reform of Scottish jurisprudence – something that Colquhoun also took part in. This bears importance to *Letters on Demonology* for one of Scott's arguments with the Scottish Reform bill was its desire to enact a trial by jury in Scotland. Scott did not value trial by jury, and as Chittick points out, saw it as more show than substance: "We can listen to the cabalistic sound of Trial by Jury [which he compares to a kind of abracadabra]...and retain the entire possession of our form and senses."<sup>100</sup> However, as Scott turned to historical writing, he began to look at the Scottish law post Union as an improvement of corrupt judges.<sup>101</sup> This is reflected in *Letters on Demonology* where both the role of testimony, jury by trial and jurisprudence in general are lambasted.

*Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* is written as a historical, ethnological and philosophical work but it also contains literary aspects. Stories make up a large part of the text. However, the text itself has linear, progressive movement. What concerns this thesis is how Scott maintains the resurgent role of superstition and regression within a socio-political-jurisprudential context:

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<sup>99</sup> Victor Sage. "Scott, Hoffman, and the Persistence of the Gothic." *Popular Revenants: German Gothic and Its Popular Reception 1800-2000*. Ed. Andrew Cusack and Barry Murnane (New York: Boydell & Brewer, 2012) 76.

<sup>100</sup> Kathryn Chittick. "Walter Scott and the Reform of the Scottish Judicature 1806-1810." *The Journal of Legal History*. Vol.36, No. 3 2015, 236-259: 256.

<sup>101</sup> Chittick, 258-259.

Our account of Demonology in England must naturally, as in every other country, depend chiefly on the instances which history contains of the laws and prosecutions against witchcraft...But when the alarm of witchcraft arises, Superstition dips her hand in the blood of persons accused, and records in the annals of jurisprudence their trials, and the causes alleged in vindication of their execution. Respecting other fantastic allegations, the proof is necessarily transient and doubtful, depending on the inaccurate testimony of vague report...we have before us the recorded evidence upon which judge and jury acted...<sup>102</sup>

This is essentially the thesis of the work but is placed in the middle since it is around this section that most of the chaos and bloodshed of the witch trial take place. If it were a play, it would be the third act, in a novel the apex of the plot. What is even more significant is that Scott attacks the legal world just as Ferriar attacked physicians who failed their discipline. Here, it is the jurisprudential world which fuels the contagion of the populace by enacting laws. The legal world becomes a tool of superstition, evidence is doubtful and testimony, that traditional bulwark against injustice becomes the primary method people are sent to their death. Scott, writing in a post enlightenment mindset when a new epistemological virtue of objectivity was gaining force, turns the earlier method of empiricism in which demonology thrived as an epistemology of the past. It is the corrupt judge and statesmen and the gullible populace that represent the forces of darkness, the esoteric ramblings of legal and 'cabalistic' argument. It is only fitting that in this section of his work, Scott give the reader a hero to counteract this: the

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<sup>102</sup> Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, 239.

physician and natural philosopher.<sup>103</sup> Amidst the vain testimony of enthused dissenters, Catholics, testimony of children and girls in fits led by witch finding generals, The “torch of Science” appears and the Royal Society signals a change in political desire to find a median path in jurisprudence.<sup>104</sup> When science leads and the state follows, progress ensues.

However, the story does not end with calm judging acquitting women to the chagrin of angry mobs who use the literal weight of Bibles as evidence.<sup>105</sup> There is still on superstition that will not die down and that is the sighting of apparitions and it is here Scott continued his attack on the validity of testimony. However, the reader is taken from the courtroom and sabbath to the domestic setting of societal gatherings where most discourse takes place:

This difficulty (forsaking gentlemanly manners to question an amusing story) will appear greater, should the company have the rare good fortune to meet the person who himself witnessed the wonders which he tells; a well-bred or prudent man will, under such circumstances, abstain from using the rules of cross examination practiced in a court of justice; and if in any case he presumes to do so, he is in danger of receiving answers, even from the most candid and honourable persons, which are rather

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<sup>103</sup> Scott, 185, 188.

<sup>104</sup> Scott, 256.

<sup>105</sup> Scott, 268. Here Scott is clearly showing a macabre aspect of the concept “weighing evidence.” Its purpose is to show both the populace and men of law using faulted reasoning to seek a conviction.

fitted to support the credit of the story which they stand committed to maintain, than to the service of pure unadorned truth.<sup>106</sup>

Scott's rhetoric here displays a new ethos of observation: a will to will-lessness and an ethos of impartial observation. Testimony from people of credit, honourable people does not make their testimony credible. Another popular legal strategy that was gaining eminence also becomes the antithesis to earlier acceptance of testimony wholesale: cross-examination. Testimony is weighed, not against a large Bible, or Biblical matter for that matter, but it becomes weighed against natural law and the normative ideas of what is probable. It is under cross-examination that the story does not hold. Lacunae appear and there is the rising cognizance that people tend to stick with their version and unknowingly embellish or fill in overlooked details. Cross-examination is just that, an examination of textual and narrative results by a trained lawyer the same way the natural philosopher examines result and places them against known laws. Ghost stories could amuse at a gathering but the possible ramifications of taking them seriously echoes the past and the violence of previous popular outbursts of superstition. Testimony of the supernatural could exist in its proper confines of occasion and genre. Crowe would turn this domestic gathering and use of cross examination into a literature of epistemological pluralism as will be shown.

Scott, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh as well, attacked gothic literature, increasingly viewed as a German genre, ushered in a mode of historical fiction as a contrast – even though in practice he did not always live up to his self-

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<sup>106</sup> Scott, 344-345.

imposed theories. His non-fictional writing also blurred historical, literary and philosophical lines. He tried to demonstrate that humanity is slowly divesting itself of superstition as knowledge and science progress. His writing may have incorporated the ideas of romance, gothic and romantic element but his ideology was one rooted in natural theology, the gentleman researcher and a belief in progress tied to the normative order of British pragmatism, Scottish “common sense” philosophy. *Letters on Daemonology* is an ethnological look at superstition and supernatural phenomena through a historical study but it is based on a mode of storytelling.

It is also a retort to previous methods of jurisprudence and the primacy of eye-witness testimony. As Ferriar lambasted previous physicians in his essay “On Illusions,” Scott did likewise, showing the complexity of both testimony and historical writing.

Echoing Ferrier, he writes, “In all, or any of these cases, who shall doubt that imagination, favoured by circumstances, has power to summon up the organ of sight, spectres which only exist in the mind of those by whom their apparition seems to be witnessed?”<sup>107</sup> For Scott, this was a personal matter as well as a sociological one. He had many friends and acquaintances that had delved into the supernatural with disastrous consequences such as James Bellantyne and Robert Pearse Gilles.<sup>108</sup>

Being a lawyer, Scott argued that most cases of sightings would have been easily explainable if only the people involved had done a little more self-inferential research around the circumstances of the supposed supernatural event.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Walter Scott. *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*. (London: John Murray, 1847) 6.

<sup>108</sup> Coleman O Parsons. “Scott’s Fellow Demonologists.” *Modern Language Quarterly* (1943) 4 (4): 473-494, 484-486.

<sup>109</sup> Scott, 5.

In a letter to a Mrs. Hughes who claimed to have seen a ghost, Scott writes:

Your recollection is very vivid & I doubt not sufficiently correct; still, it falls short of legal testimony...Our law has wisely, I think, introduced a prescription of crimes, from the idea that human testimony becomes unsettled by lapse of time & would be directed more by the imagination than the absolute recollection...I wish you would write down Mrs. Rickett's story as well as you remember it. Every such story on respectable foundation is a chapter on the human mind. Still I think the balance of evidence preponderates so heavily upon the side of imputing all such appearances to natural causes...I have been so long both a reader and a writer of such goodly matters 'Dourness familiar to my slaughterous thoughts/ Cannot e'en startle me.'<sup>110</sup>

We are back to that domestic gathering through the medium of letter exchanging and allowing the public in a personal interchange, blurring the line between the private and public which characterized the nineteenth century. Like Ferriar and Hibbert, Scott thought these stories were amusing and shed light on the pathology of the mind. That was their scientific and literary worth. They would receive no credit in the legal world or even the scientific one as concrete data for an immaterial ontology. The prescription of the law and that of the physician becomes paramount. The new epistemology of observation and objectivity could not allow Mrs. Rickett's story to be another Mrs. Veal's story. The balance of evidence as that of the new epistemic virtues weigh against it. In a

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<sup>110</sup> "Sir Walter Scott on Ghosts." *The Journal of Education*, Vol. 58. No. 5 23 July 1903: 4-5.

world of quarantine, public health awareness and branching discipline, the veridical testimony of ghost-seeing was relegated to the imagination, the realm of fiction. Scott answer's Mrs. Hugh's second-hand testimony with a quote from Macbeth. That he chooses a mentally chaotic individual in a quote that reminds one of Coleridge's dismal of ghosts, not believing in any because he had seen so many himself, Scott portrays the accumulation of evidence as not cause for seriousness but polite, gentlemanly deflection.

*Letters* was meant to be taken as a historical study with philosophical reasoning. It seeks to relate truth expressed by a world governed by natural laws that operate according to a causal relationship, and of a society constantly progressing with advancements in science. Scott echoes Burke's and Hume's distrust of enthusiasm and prophecy, which carried radical ideas and called into question institutional authority. In his view, the fear of the multitude being led by visions and superstition was threatening the nation's progress.<sup>111</sup> However, many of Scott's narratives are related in story-like manner, and he cites poetry at length. This calls into question his condemnation of the role of tales and stories in spreading detrimental beliefs and ideas. Many of his true events are related as if they were short stories. They have a seemingly unexplainable event that is soon solved by a protagonist who refuses to settle for a traditional or superstitious explanation.

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<sup>111</sup> Jon Mee. *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 84-86.



Reaction to Scott's work was mixed. Coleman O. Parsons' treatment of its reception and attempt at compromise by Scott is comprehensive. He shows the public and many of Scott's friends had reservations about Scott's insistence on explaining all supernatural occurrence away in favour of scientific and intellectual progress. Many pointed out that they enjoyed reading his work but felt he had divested reality of the fantastical.<sup>112</sup> Scott wanted, as did Hibbert, to make the "New Athens" of Edinburgh and hence Scotland a symbol of progress. One way to do this was to narratively exorcise the remnants of the past from ghosts, witches to Jacobins. The order of the rational mind and the order of the state were intertwined. The supernatural as a tale was entertainment, as testimony is could be a threat. As with Hibbert and Ferriar, literature could entertain and allowed the imagination free run but like sacred and profane history, there was a demarcation between where and when they could be employed. A prophetic bard or actual ghost was fine in fiction; in society, it could call into question rationality and institutionalized order.

Scott argued that once any testimony is accepted as probable, then almost anything can be accepted, *prima facie*, as veridical.<sup>113</sup> It is the authoritative voice of reason as seen in the work of physicians, philosophers and the church that clarify the truth behind events of their respective disciplines of knowledge. Imagination is an intrusive force that derails any sensible explanation of any supernatural appearance.<sup>114</sup> In all other contexts, however, imagination is tied to "walking reverie" and a "system of deception" – even if it was not purposefully so – when it applied to an attempt to

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<sup>112</sup> Coleman O. Parsons. *Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott*. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964).

<sup>113</sup> Scott, 13-14.

<sup>114</sup> Scott, 46.

objectively propose a fact.<sup>115</sup> Any attempt to validate a mass hallucination as objectively valid thus constituted a step back in the progress of history.

### **Samuel Hibbert**

Ferrier's essay provided the inspiration and basis for Samuel Hibbert's *Sketches of the Philosophy of Apparitions; or, an Attempt to Trace Such Illusions to Their Physical Causes* (1824). Hibbert was also a member of the Manchester and Literary and Philosophical Society and a member of the Royal Edinburgh Society who wrote a three-volume history on the city of Manchester.<sup>116</sup> The Manchester Literary & Philosophical Society sought to promote intellectual life in Manchester and its environs. It propagated the concept of the "urban enlightenment" and had ties to Edinburgh. This notion of progress covered areas from scientific and applied technology to combating superstition.<sup>117</sup> He was also a medically trained doctor (who never practiced) and antiquarian who studied geology, finding the first traces of chromate iron in the Shetland Islands. He was a proponent of studying origins and showing the trajectory of progress. Like many of the intellectuals in Manchester and Edinburgh he was a trained professional, a gentleman from one of the major families of Manchester with scientific and literary proclivities.

His major work, *Sketches of the Philosophy of Apparitions* (1825) was inspired by the excited reception to a paper he gave on apparitions before the Royal Edinburgh

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<sup>115</sup> Scott, 344.

<sup>116</sup> Samuel Hibbert. *History of the Foundations of Manchester*. (Manchester: Thomas Agnew, 1832).

<sup>117</sup> D.S.L. Cardwell. *The Organization of Science in England*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.) 22-23,63.

Society on March 3rd, 1824. It was an elaboration of Ferrier's *Essay*. Hibbert uses Ferrier's cited cases, discusses different mental states in detail, and confidently declares that he can explain most kinds of hallucinations. He claimed, like Ferrier, "that apparitions are nothing more than idea, or the recollected images of the mind, which have been rendered as vivid as actual impressions."<sup>118</sup> Hibbert, notwithstanding never having practiced as a physician, claimed that Ferrier's thesis was too vague and that his work would provide a better theory of supernatural phenomena tying it to the blood and nerve fibres. Hibbert's work is meant to look at the supernatural as a method to understanding physiological process, making it a proper, practical scientific study rather than a book on metaphysical speculation.<sup>119</sup>

Hibbert saw any impediment to the proper operation of the intellect as a possible stimulus to delusionary episodes.<sup>120</sup> In this respect, he was like Ferrier. However, Hibbert's work is a conscious attempt to go beyond the skeptical arguments of the past and look at "illusions in a different light" and for him this means ascertaining laws on how the mind produces illusions. He sought to go beyond a discussion of superstition and philosophy to one based on physiological laws. His work was fueled, not by curiosity to no purpose: "a theory of apparitions is inseparably connected with the pathology of the human mind."<sup>121</sup> There was a need to study the phenomena as it represented the workings of the mind, giving his book an air of utility in researching the growth of popular belief as well.

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<sup>118</sup> Samuel Hibbert. *Sketches of the Philosophy of Apparition*. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1825) p. 51.

<sup>119</sup> Hibbert, viii.

<sup>120</sup> Hibbert, vi.

<sup>121</sup> Hibbert, 13-14.

Like Ferriar, Hibbert maintained that hallucinations were natural. What made them potentially dangerous was the tendency of those who experienced them to believe they were objectively real, or even held metaphysical truths. Hibbert was convinced that in an age that valued information and knowledge, “it is time these illusions should be viewed in a different light”, and that this entailed delineating how the blood and nervous system work upon the mind to produce hallucinations.<sup>122</sup> He wanted to formulate laws and leave speculation aside and does so by tying blood and the brain in an excited state, thus attempting to create a “pathology of the human mind.”<sup>123</sup>

Testimony for Hibbert was unimportant when the witness was not trained. In *Sketches* he ridicules past accounts of eye-witness reports, even those with a judicial or clerical stamp:

The object, then, to be held in view in this department of our enquiry, is simply this:-While an attempt will be made will be made to apply the medical cases which have been adduced towards the explanation of many supposed visitations of good and evil spirits, it will always be necessary to demonstrate in which manner the subject of the illusions thus induced has corresponded with the fanciful imagery which owes its origin to various preconceived superstitions. In connexion, likewise, with the illustrations which I shall adduce of the morbid origin of many supernatural visitants recorded in popular narratives.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> McCorristine, 56.

<sup>123</sup> Hibbert, 14.

<sup>124</sup> Hibbert 136.

Testimony is subservient to Hibbert's thesis here. The medical case and the popular narrative are both textual evidence of a pathological condition. Even the most "authentic" narrations are sometimes difficult to categorize because not all the relevant information about the witness or context is known to properly adjudicate.<sup>125</sup> Like Scott, Hibbert places the propagation of belief in apparitions as reoccurring to the socio-historical context.<sup>126</sup>

He cites Nicolai's case in full, making it the longest narrative in his text, and judges all other examples against it. In fact, he copies Ferrier's format in that he places Nicolai's text, follows it by alluding to Beaumont, and ends with a journal entry showing a respected gentleman who had been a target for demonic obsession:

It is apparent from this confession (Nicolai's), as well from that of Beaumont, that when any phantasm has the effect of exciting strong emotions of the mind, the illusion may not only be prolonged and repeated.<sup>127</sup>

Hibbert here becomes the expert, even surpassing Nicolai's understanding of his own experience. Beaumont the "Platonic philosopher" and Nicolai the enlightened rationalist.

However, it is Nicolai's testimony that is quoted over and over again to explain the various stages of hallucination and is tied to Hibbert's tabular explanations.<sup>128</sup> This may have been due to his lack of personal experience in the medical field but it is held up as

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<sup>125</sup> Hibbert 148, 231

<sup>126</sup> Hibbert 213.

<sup>127</sup> Hibbert, 303.

<sup>128</sup> Hibbert, 7, 9, 61, 282, 293, 301, 314

the testimony par excellence where the patient's words are accepted because they concur with Hibbert's hypotheses.

Nicolai, unlike Beaumont, was able to refuse interacting with his apparitions, indeed, even with his own mind. He typified the kind of thinker that would go on to become the ideal scientist. His testimony was an example of what Daston refers to as a "genius of observation" of a new epistemological virtue of the "savant" and a will to willessness.<sup>129</sup> Beaumont was an example of the past, predating even enlightenment principles and conjuring the discourse of earlier empiric daemonology which had compromised many of the greatest mind. Nicolai became the testimony to the future, the proper, trained observer.

Hibbert, in the scientific spirit of his age, even developed a series of tables with co-ordinates axes to show the relationship between impressions and emotional excitement. The use of tables had only recently been developed, and it shows a desire to categorize the phenomena of emotional excitement and hallucinations using the latest methods of natural philosophy.<sup>130</sup> He defends this in the text by stating:

I should be induced to attempt a sort of tabular view of the various degrees of vividness to which our mental feelings are liable, it can have no other claim to regard than as a formula which, in the language of mathematicians, is *empirical*, or purely experimental. It is in fact, a result obtained by repeated trials, the effect of which is rather to give an artificial consistency to certain successions of mental phenomena, than to produce

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<sup>129</sup> Daston, *Objectivity*, 201-204.

<sup>130</sup> David Wotton. *The Invention of Science*. (London: Penguin Random House, 2015) 564.

the conviction that the formula is in every respect agreeable to truth and nature.<sup>131</sup>

Hibbert may disavow the accuracy of his formula but he does ground it in the discourse of mathematics, empiricism and repeated experimentation (which he does not elucidate unless he means the testimony from others). Conviction may not be his objective, but this apology as explanation and disavowal does not carry much weight as he also uses them very much in the second part of his book to great effect. They become part and parcel of the testimony he presents acting as a visual illustration of his laws.

Hibbert goes into depth with categorization of mental hallucination, breaking the segments down to categorical stages of: Law, Section, Transition in the Table, to Stage. One example is Section III, Transition (the 5<sup>th</sup> in the Table) From perfect Sleep to common Dreams and Somnambulism, 4<sup>th</sup> Stage of Excitement. Hibbert prefaces the testimony by stating:

“I shall now illustrate this stage of excitement by a case given on the authority of Mr. Smellie, in his Philosophy of Natural History, wherein it is perfectly clear that ideas were more vivid than sensations. The individual who walked in her sleep was a servant-girl residing near Edinburgh. It will be likewise evident from the ensuing narrative...”<sup>132</sup>

Here the testimony is prefaced by an explanation which limits its interpretation, its authority admissible because its author wrote a credible book. It ends as a number in a

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<sup>131</sup> Hibbert, 391-392.

<sup>132</sup> Hibbert, 404.

table to represent it. This juxtaposition is made more prominent given that the testimony involves a somnambule thinking she is being chased by a raging bull. What is “perfectly clear” to Hibbert is his idea of subsuming the testimony into numerical data. The inverse relationship between the body and mind seesaw and with it the vividness of either reality or hallucination. The one constant is Hibbert’s ability to use a mathematical and narrative format within the page and tabular box. Once the phenomena are explained then the intellect of the patient can begin to truly understand its experiences and can begin to return to normality.

Copying Ferrier’s format is not rare instance of Hibbert not redacting a text.<sup>133</sup> Hibbert quotes many traditional authorities on the soul, showing how the soul has slowly been replaced with the brain and mind. These authoritative excerpts were placed to put Hibbert as a culmination of investigation into how the body and brain interact.<sup>134</sup>

Hibbert may have taken Ferriar as a starting point, but he goes farther in ascertaining physiological causes. Hibbert claimed that the blood played an integral part in many ways based on his experience of the effects of nitrous oxide on the blood and ensuing illusions. The sanguinary system and its disequilibrium ranging from hereditary disease or taking substances played a vital role in creating “vivifying” influence on the mind and emotions which resulted in spectral illusion.<sup>135</sup> He wanted to take ghost-seeing beyond the realm of the sociological role of superstition, seeing it as inherently a problem in the body due to a constitution that can lie dormant even through generations.

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<sup>133</sup> Hibbert, 22-24, 53-54,73.

<sup>134</sup> Hibbert, Chapters 1-4:

<sup>135</sup> Hibbert, 70-72, 76.



This danger of a faulty mind resulted not only in spectral manifestation, but in the compromising of one's rational faculties of discernment. No greater threat was seen to the medical and scientific profession than the inability to maintain clear interpretations of reality as interpreted by scientific knowledge. Hibbert had for a time subscribed to Millennial beliefs of Dr. John Mitchell which were a source of contention with established theological authorities and the government. It took the long attempt of a devout and traditional scholar to change his fixated mind.<sup>136</sup> He knew first-hand what an erroneous base of thought could lead to if unchecked. Superstitions were the stratified remains of previous ignorance that had, in their time, been considered plausible explanations.

Hibbert, like Ferrier, rarely allows patients' narratives to stand on their own. Even their individuality is erased as they are referred in generic terms. The testimony they give is second to the inferences his verdict gives to them. They are only important as they move the purpose of his narrative of the gradation and seriousness of the hallucinatory experience and its relation to the human body. His *Description of the Shetland Islands* (1822) relishes finding strata and superstitions such as ghosts and second sight along the same lines: both show layers pointing towards a progression of nature and civilization respectively. He shows how the witchcraft of the Shetland Islands originated in Scandinavia and derides the evidential testimony of the law courts who could not differentiate mental disease and its use of medieval trials of endurance for proof.<sup>137</sup> Second sight is also recorded as a curiosity and he cites an episode involving

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<sup>136</sup> Mrs. Hibbert-Ware. *The Life and Correspondences of Samuel Hibbert-Ware*. (Manchester: J.E. Cornish, 1882) 242.

<sup>137</sup> Hibbert, 266-270.

a doctor who sees the spectral form of his patient while riding<sup>138</sup> At the outskirts of Britain Hibbert collects items of belief and tradition and places it, like the testimony of patient's and visionaries, as a narrative of curiosities for the specialists perusal.

Hibbert looks beyond eye-witness testimony in *Sketches*, instead he defers his ideas to authoritative, medical expert testimony. It is placed before the reader arguing a case for physiological causation based on the latest medical research.<sup>139</sup> Like Ferriar, Hibbert's work also shows a literary bent, and a blurring of narrative methods between philosophy, physiology and fiction. Hibbert looked to literary authors to better delineate his ideas or for good explications of hallucinations and mental aberrations.<sup>140</sup> These fictional works exist alongside medical experts and make the writer an expert of human behaviour, something that will be discussed in greater length when Crowe's fiction is addressed. Even though poetry is tied to the imagination and an acute sensitivity that resembles madness, here authors are made to appear as both specialists and fictional case studies. Both doctors and writers become part of Hibbert's narrative.

After publication, Hibbert received letters from readers critical of his position of ghostly attestations they held as verifiable. One Lady Morton discussed a family ghost that haunted the Earl Grey family before someone died (something Scott would deal with at length). It is a case with multiple, credible witnesses. Hibbert's reconstructed response informs the woman that the Earl Grey family had seen the phantom because they were predisposed to do so. He, however, is loath to explain it conclusively as he

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<sup>138</sup> Hibbert, 249.

<sup>139</sup> Hibbert, 61, 76, 273, 330, 344, 368

<sup>140</sup> Hibbert, 49, 319, 355, 415

does not know the context and particulars.<sup>141</sup> Hibbert sees the complexity in the letter of explaining generically what calls for knowledge of for a proper explanation. However, he forgoes this in his book which one can surmise stimulated the sending of letters of verifiable testimony.

However, there is little reason to believe that Hibbert would have compromised his position based on more specifics. His book shows the intertwined workings of the blood, nerves and brain and all sensory perception must find its source there. Hibbert himself had suffered from illusions based on bodily exertions of being undernourished and overworked during his travels in the Shetland Islands.<sup>142</sup> Like Nicolai he had been able to rationally explain his experiences away; however, unlike Nicolai he never stated in printed form what had transpired. His account was in a closed meeting of like-minded intellectuals. Hibbert was a victim earlier in life, but towards the end he had a comic incident of spectral illusion: he saw light at the top of the head and felt a heat on top of it. He ran to Sir David Brewster to tell him that he was experiencing an illusion when Brewster successfully exorcised it by showing him that his night-cap was aflame!<sup>143</sup>

*Sketches* proved popular, going through two additions in as many years after it had been published. However, not everyone was impressed with Hibbert's argument. The *Westminster Review* saw his argument as pretentious and flawed.<sup>144</sup> He was even accused of being an atheist: in a strange coincidence, he struck up a conversation with a lady on a train who discussed his atheist views. Not knowing she was talking to the

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<sup>141</sup> Mrs. Hibbert Ware, 361-364.

<sup>142</sup> Mrs. Hibbert-Ware, 315.

<sup>143</sup> Mrs. Hibbert-Ware, 403-406.

<sup>144</sup> Review. "Hibbert's Philosophy of Apparition." *The Westminster Review* (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, April 1824) 473-490.

author, Hibbert went on to explain the second half of the book in no way touches on sacred history, and she was convinced that Hibbert is in tandem with established doctrine. She was surprised to find out the person she had been talking to be the author himself.<sup>145</sup>

When Dickens' books were auctioned, he had numerous books on supernatural phenomena. His copy of *Sketches* was filled with annotations.<sup>146</sup> Other writers also alluded to it in their work.<sup>147</sup> Though Hibbert was not a materialist, materialists adopted his writings as a good example of tackling veridical and objective supernatural phenomena.<sup>148</sup> It even appeared in freethinking discourse.<sup>149</sup> Though lacking medical expertise, it continued to make an impression on physiologists and mental philosophers.<sup>150</sup>

## Skeptic Chorus

Ferriar, Hibbert and Scott spearheaded the first skeptical works that would influence subsequent literature, fictional and non-fictional, on the supernatural. In *The Fallacy of Ghosts, Dreams, and Omens* (1848), Charles Ollier ridiculed the idea of

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<sup>145</sup> Mrs. Hibbert-Ware, 324-325.

<sup>146</sup> Fred Kaplan. *Dickens and Mesmerism: The Hidden Springs of Fiction*. (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1975) 4.

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<sup>148</sup>Lionel A. Weathley. *The Supernatural?* (London: Simpkin, 1891) 55-56; Andrew Lang. *Cock Lane and Common Sense*. (Longmans, Green & Comp, 1894) 300.

<sup>149</sup>"Weekly Proceedings." *The Critic*. 12 October 1833: 41-42.

<sup>150</sup> Thomas C. Upham. *Elements of Mental Philosophy*. Vol.I (New York: Harper & Bros., 1841) 334, 416; Richard Middlemore. *A Treatise on the Diseases of the Eye and Its Appendages*. Vol. II. (London: Longman, 1835) 238.

ghosts by claiming that, “It would be the triumph of the world of spirits if one of them could maintain its pretensions in the eye of day. This would settle all doubt. But no; they do not dare such an issue...”<sup>151</sup> He credited Dr. Hibbert for doing an “inestimable service to the present age” by exposing the illusory nature of supernatural events. That is not to say that Hibbert did not have his polemical detractors.

In a respectful tone, Newnham disagreed with Hibbert in claiming the pain suffered by martyrs was turned into pleasure. Newnham claims that it is “certainly too absurd to be endured; and only shows how far favourite hypothesis may delude the mind into unreal creations.”<sup>152</sup> Newnham also cited *Past Feelings Renovated* by an anonymous writer in 1828, who castigates Hibbert for laying the groundwork for a completely materialist world view. The author sees Hibbert’s theories as a blanket refusal to take into consideration all the evidence.<sup>153</sup> Newnham’s book however also derides testimony of the supernatural claiming that if one fantastical story is proved false then it can be applied to other fantastical cases (outside the bounds of sacred history).<sup>154</sup>

Ferriar and Hibbert were part of a growing trend towards the acceptance of the scientific expert in British society. They represent a rising professionalism that sought to extend its authority as it became more institutionalized and respectable. Along with Scott, they also represent a northern attempt at intellectual integrity and scientific

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<sup>151</sup> Charles Ollier. *Fallacies of Ghosts, Dreams and Omens*. (London: Ollier, 1848) 5.

<sup>152</sup> William Newnham. *Essay on Superstition: Being an Enquiry into its Effects on the Human Mind*. (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1830) 223-226.

<sup>153</sup> Anonymous. *Past Feelings Renovated: or Ideas Occasioned by a Perusal Dr. Hibbert's "Philosophy of Apparitions"*. (London: Geo B. Whittaker, 1828) 120-121.

<sup>154</sup> Newnham, 179.

progress a conglomeration of professional and amateur class made up of doctors, lawyers and writers. The specialism of the later nineteenth century had yet to fully emerge and these gentleman researchers based on experience in their fields sought to defend the established doctrines of natural theology and natural philosophy from both extremes of thought: the credulous superstition of past ages and the materialism of the continent of French materialist skepticism and German idealism and radicals. They looked to the progression of disciplines and eradication of false ideas as needed for the overall progression of British society into an economic, military and intellectual example of the world's most advanced civilization.

When doctors were given the ability to testify with authority at trial in 1836, it was an epistemological and legal turning point.<sup>155</sup> This, along with the ability for defendants to waive their right to testify on their own behalf that same year, show that the right of testimony was being compromised by the specialized professions of law and medicine.<sup>156</sup> The doctor and the specialist were thus granted enhanced authority to decide whose interpretation of reality was sound and which wasn't. Within this paradigm, clairvoyance, somnambulism and hallucinations were examples of a mind not functioning properly according to authoritative medical institutions. Such a perceived lack of discernment in the non-specialist was a marker of unreliable testimony, and a possible danger to a society which depended on a reasonable populace that followed accepted narratives regarding the nature of reality. Seeing ghosts was also seeing the

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<sup>155</sup> Clive Emsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, "Crime and Justice - Trial Procedures", *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* ([www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org), version 7.0, 18 February 2019)

<sup>156</sup> Jan-Melissa Schramm. *Testimony and Advocacy in Victorian Law, Fiction and Theology*. (Cambridge: CUP, 2000) 54.

past and being haunted by superstition. For Scott, it was a dangerous trace element in society that constantly threatened to break out in regression, primitivism, madness and even radical politics.<sup>157</sup> In such matters, individual testimony had to give way before the socially-sanctioned testimony of the expert to avert a potential for superstition and revolutionary chaos.

### **Animal Magnetism and Skepticism**

The introduction of Animal Magnetism, or Mesmerism, from the continent created a strong cultural phenomenon that threatened the domain of medical expertise that had just started becoming institutionalized. Owen Davies points out that the “rationalist consensus” of Ferriar’s generation did not last, that animal magnetism and its theory that the universe was “infused with an invisible, fluid substance that connected all matter]” provided a new explanation of the supernatural in place of dissenting tradition and neo-Platonic philosophy.<sup>158</sup> This section of the chapter will show how advocates of magnetism sought proof of supra-sensory effects by both lab-orientated experimentation and vast amounts of testimony to advance their ideas as scientifically and rationally sound in the face of criticism that it was a regressive movement into superstition and quackery. This debate is important as it shaped the controversy over the objectivity of the supernatural afterwards and especially with the rise of Spiritualism.

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<sup>157</sup> C.O. Parson. *Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction*. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964) 23-25.

<sup>158</sup> Owen Davies. *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 86.

Alison Winter's *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* (1998) provides a comprehensive look at mesmerism and its cultural impact in Great Britain. However, Winters does not dwell at any great length on those proponents of mesmerism who tried to tie the phenomena to the supernatural. She does deal with the concept of the soul and clairvoyance but only in short segments. Ghosts and ghost seeing are not handled at all, though this may be attributed partly to the fact it was largely a German enterprise; but she also ignores a great proponent of the soul hypothesis, John C. Colquhoun, who was influential in reintroducing mesmerism to Britain. I will aim to fill in this lacuna by showing Colquhoun participation in mesmeric phenomena and a conscious attempt to advocate the existence of the soul and ghost-seeing. His argument, based on evidential testimony influenced by his legal background, was used by supporters of objective supernatural phenomena throughout the rest of the nineteenth century.

Just as physiology was solidifying its credibility this new method of healing without the need for qualifications or even touching sought to influence it in the form of demonstrations and bodily cures by bodiless means. Its ability to be performed by common people made it a challenge to medical authority.<sup>159</sup> However, to say there was a complete scientific/mesmeric dichotomy does not stand to scrutiny.

There had been two official investigations of mesmeric phenomena in France. The first Royal Commission in 1784 included some of the greatest natural philosophers of its day concluded that though it had effected cures, there was no proof of a "magnetic fluid." This allowed supporters later Britain to show that magnetism was effective and

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<sup>159</sup> Winter, 159.



detractors to show that the commission exposed magnetic fluid, hence animal magnetism, as false.<sup>160</sup> A further report by the Royal Academy in 1826 further decided that phenomena such as clairvoyance and intuition were verified by experimentation. However, the report of 1826 did not consider causation. Thus, proponents could claim that two reports carried out by trained or experienced natural philosophers substantiated their claims and the skeptics could point out that neither report established anything other than a preliminary observation of supposed effects. Both reports were loci for competing viewpoints and its testimony was employed as proof for both sides.<sup>161</sup>

However, the testimony of so many cures and phenomena could not and were not totally ignored by all in the medical establishment. Established institutions of medical knowledge and accepted physiological dogma from Edinburgh to London had to address the narratives - the fact, physically and literally, of a supposed healed body. The medical establishment also had its own mesmeric practitioners. Perhaps the most famous example of a physician who accepted the purported phenomena was John Elliotson (1791-1868). He was a well-known physician and professor at the University College London until he resigned in 1838 over the controversy created by his experimentation with patients and the Okey sisters. He sought to popularize animal magnetism by making it respectable and divesting it of its eccentric association. He also sought to maintain the doctor-patient relationship when it came to experiment and testimony. Though the patient's utterances could be induced by the imagination, the physical phenomena were genuine. For Elliotson, neither fancy nor the imagination

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<sup>160</sup> William Hughes. *The Devil's Trick: Hypnotism and the Popular Victorian Imagination*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015) 38-42.

<sup>161</sup> Colquhoun. *Isis Revelata*. (Edinburgh: William Wilson, 1844) Vol.I.283-290.

could account for all such phenomena. In *Human Physiology* (1840), he posits that such results, “on persons ignorant of the agency, and upon individuals, whom the operation itself has deprived of consciousness, and those which animals present, do not permit us to doubt that the proximity of two animated bodies....have a real effect, independently of all operation of the fancy.”<sup>162</sup> During an experiment, both the mind and body spoke out and Elliotson and it was Elliotson’s narrative interpretation which decided that physical phenomena was to be accepted and the musing of the patient could be brushed aside as a side-effect. The patient was the object of interpretation and the proof of magnetism lay in the body’s testimony, not to the patient’s words.

Elliotson was mainly interested in the therapeutic and verifiable effects of mesmerism, and how it could be used in medical contexts to ease suffering and aid cures. His writings on magnetism steered clear of any attempt at a metaphysical explanation. Maintaining a strict adherence to experiments, his writings tried to make magnetism respectable by showing tangible results. The very year that Crowe published *Nightside*, he published a short tract *Cure of a True Cancer of the Female Breast* wherein, after detailing a series of successful mesmeric experiments, he concludes that there was no reason to look for the cause of such phenomena outside the mind and body.<sup>163</sup>

Elliotson’s work never dealt with clairvoyance or metaphysical causation. The only testimony he considered allowable was that of the subject under supervision in a closed environment. He subscribed to the methods of modern physiology and

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<sup>162</sup> Dr. John Elliotson. *Human Physiology*. (London: Longman & Co., 1840) 20-23.

<sup>163</sup> Elliotson, Dr. John. *Cure of a Cancer of the Female Breast with Mesmerism*. 3. (London: Walton and Mitchell, 1848) 11-13.

experimental epistemology. This uncompromising view did not stop the medical establishment at the time from ostracizing him from most medical organizations after an initially successful career.<sup>164</sup> If the patient shared the stage with the physician, then not only was boundary between both blurred but was axiomatic of the showmanship and superstitious display that should have no place in a new university seeking academic approbation. However, this did not deter Elliotson, who founded *The Zoist* (1843), opened his own infirmaries and propagated animal magnetism. *The Zoist* became a mouthpiece for experimentally based magnetism where the experienced and reputable magnetist could show verifiable phenomena. Under his tutelage and editing, the subversive testimony of trance could be reined in and filtered through the magnetist who was after objective results and not semi-metaphysical etiology. The power of the doctor over the testimony over the patient was now that of the editor over the article.

However, the “evidence” of mesmerists was too variable and could not always be reproduced. Many mesmerists depended on written narratives.<sup>165</sup> Mesmerists also welcomed controlled experimentation, though they admitted the results were variable. It is this variability that was a crux for animal magnetists: if it was variable, then it could not be set as a natural law. Its inability of reproduction, where such a property was vital to scientific acceptance, ensured that it was not accepted by the institutionalized circles whose own theories it called into question. The only recourse proponents still had was the testimony and results of purported cures. Laws spoke for everyone, but a testimony was only the ability to speak for one’s self. Testimony of purported healings and powers

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<sup>164</sup> Fred Kaplan. “The Mesmeric Mania: The Early Victorians and Mesmerism.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35.4 (1974) 698-699, 698.

<sup>165</sup> Winter, 157.

abounded in newspapers and publications. If the medical establishment chose to ignore them, they simply got their narratives through different media and did so successfully.

This experimentation was not to be done by microscope or telescope, but there was an instrument that both mesmerizer and mesmerize had: themselves. As with the narrative of a testimonial, it was by the self that one could gain experiential proof. Testimony while in trance or by the onlooker became part of the interpretive act that was an experiment. Scottish apologist for animal magnetism William Lang wrote, "Man can now play upon his fellow-man as upon a nicely-tuned instrument, bringing forth whatever manifestations his fingers may direct."<sup>166</sup> Lang's narrative attempt at controlling results of trance were suspect for it sometimes also allowed the mesmeree to develop or show apparent clairvoyance. Many proponents such as Kerner and Stilling saw in the somnambolic state a doorway to knowledge. It is easy to see how scientific study might be compromised by someone not wholly conscious. If natural philosophy was symbolized by reason-driven research into phenomena and laws, then it could find no greater opposite than a half-awake person either mesmerized or in a trance using intuition. Skeptics could not allow such testimony to undo generations of subject driven narrative to be overturned by a pretense to epistemology all while in an altered state so removed from the detached and rational training of a doctor.

For the many proponents of animal magnetism, this trance state was a way of observation that was just as valid as syllogistic reasoning. Lang also had reservations of accepting the testimony of somnambules but does admit that clairvoyance may indeed

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<sup>166</sup>William Lang. *Mesmerism, Its History, Phenomena, and Practice*. (Edinburgh; Fraser & Company, 1843) 212.

occur. He was averse to state a final theory but sought to treat trance states seriously and accept that some supersensory epistemology did seem possible. He seeks recourse to recorded testimony of experienced professionals and advocates of mesmerism. In one, he cites a woman who was mesmerized and asked to go the house of one of the attendees (whom she does not know and cannot see). She does so and describes his family, house, father's clothes and recent history. Lang admits: "The coincidence was certainly curious, and the phenomena connected with these imaginary excursions seem altogether calculated to repay investigation. To dogmatise upon them, in our present imperfect knowledge of the science...would lead to no useful result"<sup>167</sup> Where Ferriar and Hibbert can collect, interpret and declare a cause, Lang and Elliotson can only show, at times, a result. This inability and desire to form a set of hypotheses was portrayed as Baconian. However, it was this literal interpretation of such a scientific method that made animal magnetists and later ghost-seeing advocates seem even more unscientific in many established spheres of learning and authority. Elliotson who fulfilled the ideal qualities of the experienced specialists could show the use of a modern scientific method, but his results were not accepted by the most powerful institutions and magnetism's ties to the untrained and subversive kept it outside the pale of institutionalized medicine.

Yet many were quick to see the somnambulist and/or the mesmeree as proof of a higher reality. There were already a number of such works in German and French but extremely few in English that tied the phenomena of magnetism, somnambulism and

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<sup>167</sup> Lang, 100.

proof of the supernatural to verifiable evidence of the spirit.<sup>168</sup> Continental research sought to take the testimony of the patient seriously, but not simply to ascertain the symptoms of a disease but to see whether their pronouncements in an altered state could point to an epistemological insight through a method hitherto unknown.

### **Martineau's Confession: Journalism and Testimony**

If Nicolai provided an exemplary testimony of rationality conquering a mental abnormality, Harriet Martineau (1802-1876) provided one for mesmerism. She had been famous in the 1830's for her journalistic work and writings on political economy and was popularly accepted as a trustworthy source of testimony and discernment. In 1844, she published *Life in the Sickroom*. It was a personal account being bed-ridden because of a uterine tumor. She held to the autonomy of the will and introspection when one was unable to be physically able. She wanted to show the inner dignity of the mind and described the relationship between doctors and patients. It was an intimate, detailed and realistic portrayal of an area of domesticity that had not been discussed greatly. The book sold well and many accepted her personal narrative as an authentically valid and personal account, though there were reviewers in the *British and Foreign Medical Review* who viewed her as pathologically fatalistic.<sup>169</sup> However, the same year that she published her book, she had an amazing change in fortune. She was suddenly doing well and became physically active. She published her second first-hand account of her

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<sup>168</sup> John C. Colquhoun. *Isis Revelata: An Inquiry into the Origin, Progress, and Present State of Animal Magnetism*. (Edinburgh: William Wilson, 1844) Vol.I. xv.

<sup>169</sup> Winter, 219-220.

recovery in *Letters on Mesmerism*. Unlike *Sickroom*, Martineau felt the need to provide an experiential defense of her return from her disease.

As a journalist, her recourse to objectivity lay in ascertaining the truth based on collecting facts firsthand and interrogating witnesses. It is no surprise that testimony was of great evidential value to her, compounded by the fact this time it was her own. She held that her epistemological method and findings were considered sound. Though not a natural philosopher or doctor (an impossibility for her due to her gender) she could interpret events and compose a narrative that was able to relate events clearly without recourse to metaphysics. Though her first book had been well-received, *Letters on Mesmerism* went beyond the description of objective events and subjective feelings.

She portrays the whole account as “unaltered”<sup>170</sup> and begins by validating the worth of second-hand testimony of mesmeric “facts:” “many which were related to me without distrusting either the understanding or the integrity, of some of the wisest and best people I knew. Nor did I find it possible to resist the evidence of books, of details of many cases...”<sup>171</sup> Martineau is not claiming to have believed at this point but only to have given serious credence to their accumulated testimony and is showing her rational ability to withhold final judgement. She declares the need for an open mind: “It showed me that I must keep my mind free, and must observe and decide independently, as there could be neither help nor hindrance from minds self-exiled in this way from the region of evidence.”<sup>172</sup> The geographical metaphor of exile is pertinent as she was suffering at that time from debilitating disease that did not allow her to take part in

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<sup>170</sup> Harriet Martineau. *Letters on Mesmerism*. (London: Moxon, 1845) p. A2.

<sup>171</sup> Martineau, 2.

<sup>172</sup> Martineau, 3.

everyday activities, calling herself a “prisoner.” Almost all her activity at that time was restricted to the output of her writing. She describes herself as “stationary,” in a “condition of almost entire stillness.” She builds a narrative where she is not truly alive and dependent on opiates.<sup>173</sup>

However, she claims that she did not do what many scoffers of mesmerism did at the time, ignore the evidence. She continues seeking the help of physicians, but their help proved ineffective, however well-meant. It was her physician who in fact brings over a mesmerist as a desperate attempt to help her. The very day her medical friend arrives with Mr. Spencer Hall, she is at her low point and the opiates are about to wear off. Mr. Hall makes a series of passes over her head and after a while her pain leaves and she has a visionary experience where something diffuses through the atmosphere: “First, the outlines of all objects were blurred; then a bust, standing on a pedestal in a strong light, melted quite away...till one small picture...only remained visible, -like a patch of phosphoric light.”<sup>174</sup> The experience is euphoric and little by little as the time passes she leaves her opiates for good and even her servant becomes able to carry out the mesmeric therapy on her.

She is saved, raised from a stationary death into the light. Her new-found strength allows her to return from exile and join the world. Where medicine failed, mesmerism prospered. The spread of ability from Hall to others and her servant seems almost to be a kind of magnetic Pentecost. However, she couches it in a detailed diary that shows the good news of mesmerism.

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<sup>173</sup> Martineau, 4.

<sup>174</sup> Martineau, 7-8.



It may have religious undertones but the entries and attention to recovery read like any diary. It is a confessional where the narration even treats the visionary experience as a categorized state of mind. She places the events in a medical backdrop, citing the physicians (which included her brother in law) and medical cases of other testimonies. The pathos may be religious, but it is anchored by credible authorities and recorded events. It is a rational recording of events with interspersed emotions to give a clear testimony of reluctance, experience, progression and a purported verifiable cure.

This time around the reception was more mixed from physicians. On famous reply was given anonymously by the *Athenaeum's* editor Charles Wentworth Dilke. His response is a good representation of skeptics in general from the scientific community: according to Dilke, Martineau was misdiagnosed and was only suffering from hysteria, as a layperson she was not a medical expert; and that she could not interpret the phenomena because she was a part of it.<sup>175</sup> Martineau claimed in her narrative that she was the best to judge what happened to her. She cites her diagnosis by a physician and proof of her recovery by physician, points to other cases and medical literature as bearing ample testimony. The skeptical response, though not accepted by all, leaves the power of ordering the events to the expert, not the witness. Only the well-qualified expert could interpret the events and order the narrative. If another expert said it was genuine then they were mistaken, as accepted natural laws had already shown that no anomaly could overrule an evident natural law. If Martineau had indeed been "cured" it was because she was misdiagnosed to begin with. Martineau's confession was reduced

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<sup>175</sup> Winter, 225-226.

to the equivalent of the testimony of an enthusiastic novice, a narrative of self-delusion. In wandering in pseudo-scientific theories, according to critics, she lost the plot. What she would have considered journalistic integrity of reporting things as they occurred, a scientific virtue, becomes a rush to judgement based on uneducated naivety. She could report but she couldn't judge as she was medically illiterate.

### **J. C. Colquhoun**

Perhaps no figure is as important for our discussion of the supernatural ramifications of mesmerism and how it was appropriated by belief in the validity of ghost-seeing as that of J.C. Colquhoun (1785-1854) who helped introduce mesmerism to the larger British public in 1833 with the publication of the Medical section of the French Royal Academy of Sciences in 1831. This report overturned the complete dismissal of animal magnetism done by a committee in 1784. However, he is best known for his two volume, magnum opus *Isis Revelata* (1836) which saw a second and expanded edition in 1843. This early work of British apology for animal magnetism also provides the most thorough argument for using the phenomena to advocate an immaterial ontology, providing one with a close analogy with Crowe's *Night Side of Nature* in 1848. Both Crowe and Colquhoun were based in Edinburgh, partaking of mesmeric phenomena and heterodox discourses. Colquhoun was a lawyer and his method of argument seeks for proof by arguing that accumulated testimony points not to the symptomatic antics of a disease but that of verifiable effects of immaterial influence.<sup>176</sup> In *Isis Revelata*,

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<sup>176</sup> Colquhoun, Vol.I.xiii.

Colquhoun as narrator takes the reader through a jurisprudential format of presenting evidence, cross-examining objections and leading the reader/jury to the conclusion that at the very least the topic of immaterial causation and possible ontological ramifications needed to be taken seriously.

He did not view accepted natural philosophy as authoritative experientially but authoritative dogmatically, more akin to the system of the scholastic tradition than any modern scientific method.<sup>177</sup> He sees the establishment as protecting itself rather than promoting true science. Crowe echoed this in *Nightside* where she states early in the book: “Various views of the phenomena in question may be taken; and although I shall offer my own opinions, and the theories and opinions of others, I insist upon none; I do not write to dogmatize, but to suggest reflection and inquiry.”<sup>178</sup> Both do not seek neat theories to limit the anomalous phenomena. Physiologists and writers like Hibbert, and Scott had sought to explain away such occurrences through theory. For Crowe and Colquhoun that is just a way to ignore the facts and constrain reality to a prejudicial view.

This prejudicial view was seen by Colquhoun as a materialism which mechanizes all of reality. He treats this as modern Sadducism and trusts that research into the facts of animal magnetism, “will solve, by the amplest and irrefragable evidence, to set forever at rest that....questio vexata”, and will thus be “of the highest importance, not to medical science only, but to general philosophy.”<sup>179</sup> Colquhoun put his discourse into

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<sup>177</sup> Colquhoun, Vol.I.xxi.

<sup>178</sup> Crowe, Catherine. *The Night Side of Nature or Ghosts and Ghost Seers*. (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1848), 13.

<sup>179</sup> Colquhoun, 136.

historical perspective to show a pattern of a traditional establishment wishing to ignore new phenomena that challenges their systemization of truth. It is the example of accumulated credible testimony that can undo this monopolization. It is evidence against the forced hypotheses, portrayed as anti-scientific, of mechanist philosophies and their supportive institutions.

Colquhoun realized that not being a physician made his narrative unqualified testimony and akin to the realm of opinion among trained natural philosophers and physicians. However, his narrative strategy to combat this was, as it would be Crowe's later, to bring in his own group of specialists, expert witnesses: continental physicians, especially from Germany. Colquhoun places them next to all his sparing hypotheses at every turn, very much in the same way that Hibbert gradually put a doctor's case study or opinion to each stage of his tabular systems. Colquhoun felt the need to do so:

Conscious, however, as I necessarily must be, of my own great deficiency in the requisite knowledge of those sciences which are most calculated to elucidate the particular object of my present researches, I have long felt an anxious desire that some individual, better qualified by his professional pursuits, and in every other respect more competent, had been induced to undertake the task which has now devolved on me.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> John C. Colquhoun. *Isis Revelata*. Vol I. 2 Vols. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Edinburgh: MacLauchlan & Stewart, 1843) Preface to the First Edition.

This is how Colquhoun introduces himself, his purpose, and his goal. In the nineteenth century ethos of the introspective researcher who puts their ego second and takes on an impartial task, as an advocate whose training is in the service of truth not sophistry, he minimizes his importance, stays clear of prepossession but still remains the hero of the topic tying the object to his narrative enterprise. He was not a specialist, but his undertaking is. He calls attention to his shortcomings often in the text.<sup>181</sup>

This shortcoming is made up by the continental physicians and philosophers who are contrasted with British thinkers and medical practitioners:

And here I shall bring forward no facts, as such, unless they be sufficiently attested by men of impeachable veracity;-men abundantly qualified by their scientific habits and attainments, by their perspicacity and cautious spirit of research, for investigating the reality of the circumstances which they profess to have witnesses.<sup>182</sup>

There are three criteria at work in this excerpt and Colquhoun tried hard to cover possible objections to his experts. Firstly, they are men of good character – the social aspect. Secondly, they are scientifically trained observers, they are supposedly impartial and objective. Thirdly, they are impeachable, legally sound and qualified to give testimony. However, they aren't British. Colquhoun cites German physician after German physician with French ones coming in second and British physicians and natural philosophers like Davey, Jenner, Bacon and Newton (the final two would also be used often by Crowe) employed mainly for analogy to initially rejected ideas. Colquhoun

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<sup>181</sup> Colquhoun, *Isis*, I. xviii, xlvi-xlvii, 34; Vol.II. 149, 343, 408

<sup>182</sup> Colquhoun, Vol.I.67.

did not shy away from this fact, calling attention to British scientific culture as one that was prepossessed and unwilling to practice a truly scientific ethos of objectivity or Baconian induction – something Crowe would argue.<sup>183</sup> It was their testimony which gave evidential weight to Colquhoun's case.

The weight of evidence for Colquhoun was not only determined by the names of physicians but also the amount of their cases and experiments. This accumulation of evidence would also be emphasized by Crowe. Colquhoun has so much evidence (testimony) that he must exclude many narratives and cases:

M. Chardel, the ingenious author of an essay on Physiological Psychology, assures us-and I have no doubt of the fact-that he could adduce hundreds of examples of these phenomena, which occur in almost every magnetic treatment; but that it appears to him quite superfluous to be continually recurring to the reality of facts which have been already so amply established. I shall, therefore, now proceed, in the progress of my induction, to give a few instances of those phenomena which occur...<sup>184</sup>

The expert witness here gives testimony that his cases are too numerous to place in a narrative. Colquhoun tells the reader that the examples are reoccurring and invariability in experimentation was an indicator for this new epistemology of enlightenment values of laws and the world of objectivity. This invariability should turn the phenomena not into imposture, imagination or imitation but facts. The reader here is getting a rhetorical narrative of plenty, a cycle where data gives its fruit of results. What is telling is

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<sup>183</sup> Colquhoun, Vol.I.xiv-xv, Vol.II.98, 111.

<sup>184</sup> Colquhoun, Vol.II 82-83.

Colquhoun's desire to portray his method as inductive, alluding to Bacon's epistemology of collecting facts and observations. Here the language of physiological material causation of reproducibility is appropriated by a heterodox science. This is an evidential cornucopia. This is a theme that runs throughout both volumes.<sup>185</sup> This lead Colquhoun, as it would later Crowe, Cox and Wallace to wonder how much proof, beyond the great amount already collected would be needed before a prejudicial, skeptical audience began to take the subject as objective?<sup>186</sup>

But what of these cases? What was it about them that made them problematic with many physiologists? It could have been cases like this one concerning a somnambulist who was blindfolded:

It was then proposed to her to play a game of backgammon. She said she knew nothing about the game but consented to learn it. She commenced playing, with the assistance of one acquainted with the moves, and acquired a knowledge of the game very rapidly. She handled the men and dice with facility, and counted off the points correctly...The Doctor, a little mortified at being beaten by a sleeping girl, tried another game, in which she exerted his skill.<sup>187</sup>

This example is a light-hearted one but intimates what made many doctors nervous over animal magnetism. The domestic setting, the unorthodoxy of experiments, the blurring of doctor-patient and the power relations of gender. This lacks the

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<sup>185</sup> Colquhoun, Vol. II. 100.

<sup>186</sup> Colquhoun, Vol.I. xxxvi.

<sup>187</sup> Colquhoun, Vol.I.381

seriousness of Colquhoun's other citations of sight through the pit of one's stomach. However, its comic effect shows the expansive use of experiment by animal magnetists and doctors who weren't afraid of losing if the results won observable facts.

Sight was not all-important nor superior. Neither was reason. In a scientific world view where the waking state and reason were paramount, Colquhoun wanted to show that induced somnambulism on rare occasion could prove that instinct/intuition (used interchangeably) was perfectly valid and epistemologically useful, even giving greater insight.<sup>188</sup> In fact, the whole of the first volume is dedicated to showing an ethnological and experimental base of alternate mental states, ending at natural somnambulism. This prepares the reader for volume II where artificial somnambulism and clairvoyance are presented in case studies with reproduction of the French Commission's second report. What the introduction of artificial somnambulism and clairvoyance do is make a discursive space for intuition and more importantly an immaterial ontology, scientific proof of the soul. It is by intuition, present even in animals, that somnambule can diagnose people, prescribe remedies, function without functioning organs and even foretell events.<sup>189</sup> All this "evidence" is meant to lead one to recognition of the soul, and with it fueling an inner awakening of edification of humanity.<sup>190</sup>

Martineau's confession is a foil to Nicolai's at first glance. The quasi-euphoric nature of her "conversion" to animal magnetism reads like a moment of enthusiasm meant to sway popular opinion, the anti-thesis of Nicolai's calm, rational surmounting of the self and ability to journalize his own life into a case study to his intellectual peers.

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<sup>188</sup> Colquhoun, Vol.I.81,

<sup>189</sup> Colquhoun, Vol.II.16, 53, 58, 77, 82

<sup>190</sup> Colquhoun, Vol.II.165.



Yet, both accounts seek approbation based on credit that they have accumulated in society, the ordering of their narrative, their recourse to research based on physician. Their special testimony both seek specialist support and a jury of the public to agree. Both are cured and return to normative interaction with the world with a story to tell.

When Colquhoun published *Isis Revelata*, he received a torrent of criticism from Eliotson in the *Zoist*. Eliotson wanted a fact-based discourse grounded in materialism, as did others such as Martineau. Colquhoun took the same information that was at Eliotson's disposal, mesmeric phenomena, but advocated for taking the argument into the realm of a spiritual ontology. It was a case of a rejected doctor criticizing Colquhoun for going outside his disciplinary space and encroaching on a medical one and reaching an erroneous conclusion. Colquhoun, being a lawyer, counteracted such opposition by allowing other medical specialists to argue his case based on their experimentation and case studies. It was the adversarial method enacted in the world of book and journal publication. The jury of the public continued to hear the evidence on all sides in a society that represented the tower of babel rather than the discursive calm of a progressive linear rise of an enlightened world.

What makes Colquhoun's take unique and one that would be embraced by Crowe, Crookes, Cox and other at the rise of spiritualism is the call for scientific experimentation to ascertain the validity of the soul and immaterial causation:

Much, indeed, still remains to be done in the investigation of this dark and difficult subject; but a patient and judicious perseverance in the path of experimental research, and especially a more attentive observation and classification of the psychical manifestations, as contra-distinguished from

the mere acts of the sensitive organism, may ultimately lead to a successful solution of some, at least, of many difficulties with which it is now beset.<sup>191</sup>

## Conclusion

This was a call to find proof of the soul through the inductive Baconian and modern objective scientific method. What proponents of natural theology saw as beyond the scope of science became part of that scope. What materialists saw as pointless metaphysical speculation was within clairvoyant sight. As Britain approached 1848 its political reforms had started to allow more to partake of the political establishment, dissenters, Catholics and Jews could take oaths and have their testimony count, more people qualified as professionals through merit rather than birth, Yet, at the same time the voice of authority from the rise of the police force, the expert witness and expert lawyer ensured the role of narrative power became more complex and part of the specialist, specialist jargon, institutions and cultural hierarchy. Colquhoun remained a heterodox voice in a heterodox field. Elliotson, a staunch materialist and progressive, could not surmount the opposition of Wakely, himself from a dissenting background and radical MP and a whole generation of qualified medical practitioners, no longer even had a real need to address magnetism's anesthetizing powers. Science had its own magic called chemistry which produced chloroform. Britain was pragmatic, progressing

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<sup>191</sup> Colquhoun, 160-161.

though not progressive and like accepted natural laws, its functioning and its mode of functioning became accepted as normative, invariable.

Yet, that older strain of Baconian observation, of collecting and investigating phenomena no matter how strange or outside the realm of accepted tradition continued. This was true for transmutationists as much as ghost seeing. The attempt by many in the scientific community to enclose narratives and testimony as case studies, evidentially and qualitatively inferior would continue to be problematic. In an era of easier access to writing material and a culture of diary, journal and note taking, more people were not only getting their voice heard, they were also writing it down. Colquhoun's experts were other physicians. Crowe would ask for their expert opinions as well. She also sought a second one from the public.

## **Chapter 2: Catherine Crowe and the Evidence of Testimony**

It has hitherto been too much the practice, in treating of this subject, to build up a theory upon some one solitary fact, or, at least, upon the circumstances of some single case; whereas, it appears to me to be much more philosophical, and much more satisfactory in the end, first to form a sufficient collection of well-authenticated cases to constitute a legitimate basis of induction; and then proceed to classify the phenomena...<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Colquhoun, *Isis Revelata*, Vol.II.383.

Catherine Crowe would do just and attempt an inductive, Baconian approach to a classification of supernatural phenomena. The previous chapter laid the context of the polemic between disciplinary expertise and its problematic relationship with dissenting narratives from both fellow experts and amateurs regarding the supernatural. This chapter will show the dissident voice of Catherine Crowe, a professional writer who through her narrative method sought to bring in both the voice of the expert and layperson together in a comprehensive, evidential display of the veridical supernatural through the use of testimony. Where Ferriar and Hibbert had the medical establishment and along with Scott were members of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Crowe had her circle of friends and popularity, a domestic locus of knowledge transmission through personal media, experiments and newspapers. Crowe and her method of research will be the first major step of an inductive Baconian use of accumulative testimony in the Victorian period that sought to validate as objective an experiential inductive approach. At this period of nineteenth century British society was being influenced by the rise of deductive studies, fusing statistics and work of commissions designed to develop policies on a growing sense of an abstracted “social body.”<sup>193</sup> What Crowe did was to maintain the populace in communitarian form but retain its individuality in presentation of testimony. She was wary of the use of statistics. Though she favoured a centralization of science, she did not see the advantage of using statistics for centralization.<sup>194</sup> Crowe would not make a mass out of society but reached out to the masses.

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<sup>193</sup> Mary Poovey. *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation 1830-1864*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984) 4-6, 11.

<sup>194</sup> *NSN*, Vol.19.

Specialists advocated a physiological approach to all phenomena enclosed the narrative of experience and limited it to the body in a discourse only they could truly read. Ingram points out that this “self-confidence of the professionals generated a new rhetoric” that silenced the narrative of the patient.<sup>195</sup> Animal magnetists broadened its readership to both practitioners and the magnetized, even if not fully aware of their ability whilst in the magnetic state. Non-conformist believers could also still point to personal revelation and in confession narratives or prophecies delineate their own interpretations and prognostications for personal salvation and the world.

Who took which testimony seriously depended on one’s epistemological and ideological premise. For skeptical physiologists it was the qualified, rational interpretation that was based on the premise that anything metaphysical, besides the divine, was against natural law, hence impossible. Animal magnetists sought to broaden the scope of natural law and apply it to yet undiscovered laws and testimony and experience was proof that such unknown laws were not only possible but verifiable. Non-conformists, especially millenarians, saw the divine as still partaking in revelation to the masses and that orthodox Christianity was creating a narrative barrier based on dogma but one that could be broken by the witnessing of God making himself known to practitioners who had the testimony to expand the continue interaction between the natural and divine.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Ingram, 17.

<sup>196</sup> Owen, 11.

This is representative of what Barrow termed the democratic epistemology of the nineteenth century.<sup>197</sup> Though he applies it mainly to plebian spiritualism and heterodox therapies and medicine, it carries over to both animal magnetist practitioners and Crowe's work. Crowe's collection is a collection of societies voices all assenting to the seriousness of supernatural phenomena. Democratic epistemology is founded on an epistemological level interpreting field. Barrow's insight unites this epistemology that holds that knowledge is accessible to all and that its methods most often entailed empiricism, based on tests and facts.<sup>198</sup> Crowe's work advocated just that: a collection of facts deemed so by the laity, in contradistinction to the elitist epistemologies of Ferriar and Hibbert which excluded narratives or mis-represented them. It also endorsed an empirical and inductive approach to case gathering.

This carried over into concepts of credibility, credit and authenticity. As McCorristine rightly points out, even medical professionals like Robert Patterson and Ferriar did not doubt the authenticity of the spectral.<sup>199</sup> This was partly because the testimony would come from upper and middle-class circles. To impugn them with lying would be a breach of normative social values and a poor estimation of credit. It was the lower classes who practiced trickery or blind superstition. Authenticity was tempered through the narrative frame of a medical narrative. Though the legal and medical disciplines were dismissive of hearsay, the role of character and credibility were still important. This credibility was determined by class status and gender.

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<sup>197</sup> Barrow, 146.

<sup>198</sup> Barrow, 147.

<sup>199</sup> McCorristine, 39-40, 48-50.

This chapter will show how Catherine Crowe used testimony, enlarging the scope of authenticity and credibility of the masses, though mainly middle class, to represent their own experience but to interpret it as well, allowing further validation as evidential proof. For Crowe, this credibility was epistemologically democratic, knowledge was available to all who would care to investigate. This credibility even continued, not simply to an empirical ability to delineate an event but to interpret as well. People who understood their peers more than a medical ideology could have a better grasp of circumstance, personal ability and validation. As Schramm and Watt have pointed out, literature and law had such an evidentiary epistemology in common placing the reader in the role of the jury, making the generation of assent essential in determining a verdict.<sup>200</sup> Crowe's work was just such a mixture of narrative testimony to further an experiential jurisprudential method, leading the reader to see the inherent credibility and trustworthiness of her witnesses and cases and the preponderance of evidence in favour of supernatural phenomena as objective. It was meant to rescue excluded evidence and with it the exclusion of women's voices and lower-class testimony as well. Women were held to be more prone to hallucination as were children, a belief found throughout the century.<sup>201</sup> The lower classes were uneducated and this more prone to emotional, irrational thinking. Neither could be proper loci for reasonable judgement. Crowe sought to undermine this exclusive mode of epistemology. It was the testimony that represented strata of superstition that had to be eradicated in light of the progress of knowledge and proper medical physiologically based psychology.<sup>202</sup> She wanted to do

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<sup>200</sup> Schramm, 24-26.

<sup>201</sup> McCorristine, 55, 85.

<sup>202</sup> McCorristine 46, 80.



what Bentham sought for in judicial reform of evidence, to “see everything that was to be seen; hear everybody who is likely to know anything about the matter.”<sup>203</sup> This was meant to allow dissenters and non-Anglicans to be allowed to stand as credible and competent but it can easily be applied to Crowe and her desire to allow the unheard to have their say. It was this holistic embrace of testifier and testimony that would lead not only to a better grasp of truth but create a better society.

Crowe’s method of incorporating these cases that came from oral, written, journals, letters, diaries, manuscripts and papers not only represents a contemporary glance into the media and public of the mid-century, but an epistemological method as well. As Daston points out this was a period when the role of writing down events as they happened or as soon as possible, keeping a journal and marking down the event to maintain an objective approach reflected a growing modern scientific method of data collection.<sup>204</sup> Crowe’s work is just such a notebook, a journal entry of a moment in society. It is the empiricism that incorporates people as individuals into a true testimonial network that allows a holistic approach to societal growth. The method of gathering testimony was the self-education of society.

Clapton saw *Night Side* as a jumbled mess: “The chapters are very loosely constructed, the instances not rigorously classed or scrutinized, the repetitions frequent, and the whole written in a deplorable style, packed with solecisms and even faults of spelling.”<sup>205</sup> This chapter disagrees with that statement and others that look at the vast collection of testimony as something collected haphazardly. Crowe orders by theme,

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<sup>203</sup> Schramm, 65

<sup>204</sup> Daston, *Objectivity*, 236, 245.

<sup>205</sup> Clapton, 290.

uses multiple testimonies that corroborate with others strengthening her case while enlisting specialist help. It is a narrative that shows the public and private nature of supernatural experience and the text recreates the arena of that intersection between the public and private spheres. As for its 'deplorable style,' even the critics found it engaging and the product of an able writer as will be shown in Dickens' review.

Given the historical backdrop of Chartist activism and revolutionary fervor in continental Europe, Crowe's stance is quite forceful. Crowe throughout her writing career was not one for orthodoxy and she did write stories and articles for a Chartist paper *The Leader* (1850-1859). If her proclivity to raise the status of servants in both her fiction and non-fiction are any indication, it is not a far stretch to surmise her narrative method is an exercise in testimonial enfranchisement, extending epistemological validity to the testimony of groups and individuals whose narratives tended to be systematically discounted within the authoritative discourses of the period. Mary Poovey sees this period as one where the physiological term "social body" becomes a term to describe the masses seen with trepidation as liable to be excited in a subversive manner, being ruled by instinct over reason.<sup>206</sup> Crowe saw these masses and wished to reform it, not by seeing it as an undifferentiated mass, but a mass of individuals who together were able to lead to new knowledge if their testimony of the supernatural were brought together and judged impartially.

*Night Side* is now largely remembered as a work on apparitions with an epistemological use of intuition, but its true ambitions were very much greater than this.

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<sup>206</sup> Mary Poovey. *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1894) 9.

Against the backdrop of the contemporary debates over the verity of animal magnetism and the specialization of physiology, Crowe attempted to provide an ontological apology for the concept of the soul and this chapter will show how she appealed to more than one form of epistemology in her narrative.

Crowe's magnum opus was "groundbreaking" and predated the emergence of Spiritualism, as Heholt rightly points out.<sup>207</sup> *Night Side* is unique as it offered the only attempt by a woman of this period to offer such an ontological work based on an inductive approach of accumulated testimony which called into question skeptical professionals from the standpoint of one whose only specialism was writing fiction. This chapter will show that Crowe compensates this lack of professional specialism, as did Colquhoun, by her use of mainly, but not only, German physicians, philosophers and scripture to argue her case. It is a book that allows one to see the complicated debates over ontology and epistemology in the mid-Victorian period. Crowe wanted to retain the role of the layperson to interpret and narrate their own experience against encroaching scientific circles that saw such testimony of the ontologically metaphysical as digressive to the progress of knowledge and dangerous in allowing the masses to have epistemological authority over concepts of natural law. In *Victorian Sensations* James A. Secord focuses on the contemporary reader-response to Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844) but his insights could apply to Crowe:

The first half of the nineteenth century, when gossipy personal letters and private diaries coexisted with steam-printed books and cheap magazines posted by rail, is probably richer in sources for the history of reading than

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<sup>207</sup> Heholt. "Seeing Ghosts," 25.

any other period. Yet this material has been quarried primarily for anecdotal color and to undercut stereotypes. Historians have only just begun to use it to challenge older narratives based on a limited canon of authors and the intellectual achievements of a few great minds.<sup>208</sup>

Crowe in *Night Side* mined these quarries during this very period to bring the reader into a juryperson's position of judgement. Her work presents a contemporary example of such a work all to create testimonial evidence in order to subvert a rational, physiological based hegemony of interpretation over the body and, as she tried to prove, the soul. Chambers, prodigious editor, writer, and good friend of Crowe, sought to reform society by showing the progression of species, Crowe sought to do likewise but through experiential knowledge and impartial study of the supernatural. Both works were representative of "popular" literature. However, whereas Chambers sought the help of physiologists like John Carpenter and the approbation of scientists while still seeking to keep his book a best seller, Crowe sought popularity by a direct appeal to the populace.

### ***Beginnings: The Seeres of Provost and Animal Magnetism***

Even before the publication of *The Night Side of Nature*, Crowe had made public her interest in somnambulism and mesmerism. In 1845 she published a translation of the German book *The Seeres of Provorst* written by Justinus Kerner, then chief

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<sup>208</sup> James A. Secord. *Victorian Sensation*. (Chicago: CUP, 2000) Kindle Edition.

physician at Weisenberg in 1829. It was the first work that she published under her name and Larken plausibly argues that it shows Crowe's willingness to put her name and reputation to subjects that would be ridiculed by skeptical circles.<sup>209</sup> The book is a detailed exposition of the final years of the life of Friedrieke Hauffe (1801-1829). Hauffe was an invalid who went into clairvoyant trances and provide supposed discourse on the spiritual nature of "magnetic" man, a way of explaining the workings of one's being beyond the body. This work would prove to be the beginning of Crowe's published ventures into supernatural phenomena. It was published the very year that Martineau published her book on mesmerism and shows a first-hand account of somnambulism and clairvoyance. It is a narrative testimony that contains incidents of apparent clairvoyance which were later validated by events, thus seemingly demonstrating that Hauffe's visions were the products, not of either hysteria or hallucinations, but of a method of epistemology unknown but verifiable.

*The Seeres* was introduced to English readership in 1842 by way of a long skeptical article printed in the *Dublin University Magazine*.<sup>210</sup> It decried what it called Hauffe's "ghostcraft", and questioned the critical ability of respected German medical professionals such as Kerner and Eschenmeyer, portraying their work as undignified given their qualifications as physicians should deal with the body and not metaphysics.<sup>211</sup> The previous year, an article had appeared in the same magazine which lambasted the influence of German thinking in Britain, describing it as

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<sup>209</sup> Geoffrey Larken. Manuscript. (Crowe/Book/F191859/Special Collections & Archives, University of Kent) p. 172.

<sup>210</sup> 'Chapters on Ghostcraft: Comprising Some Account of the Life and Revelations of Madame Hauffe, The Celebrated Wirtemberg Ghost Seeres.' *Dublin University Magazine* (1842) 1-18.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

metaphysical and supernatural speculation that only served the credulous. Written by Henry Ferris under a pseudonym, it portrayed the Germans as naturally disposed to seeing phantasms, something many skeptics in Britain would echo in their polemic against the supernatural.<sup>212</sup> Though Ferris himself wrote many supernatural tales, he, like Scott and Dickens as will be shown in the next chapter, railed against the belief in the supernatural, and ridiculed German seriousness over the subject.

Crowe as collector and redactor, encroaching on the hegemony of the skeptics and their use of the scientific method was a conscious attempt as a woman writer to demand a role for the data and her research. Part of the desire to dismiss Crowe by Dickens was because Crowe sought to validate her research in an area of skepticism dominated by men. Crowe as writer, like Martineau, would be considered in the derogatory term of a “blue-stocking” pretender to science, unlike the ideologically safe role played by “green-stocking” women who held to natural philosophy and with it normative middle class notions of epistemological limitations for women.<sup>213</sup> Crowe, unqualified as a physician and undermined for being a woman, was cognizant that her attempt to show evidence that was excluded, testimony that was ridiculed all the while holding an unorthodox position based on German research would be seen as problematic. She wrote it nonetheless. Dickens’ claim that Crowe accepted everything was an extension of his impatience with just such women. Even *Vestiges*, derided as womanly prose by some (manly by others), was attributed to Crowe (or Ada Lovelace) for only such writing even if this time from a transmutational and hence physiological

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<sup>212</sup> Henry Ferris [pseud. ‘Irys Herfner’], ‘German Ghosts and Ghost-seers.’ *Dublin University Magazine* 17 (1841)

<sup>213</sup> Anne B. Shteck. “Green-Stocking or Blue? Science in Three Women’s Magazines 1800-1850.” *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth Century Media*. Louise Henson Ed. (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited)

bent, could be seen as another outburst of subversive theoretical thought.<sup>214</sup> A strong-minded woman was a woman who could not be entrusted with overarching ideas concerning either species or the spirit. Crowe was recording the testimony of the “weak-willed” and doing it with a “strong mind” which made her collection less credible, however entertaining. A woman presenting a jurisprudential approach to the supernatural would not appeal to Dickens who thought women would be especially “de-sexed” by entry into the legal profession, or any male dominated profession for that matter.<sup>215</sup>

German speculation on the supernatural was pitted against the pragmatic approach of normative British epistemology based on a practical, rational and “common sense” approach propped up by natural theology. German idealism harkened to metaphysical speculation and not the productive knowledge that led to greater specialization in natural philosophy or industrial technology. Even before being translated, skeptics saw Hauffe as an example of the shortcomings of continental physiology. That Crowe decided to continue to use them shows her acknowledgement that the disagreement was an ideological one as the same phenomena caused equally experienced specialists to reach different conclusions. Crowe pointed out that it was the German tradition which had taken it seriously for years, hence they were in a better position to interpret as opposed to British physicians and skeptics who had dismissed it a priori.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Secord, Loc 3310.

<sup>215</sup> Sara Deutch Schotland. “Defiled and De-Sexed: Dickens’ Portrayal of a Woman Waging Law in Victorian England.” *American Journal of Legal History*. 49 (2007) 438-455: 439, 441, 444.

<sup>216</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II,8.

Crowe was not alone in using German work on the supernatural or altered states for ontological reasons. McCorristine deals with the translation of gothic works from German to English that deal with fictional ghost-seeing.<sup>217</sup> German thinking, specifically idealism, also influenced the Transcendental movement which was popular in America. Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) a writer, editor of the transcendentalist *The Dial* and pioneer of women's rights, read that very same article on Hauffe and decided to read Kerner's account.<sup>218</sup> She saw Hauffe as the best studied example of the trance state by Kerner whom she regarded as a well-qualified physician.<sup>219</sup> For Fuller, Hauffe's disease does not call into question her testimony into question. Rather, it shows that sickness can sometimes highlight epistemological methods such as the intuitive sense which believed to be more marked in children and women, something Crowe will claim as well in *NSN*.<sup>220</sup> Fuller's use of Hauffe and her relative prominence in this seminal feminist text shows how Hauffe's narrative (Kerner's narrative) could be a locus for either ridicule or inspiration. Fuller places her along Cassandra and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, as Kerner places her beside Joan of Arc. She quotes Hauffe's poetry at length showing the relationship between the narrative power of symbol and its epistemological use as opposed to other forms of writing, another aspect Crowe uses as well when discussing dreams and trance. Where Ferris and Ferriar would have seen a nervous invalid, Fuller and Kerner saw proof of a "nerve-spirit" producing knowledge that reasoning and

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<sup>217</sup> McCorristine, 92.

<sup>218</sup> Fuller, Margaret. *Summer on the Lakes in 1843*. (Charles C. Little and James Brown, New York, 1844) 125-126. Fuller was in a domestic setting when she began reading Kerner's account and saw the discrepancy between the scene around her of housework of the people around her and the intuitive power of Hauffe's inner world, "exhalted and sensitive existence."

<sup>219</sup> Fuller, Margaret. *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. (Greeley & McElrath New York, 1845) 95.

<sup>220</sup> Fuller, 104.



experimentation alone could not find. Crowe herself was influenced by Transcendentalism, read and met Fuller and was good friends with Emerson.<sup>221</sup> It could very well be that Fuller's response to the attack in *The Dublin Magazine* is what inspired Crowe to choose Kerner's book over other works. Though Fuller did not believe in ghosts, it is interesting that both she and Crowe questioned male dominated and rationally-centred epistemological methodology and both saw Hauffe as worthy to represent different methods of knowledge.

This is what makes Crowe's translation unique amongst the literature of the period that was available in English (beside the excerpts translated by Fuller) and it mixed magnetism with ghost-seeing that Crowe would later employ herself. Even Hauffe's moral premise on ghost appearances would reappear in *Night Side*, as Clapton points out.<sup>222</sup> Kerner's biography of Friedrieke Hauffe was the anti-thesis to the account of Nicolai the Bookseller. If critics could claim Martineau was not an expert, they could not lay the claim against Kerner. If Nicolai calmly explained away his illusionary visions, Kerner's account of Mrs. Hauffe provided society with an example of a pious woman who apparently saw true visions while enduring saintly suffering. It is a testimony of the specialist with traditional undertones – a trait many skeptics saw as a blurry reminder of metaphysical or Swedenborgian philosophy. For all that, Kerner was a successful physician in his field, holding just as high an institutionalized rank as Ferriar. However, his locus is the sickroom and not the institution. He weighs a patient's words by allowing Hauffe to speak at length and interpreting the testimony as evidence that her declamation do indeed have objective validity.

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<sup>221</sup> DeWess, loc 2285

<sup>222</sup> Clapton, 298.

However, his epistemological stance ventured into metaphysics that were rejected by British skeptics, who were either supporters of natural theology and/or of a growing positivism that called into question his own ability to fully interpret the phenomena. His metaphysical interpretations literally put him beyond the physicality of the objective world. Though there was a popular cultural transfer of literature, there was a fear as well, alluded to in the previous chapter, that German supernatural literature had a devastating effect on the psyche if taken as objective.<sup>223</sup> With the advent of Spiritualism, German works like Ennemoser's *History of Magic*, translated by William Howitt in 1854, would begin to see wider circulation as the need for non-fictional, scientific apologies for the supernatural would increase.<sup>224</sup>

At the very outset in her foreword Crowe defends Kerner's narrative based on the authoritative value of honest testimony:

I say *facts*; because I cannot conceive the possibility of any candid mind doubting the greatest number of them, after reading the book...Indeed, Kerner's well-known character, ought to exempt him from such an imputation from any quarter...I reject with horror the idea, that in a suffering creature...so much apparent innocence and piety should have been but the cloak to so useless and cruel a deception.<sup>225</sup>

The defense of Kerner is important. Crowe was working from the standpoint of endorsing both a professional but also a person that was of good character. It was during this time period that the character of a witness was giving way to circumstantial

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<sup>223</sup> *Literature and the Supernatural: Essays for the Maynooth Bicentenary*, ed. Brian Cosgrove (Dublin, 1995) 3-5.

<sup>224</sup> Oppenheim, 37.

<sup>225</sup> Kerner, x.

evidence. Even the great Scottish physician Abercrombie (1780-1844) held the importance of character to acceptable testimony in ascertaining a fact, regardless of what the accepted orthodoxy might claim as law.<sup>226</sup> However, Crowe was wary of the double-edged sword of circumstantial evidence and its efficacy was doubted by many.<sup>227</sup>

Being an expert, Kerner's testimony was vital for not only was he the original author but an authoritative physician. According to him, Hauffe showed that somnambules did have epistemological abilities and could look inward, shutting off the body and not feeling physical torment. Kerner writes, "We are instructed also by certain significant dreams, presentiments, and communications from the world of spirits; and from what is only to be learnt by the revelations of the magnetic life."<sup>228</sup> This is done by validating the prognosticated sayings of the seeress and by the multiple witnesses who attest to her phenomena.

It showed Crowe's need for expert narrative as she had no such medical credentials. This would also be visible in *NSN* where she gives way to German physiologists to back her thesis. It also shows her belief in the validity of using character when assessing testimony, not just to rule out trickery but the ability for people to accurately interpret their experiences.

This use of 'honest' testimony represented Crowe's and Kerner's insistence in the role of character concerning testimony. As Welsh pointed out, the 'positive evidence'

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<sup>226</sup> John Abercrombie. *Inquiries concerning the intellectual powers and the investigation of truth*. 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, Waugh and Innes, 1831) 80-84.

<sup>227</sup> Welsh Alexander. *Strong representations: narrative and circumstantial evidence in England*. (John Hopkins University Press, 1992) 17.

<sup>228</sup> Kerner, 15.

of the first-hand witness testimony was giving way to circumstantial evidence in the legal tradition and even in the rise of realist third-person narratives.<sup>229</sup> Testimony could be compromised no matter how honest or educated the observer.

Kerner's book is a mixture of episodes of magnetism, experiments, diagnosis, sightings and feelings of apparitions and somnambulist clairvoyance. It is unlike the medical literature written by apologists such as Elliotson that purposefully stayed away from metaphysics, even attacking such theories. Kerner, like Crowe later, used signed testimonies of supernatural events, and tied them to a spiritual explanation, though leaving a final explanation open. For Kerner, and Crowe as well, proofs such as the validation of clairvoyant utterances showed that the illusory explanation of the supernatural is wanting.<sup>230</sup> This was done by comparing Hauffe's clairvoyant utterances against what transpired later. In one example, a visiting skeptic asks the Seeres to contact a friend she claims is dead who claimed he would visit her. The Seeres while in trance is silent for weeks until the skeptic finally admits she made up a fake death; another time a spirit contacts the Seeres and gives his date of birth. People are sent to ascertain the truth and state the date is different. The ghost tells the Seeres to have them sent again whereat more enquires back the Seeres' pronouncement.<sup>231</sup>

Another lengthy example where the Seeres restores a widow's fortune by being able to see a letter in a corner of a bailiff's office, even describing the room and what the bailiff was doing at the time, is attested to in writing by the Bailiff of Heyd himself who verifies the incident.<sup>232</sup> The trance is not a narrative of delusion if the testimony is later

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<sup>229</sup> Welsh, 28-29.

<sup>230</sup> Kerner, 35-38.

<sup>231</sup> Kerner, 180.

<sup>232</sup> Kerner, 215.

objectively validated. If credible witnesses can testify that the Seeres was able to disclose something that could not have been known by her, even to the people involved, then it points to an ability to gain knowledge by supersensory means. Even Kerner defers to the signed testimony of the Bailiff. His testimony is added to the event and this accumulated evidence points to an objective validation of a metaphysical epistemological method. It was testimony situated in the locality of the intimate bedroom and not the psychiatric institution. In word and place, it was a testament to a divergent interpretation of sickness as Winters points out.<sup>233</sup> This testimony was subversive of medical orthodoxy, turning the physician into just another observer outside of his institutionalized sphere of influence.

In Britain, this mode of validating testimony had given way to the rising influence of the interpretation of data according to a physiological interpretation. Kerner's many signatures from professionals were no longer viewed as valid when counteracting accepted positions of mechanical laws. Ferriar, Hibbert and Scott seldom questioned credibility but they did question ability. Kerner and Crowe never accepted this changing paradigm just because it was anomalous to known natural causation. Their defense of 'positive evidence,' first-hand testimony was a conscious unacceptance of the skeptic's ideological refusal to admit that there were such phenomena that they could not explain even if the narratively sought to erase it.

If Colquhoun used the template of a lawyer and Elliotson that of a doctor, it seems only fitting that Crowe turns to Kerner's narrative of Hauffe. Kerner was also a physician but his narrative is an attempt to allow Hauffe, a clairvoyant invalid, to speak

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<sup>233</sup> Winters, 215-216.

on her own behalf. In fact, Kerner began his investigation of her with the skeptical attitude of Hibbert. His narrative and Hauffe's life show a true scientific investigation, modern, medical conversion where truth of the evidence overcomes prejudice and theory and a productive instance of a clairvoyant's career. The visions of Hauffe in a trance may have appealed to Crowe who sees trance as a pathway to greater knowledge. If one were to only accept events whose explanations were already known then, Colquhoun argued, "there would be an end to all farther advancement, and the book of Nature would henceforth be to us a sealed volume."<sup>234</sup>

Although Kerner, Fuller, and Crowe all claimed to allow the Seeres to represent herself and afford her the benefit of epistemological doubt, their redactions point to an imposition, nonetheless. Kerner cites a few pages of her journal and poetry but there was never a full publication of it. We do not get a totally first-person narrative. Kerner chooses which phenomena are recorded, the witnesses, the concurring specialists. He gets the final word. The role of the educated and specializing physician is still supreme. Fuller cites more of her poetry. This shows her admiration of Hauffe's insight rather than poetic merit and points to a transcendental and proto-feminist agenda of the role of the intuition, Crowe's translation is neither literal or full: she chooses what to translate and what to leave out. Though retaining the essentials of Hauffe's experience, it is an imposition, nonetheless. One only gets one of the Seeres' poems even though they count as an important form for her to communicate.

Though she is the narrative antidote to Nicolai's account, unlike Nicolai we never get her full testimony. Kerner, Fuller and Crowe end up employing the same method of

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<sup>234</sup> Colquhoun, Vol.II.120.

the skeptic even if they reach a different conclusion with the same data. Nonetheless, Hauffe's case provided a base for Crowe to build upon to defend the veracity of supernatural phenomena, not just ghost-seeing, and she would use German physiologists and thinkers when compiling her magnum opus.

### ***The Night Side of Nature***

Crowe was already a successful novelist and short story writer when she published *The Night Side of Nature* in 1848. However, that did not save her from the detraction of her erstwhile admirers upon its publication:

Doubtful and scant of proof at first, doubtful and scant of proof still, mankind's experience of them [apparitions] is, that their alleged appearances have been in all ages, marvelous, exceptional and resting on imperfect grounds of proof; that in vast numbers of cases they are known to be delusions superinduced by a well understood, and by no means uncommon disease; and that, in a multitude of others, they are often asserted to be seen, even on Mrs. Crowe's own showing, in that imperfect state of perception, between sleeping and waking, than which there is hardly any less reliable incidental to our nature. <sup>235</sup>

Thus, wrote Charles Dickens in a partially condescending review for the book. Though not a total skeptic in immaterial causation in that he openly practiced animal magnetism, Dickens found Crowe's narrative compilation erratic and her spirit hypothesis far-

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<sup>235</sup> Charles Dickens. "The Literary Examiner." *The Examiner*, 26 February 1848. 4.

fetches. If the text was as jumbled as a Dickensian pawn shop, he saw little chance of getting anything from it that could constitute irrefutable proof. However, Crowe felt that her work had numerous textual artifacts of testimonial evidence that did not lend themselves to being interpreted as instances of delusion. Where Dickens saw the boundary between sleeping and waking as cognitively problematic, Crowe wished to show examples, as did animal magnetists such as Colquhoun, where such thresholds became moments in which one could see even more clearly.

When Crowe published *Night Side of Nature* in 1848, her goal was not simply to validate the reality of apparitions but anomalous phenomena that pointed to the existence of the soul. Crowe's book was a compendium of narratives – whole and fragmentary -compounded with scholarly and medical opinions. Like Glanvill, Baxter, Beaumont and Defoe before her, she sought to prove the real existence of the supernatural by the weight of testimony utilizing a Baconian method that took in data no matter how extraordinary. However, their texts are not as thematically expansive as *Night Side* in giving each phenomenon its own detailed discussion and collection of data. It contains Crowe's and other hypotheses but no dogmatic insistence on accepting them, though it is obvious Crowe endorses the soul hypothesis. She sought to build on like-minded German and French scholarship while maintaining her own views. In short, it is an epistemological and ontological work which covers many facets of consciousness and experience deemed supernatural. Crowe wanted to show proof that being is a spiritual experience, that the soul moves the mind. For her, knowledge is not simply a process of reasoning and inferring by way of the senses on the physical world: it was also the process of a supersensory intake from the soul.



For the most part, scholarship on Crowe's *Night Side* stresses her pioneering role in bringing veridical supernatural literature to a vast audience. McCorristine calls it a 'landmark book' and a "quasi-folkloric collection of supernatural narratives heavily drawn from German sources, rhetorically somewhere between fact and fiction." He hails her "Baconian approach" and "will-to-investigate", claiming it inspired a generation.<sup>236</sup> It is also a continuance of an inductive form of Baconian accumulation that shows an experiential methodology that continued to survive simultaneously with the dominance of the Enlightenment and rise of objective, scientific methodology. However, he seems to echo Dickens's view that her collection is chaotic. He fails to see that Crowe's method of narration is designed to show data over commentary. Most supernatural researchers focused solely on apparitions and witches. Magnetists focused on proof of meta-abilities of thought. Crowe was unusual in allowing all these phenomena to be set forth before the reader to be convinced of their objective validity. Where she does employ commentary and theories it was after groupings of phenomena. Hibbert and Scott chose narratives sparingly, Crowe does the opposite.

In *Ghost Seers, Detectives and Spiritualists*, Smajic concentrates on Crowe's approach to "inner sight" as non-corporeal, noting how it aligns with Ruskin and Carlyle, who also wished to uphold ways of experiencing the world that surmounted bare materialism. Each of them thought that inner vision was just as important as common physical sight. Smajic puts Crowe's book into the historical context of the role of utility and vision in an increasingly materialist vision of Victorian society. In doing so, he touches upon Crowe's unique place in Victorian ontological thinking. He touches upon

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<sup>236</sup> McCorristine, 10-12.

her theory of a universal connection and intuition, but his discussion of these subjects is mainly thematic.<sup>237</sup> This chapter will go into greater depth on how Crowe put forward her ratiocative, jurisprudential and narrative argument for her ontological position. However, the role of sight in Victorian studies does not address the role of testimony and data in the same period and Crowe's purpose.<sup>238</sup> Crowe's focus is not on sight, but on events that are verifiable and can be proved against other forms of evidence. A ghost sighting might very well be explained by a hallucination, but one that corresponds to an event tied to the sighting that is beyond coincidence cannot be so easily accounted for: it is experiential proof of an objective interaction.

Scholarship has yet to study Crowe's "landmark book" in depth it deserves as an influential, cultural artifact. McCorristine's estimation does not take into a comprehensive account that Crowe's text does more than simply collect; neither does Smajic's thematic estimation deal seriously with Crowe's attention to detail. Crowe's work was an ambitious attempt to present supernatural phenomena according to concept, data, and plurality of theories. Once all this material was brought together, Crowe maintained that one could not claim, as the skeptics had done, that it was all hallucinatory. Such a complex field of data called for a more complex set of explanations.

Heholt claims that Crowe was "trespassing into male territory...advocating, not logic or pure reason, but intuition, experience and insight and presenting science with

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<sup>237</sup> Smajic, Srdjan. *Ghost Seers, Detectives, and Spiritualists: Theories of Vision in Victorian Literature and Science*. (Cambridge: CUP, 2010) 38-42

<sup>238</sup> See Lamont, P. (2004). Spiritualism and a Mid-Victorian Crisis of Evidence. *The Historical Journal*, 47(4), 897-920.

'evidence' through a feminized form of story-telling."<sup>239</sup> Crowe did hail intuition, and showed how it is more prominent - but nowhere near exclusive - to women, children, 'primitive societies' and animals, as will be shown later; however, she views observation and experience as being just as fundamental. Nowhere does she intimate that her outlook is an example of a feminized story telling as she incorporates many forms of narrative but rather Crowe consciously attempted to enfranchise testimony of the masses as epistemologically valid. Her use of testimony, oral and written, to counteract a physiological explanation was nothing new. Heholt's argument is anachronistic as many of Crowe's arguments for veridical episodes had already been used by researchers for centuries, from Glanville to Colquhoun. Furthermore, the role of the intuitive woman as a conduit for prophecy, even messianic roles, was already important in non-conformist circles from millenarians to Methodists as Owen has pointed out.<sup>240</sup> What really made Crowe's take unique is that she compounded this with a serious use of the jurisprudential weight of testimony, data collection and investigation. In doing so, Crowe was breaking the woman as intuitive, spiritual stereotype into that of an able collector of data, as a researcher going beyond the limited viewpoint of both the superstitious and the skeptical. If middle class normative thought saw woman as the angel of the house and millenarians a possible messiah, Crowe showed one an author with an authoritative command over material presenting her cases in case studies.

Her collection was one of many that sought to use a broad definition of epistemology and testimony to show that not all supernatural events could be explained

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<sup>239</sup> Ruth Heholt. (2014). 'Science, Ghosts and Vision: Catherine Crowe's Bodies of Evidence and the Critique of Masculinity'. *Victoriographies*, 52.

<sup>240</sup> Owen, 12-16.

and dismissed as false. For her, from Burton's explanation of melancholia, Webster's use of fancy or Hibbert's recourse to hallucination, skeptics had always sought to ignore events that did not fit their theories. What separates Crowe from these earlier collections of narratives is her wide collection of varied phenomena of over 500 cases, most of which had not been seen before, and her ability to present many theories tied into the latest advancements of physicians and physiological explanations of mental phenomena. One reads at the very beginning:

In the seventeenth century, credulity outran reason and discretion; the eighteenth century, by a natural reaction, flung itself into an opposite extreme. Whoever closely observes the signs of the times, will be aware that another change is approaching. The contemptuous skepticism of the last age is yielding to a humbler spirit of enquiry.<sup>241</sup>

Crowe argued that science itself runs into extremes based on historical circumstances, and that its materialist inclinations were an extreme response to blind credulity. She made a conscious decision to adopt an older epistemological model based on Baconian induction. She wanted science to reflect the present age of new discoveries by looking that the supernatural without prejudice. The tone is optimistic and hopeful for the future where science would sooner or later take the supernatural into serious, investigative consideration. Her argument is reminiscent of the sentiments of supernatural investigators such as Glanvill and Baxter, who sought to provide an alternative to Deism and materialism; they also collected testimonies and studied cases in depth. Crowe was the first major writer to devote such an apology to supernatural phenomena in Britain

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<sup>241</sup> *NSN*, 3.

since Defoe, and she was aware that her work approaching an old subject that had been disregarded in a new way. She is also an example of an autodidact in an era where autodidacts could still make inroads into disciplinary fields of the emerging sciences, as Barrow has shown, and that this too was part of an ability to question elitist epistemologies or “social superiors.”<sup>242</sup> Heholt states that Crowe’s purpose is to show how such enquiry will lead to the discovery of how the supernatural operates according to natural law.<sup>243</sup> Crowe wanted to show that the supernatural was natural.

Heholt, with Dickens, agrees that Crowe's stories are “jumbled up together...the narrative is disjointed, and they do not equate to the flowing realism we are accustomed to in Victorian ghost stories. One reason for this style of ghost stories is that Crowe’s work is deeply rooted in oral traditions.” She rightly recognizes that Crowe objectively writes down the events by not being overly reductive, and that her work is reminiscent of the “picturesque” literature of the previous two centuries.<sup>244</sup> However, it seems Heholt confuses ghost-stories, folk tales, “realism,” and testimony. Nowhere in *Night Side* does Crowe state she is collecting only ghost-stories. The phenomena are more varied and complex than that. Unlike fiction, her narrations are events that were supposed to have happened. Though she does often refer to both some testimony and attested events as “stories,” she also often calls them “cases” and it is with the understanding that they are parts of a chain of such stories that in the tradition at the time, was a method in many disciplines to setting up circumstantial evidence.<sup>245</sup> Such a term would not be used again until the SPR’s *Phantasms of the Living*. Crowe collected data, each testimony a

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<sup>242</sup> Barrow, 151

<sup>243</sup> Heholt, “Science, Ghosts and Vision,” 47-48.

<sup>244</sup> Heholt, “Science, Ghosts and Vision,” 49-50.

<sup>245</sup> Welsh, 30.

datum meant to accumulate evidence. The narratives are “disjointed” and “lack menace” not because Crowe cannot weave together a good tale but because she is only showing testimony as a product of quotidian events, rather than modifying it. She gave the essentials of a case as they were the most relevant to her collection of corroborative evidence.

The ambitions of *NSN* go well beyond ghost-seeing. Most critics of Crowe, both supportive and dismissive, seem to overlook that *NSN* is an ontological work. Her work uses supernatural occurrences to prove the existence of immaterial ‘mystery of our being.’<sup>246</sup> In this her work is one among many of that period from both sides of the materialist debate, such as George Coombe’s (a close friend of Crowe’s) *Constitution of Man* (1828), which took a mainly physiological and phrenological approach, or William Whewell’s *Elements of Morality* (1828). Coombe was a lawyer and like Crowe, sought to approach a subject he was not traditionally qualified for and sought to convince both specialist and layperson. He believed his method of physiology based on a proper interpretation of the parts of the skull and brain – an interpretation that could be done by anyone devoted to enough training – could transform society in ways that made it more merit based over hierarchy based on birth.<sup>247</sup> Carlyle in his, *Sign of the Times* (1829) also sought to counteract what he perceived was the encroachment of materialism. Smajic posits this period as one of importance where ontology and sight were combined in calling into account materialism and mentions Crowe’s *Night Side* alongside Ruskin and Carlyle.<sup>248</sup> Even *Blackwood’s Magazine*, a Tory dominated periodical which never

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<sup>246</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.4

<sup>247</sup> Cooter, 7, 123-124.

<sup>248</sup> Smajic, 34-54.

printed anything of Crowe's, would in 1894 put her theories along that of Emerson and De Quincy as axiomatic of the times.<sup>249</sup> Crowe sought experiential proof of the soul by identifying and cataloging observable events that defied physiological explanation. She was not trying to prove ghosts exist as much as she was trying to prove the soul exists. This would be done by collecting the positive evidence of testimony that would provide a chain of circumstantial proof.

Her narrative sought a case for the objective validity of the supernatural by mainly by three methods: appeal to scripture, German physiologists, and testimony of the supernatural. Her tripartite being of soul, spirit and body, which was her ontological premise and entirely acceptable in natural theological circles, is introduced in a quasi-mystic metaphor: "The Dweller of the Temple." This is the title of her first chapter, and it refers to the soul living in the body. This metaphor sets up the rest of the work. It is the dweller (soul) which dwells in the temple (body, "mechanism") and by way of the will which along with the imagination is given almost divine ability, exudes its being by thought and action.

#### Accepting and Rejecting the Skeptics

Crowe's narrative method was to collect a base of testimony to put forward to the reader so they could decide on their credibility. Crowe's purpose was to take the veridical episode away from the position of both skeptics and the traditional portrayal of the supernatural. It was these two loci of interpretation and dissemination of testimony

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<sup>249</sup> Larken, 144.

that kept the veracity of the narratives as an objective reality from getting serious attention. As for the skeptics, Crowe positions herself as consciously answering the writings of Ferriar and Hibbert while at the same time defending both their qualification and knowledge:

It may be objected that the eternally quoted case of Nicolai, the bookseller at Berlin, and Dr. Ferriar's "Theory of Apparitions," had not eternally settled the question; but nobody doubts that Nicolai's was a case of disease...I was acquainted with a poor woman, in Edinborough, who suffered this malady...but she was also perfectly conscious of the nature of the illusions; and that temperance and a doctor were the proper exorcists to lay the spirits. With respect to Dr. Ferriar's book, a more shallow one was assuredly never allowed to settle any question...That such a disease as he describes, exists, nobody doubts; but I maintain there are hundreds of cases on record, for which the explanation does not suffice;<sup>250</sup>

Crowe here is laying out the basis of her retort and presenting the essentials of her case. That Ferriar, Hibbert, Scott and even Dickens looked to Nicolai as the case par excellence of spectral illusion, Crowe uses it as the very first case she deals with in her work. However, what she does next shoes her method. She makes Nicolai's case not unique portrayal but a case among others. Of significance is that she provides a personal example of an acquaintance, blurring the lines of society paper case and personal knowledge. That woman, a drunkard, also was perfectly aware just as Nicolai the intellectual. Crowe does not attack Nicolai or Ferriar's interpretation. What she did

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<sup>250</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.14.



attack is its use to explain all other phenomena. Ferriar was a specialist in disease, not ontological truths that went beyond the infirmary. The one case hailed by Ferriar could account for the hundreds of others that are too complex that coincidence and spectral illusion fall short. It was this preponderance of testimony that showed a deep reservoir of evidence as opposed to Ferriar's shallow theorization. Crowe will use hundreds of cases and it will be a testimonial tour de force uniting time periods, religions, genders, and class to show an inductive approach to anomalous supernatural phenomena.

The physiological explanations of skeptics had shortfalls: "Their books cannot, therefore, claim to be considered as anything more than essays on a special disease; they have no pretense whatever to the character of investigations."<sup>251</sup> This is where Night Side is important. Crowe is putting their books against her testimony and their theories against her concept of investigation. These medical experts have simply not done a proper investigation. Crowe's work was meant to begin a remedy of that situation by assembling data for future research. Crowe here shows the scientifically minded as being unscientific and that her work is a more impartial, reasonable approach to the difficult subject, looking at the complexities the skeptics refuse to acknowledge. These complexities were put before the reader to weigh the evidence themselves.

## **Crowe and Scripture**

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<sup>251</sup> NSN, Vol.121-22.

As *NSN* is based on testimony, it is interesting to see just how Crowe used its importance on scripture to make her ontological argument. Though she espoused natural theology, Crowe did not use scripture in an orthodox sense. She looked upon the clergy as dogmatic, and its authoritative role in producing acceptable knowledge as partly responsible for keeping the populace ignorant of the full import of the supernatural.<sup>252</sup> Clapton in his essay on Baudelaire and Crowe, erroneously called them “enemies of her faith.”<sup>253</sup> For her, however, religion was not a faith but a mode of arriving at knowledge. Belief was not enough. It was conviction – as it would be for Cox – that was the whole purpose for investigation. Conviction based on evidence would transform society.

For Crowe, scripture was not to be ignored, for it served as an important, testimonial base to show the veracity of spirits. For her, scripture supports the existence of the soul, but the details of the exact make up or how it functions is a matter for human exertions:

All the information we have on these and kindred subjects is compromised in such hints as the scriptures here and there give us; whatever conclusions we draw must be the result either of our intuitions, or of observations of experience<sup>254</sup>

Crowe used the lacunae in revelation as an avenue for the interested searcher to find the truth of the soul. In fact, one episode mentioned by St. Paul seems eerily like a somnambulistic trance. Crowe cites it:

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<sup>252</sup> *NSN* Vol.I.362

<sup>253</sup> Clapton, 288.

<sup>254</sup> *NSN*, 422.

Then, with regard to the spirit absenting itself from the body, St. Paul says, referring to his own vision, 2 Cor. Xii, 'I knew a man in Christ, about fourteen years ago (whether in the body I cannot tell; or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth) such a one caught up to the third heaven' and we are told to be 'absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.'<sup>255</sup>

This citation is used to convince an audience that holds the witness testimony of scripture valid. That was not considered controversial. What is controversial is how Crowe gave it a heterodox reading. This was not unheard of with the multitude of dissenting and millenarian interpretations of the period. Barrow also notes the role of millenarian, even socialist based movements tied to it, that gave such heterodox ideas as tied to personal experience, democratic epistemology and the idea of being subversive the authoritarian role of institutional religion.<sup>256</sup> Crowe mentions Dr. Reid Clanny (1776-1850), senior physician at Sunderland Infirmary, whose investigations convince members of the established church.<sup>257</sup> His investigations, as Davies mentions, were based on supposed clairvoyance within a Christian context, that even Methodists in the 1840s (popular, politically strong and middle-class centred) still believed that one spirit communication would mean the age of miracles had not ended.<sup>258</sup> This may explain why Crowe alludes to Wesley.<sup>259</sup> However, what makes Crowe's use of scriptural testimony unique is that Crowe places it against Hauffe's somnambulism. It united the religious experience with modern day somnambulism. She claims that, "the

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<sup>255</sup> *NSN*, 141.

<sup>256</sup> Barrow, 148-149.

<sup>257</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.307

<sup>258</sup> Davies, 87.

<sup>259</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.267.

Seeres says they (spirit sounds) are produced by means of the nerve-spirit, which I conclude is the spiritual body of St. Paul, and the atmosphere, as we produce sound by means of our *material* body and the atmosphere”<sup>260</sup> Crowe united the clairvoyant, sick patient with St. Paul in a single epistemological discourse and experience. If one questioned one, one had to question the other. St. Paul’s experience is presented as an important precedent, making later cases possibly valid. The sacred and the secular do mix and cannot be separated by religious, arbitrary dogma to protect the institution of the church. This allusion and employment of the religious is important in Crowe’s work: the witness as martyr who suffers for admitting what they have experienced whether in persecution or the modern method of ridicule was nonetheless a witness to the truth. It also tied Crowe the intuition-based epistemologies important to religious personalities such as Newman. Schramm points out that Newman also looked to testimony and intuition as epistemological foundations that could bypass other discourses.<sup>261</sup>

St. Paul is mentioned twelve times in the text, and almost always in Crowe’s attempts to delineate the soul.<sup>262</sup> This makes him among the most mentioned authorities in the book. According to Crowe’s interpretation people are made up of a tripartite being of spirit, soul and body; also, that “according to St. Paul, we have two bodies – a natural body and a spiritual body; the former being designated as our means of communication with the external world.”<sup>263</sup> Crowe created her own Biblical exegesis based on German research, but placed it as just another possible proof of the supernatural, not simply as a Christian apology.

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<sup>260</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.265.

<sup>261</sup> Schramm, 146-148, 176.

<sup>262</sup> *NSN* Vol.I.24-25, 267, 346, 397; Vol.II.2, 17, 160

<sup>263</sup> *NSN*, 15.

This method had been employed by Christian apologists, but Crowe sought validation in other religions as well. It had even been used by another eighteenth century actress and writer Eliza Fowler Haywood (1693-1756) who also saw scripture and the mass of testimony as valid evidence, as Davies points out.<sup>264</sup> This would become more important when Crowe went on to challenge organized religion in *Spiritualism and the Age We Live In* (1859). Crowe points to other religions, as did Colquhoun, to show that an intuitive apprehension of the existence of the spirit is universal, or very nearly so.<sup>265</sup> She, like Colquhoun, saw the body as a medium for the soul by way of the brain.<sup>266</sup> However, Crowe in addition felt that the spirit body is made up of organs as well, each with its purpose.

It seems fitting that Crowe chose St. Paul as her scriptural authority, as his entire call to ministry was initiated by a vision of Christ that was not witnessed by those with him. It was an example of accepted testimony that even Ferriar, Scott and Hibbert would not question, but it was still an example of testimony. Crowe maintained that if Paul's testimony was considered valid then there was no reason to simply dismiss other testimony as mere hallucination.<sup>267</sup> His predicament seemed to echo that of many of the credible witnesses of good character that writers like Hibbert, Newnham and Scott reject though they would never be expected to question Paul's account.

Crowe was not alone in citing scripture as fundamentally tied to the importance of testimony. In an era where physiological explanations were seen in many religious circles, Anglican and non-conformist, as potentially materialistic, the testimony of the

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<sup>264</sup> Davies, 123.

<sup>265</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.11,349.

<sup>266</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.48-49, Vol.II.160.

<sup>267</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.379, Vol.II.17.

scriptures was an ideological defence of the immaterial. Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) leader of the Free Church of Scotland and Vice President of the Edinburgh Royal Society (1835-42) also tied testimony's importance to scripture.<sup>268</sup> What made Crowe break with established and dissenting tradition in using scripture was that she employed it as a means to an end. It was placed alongside modern mental philosophy which is alluded to much more often. Scripture as part of the evidence and not the point of evidence.

Crowe's argument was taking place at a time when the natural theology of Paley's *Natural Theology or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity* (1802) was still popular as a defense against Hume's skepticism. Crowe thus uses the argument for St. Paul against natural theologians, arguing that it rests on the same basis of evidence as the kind of claims that they discount, and asserting that they discredit reports of the supernatural as an attempt to maintain ideological power rather than any attempt to seek objective knowledge. Based on her collective evidence, which includes that of St. Paul, she presented what she saw as a pattern of proof that there is a spiritual component to humanity that has always been at work, and that there was no reason to suppose that it has ended. Indeed, she maintained that this was as natural as any scientific fact. If the spiritual operations of being are an effect of an undiscovered natural law, as Crowe thinks, then it would be truly abnormal if it ever had stopped at all. Her use of St. Paul's vision was later taken up by spiritualists in their defense of spiritualist phenomena, especially by Christian spiritualists.

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<sup>268</sup> Thomas Chalmers. *The Evidence and Authority of the Christian Revelations*. (Anthony Finley, Philadelphia, 1817) 10.

Crowe's perspective on scripture may be usefully contrasted with that of William Newnham (1790-1865) who was a medical practitioner. He was also one of the first members of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association and a member of the Royal Society of Literature. His *Essay on Superstition: Being an Inquiry into the Effects of Physical Influence of the Mind* (1830) argued that there was no need to address the Bible on the matter of inexplicable phenomena. According to him, one cannot seek recourse to scripture to validate modern supernatural phenomena:

In the same class of extraordinary communication, dreams and visions are to be ranged, which have equally ceased with the peculiarities of the ages... These are not to form the rule of our opinions at the present day; miraculous interposition is no longer to be expected: the spirit of prophecy no longer actuates the ministers of God.<sup>269</sup>

Like Crowe, Newnham held that the brain was a medium – a conduit for the spirit to the rest of the body – but it must be working perfectly if it is to channel information from the external world to the soul. For him, apparent visions simply demonstrated that the brain was not working well, and not a sign of divine vision. “Second Sight” was simply cerebral in origin, as was somnambulism.<sup>270</sup> Newnham's stance even ruled out the idea of satanic influence, seeing it as an excuse and an impingement of God's gift of free-will to humanity. This interpretation dismissed older models of Christian apologist against satanic influence and the modern phenomena of animal magnetism or millenarianism by affirming faith in both scripture and science. This allowed him to maintain human free will and balance between theology and enlightenment thought.

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<sup>269</sup> William Newnham. *Essay on Superstition: Being an Enquiry into its Effects on the Human Mind*. (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1830) 199.

<sup>270</sup> Newnham, 182.

It is interesting to note that both Crowe and Newnham

refer to 2 Kings VI.17 where Elisha's servant cannot at first see the armies of God until the "Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire, round about Elisha." For Crowe this intimates a second sight which is part of each person's spiritual abilities.<sup>271</sup> For Newnham, it is a case of divine intervention that is no longer used. Newnham does not wish for the chaos of personal testimony to cloud the order of scientific thought. God, for Newnham, is also a scientist.<sup>272</sup> For Crowe, this second sight is not reserved for the past elect but accessible to people of all walks of life. Ideological exclusion could not account for it still happening in the world in so many recorded cases.

This reliance on the testimony of scripture served not only to prove the soul but anomalous phenomena as valid and epistemologically objective. Crowe saw the dream and somnambulant state as not states of unreliable weakness, but sound expressions of the soul. God in scripture communicated in dream through allegorical and direct language.<sup>273</sup> She had scripture to prove it:

The Scriptures teach us that God chose to reveal himself to his people chiefly in dreams, and we are entitled to conclude the reason of this was, that the spirit was then more free to the reception of spiritual influences and impressions...It is also to be remarked, that the awe or fear which pervades a mortal at the mere conception of being brought into relation

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<sup>271</sup> Crowe, 167.

<sup>272</sup> Newnham, 258.

<sup>273</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.77-78.



with a spirit, has no place in sleep, whether natural or magnetic...we seem to meet on an equality—is it not that we meet spirit to spirit.<sup>274</sup>

If scripture was valid as testimony concerning the dream state, then the dream state was valid as an epistemological source. The matter was symbolic, and it called for an interpretive reading that is beyond language.<sup>275</sup> However, its meta-rationality was still valid. What is of significance is the language of equality and lack of fear. It is on this plane of the dream state above words, class, gender and bodily health conditions that both an ontological and epistemological encounter takes place. It is in this liminal area of consciousness where the “wisdom of the world is foolishness before God” a quote Crowe cites often in her work.<sup>276</sup> The wisdom of the world are the knowledge systems of the world, the a priori prejudices that fall under the power of symbol of ontological encounter. What makes Crowe’s use here significant is that she is not using it to usher in a millenarian prophecy or apocalypse. Nor is it the tying to animal magnetism which makes it so. It is what Crowe does afterwards with scriptural testimony. She ties that citation to a common case of presentiment during the dream state:

On the night of the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, in the year 1813, a lady residing in the north of England, dreamt that her brother, who was then with his regiment in Spain, appeared to her saying, “Mary, I die this day at Vittoria.”<sup>277</sup>

She wakes up and looks at gazettes and atlases to find such a place and the vision is fulfilled. Here scripture meets modern printed media and the divine voice that reveals

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<sup>274</sup> *NSN*, Vol.150-151

<sup>275</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I 84

<sup>276</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I. 388; Vol.II.23

<sup>277</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.152-153

itself to the unafraid spirit gives way to a brother far away revealing his fate to his sister. Both are valid. The power and spirit of prophecy is also the power of the soul inherent in all that in altered states can reach epistemological truth beyond the rational, waking state. Her work is religiously charged, and she sought recourse to it as often as she does German physiologists.

### **The Specialists**

Crowe did not only appeal to scripture, its testimony and its major figures such as St. Paul. Crowe was not a physician, doctor, lawyer, or scientist. She realized, like Colquhoun, her limited credentials:

I am very well aware of all the difficulties in the way...and I am very far from supposing that my book is to settle the question. All I hope or expect is, to show that the question is not disposed of yet. Either by the rationalists or the physiologists...and all I desire is to arouse enquiry and curiosity; and that thus some mind, better qualified than mine, to follow out the investigation, may be incited to undertake it.<sup>278</sup>

Crowe's purpose was to provide several cases to show the holes in the physiological hypothesis of all anomalous phenomena. This allowed for a discursive space for

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<sup>278</sup> NSN, Vol.278-279, also: 350.

alternate explanations. By consciously divesting her ability she gave the data precedence over her own authorial power and left the door to others.

She remedied this lack of expertise by mainly appealing to German physicians and continental doctors, using them more often than any other authority like Colquhoun.<sup>279</sup> This call of the expert testimony of serious researchers and specialists whose findings conflicted with the dismissive work of British skeptics was to allow the reader to hear another credible, qualified interpretation of the phenomena. It was a conscious decision on her part as a narrative strategy:

It is not simply the result of my own reflections and convictions that I am about to offer. On the contrary, I intend to fortify my position by the opinions of many other writers; the chief of whom will...that it is they who have principally attended to the question, be Germans.<sup>280</sup>

She on the one hand combined sacred and profane history but she is also made an ideological statement by preferring German physiology that was derided by segments of British thinkers.<sup>281</sup> Crowe fortified her argument by bring the opposing experts into the narrative. Though she knew many readers could relate to her stories, she felt that it was this serious, investigative approach from the continent and its discursive bravery that could make up for the reticence of the public's refusal to openly espouse such views.<sup>282</sup> She plainly states that her viewpoint is the opinion of "many of the most enlightened

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<sup>279</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.8,22,151.

<sup>280</sup> *NSN*, Vol.10-11; see also 8, 22-23, 38, 44-45; Vol.II.354

<sup>281</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.8,22, 11.

<sup>282</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.11.

persons of the present age.”<sup>283</sup> She points out German scientific culture as heterogenous: “they do think independently and courageously...that they never shrink from promulgating the opinions they have been led to form” unlike British thinkers who fear ridicule.<sup>284</sup> The investigative act of a heterodox opinion is the ethos of a true scientist where one’s credibility is put before society and one’s peers. The testimony of impartial research calls for an ethical witness that bases their views on evidence and not imposition.

Crowe uses German research to “fortify” phenomena as valid. The philosopher and physician Eschenmeyer (1768-1852) is cited in *Night Side* in a discussion of Christian tripartite being of a consciousness rooted in Pneuma (spirit), Psyche (soul) and Soma (body).<sup>285</sup> Ennemoser (1780-1854), another physician, is cited most when discussing his idea of human polarity and how it relates to the magnetized state.<sup>286</sup> Ennmoser is also frequently cited in Crowe’s discussion of the influence of the spirit and imagination in dreaming.<sup>287</sup>

In addition, Crowe cites Dr. Johann Karl Passavant’s (1790-1857) views of the spirit operational in sleep whereas other physiologists claimed the mind was still at work along with his explication of intuition in women.<sup>288</sup> Dr. Passavant dealt with the cholera epidemic in Vienna in 1832 and refounded the Physical Association in Frankfurt in 1834, afterwards studying mesmerism and looking for ways to fuse theology with science. It was this open minded, synthetic approach and investigation which appealed to Crowe.

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<sup>283</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.1-2.

<sup>284</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.8.

<sup>285</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.28.

<sup>286</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.166..

<sup>287</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.38,46,76.

<sup>288</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.41, 160,166-69, 382-384; Vol.II.160.

German physician and evangelist Jung Stilling (1740-1817) is another specialist. In fact, Stilling's *Theory of Pneumatology* can be seen, partly, as the template that Crowe used for Night Side in its breaking down phenomena into themes. *The Theory of Pneumatology* is a large work that deals with what can and cannot be considered a verifiable case of the supernatural. Jung-Stilling dealt with the supernatural in scripture, reason and nature. It is ambitious, citing many cases that show a spectrum of experience: from the delusional to the sublime. Spirit and vision are dealt with as manifold and unable to be explained simply as physiological. Another German which Crowe cites often is Joseph Ennemoser (1787-1854).<sup>289</sup> Though not as qualified as Stilling, Kerner or Passavant, he spent years researching animal magnetism and Crowe's use of Ennemoser for his polarity hypothesis predates Mary Howitt's translation (1854) of his *History of Magic* (1841).

Crowe did not depend on German physicians alone but also appeals to French and British physicians and thinkers as well. This showed the reader that she was both well informed of the latest physiological ideas and chose her expert opinions to further her narrative, allowing the specialists to help make her case. She appealed to Wigan when discussing the latest theories of the brain, to Pinel for blood flow, and to the writings of LaPlace when discussing the concepts of possibility and probability in order to show that such phenomena defies chance.<sup>290</sup> LaPlace's influence in probability was used by German physicians when weighing supernatural phenomena and the field of probability was growing importance to ascertaining causality.<sup>291</sup> Such use of probability

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<sup>289</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I. 45, 76-77, 85, 166-167, 196, 270-271, 381; Vol.II.18

<sup>290</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.44,98-99,111, Vol.II.15

<sup>291</sup> Gigerenzer et al. *The Empire of Chance: How Probability Changed Science and Everyday Life* (CUP, 1989) 26-35.

and inference was being used in court cases when weighing circumstantial evidence.<sup>292</sup> It began to outweigh testimony as more specialists weighed what was said against what was probable. Evidence based on probability took precedence.

Crowe wants to show the skeptic and the enquiring reader that these phenomena were being handled differently and seriously by other specialists just as well trained as British skeptics from the professional world, that probability favoured the accumulated testimony in one grand, “universal coincidence.”<sup>293</sup> This use of scientific sources is not erratic but well-chosen in that Crowe is using a continental template of interpretation to defend the objectivity of rare phenomena that institutionalized orthodoxy was attempting to explain away. She uses each expert according to the chapter’s theme while leaving a final verdict on the phenomena open to more enquiry, creating a narrative without hegemonic closure.

This constant deferral to others and the many interspersed narratives lead some, such as McCorristine, Clapton, Heholt and Smajic, to look at *NSN* as a pastiche of sorts. However, Crowe was not alone and did not employ them haphazardly to no purpose. The immensely controversial and popular *Vestiges of The Natural History of Creation* by Robert Chambers did likewise: transmutation and other scientific topics were defended by the latest theories of selected specialists. Chambers, unlike Crowe, retained his anonymity of the book throughout his life. However, the obvious lack of expertise allowed opponents to criticize the theses of the book, or at least show it was done by amateur hands, a kind of “synthesis a woman might attempt.”<sup>294</sup> One of those

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<sup>292</sup> Welsh, 11.

<sup>293</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.132.

<sup>294</sup> James. A Secord. *Victorian Sensation: The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*. (UCP, Chicago, 2017) 21.

women was Catherine Crowe. Crowe published for the editor and Whig reformist Chambers and even put herself in authorial danger to protect his anonymity. Neither Crowe nor Chambers could claim to be professional physiologists or scientists, but their reading of such authors allowed them to bring forward arguments against orthodox ideological positions. It was a narrative undertaking of selection where specialists filled in the role of writer with their testimonial expertise. Both sought to convince the public with their heterodox takes with Crowe being unique in seeking to do so by showing the public the public nature of the phenomena and testimonial enfranchisement.

### **Investigation**

Crowe's work begins and ends with a call for serious investigation. Crowe viewed skeptical literature as the work not of investigators but partisans. Both the scientific world and press of Great Britain are portrayed as biased and untrustworthy in giving all the evidence a chance to stand. Crowe knew that her work could not entirely satisfy a scientific approach:

I am quite conscious that the facts I shall adduce are open to controversy; I can bring forward no evidence that will satisfy a scientific mind; but neither are my opponents a whit better fortified. All I do hope to establish is, not a proof, but a presumption; and the conviction I desire to awaken in people's minds is, not that these things *are so* but that they *may be so*, and that it is well worth our while to enquire whether they are or not.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> NSN, Vol.I .388-389.

Crowe, by pointing out her imitations and the limitation of her investigation allowed her to keep her goal feasible of portraying the phenomena, not as theoretically explained but as worthy of serious research. This was further done by pointing out that skeptics suffered from the same limitation. Furthermore, qualified skeptics were met with qualified believers.<sup>296</sup> Hence, the evidence she was to present could be weighed by the reader without the aura of authority by a skeptical position.

Evidence was to be gathered and *Night Side* was an example of such an investigation that brought together ancient reports, medieval manuscripts and tied them to contemporary letters from family, oral relations from friends to newspapers clipping,<sup>297</sup> Indeed, for Crowe -and later for Cox- it is this gathering process that lays the basis for new sciences:

In the beginning, all sciences have been but a collection of facts, after wars to be examined, compared, and weighed by intelligent minds. To the vulgar, who do not see the universal law which governs the universe, everything out of the ordinary course of events, is a prodigy; but to the enlightened mind there are no prodigies...and that the most strange and even apparently contradictory or supernatural fact or event will be found, on due investigation, to be strictly dependent on its antecedents.<sup>298</sup>

The purpose of collecting these cases, stories and traditions was to lay a possible foundation of a new system of knowledge. It was to make the supernatural a natural

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<sup>296</sup> *NSN*, Vol.15.

<sup>297</sup> For examples of collecting and gathering see: *NSN*, Vol.I.242, 257, 362,364, 379; Vol.II.28, 338, 383

<sup>298</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.17.



part of life, divested of both superstition and skepticism. Here Crowe put the skeptic along the same ideological position of the superstitious who cannot explain and hence impose their own views. Crowe wanted to strip the data of theory and allow for a fresh approach that would give way by patient observation to new avenues of knowledge. It was inductive and harkening to an experiential enterprise. The publication of these circa 500 cases was just such a Baconian undertaking of a textual cabinet of curiosities for the reader to look upon. Until something was proven as inductively impossible, it could still be presented as a possibility.<sup>299</sup>

What was needed was diligent investigation based on observation:

No doubt there are examples of error and examples of error and examples of imposture, so there are in everything where room is to be found for them...but it is for the judicious observers to examine the genuineness of each particular instance; and it is perfectly certain and well established by the German physiologists and psychologists who have carefully studied the subject, that there are many above all suspicion. Provided then, that the case be genuine, it remains to be determined how much value is to be attached to the revelations, for they may be quite honestly delivered, and yet be utterly worthless...and it is here that conformity becomes important, for I cannot admit the objection that the simple circumstance of the patient's being diseased invalidates their evidence so entirely as to annul even the value of their unanimity...<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.363.

<sup>300</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.381

Crowe realized supernatural phenomena was rare, the evidence problematic and that testimony could be false. Hearsay, already considered problematic in jurisprudence, was necessary in some instances but only in the infancy of the subject. The testimony of the sick already enclosed in physiological interpretation by British skeptics had to be re-examined by continental physicians. Though Crowe took testimony from many, she still advocated a serious observer, a judge of evidence, who would sift the countless data. This call for judicious observation had, and would be, used by skeptics. What Crowe does here is transfer the power of judicious observation and inductive ability away from the specialist and broadens it to anyone who can carry out a truly patient, impartial investigation. Furthermore, the data collected was to bring the rarity of occurrences into textual proximity with one another. Once this inductive process was accomplished, then the similarities between episodes, cases and stories could be drawn out into possible patterns. This would be further validated by the prognostications coming to fruition making the theory of coincidence untenable. This fusion of testimony and later validation ruling out coincidence would be picked up by the SPR.

## **Testimony**

Crowe's position that the specialist and layperson have testimonial equality when it comes to truly unexplainable events is borne out by her use of testimony. Servants, derided in contemporary fiction as credulous and mischievous (as the next chapter will show), for Crowe became valid sources of testimony. If Secord points out that that Chambers wanted to subsume gender and class divisions through a discussion of

evolution, Crowe looked to commonality of supernatural experience and their transformative power brought into the public arena to do so.<sup>301</sup> She received information from maidservants or their relatives on events that take place among distinguished families.<sup>302</sup> She gave them narrative credit and claimed they sometimes say what the families themselves do not. The servants are conduits of knowledge for events that are brushed aside or kept silent, excluded evidence in the presentation of normative behaviour and belief. She turns the servant into a locus for knowledge. Crowe did so with other less affluent groups: a farmer,<sup>303</sup> a cook,<sup>304</sup> and even the experience of animals.<sup>305</sup> If the experience is universal that it is only fitting that testimonial data be collected from a vast section of society.

This is not to say that Crowe did not cite more respectable sections of society that were given more testimonial credit. She cites authors,<sup>306</sup> ladies,<sup>307</sup> gentlemen<sup>308</sup> and aristocrats.<sup>309</sup> Indeed, it is when she cites these social classes that her narrative often is more lengthy than other sections. However, that is not always the case as Crowe's almost verbatim reproduction of the Quaker Proctor's experience is one of Crowe's longest and is only superseded by her reproduction of Kerner's study of the supernatural occurrences at the Prison in Weisenberg.<sup>310</sup> This is not done to promote a classless, egalitarian view of society, for Crowe's wasn't egalitarian as Worthington

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<sup>301</sup> Secord, Loc 330.

<sup>302</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.79, II. 22, 167,337.

<sup>303</sup> *NSN*, Vol.64.

<sup>304</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.286.

<sup>305</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.104-105, Vol.II.186-187.

<sup>306</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.67.

<sup>307</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.84, Vol.II.210.

<sup>308</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.244.

<sup>309</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.316, Vol.II.268.

<sup>310</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.120-135; Weisenberg Vol.II.197-223.

points out.<sup>311</sup> She did however hold that the inductive method called for such as an accumulation, and that people were equal when it came to their own experience of the supernatural or their ability to be truthful in relating events.

Crowe's use of testimony was tied to normative ideas of credibility and character that were becoming based more on ideas of merit over birth. Crowe's cases cover a large swathe of society but are indeed mainly tied to the middle class and mainly supported by German physiologist investigation. However, around a fourth of Crowe's cases are based on first-hand or secondhand reports she has received. Crowe as author gave herself authorial power as judge in ascribing authenticity to the narratives she received. *Night Side* is filled with numerous cases where Crowe shows her personal tie to the person giving the testimony:

A friend of mine, being in London, dreamt that she saw<sup>312</sup>

Mr., a gentleman with whom I am acquainted, a man engaged in active business, and apparently as little likely as anyone I ever knew to be troubled with a faculty of this sort...<sup>313</sup>

A Lady, with whom I am acquainted<sup>314</sup>

A distinguished authoress told me, that some time ago she passed a night in the house of an acquaintance

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<sup>311</sup> Worthington, 167-168.

<sup>312</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.63.

<sup>313</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.93.

<sup>314</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.328.

I know of two or three other houses in this city, and one in the neighborhood, in which circumstances of this nature are transpiring, or have transpired very lately.<sup>315</sup>

Crowe brought in her circle of friends and acquaintances and put them along older reports and cases cited by German physiologists. This brought the testimony into textual and qualitative proximity. It also affected the testimony chronologically as a sense of immediacy was created by events that happened just as the book was being collected. The traditional story of a past occurrence becomes a contemporary case, the proximity of intimate conversation becomes a public window into that privacy. The authenticity of Crowe's, overwhelmingly middle-class circle, was creditworthy. Her respectable circle made of professionals, who often do not ascribe belief to supernatural phenomena. This use of personal ties to narrative at such a numerous level, strewn throughout points to an abundance of communication in a period where communication and connections were increasing exponentially.

Crowe's acquaintances were authentic, and she points to this idea of authenticity often in the text and vouched for people. The credibility of the witness and ensuing validation by later events made it undeniable authentic, not just as authentic narrative testimony but as objective. This is what authenticity entailed, honest relation of an event that was to be interpreted considering the experience not dismissed as exclusatory evidence based on premise. This thesis has many examples to choose from given the magnitude of Crowe's abundant use, but two poignant examples of this use of testimony and authenticated narrative are tied to jurisprudence, investigation and even the

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<sup>315</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.67.

medical field. The episode at Weisenberg – the largest of Crowe’s narratives -will be dealt with later but one example occurred in 1746 and was investigated by Jung Stilling. A gentleman named Dorrien who tutored in the Carolina Colleges at Brunswick is seen by multiple people after his death.<sup>316</sup> A professor of Mathematics, Oeder, holding that it is a spectral illusion decides to investigate who has his skepticism overturned upon witnessing Dorrien himself and slowly ascertaining that he had unfinished business as the cause of his haunting. This was considered an authentic case by Crowe because:

Stilling, who relates this story, has been called superstitious; he may be so; but his piety and his honesty are above suspicion; he says the facts are well known, and that he can vouch for their authenticity; and as he must have been a contemporary of the parties concerned, he had, doubtless, good opportunities of ascertaining what foundation there was for the story.<sup>317</sup>

Crowe knew testimony was problematic and that a narrator was limited. However, even a superstitious bent had to be seen in totality of character. Skeptics and believers saw ghosts. To be honest and pious was a merit-based system of credibility. This credibility was further strengthened by Stilling’s qualifications and the qualifications of Professor Oeder the skeptic. The authenticity is not just based on the relation of the facts but the facts as they were judiciously investigated by both, and by the multiple witnesses. Stilling as investigator is a trustworthy narrator who can vouch and who is in turned vouched by Crowe. It is a train of textual transmission that retains an authentic tie to a

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<sup>316</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.335-346.

<sup>317</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.341-342.

veridical event beginning as a rumour by students to the pronouncements of a professor and redacted by Crowe and Stilling into case form.

The act of testimony was an ethical act for Crowe. The role of standing witness in defense of one's experience and consequently one's character was integral to investigation. Crowe realizes that she lacked even more evidence for want of bravery in people in coming forward to protect both name and even property. The character assassination of proper investigation was used in the retort to supernatural experiences by ridicule:

But the difficulty of furnishing evidence is considerable; because, when the seers are of humbler classes, they are called imposters and not believed; and when they are of the higher, they do not make the subject a matter of conversation, not choose to expose themselves to the ridicule of the foolish; and consequently the thing is not known beyond their own immediate friends.<sup>318</sup>

Crowe here lays before a conundrum that would affect spiritualist polemics of authenticity later. There were class issues involved where the lower were portrayed as wanting notoriety and hence status and the higher classes wanted to maintain social status by exclusion. Both employ refusal to stand witness because of ridicule and false interpretation of motives. Crowe is taking this discussion out of the private sphere of personal friends, freeing narratives from self-imposed epistemological enclosed space of private conversation.

Crowe made the narrative act an example of epistemological bravery:

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<sup>318</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.328. Compare esp. Vol.I.300-302.

To shut our eyes to the truth, because it may, perchance, occasion us some uncomfortable feelings, is surely a strange mixture of contemptible cowardice and daring temerity. If it be true that by some law of nature, departed souls visit. We may be quite certain that it was intended we should know it, and that the law is to some good end; for no law of God can be purposeless or mischievous;<sup>319</sup>

This coupling of outer and inner sight makes it an ethical choice. Refusing to testify is not only counterproductive but immoral. Honest testimony is portrayed as tied to discovering natural law and divine law and purpose. Echoing and appropriating Descartes, supernatural phenomena was not placed there to fool the human mind. Each phenomenon of nature had its purpose. To deny this was to give in not to inherent desire for true knowledge but fear of the ignorant. Crowe claimed she was no such person. Concerning a case where the author had to not release names at the final moment when getting ready to print due to “want of moral courage” by the family, Crowe says: “had it occurred to myself, I should have felt it my imperative duty to make it known, and give every satisfaction to enquirers.”<sup>320</sup> Fear of ridicule or loss of social credibility is seen as obstruction to investigation. It is self-tampering with one’s testimony and a dereliction of duty to maintain the appearance of acceptability and social constructions of credibility.

Yet, Crowe realized such a testimonial act was out of the question for many. Alastair Gunn points out in his introduction to Vol. III of *The Wimbourne Book of Victorian Ghost Stories* (2017) that anonymity was rampant at the time for a number of

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<sup>319</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.303.

<sup>320</sup> Vol.I.331



reasons among which were “reticence based on class, profession, religion or gender, the unwillingness to be exposed to public opinion.”<sup>321</sup> Mullan has written extensively on the role of anonymity as shows its many uses in literature and devotes a whole chapter to its confessional use.<sup>322</sup> Anonymity was a method by which people could circumvent ridicule and censure, to relate their true ideas or testimony. By being invisible, this apparition like state of the writer, could appear on the printed page. Crowe made use of anonymous testimony as it was a method whereby she could get people to speak and relate their experience. She hid her sources and they became capital letters and dashes. However, Crowe retained them as it was quite common and it also served to relay to the reader that such a cross section of people may have been nameless but might possibly be mirrors of themselves and their own possible supernatural experiences. Crowe used anonymity in the beginning of her literary career, and even Dickens’ review criticized her under the cover of anonymity.<sup>323</sup>

### **Accumulative Testimony**

That many had seen ghosts, doppelgangers and crisis apparitions was not in doubt. What Crowe sought to do was bring the testimony together and in doing so bring the full public significance of the phenomena in bringing forward her case. It was to make the personal public and make it relate to the personal experience of the reader.

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<sup>321</sup> Gunn, Alastair, editor. *The Wimbourne Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. III, (Wimbourne Books, 2017) Loc 52.

<sup>322</sup> Mullan, John. *Anonymity: a secret history of English literature*. (Princeton University Press, 2007) pp. 254-297.

<sup>323</sup> On reviewing and anonymity see Mullan 181-217.

For Crowe, these ghost stories were not stories in the fictional sense and with Crowe we get the first widespread use of the word case that would not be utilized until the SPR. The two-volume work constantly refers to “cases” twice as often as it does “story” or “stories” combined. These cases are a presentation to place doubt in the skeptical position, creating circumstantial evidence leaving the possibility open for a spirit hypothesis.<sup>324</sup>

Time and again Crowe states her cases and either prefaces them or ends them with the repetitive phrase reminding the reader that her cases are unique as instances but common as a pattern:

I could fill pages with dreams of this description which have come to my knowledge or been recorded by others.<sup>325</sup>

Everybody has either witnessed or heard of instances of this sort of presentiment, in dogs especially.<sup>326</sup>

Instances of people being seen at a distance from the spot on which they are dying, are so numerous, that in this department I have an embarrass de richesses and find it difficult to make a selection.<sup>327</sup>

I could relate many more instances of this kind, but I want to avoid repeating cases already in print.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.156.

<sup>325</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.93.

<sup>326</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.105.

<sup>327</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.233-234.

<sup>328</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.189.

I could mention many other cases and as I have said before they occur in all countries but these will suffice as specimens of the class.<sup>329</sup>

Crowe calls attention to repetition and conscious avoidance of more repetition or addition. Crowe here is excluding evidence, not to hide from skeptical rebuttal but because the evidence is so abundant textually. There are cases in print and new, more contemporary cases bringing immediacy to the phenomena. Crowe uses repetition but she is not simply repeating by the very use of this modulation of sources. She places her own investigative work along with other recorded cases and points out the pattern of phenomena is not localized but universal. The evidence becomes multiplied by omission and suggestion to a world-wide phenomenon. It shows Crowe as advocate and scientists bring classes of a specimen together, deciding which qualify as inductively valid to present. The cases are brought forward as witnesses, Crowe is a witness investigator, and the reader is also a witness as well. The credible reader and the testimony of the credible are brought together textually uniting both and the cases that follow one after the other. One could deny the cases individually but they are too numerous to be ignored.<sup>330</sup>

### **Crowe as Investigator and Experimenter**

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<sup>329</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.273.

<sup>330</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.263

Crowe may have cited German physiologists and had recourse often to their views, yet *Night Side* also provides one with glimpse of Crowe doing the investigative work she advocated albeit within her limitations. One often encounters Crowe the active participant willfully making her observations will-less in recording events as they are observed, keeping her intrusions to a minimum. At the same time one is cognizant of Crowe the autodidact who while investigating, translating, collecting and presenting a case grows in her own knowledge and experience that led, as Barrow argues for autodidacts, to a confidence of opening new inroads of knowledge.<sup>331</sup> Crowe's German friend may have been in astonishment that there was a lack of "accredited" stories in England whereas Germany had plenty.<sup>332</sup> Yet, Crowe's work was meant to show that that was due to lack of investigation and her work fills in that lacuna.

Crowe did this in many ways beyond receiving reports, citing "accredited" stories and newspaper clippings. Crowe was not a passive collector, accepting everything she received. She often remarks on how she followed up on either what she received or in other published narratives. She receives letters from members of prominent families attesting to the verity of supernatural episodes, even sometimes "setting the record straight" on the details.<sup>333</sup> *Night Side* is full of examples where Crowe follows up on cases.<sup>334</sup> One example is a manuscript which is given to Crowe by a friend of the family copied in the handwriting of a C.M.H. concerning a haunted room at C-Castle.<sup>335</sup> One is given a detailed layout of the room and primary source records of entries during

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<sup>331</sup> Barrow, 152.

<sup>332</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.230.

<sup>333</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.188.

<sup>334</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.316-320 (Lord Littleton), *Haunted House*: Vol.II.113-120. *Proctor Episode* Vol.II.120-146. Also, Vol.II.182-184.

<sup>335</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.154-159.

respective events such as an entry on Sept. 8 1803 when a visiting Rev. Henry A leaves in an agitated state after spending a night in the room. The entire narrative ends with an avowal of the veracity of what is written. What is important is what Crowe does after the manuscript. She follows up on the event:

I am acquainted with some of the family, and with several of the friends of Mr. A., who is still alive, though now an old man; and I can most positively assert that his own conviction, with regard to the nature of this appearance has remained ever unshaken. The circumstance made a lasting impression upon his mind and he never willingly speaks of it; but when he does, it is always with the greatest seriousness, and he never shrinks from avowing his belief, that what he saw admits of no other interpretation than the one he put on it.<sup>336</sup>

It was not enough for Crowe to receive the manuscript and reproduce it. She follows up on the case due to her circle of friends and turns a manuscript into a living narrative where the writer has aged but not changed their testimony. Crowe can vouch and claim that the judicious clergyman is convinced by the experience and that he has ruled out the spectral illusion hypothesis. It has made an impression on his mind that is life changing but not in the Lockean sense but an almost religious one seen in an experiential light. Crowe brings the narrative from ghost story to case, not just by placing it between similar cases but bringing its immediacy into relation by the updated coda of a follow up investigation. It is this experience which changes lives and it is investigation which further validates it.

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<sup>336</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.159.

Crowe provided her own observations and experiences of supernatural phenomena. She discusses her own brief hallucinatory experience and explains why such experiences cannot account for all other such cases. After describing “persons” she know who wake with a painful feeling that is followed by a calamity, she admits: “This is the only kind of presentiment I ever experienced myself; but it has occurred to me twice, in a very marked and unmistakable manner.”<sup>337</sup> This admission may seem anti-climactic but it is not meant to be if one takes Crowe’s agenda of collecting data as important even in its minutiae. Crowe is admitting herself that even her hold of tuition slips when in the fully wakened state once the presentiment passes. Crowe’s spaniel while in Plymouth is shown to be in better sync with intuition than Crowe.<sup>338</sup> Crowe goes into her moment of an ecstatic experience which was unlike the hallucination.<sup>339</sup> She has spoken to women, a maidservant and a “daughter of a respectable person.” who were in a state of clairvoyance during magnetist experiments performed by a Mr. A. These women claim to see the people in the room as bright, dark or other depending on their true selves. Crowe ties this episode to another experiment she observed with a young person:

I once asked a young person in a clairvoyant state, whether she saw “the spirits of them that passed away;” ...she answered that she did.

“Then where are they?” I enquired.

“Some are waiting, and some are gone on before.”

“Can you speak of them?” I asked.

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<sup>337</sup> *NSN*, Vol.117.

<sup>338</sup> *NSN*, Vol. 106.

<sup>339</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.161.

“No,” she replied, “there is no meddling nor no direction.”

In her waking state, she would have been quite incapable of these answers; and that “some are waiting and some gone on before,” seems to be much in accordance with the vision of Thespesius.<sup>340</sup>

The narrative is simple with no embellishments. It is a simple question and answer excerpt. What was important was to inquire, record and see if it fell into other patterns. For Crowe, this short excerpt is sandwiched other cases with similar results. She points out the difference in her waking and somnambulistic states, ties it in between two cases carried out by Mr. A and Dr. Passavant respectively and alludes to an early recording of a vision. This is part of a chain of evidence that is meant to gather weight and Crowe the investigator is part of an epistemological community of research. In other encounters with magnetism, she mentions observations of experiments of sight restored by Spencer Hall.<sup>341</sup> This “disappearance” of the author is Crowe the investigator, not creator or author, it is the will to selflessness of observation in an approach of fusing older experiential epistemology with an emerging scientific method. This is the antithesis of dissenting conversion narratives or the epiphany of Martineau. Crowe is showing herself as part of a comradery of scholars and impartial observers that are united with German physiology and British research before the supremacy of enlightenment thought. Crowe even discusses miscellaneous phenomena that are hard to categorize even in serious research. After quoting a long case concerning detection of crime by a divining rod, she mentions her own experience with investigating the phenomenon:

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<sup>340</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.2110-211.

<sup>341</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.8.

I have myself met with three or four persons in whose hands the rod turned visibly...Mr. Boyle mentions a lady who always perceived if a person that had visited her came from a place where snow had lately fallen. I have seen one, who if a quantity of gloves are given her can tell to a certainty to whom each belongs; and a particular friend of my own on entering a room, can distinguish perfectly who has been sitting in it; provided these be persons his is familiarly acquainted with. Numerous extraordinary stories are extant respecting this kind of faculty in dogs.<sup>342</sup>

Here Crowe observes and investigates herself, tying together two different episodes recorded by others. Crowe can authenticate and create her own narrative because she has experientially witnessed it. Furthermore, Crowe here brings both men and women into an intuitive field of knowledge that validates itself, again known by personal acquaintance and observation, hence authenticated by the author. Crowe ties this intuitive knowledge to that of dogs, making the epistemology transversive of not only gender but of species. Even the allusion to gloves, chairs and snow places the absolute quotidian into the loci of serious and remarkable phenomena. This makes the phenomena as experiential and naturally part of natural law. What is of special significance is Crowe's placing of Robert Boyle (1627-91) and his investigation along her own. Not only is Crowe tying across species but also tying her own work to that of Boyle's Baconian approach. She situated herself as a continuation of early methods of

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<sup>342</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.262-263.



collection of the Royal Society and Boyle consciously to show that her work was very similar to that of early researchers who did not shy away from an expansive look at experiential phenomena.

### **The Prison at Weisenberg**

It is not surprising that Crowe's longest narration deals with Dr. Kerner's investigation of a haunting at Weisenberg Prison where female inmates were kept in a windowless edifice. Crowe saw Kerner's method of investigation as ideal. Furthermore, the prison itself became a laboratory where a thorough investigation was held in a communal effort by the authorities of the prison, physicians, magistrates and prisoners.

The supposed haunting took place in 1835 and is based on a small published volume by Dr. Kerner and revolves around a repentant ghost who harangued an Elizabeth Eslinger, a thirty-eight year-old inmate. Crowe based her narration on Dr. Kerner and Deputy-Governor of the prison, Mayer. What is significant is that the narrative opens with Mayer's claim, a deposition by a Rosina Schahl who claims to have witnessed a "form" by Eslinger, and is followed by a resolve of the magistrates Eckhardt, Theurer and Knorr to have a physician look at Eslinger.<sup>343</sup> That Physician was Dr. Kerner.

What is significant is Kerner's method of investigation:

On the eighteenth October, I went to the cell again, between ten and eleven, taking with me my wife, and the wife of the keeper, Madame Mayer.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.189-199.

<sup>344</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.205

On the night of the 20<sup>th</sup>, I went again, with Justice Heyd. We both heard sounds.<sup>345</sup>

Dr. Kerner's approach brings together the female lay person and the Justice. It is a communitarian approach to find a solution. It is also meant to validate a case based on bringing multiple witnesses together at the same time to ascertain validity. He did this throughout the length of the investigation.

Madame Mayer takes an active role in the investigation:

'It is very extraordinary, that whenever the ghost spoke, I always *felt it before hand*. (Proving that the spirit had been able to establish a rapport with this person. She was in a magnetic relation to him.) We heard a crackling in the room also; I was perfectly awake, and in possession of my senses, and we are ready to make oath to having seen and heard these things.'<sup>346</sup>

Here Kerner is using a woman as an authority and Crowe builds upon this. One sees Mrs. Mayer's testimony (she takes her niece and maid-servant along as well) and her willingness to take an oath, binding it jurisprudentially to it and her social status as a credible person. Kerner's commentary of magnetic rapport is meant to be an inference on why she feels its presence beforehand.

Yet, Madame Mayer would have already been a person of credit. It is the use of female inmate testimony that is striking:

Catherine Sinn, from Mayenfels, was confined in an adjoining room for a fortnight. After her release, she was interrogated by the minister of her

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<sup>345</sup> NSN, Vol.II.205-206.

<sup>346</sup> NSN, Vol.II.207.

parish and she deposed that she had known nothing of Eslinger, or the spectre, “but every night, being quite alone I heard a rustling...I often heard him speak; it was hollow and slow; not like a human voice...

(signed) Catherine Sinn “Minister Binder, Mayenfels<sup>347</sup>

The following particulars are worth observing, in the evidence of a girl sixteen years of age, called Margaret Laibesberg, who was confined for ten days for plucking some grapes in a vineyard. She says she knew nothing about the spectre...<sup>348</sup>

It is quite remarkable that Kerner would choose the prison as a locus and the female inmate as reliable transmitters of testimony. Given that a minister is the driving force behind the first excerpt, and Mayer the others, it is still the narrative of the imprisoned being heard, adjudicated and found trustworthy. In the prison, the symbol of containment based on societal concepts of justice, it is the ghost that sends the prison governor, physician and magistrates into epistemological action over a variable they cannot control, the spectre. It is their painstaking investigation along with their female relatives and inmates that together unravel the mystery. Crowe, the redactor and commentator points out what is worth observing, making her reader-response an investigator’s response, one where the evidentiary value of the case is weighed.

What is important for Crowe is that her weight of this evidence was seen as sufficient for qualified professionals:

The Supreme Court having satisfied itself that there was no imposture in this case, it was proposed that some men of science should be invited to

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<sup>347</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.211-212.

<sup>348</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.215

investigate the strange phenomena...Accordingly not only Dr. Kerner himself and his son, but many others, passed nights in this prison...Amongst these, besides some ministers of the Lutheran Church...Kapff, professor of Mathematics at Heilbronn; Fraas, a barrister; Doctors Seyfeer and Sichrer....but their perquisitions elicited no more than has already been mentioned.<sup>349</sup>

These qualified professionals and their testimony are put on equal footing with the female inmates. Indeed, the women see more because of a female predisposition. However, it is the combined use of all epistemologies of intuition, magnetic-rapport, empiricism, reason, jurisprudence and the scientific method that all come together to create the validation of an object event and spirit. In the most authoritarian of places, under the testimony of the condemned, facts are collected and sifted. This is all done to rectify the legal and spiritual failings of a supposed ghost who claimed he was a guilty priest in Wimmenthal in 1414. It is a mode of spiritual and legal jurisprudence meeting with a spiritual and legal imprisonment where prayer and repentance, inner transformation can undo or do better what normative social structures could not. Eslinger the inmate becomes the medium of self-reform and a priest's salvation. This is the longest narrative Crowe has in her two-volume work and an example of how she felt that a true investigation was to be held. Dr. Sichrer concluded in a report at Heilbronn on Jan 8, 1836 that in the "report he made, at the desire of the Supreme Court, he had recorded his observations as conscientiously as if had been upon a jury."<sup>350</sup> Crowe wanted the jury of her readership to do the same.

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<sup>349</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.219.

<sup>350</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.222.

## The Will and Crisis Apparition

So, what did all these phenomena point to? If the evidence and testimony gathered together and taken as a whole were looked upon seriously, it would leave open a strong possibility that the soul not only survives death but that its manifestations were discernable in an objective, experiential manner that went beyond normative conceptions of natural theology and physiology. The fallen priest of Wimmenthal showed a spirit that had a will, personality and even a desire for progression that forcefully sought help through symbol and sometimes even through violence.

*Night Side* was not simply about ghosts but an ontological defense of spirit, its will and its growth showing itself in multiple mental states from wakefulness, sleep, deep sleep, somnambulism, point of death and death. This meta-physiological defense limited the physiologist's ability to interpret all phenomena and left epistemological ability open to both people and animals. The skeptical physiologists could read the body and symptoms but the symbols of dreams, the imagination and expressions of the will and spirit were legible to anyone who wished to read them with proper consideration. The supernatural was only either supernatural or occultic if one chose to close their eyes to the book of nature.

Crowe focused on the will. Indeed, the second volume of *NSN* has a chapter on the will and Crowe's use of testimony in the second volume utilizes larger narratives that tie testimony not only in the field of press, medical and jurisprudential involvement but also the prison complex as well. What impressed Crowe was German research on "far

working,” sympathy and her own musings on crisis apparitions.<sup>351</sup> Crowe depended on Passavant and Ennemoser for most details of her explanation of the ability of immaterial causation caused the feelings or thoughts of another.<sup>352</sup> However, her format and method of showing it at work in testimonial narrative is a jurisprudential presentation of corroborative cases that would not be utilized again until the use of the SPR which also sought to prove the existence of the supernatural by this form of rapport premised on a will that made itself known before, during or after the moment of death.<sup>353</sup> Crowe often phrases this “a spirit must be where its thoughts and affections are.”<sup>354</sup> It is in this department of phenomena that Crowe found the most promising:

As I find so many people willing to believe in ghosts-that is, they are overpowered by the numerous examples, and the weight of evidence for the first-it would be very desirable if we could ascertain whether these wraiths are seen before the death occurs, or after it; but though the day is recorded, and seems always to be the one on which the death took place, and the hour about the same time, minutes are not sufficiently observed to enable us to answer that question.<sup>355</sup>

Crowe saw the preponderance of data in crisis apparitions as the focal point of a new investigation that pointed not only to supernatural phenomena but one that showed an intelligence at work by will and imagination. Throughout her work she cites cases after case and giving her thoughts tying them together. To give one a sense of this a

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<sup>351</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.14-18. Vol.II.63.

<sup>352</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.166-177.

<sup>353</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.177, 229,233

<sup>354</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.198.

<sup>355</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.320.

condense production is needed where the cases will be prefaced, abbreviated to bare details and followed by commentary since a whole reproduction would take up too much space.

Mrs. K thesis of Provost B. of Aberdeen sees brother I.234-235

Lord and Lady M. Lady. M sees Lord. M's wraith 235

A person in Edinburgh sees a woman neighbor 236

Madame O.B. was engaged to marry an officer in India 236-237

Mr. H an eminent artist sees his brother in Edinburgh 237

Mrs. T sees her nephew supp at Cambridge 237-38

A Scotch minister went to visit a friend 238

Three young men at Cambridge 238-239

Mr. C.F. and some young ladies 239-240.

Two young ladies staying at Queen's Ferry see uncle 240.

A gentleman living in Edinburgh 240

A regiment, officer sees brother 241.

Lord Balcaress in jail sees Viscount Dundee 242

I have met with three instances 242

Mrs. Jakes sees father 243

Lord T. sees wife enter cabin

Mrs. Mac of Sky at a ball a girl sees her mother 243

Lord M sees Lady M. 244

A lady with whose family I am acquainted had a son abroad 244-45

Mr. P the American manager sees brother on ship 245

Captain Kidd's apparition from Lord Byron 246

Ben Jonson 246-247

Mr. S.C. a gentleman of fortune had a son in India 247

A lady with whose family I am acquainted sees son 247-248.

A woman named Price daughter saw brother

A young lady in Berlin 1813 sees fiancée 248-249

A woman in Bavaria had a brother in the army

Mrs. H in Limerick had a good servant Nelly 250-252

A Lady with whom I am acquainted 252-253

Dr. H. Werner relates 253-254

Somnambule Auguste Muller of Karlsruhe 254

Mr. F saw a female relative 255

Walter Scott's letter to Daniel Terry April 30, 1818 255-277\*

Macnish and doppelganger 259

Crowe was not a folklorist or antiquarian and these are not ghost stories. Crowe was a researcher and these were cases. Rather than a "jumbled mess" they are linked: chapters on sleep move into chapters on wraiths onto doppelgangers showing a building up of a testimonial, logical based defense of the supernatural. This is a progression of phenomena from dreams onwards, an attempt to read the symbolic language of altered states that were illegible to both skeptics and the superstitious. They come from a large sample of society, showing the evidence is representative. overwhelming testimony was to show that the evidence was there. When left alone it was excluded from mainstream, serious consideration. When together, it showed a



multitude that could not be ignored. It was an attempt to enfranchise experiential methods and empower people as able judges of their experience. People take note of dates and times, interpret their experience and either validate or explain away. The phenomena showed not only the supernatural at work but at work in a way that showed will and power. The rapport between people, sympathy and will could change the physical environment and being. Though Crowe favours the middle-class, this testimony levels the epistemological field of being. The will is real, the “mechanism” of the body – something Cox will deal with at length – is only one facet of being. This testimony is proof of spirit at work that did not need approval from physiologists and theology, though both open-minded specialists of both could be used as important judges but not the only judges. Crowe’s first chapter in volume one is “The Dweller in the Temple” and the first chapter in volume two is “The Will.” Crowe like Colquhoun uses the first volume to bring the most important evidence in the second. It is a pacing of the argument meant to show, in both, a gradual move from altered states of consciousness as pointing to an intelligent, willful immaterial being. It was not enough for Crowe to prove ghosts exist outside the imagination, it was important to show they existed and that their being was a continuation of our own. Crowe blurred the line between the living and the dead. The dead had will power, imagination and a personality as living people could use their own being to effect changes once the domain of ghosts.<sup>356</sup> This was important. A data base of knowledge showing that both the living and the dead possessed a form of being of such creative and effect will power could transform society. Where Chambers in *Vestiges* saw progression as physiologically based, where Coombe saw phrenology as

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<sup>356</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.42, 173, 196, 273, 317; Vol.II.61

opening the society to a merit based system of reform, where growing public health concerns sought the answer in environment and water and chartists in enfranchisement, Crowe sought conviction-based renewal based on knowledge of one's true being. Type of being that partook of the divine and could be shown if one just looked at the proof of somanmbules and experiences they or someone they knew.<sup>357</sup> It was this authoritative knowledge, tradition and law were not enough.

Belief was not enough. Once people looked at the evidence and were swayed by it to realize that they were more than their body and that their own actions determined their metaphysical progression, not based on religion but experiential proof, society would progress. It was this chasm of education that allowed democratic epistemology to empower groups regardless of class, sectarian and gender placed limitations.<sup>358</sup> It was introspective thinking and inductive reasoning that would open more than doors, it would produce conviction based on evidence over belief based on opinion. Testimony was transformative. Crowe's perspective on nineteenth century angst over will and mechanistic predetermination and attempt to prove that the soul existed and could be studied would not replicate until Cox and the SPR's use of these altered states to the same purpose.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>357</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.159, 348-352.

<sup>358</sup> Barrow, 156-157.

It is no wonder Crowe cites both Boyle and Henry More (1614-1687) toward the end of her work.<sup>359</sup> More also fought against the mechanical thinking and supposed encroachment of materialism of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He, like Crowe, sought authenticated testimony as epistemologically sound and that the supernatural was indeed natural and able to be verified. Boyle helped lay the groundwork for objective methodological research for the Royal Society but he also sought an empirical framework, along with Glanville, to study the supernatural in a way opposed to both sceptics and demonologists.<sup>360</sup> He was a natural philosopher who maintained the evidentiary weight of testimony and narrative such as Gray, Flamstead and Defoe's supernatural research<sup>361</sup> All three were also British examples of an experiential and experimental tradition. Crowe saw herself of as continuing the work of both the famed inventor Boyle and More the philosopher. In doing so, she represents a strain of experiential epistemology that continued in the post-Enlightenment and scientific era of objectivity. Crowe is a unique example of continuance but one that brought in the private sphere into the public, keeping free of religious dogma and looking forward to a method of investigation that would build a base of facts upon which to build proof of the soul. *Night Side* was the modern antidote to a growingly mechanical and mechanistic physiology as More had intended his *Antidote to Atheism* (1653) to be a testimonial based proof against the pitfalls of Cartesian dualism. Her rejection of the skeptics and the

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<sup>359</sup> For Boyle, See NSN, Vol.II.363, 365,366; For More, See NSN, Vol.II.335-336; for Glanville, See NSN, Vol.I.257.

<sup>360</sup> Sasha Handley. *Visions of an Unseen World: Ghost Beliefs and Ghost Stories in Eighteenth Century England*. (London: Routledge, 2007) Loc 2698.

<sup>361</sup> Handley, Loc 779, 894, 1184, See esp: 2239.

antiquarian Grose was a conscious attempt to retain a method of experiential enquiry as valid and useful.<sup>362</sup> What was needed was a system of education.

Moreover, though I do not suppose that man, in his normal state, could ever encounter an incorporeal spirit without considerable awe, I am inclined to think that the extreme terror the idea inspires, arises from bad training. The ignorant frighten children with ghosts and the better educated assure them there is no such thing. Our understanding may believe the latter, but our instincts believe the former; so that, out of this education, we retain the terror, and just belief just enough to make it troublesome whenever we are placed in circumstances that awaken it.<sup>363</sup>

This concept of education and training so important in terms of deciding who was able to judge or not on such phenomena is given a double significance. It is not only the fireside child's tales that are a product of miseducation but also the opinion of the educated. Both are loci for dogma over truth, opinions over facts that create a disposition to fear and self-unbelief. The nineteenth century preoccupation with education and societal betterment here is taken into the discourse on the supernatural but divested of older orthodox religious significance, though Crowe's tone alludes to religious tropes throughout. It is a holistic approach to education of personal empowerment and by proxy, society. Her magnum opus is a reintroduction of the ghost and a reintroduction of one's essential self-divested of imposed dogma.

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<sup>362</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.109, 148, 159, 234-235.

<sup>363</sup> *NSN*, Vol.I.304, 361-363.

*The Night Side of Nature* is not a collection of ghost stories. It is an ontological work in an era of ontological searching. Like Paley, Crowe used scripture and the circumstantial evidence of phenomena, but she went farther in positing the phenomena, decried in orthodox dogmatic circles, might also constitute valid circumstantial data to prove the soul. Though she used reason and intuition, they are compounded with the role of the will, aided by the imagination in showing that being was just as much creative as it was passive of outside impressions.

The 'dweller in the temple' was the soul in the body. It was made the patient in the sick bed equal with the physician, it is what united the poet and the doctor, the people of the past with the people of the present. The soul could make itself known and knowing by a will that could override sickness and even death. The phenomena it produced was greater than the narrative act of the skeptic.

However, it was a soul that needed the narrative act of the researcher to prove its existence. Crowe knew her evidence was not perfect, that it was open to interpretation. She hoped that the preponderance of testimony would give more credence to finally proving it by inductive investigation. Yet, like Colquhoun, she thought that she was not the writer that was up to the task: "all I desire is to arouse enquiry and curiosity; and that thus some mind, better qualified than mine, to follow out the investigation, may be incited to undertake it."<sup>364</sup> *Night Side* is at once the product of a writer sure of her conviction but unsure of her own capabilities of proving them.

Crowe wanted to show people the Night Side of human being, a side she held that most British skeptics tried to narrate away. It was yet to be explored in Britain, and

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<sup>364</sup> NSN, Vol.I.279.

Crowe, though not a historian, lawyer or physician, could be a pioneer in this unchartered territory, though it fell in the middle of what Carlyle considered a 'mechanical age.' However, Crowe invited the reader to come along, confident that most would be familiar with the phenomena she discussed. The ghost in the machine, the "mechanism" of the human body was the reader. The "questio vexata" could be answered. What was needed was investigation that was inductive, that took all the evidence together. Ending her work on a note that would be taken up by researchers after the advent of spiritualism and especially Cox, Crowe surmised:

Since in science we know that there are delicate manifestations which can only be rendered perceptible to our organs, by the application of the most delicate electrometers, is it not reasonable to suppose, that there may exist certain susceptible or diseased organisms, which judiciously handled, may serve as electrometers to the healthy ones?<sup>365</sup>

This would be the crux of such a judge, Cox, and many researchers who would apply this analogy to mediums after the arrival of spiritualism. The person as instrument for study is here presented and the complex and controversial over what was judicious observation would continue.

. *Night Side* went through three editions in its first four years of publication alone,<sup>366</sup> and was cited by skeptics and spiritualists years afterward.<sup>367</sup> Clapton quotes Garnett who, though appraising its 'literary merit,' thought it one of the best and most

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<sup>365</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.381.

<sup>366</sup> G.T. Clapton. "Baudelaire and Catherine Crowe." *The Modern Language Review* (2005) 287.

<sup>367</sup> Vanessa D. Dickerson. *Victorian Ghosts in the Noontide: Women Writers and the Supernatural*. (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1996) 38-41.

popular collections ever of its time given force by Crowe's imagination and narrative.<sup>368</sup> Antsey Guthrie toward the century accredited Crowe with changing the nature of the British ghost as Makala has pointed out.<sup>369</sup> It became semi-authoritative where supernatural narratives and locations were concerned.<sup>370</sup>

Crowe made ghost-seeing, presentiment, and supernatural phenomena a public phenomenon. In the era between the Reform Bills, which saw the solidification of legal and scientific expertise as a source of authority in matters of testimony, she sought to spread confidence in the ability of ordinary people to act as authoritative witnesses to their own everyday experiences, no matter how anomalous. She saw the past not just as a collection of priest-craft, superstitious rabble and primitive societies, but as a possible source of knowledge. Her appeal to the scientists of her own day was that true science should not reject reliable testimony simply because it does not have a ready explanation for it besides hallucination. As reformists were seeking greater enfranchisement and radicals more popular power, Crowe was in her own way defending the ability for people to trust their own testimony. Later, in *Spiritualism and the Age We Live In*, she would call into questions the institutions of the government, medical establishment and clergy, arguing that they lacked the power, though not the pretense, to effect lasting change.

Crowe's belief in testimony was belief in the individual to control their narrative of experience. Each person was different and each narrative is different. The generalizations of experts were a method of discrediting not only a verifiable

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<sup>368</sup> Clapton, 287.

<sup>369</sup> Makala, 4-5. See: F. Antsey, 'The Decay of the British Ghost,' *Longman's Magazine* (January 1884) 251

<sup>370</sup> Anonymous. "Mr. Howitt and Mr. Dickens." *The Spiritual Magazine* February 1860: 60-61

supernatural event but also delegating objective truth to the few. The existence of the soul and its ability to appear, even after death, offered not only consolation and an alternative to an increasing materialism; but it also offered a view that even in sleep, epistemological growth was possible, that the average person could gain ontological insights that neither the physician or clergyman could teach. Crowe liked to think that her readers had “supped full of *wonders*, if not with *horrors*” and even a little entertainment: but she does so in the hope that at least one person would be able to look at their being differently, more complex and spiritual.<sup>371</sup>

*NSN*'s influence could be felt years after Crowe stopped publishing on the supernatural. William Howitt, a seminal figure in British Spiritualist circles in the 1860s and 70s used her work as an authoritative voice on veridical ghost sightings in his own supernatural magnum opus.<sup>372</sup> Her work was also cited almost wholesale in *The Haunted House and Family Traditions of Great Britain* (1897).<sup>373</sup> This book, one of the first of its kind, was made as a kind of supernatural geography for ghost enthusiasts who wish to tour the country for locations. Also interesting is Blavatsky's use of Crowe to advocate her metaphysical beliefs.<sup>374</sup> Even Andrew Lang took it upon himself to study one of the cases brought forth as legal proof of a veridical sighting.<sup>375</sup> He refers to her at

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<sup>371</sup> *NSN*, Vol.II.378

<sup>372</sup> William Howitt. *History of the Supernatural*. 2 Vols. (London: Longman, Green & Longman, 1863) Vol.I.56-64, Vol.II.438-440.

<sup>373</sup> John. H. Ingram. *The Haunted Homes and Family Traditions of Great Britain*. (London: Gibbings & Company, Limited., 1897) 24, 37-43, 44, 48, 61, 101, 180, 202, 219, 267.

<sup>374</sup> H.P. Blavatsky. *Isis Unveiled*. Vol.I. Science. (New York: J.W. Bolton, 1877) 68,71, 219, 362, 478-482.

<sup>375</sup> Andrew Lang. “Ghosts before the Law.” *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. Vol.CLV. Jan-June Feb, 1894 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Son) 217-220.



the end of the century as an “intellectual and accomplished” and as a “well-known novelist.”<sup>376</sup>

Her final non-fictional work, interestingly, had to do with seaweeds. The Crowe that studied phrenology, animal magnetism and who sought proof of the soul may at first be seen as retreating in this obscure field almost at the bottom of the chain of being. Yet, even here one gets one final glance into a writer and researcher who took a holistic approach to epistemology and ontology. Crowe had viewed the spiritual as normative but this quotidian nature did not take away from its wonder. The converse was essentially true of seaweeds: “You may perhaps feel inclined to doubt the possibility of these moving plants; you may think that the story is a mere scientific figment...”<sup>377</sup> The scientific becomes creative, narrative filled. It is filled with wonders upon closer inspection. The “hiddenness” of zoospores mirrors the work of the spirit as neither are seen except by a closer look:

Strange as are some of the facts when told; they seem far more strange when seen...Here, too, as in all other branches of natural history, he who wishes truly to know, must not rest contented with the description of others, but must take the earliest opportunity of verifying or correcting them by his own observation.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Andrew Lang. “Emerson’s meeting with De Quincey.” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*. Vol. CLV, Jan-Feb, Apr 1894 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Son) 490.

<sup>377</sup> Catherine Crowe. “Green Seaweeds.” *Once a Week*. Aug 31, 1861 (London: Bradbury & Evans) 260. See also “Brown Seaweeds.” *Once a Week*.

<sup>378</sup> Green Seaweeds, 263.

Seaweed or ghost-seeing, what was important was to not rest contented with being told what to think but to observe and think for oneself, to be judge over the evidence of reality. Crowe's call for patient, impartial investigation would expand during the rise of spiritualism by investigators seeking either to uphold or debunk spiritualist phenomena. It would take a communal effort by a committee of the London Dialectical Society in 1869 to bring Crowe's vision of an investigation and collection that catered neither to skeptics nor the credulous.

### Chapter 3: Narrative Method and Testimony in Crowe's Work

This chapter will show that Crowe's fiction and "factional" work predates and continues her polemic in *NSN* and portrayed the supernatural as part of a realist method as she viewed it as a veridical part of reality. They will be shown to advocate for a democratic epistemology, however faulty at times, that transcends the boundaries of education, class and gender. It will focus upon two of her novels - *The Adventures of Susan Hopely* (1841) and *The Story of Lilly Dawson* (1847) - and her short-story compilations *Light and Darkness or Mysteries of Life* (1852) and *Ghosts and Family Legends* (1859). These works are the predominate ones that incorporate the supernatural. It will try to examine how Crowe used traditional tropes such as the intuition, presentiment, crisis apparition, dreaming and hallucination but in ways that differed from her predecessors and contemporaries. Crowe's fiction and factional writing portrayed the supernatural as part of realist narrative. For Crowe, the supernatural was not fantastical but part of an objective ontological reality.

Crowe's work will be analyzed by showing the socio-historical context of competing epistemological discourses and Crowe's attempts to use her fiction to further advocate her own views. Her novels' portrayal of the supernatural and testimonial narrative will be compared to *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* both published in 1847, the same year as *Lilly Dawson*, to show a contrast in contemporary methods. It will also look at Crowe's work in the first section of *Ghosts and Family Legends*. Unlike these writers, Crowe never saw herself as a writer of ghost stories, and kept her fiction and non-fiction largely separate. Apparitions are never essential to the plots of her fictional

works, and the preponderance of her work shows her dealing overwhelmingly with other themes. As Larken said, “she never was for an invented ghost story.”<sup>379</sup>

The period of literature was a transformative one where gothic slowly gave way to sensational fiction and one saw the emergence of realist literature. Realist literature has often been the mark by which other genres such as the ghost story, fantasy and gothic are antithetical. If natural philosophers and physiologists held they could delineate the real, literature was following suit likewise with authors consciously wishing to stay, like Ruskin, true to nature. Eliot wrote that realism was a desire to stay clear of literary embellishment to maintain “the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature.”<sup>380</sup> This sense of objectivity was to differ from romantic and gothic conventions, however, just how to follow this truth was a matter of debate, even in Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (1859).

The ghost has especially been portrayed as disturbing the ‘real’ world by addressing marginalized groups and as such is discussed as outside ‘realist’ literature. It has but that is not the limit to its presence in texts. Ghosts also present an aspect of belief that was still considered real during the nineteenth century as it is even now. Many writers who use the ghost such as Gaskell, Dickens and Eliot did not believe in them so their portrayal must have other purposes. Crowe’s major contribution to this was employing what Smajic refers to as ‘supernatural realism’ where the supernatural, rather than being considered antithetical to the ‘real’ is part and parcel of it, if even only because of the character’s viewpoint (believer or sceptic) or time period being

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<sup>379</sup> Geoffrey Larken. Manuscript. (Crowe/Book/F191859/Special Collections & Archives, University of Kent),

<sup>380</sup> *George Eliot: Selected Critical Writings*, ed. by Rosemary Ashton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 322–25.

represented.<sup>381</sup> Indeed, this chapter agrees with this notion – as he applies it to skeptical authors from Scott, Gaskell to Eliot who used the supernatural in such a fashion- but takes it one step further in showing Crowe’s use of the supernatural was meant to show the common but complex manner of the supernatural in daily life divested of traditional, occultic and skeptical imposition. The major purpose behind the supernatural, especially ghosts, in Crowe was simply to show it as a simple, objectively verifiable fact of life.

The major way Crowe accomplished this was tying testimony to narrative in a framework whereby the author became an advocate appealing to a jury of readers. Crowe’s writing dealt with jurisprudential methods and true crime just as much as with the supernatural and the two intersected at times. Her writing represented the importance of such discourse, especially when it came to circumstantial evidence and testimony. Schramm noted just such an appropriation by writers in the nineteenth century where the fact-finding model in common law dependent on testimony was paramount: “Hence, the presentation of evidence in a court of law has often served authors of fiction as a coherent and influential model of ‘reality,’ and writers have long imitated the strategies of persuasion privileged by legal forensic methodology.”<sup>382</sup>

Modern literary criticism that looks at Crowe’s supernatural fictional work in detail is scarce. One exception is the pioneering scholarship of Ruth Heholt. Her essay, “Science, Ghosts and Vision: Catherine Crowe’s Bodies of Evidence and the Critique of Masculinity,” by Ruth Heholt posits Crowe’s “radical” narrative method which calls into

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<sup>381</sup> Smajic, “Supernatural Realism,” *Novel*. 42.1, Spring, 2009: 1-23, 3-4.

<sup>382</sup> Schramm, 1.

question masculinity and proposes a feminine way of knowledge.<sup>383</sup> However, her allusions are mainly taken from the second part of the book and ignore the many other stories which show no such interest but focus on generational curses, animals or pecuniary interests. The first section also shows plenty examples of women who do not subscribe to the objective reality of apparitions.<sup>384</sup> Crowe never refers to any such complete dichotomy of masculine and feminine discourse and is against a priori concepts of epistemological monopolies by any group. Heholt's insightful introduction to Crowe's novel (the only recent introduction to any of her fictional works at all) *The Story of Lilly Dawson* shows that Crowe was not a radical, though indeed progressive when it came to equality.<sup>385</sup>

Yet, this does not impede Crowe's view that the testimony of women was just as valid as that of men, and that the less educated were just as capable in assessing a veridical event, however it may fall outside normal belief. Heholt's major argument rests on *Ghosts and Family Legends* where she chooses only handful of stories to argue her case that Crowe wants a "radical (re) vision" and that her male ghosts are emasculated.<sup>386</sup> I will argue that her interpretation comes short in that ignores the other narrations and tales which show women and lower classes in positions of incredulity, men who take the supernatural seriously and that all epistemologies are useful in ascertaining a veridical supernatural event. It is in that complex portrayal of the veridical supernatural and its transmission in culture that shows Crowe at her most unique,

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<sup>383</sup> Ruth Heholt. "Science, Ghosts and Vision: Catherine Crowe's Bodies of Evidence and the Critique of Masculinity," 47, 52.

<sup>384</sup> Catherine Crowe. *Light and Darkness or Mysteries of Life*. (London: Henry Colburn, 1852) 83,100, 111.

<sup>385</sup> Catherine Crowe. *The Story of Lilly Dawson* [annotated] (Kindle Locations 106-112). Victorian Secrets. Kindle Edition.

<sup>386</sup> Heholt, "Science, Ghosts and Vision," 59.

placing her in a post-gothic, proto-sensationalist literary portrayal. Crowe, oddly like the spectre through solid objects, went in between genres.

This chapter will take 1859 as its end point because it was the year Crowe published her final works on the supernatural, *Ghosts and Family Legends* and *Spiritualism and the Age We Live In*. She never published anything non-fictional on the topic of the supernatural afterwards. Dickerson and Cox have also pointed to 1859 as a period where supernatural literature, especially the ghost story changed.<sup>387</sup> It is after this time that the ghost story becomes less traditionally gothic and more attuned to realism: a change which I shall argue that Crowe's works had already initiated some years before.<sup>388</sup>

As Hay has explained, ghost stories in the mid-Victorian period were in a process of great change and heavily influenced by realist narrative, and this chapter will aim to show that Crowe employed such realism in her fictional work.<sup>389</sup> He portrays the ghost story in a complimentary relationship to realist fiction in light of a Lukasian reading where Realism represents depicting a social and historical totality. It does these two ways: first, the ghost story makes the real world sensible through symbolism and allegory. It is a commentary on the socio-historical fragments reality through a series of "cognitive mapping" that showed the relationship between strands in society portrayed as a whole. Second, it is also a disruptive meta-narrative on reality that favours the

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<sup>387</sup> Vanessa D. Dickerson. 1996. *Victorian Ghosts in the Noontide: Women Writers and the Supernatural*. (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1996) 132-133.

<sup>388</sup> Michael Cox and R.A. Gilbert, *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) x.

<sup>389</sup> Simon Hay. *History of the Modern British Ghost Story*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 57.

personal fragments of experience over rational totality, the limits of epistemology.<sup>390</sup> It is the last attribute that leads him to hold that detective fiction and ghost stories are essentially opposites. The former contains a narrative closure and surety whereas the other has the “articulate suffering” that offers no “narrative satisfaction.”<sup>391</sup> This chapter agrees with his first premise but not the second. It will be shown that Crowe united her ghost fragments in detective fiction where all epistemologies unite to reach a conclusion. The greatest hindrance that resulted in epistemological failure for Crowe in the real world was ignoring one at the expense of the other. Crowe was both a detective of the supernatural and a narrator.

### ***Susan Hopley and Lilly Dawson***

Crowe has received recently some critical attention for her novels. Her first novel, *The Adventures of Susan Hopley* (1841) is cited by Sussex as a precursor to both sensationalist and detective fiction, with a strong female character uncovering lower-class suffering.<sup>392</sup> Sussex devotes an entire chapter of her book, *Silent Voices*, to Crowe, and points out her mastery of plot and even her use of forensics. The protagonist Susan Hopley must not only vindicate her missing brother Andrew over a murder but must also survive in the modern world, encountering other characters in a complex layering of many sub-plots. She also credits Crowe with writing the first crime

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<sup>390</sup> Hay, 75-77.

<sup>391</sup> Hay, 82-87.

<sup>392</sup> Lucy Sussex. *Silent Voices: Forgotten Novels by Victorian Women Writers*. Ed. Brenda Ayres. (Westport: Praeger, 2003) 57. For a summary of the novel see *Ibid.*, 46-50.



novel and having the first female detective protagonist.<sup>393</sup> Sussex notes that the novel was evidently popular, being reprinted numerous times and is always cited in the title of her later works.<sup>394</sup> However, what is important to the discussion at hand is to see how Crowe used supernatural phenomena in the novel, years before the publication of *Nightside*. It will be shown that while it is used in important parts of the narrative, it is used sparingly, and at times is shown to be delusional as well. A year before publishing *Nightside*, Crowe published *The Story of Lilly Dawson* in 1847. This novel too is about the self-realization of its protagonist, Lilly Dawson, who must survive and grow in a harsh environment all while being stalked by the Littenhaus family who kidnapped her when she was a child and hiding her true identity. The novel employs, as in *Susan Hopley*, veridical supernatural elements and mistaken cases of the supernatural with the result that both produce moments of the uncanny.

Crowe's novels were intended to be works of literary realism. The narrator of *Susan Hopley* asserts that the novel is a realist narrative<sup>395</sup> and Larken has shown that Crowe prided herself on, "storytelling, drawing characters, or rather painting by their actions or conversations giving pictures of human life, and so forth."<sup>396</sup> However, it also employs moments of the supernatural sparingly but to important effect. Walter Scott had advocated such an approach a generation before, writing in his essay "On the Supernatural in Composition:" "Hence it usually happens, that the first touch of the supernatural is always the most effective, and is rather weakened and defaced, than

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<sup>393</sup> Sussex, 63.

<sup>394</sup> Sussex, 58.

<sup>395</sup> *Susan Hopley*, 1.

<sup>396</sup> Larken, 102

strengthened, by the subsequent recurrence of similar incidents.”<sup>397</sup> Crowe would employ such a method in not making her supernatural episodes repetitive or integral to the main plot or sub plots. This also keeps Crowe very much in the vein of Scott and Dickens whose ghost stories, though rarely objectively supernatural, are strewn in fragments throughout their novels.<sup>398</sup> The supernatural in her novels provide moments of insight of an intuitive epistemological mode, but it is never the mode that drives the novel or solves the crime.

An example of this can be seen in Crowe’s use of presentiment. As has been shown, instances of apparent presentiment were important to Crowe, as she saw the mechanist model of the mind as being unable to account for premonitions that are later verified. An instance of such presentiment appears early in *Susan Hopley*, when Mrs. Leeson has a presentiment that her husband, Major Leeson, will not return – a presentiment that is later verified.<sup>399</sup> Mrs. Leeson’s experience, in which she knows by a supersensory epistemological method that something has happened, portrays the “intuitive” power that Crowe believed were stronger in women, animals and “primitive” people. Another example of extrasensory epistemological power occurs later in the novel when Susan’s employer, Alicia Aytoun, feels the presence of her husband even though she does not yet know that he has spotted her and Mr. Seymour her obsessed admirer:

It was not so much from the intelligence of her eyes that she judged, for she had seen the figure too imperfectly to recognize it; but some other

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<sup>397</sup> Walter Scott. *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*. (London: John Murray, 1847), 63.

<sup>398</sup> Hay, 63

<sup>399</sup> *Susan Hopley*, 9.

sense, like that which warns the ghost seer that a spirit from the grave is near, whispered that it was Arthur.<sup>400</sup>

Here Crowe's interpolation is tying up fear of the supernatural with fear of marital and social circumstances. Alicia can judge, without a rational explanation. She can also see without the eyes in an intuitive sense. Like Mrs. Leeson and Jeremy she is reaching beyond appearance and sees what is hidden. In a society of convention and circumstantial suspicion, Alicia has recourse to another mode that is deeper but, being above language and conventional belief, is indescribable and indefensible with the exception of the novel which shows that she is indeed correct and innocent. Although Crowe believed these intuitive powers were stronger in women, *Susan Hopley* contains many examples of men who have similar experiences. Susan's employer Mr. Wentworth intuitively feels that something is wrong when Mr. Gaveston woos his daughter:

But of late years he had felt a sort of growing dislike to him that he could hardly account for; and that he was himself half inclined to look upon as idle antipathy or weak prejudice. He had nothing exactly to allege against him; and sometimes after examining his own mind, and searching for the motive of his own inclination, he would end up saying, "D-n the fellow! I believe it's only that I don't like the expression of his face."<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> *Susan Hopley*, 229.

<sup>401</sup> *Susan Hopley*, 11.

Again, here the feeling and intuition cannot be semiotically expressed in words. Mr. Wentworth seeks recourse to jurisprudential reasoning of accounting and alleging but they mean nothing without the modern conception of evidence. This becomes qualified by fear of prejudice that contaminates his feelings. He studies his mental train of thought and reaches the rational conclusion that he has no valid, rational reason to dislike Gaveston. Mr. Wentworth ignores his intuition which is later verified when Gaveston kills him, Mrs. Wentworth and Susan's brother Andrew whom Gaveston pins the murder on with a sly use of framing, circumstantial evidence.<sup>402</sup> In this matter Mr. Jeremy, the butler, possesses a greater insight than his master, due to his greater willingness to trust his own intuition – a role-reversal which shows Crowe's subversion of class structure. After the Wentworths have been murdered and all the evidence is against the missing Andrew, Jeremy remains unconvinced:

Jeremy was silent. There was something in all this that was inexplicable to him. He was uneducated, but a very clear-headed man, and one who, to use his own phrase, was rarely deceived in man or woman. Of Andrew he entertained the highest opinion, founded on observation and experience; whilst to Gaveston he had an antipathy so decided, that he used to liken it to the horror some people have of cats; and declare that he always felt an uncomfortable sensation when he was near him.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> For a discussion between Gaveston and a coroner on circumstantial evidence and character, see *Susan Hopley*, 24.

<sup>403</sup> *Susan Hopley*, 25.

Gaveston can destroy a family with sophistry and fool the law, but cannot deceive a butler with a strong sense of intuition and sound experiential knowledge. Mr. Jeremy can look past appearances, can reason in an objective manner based on proper observation and *feel* reality. He cannot express it though and his supernatural revulsion to Gaveston would not be considered evidence. However, due to his social standing there is little he can do without material proof. Schramm argues that testimony in nineteenth century narrative is often a tool to express, “the voice of the oppressed or prosecuted,” which seeks to be regarded as evidence.<sup>404</sup> He can only help Susan survive and help clear Andrew’s name incrementally throughout the novel. Jeremy may be right but it is not his right to say.

Heholt has argued that Crowe tried to use her fiction to make epistemological space for intuition in women.<sup>405</sup> Indeed it does but Crowe’s writing is too complex to generalize based on two examples, and her stories feature several other male characters who have the same power of intuition.<sup>406</sup> Crowe was against a monopoly on epistemological discourse by any group and portrays the search for truth as a task for more than one individual, within which testimony from any witness can potentially be valid regardless of their gender or class. The law may exclude the testimony of Jeremy or Susan, and their intuition and moments of presentiment, but that allows Crowe the writer to bring such evidence to the reader so they can judge for themselves. Schramm

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<sup>404</sup> Schramm, 5.

<sup>405</sup> Heholt, “Science, Ghosts and Vision,” 47.

<sup>406</sup> Catherine Crowe. *Men and Women*. 3 Volumes. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1843), Vol.III.82-84, 266-268; Catherine Crowe. *Adventures of a Beauty*. 3 Volumes. (London: Colburn and Co., 1852), 189-191, 201. For intuition in animals see *Susan Hopley*, 136, 239; *Men and Women*, Vol.I.257.

writes that that with the rise of the defense counsel, personal narrative of guilt dissipated but remained vibrant in literature. Its purpose was allow the reader in to be a juror, to show the writer as using fiction to reach essential truths of human behaviour that was lacking in court representation.<sup>407</sup> The reader knows that Andrew Hopley is not guilty based on past conduct, good nature, Susan's dream and Jeremy's estimation; however, the court doesn't.

As I have mentioned, the supernatural never becomes a *deus ex machine* in Crowe's fiction. Intuition helps guide her characters, but it is a group effort based mainly on the reasoned approach of Susan which brings the novel to a conclusion. Rather than being superior to all others, the supernatural mode of knowledge is simply one of many natural ones, that certain segments of society foolishly wish to brush aside. Hay claims that the ghost story of the period could be anti-empiricist in that it "makes occult fiction congenial mapping," pointing out areas of ideological spaces "which trades in knowledge not of isolated facts, but of the broad social structures in which those objects are located."<sup>408</sup> Crowe's empiricism is part and parcel of using a totality of epistemological methods. She never calls empiricism into question and uses it to show the power of accumulated testimony.

### **Crisis Apparition Apparitions in Crowe's Novels**

The role of crisis apparitions in Crowe's fiction further demonstrates the ways in which she depicted supernatural events as being compatible with realism rather than opposed

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<sup>407</sup> Schramm, 7.

<sup>408</sup> Hay, 82.

to it. In the ballads of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the traditional murdered ghost often beckons and even speaks, providing the solution to the mystery of its own death: but in *Susan Hopley* only clues speak, and Susan must strain to find them or connect disparate facts. Crowe's crisis apparition becomes an important clue that shows up once then is remembered and better seen again and interpreted in the more mundane mode of dreaming. Crowe includes such apparitions in the novel not because they provide the key to the plot, but because that is what she claims happens in life. Nicola Bowen points out that Crowe held dreams as a spiritually superior way of receiving messages, acting both "internally and externally in the mind."<sup>409</sup> However, for Crowe, not all dreams are prophetic and not all dreams are simply memory and the imagination loosened from reason.<sup>410</sup> Reality is far too complex for that.

What is vital to note is that Crowe's heroine detective does not depend on dreams to vindicate her nor reaches an easy conclusion based on them. Ascari posits in *Women Writers and Detectives in Nineteenth Century Crime Fiction* (2010) that dreams and premonitions in Victorian fiction were part of an anti-realist polemic of narrative uncertainty intended to show many epistemological possibilities, citing Collins's apology in *Armada* (1866) allowing the reader to reach their own conclusion.<sup>411</sup> However, Crowe was employing the same method many years before Collins, not as part of any dialectical polemic, but as part of a comprehensive portrayal of reality, one where realism can include both veridical presentiments and hallucinations. Susan must use

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<sup>409</sup> Nicola Bowen. "What is the stuff that dreams are made of." *The Victorian Supernatural*. Ed. Nicola Bowen, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 163.

<sup>410</sup> *Men and Women* Vol.II.65-68, *Susan Hopley* 70. For living a dream-world ibid 114.

<sup>411</sup> Ascari, 59.

her rational side to gather clues: something Willkie Collins himself incorporated, even using the same clue of scrap cloth in his novel *No Name* (1862).<sup>412</sup>

The dream or vision is not central to the plot of *Susan Hopley*, but it is still valid as an epistemological method at times. Crowe uses both dream and vision in tandem later in the novel towards its end. Susan's attempt to vindicate her family and find out the truth is a long and arduous process where she is a detective of the crime and of her own mental experiences. She has the narrative ethic of a contemporary scientist where nothing is ignored or imposed upon to reach an objective truth.<sup>413</sup> Her very doubt of her own dreams attests to her scientific rigor.<sup>414</sup> The novel thus implies that many epistemological discourses, working in a unified totality, are required in order to reach the truth.

The crisis apparitions in the novel provide examples of this. Susan's crisis apparition of her brother Andrew initiates her break with accepted sociological reality:

I thought I was I was sitting in my master's armchair by his bed-room fire, just as indeed I was, and that I had just dropped asleep, when I heard a voice whisper in my ear, 'Look there! Who's that?' Upon that I thought I lifted up my head and saw my brother Andrew sitting on the opposite side of the fire in his grave clothes, and with his two dead eyes staring at me with a shocking look of fear and horror- then I thought he raised his hand slowly, and pointing with his thumb over his shoulder, I saw two men

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<sup>412</sup> Ascari, 62.

<sup>413</sup> Levine, 96-97.

<sup>414</sup> For another use of dreams and presentiment, see Crowe's *Linny Lockwood: A Novel*. II vols. (London: George Routledge and Co., 1854) pp. 35, 332, 366-384; For an example of second sight and letter reading, see *Adventures of a Beauty*, 167-168.



standing close behind him; one had a crape over his face and I could not see who he was; but the other was the man with the crooked nose, who had rung at the bell two nights before.....I turned my eyes again on the chair where Andrew had been sitting, instead of him I saw my master there with a large gash in his throat, and his eyes steadfastly on me, whilst he pointed to something at my back; he seemed to try to speak and he could make no sound.<sup>415</sup>

The visionary characters do not speak as they would in a more traditional portrayal of the supernatural. Andrew's desire for Mr. Wentworth to let Susan sleep is not like the complete explanation of a crime by a ghost in either the ballad or gothic tradition. The apparitions here show and indicate but it is up to the person observing to interpret. She sees events but cannot piece together what is happening. It is only at the end that Susan can bring all these strands together and reach a conclusive interpretation. It is so out of context that she does not make more of it. This dream solves nothing and is only validated at the end. Its worth as evidence is questioned at the very beginning when Crowe prefaces her sleep by her mention of associative thinking which would put her vision into a Lockean category of hallucination. Susan at first surmises that it is simply a dream and as dawn arises she becomes convinced with every brightening minute: "And you may imagine that the lighter it grew, the more absurd my terror appeared to me; till, at last, by the time the sun was up, I was ready to laugh at myself for my folly."<sup>416</sup> The daily world and the routine bring her back to habit and rationality. She does not mention her dream though, fearing it would be ridiculed. This self- and societal ridicule pushes

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<sup>415</sup> Susan Hopley, 19.

<sup>416</sup> Susan Hopley, 20..

her to hold back her experience, a problem Crowe complains about in *NSN*. *Were Susan to break the accepted mode of social interaction by inserting the night-side of human experience, her testimony would lessen her credit as a rational, dependable servant*. It is fear which impedes testimony which in turn impedes the ability to ascertain the truth. There is no reason whatsoever for her to make more of it. Yet, the rational explanation is compromised once she finds out that Mr. Wentworth was murdered along with his wife and that her brother is missing.

This is duplicated in Crowe's final novel *Linny Lockwood* (1854) where Catherine Eardley dreams of her parents showing her the date of her and her father's death. Linny Lockwood, tried to dissuade her that it is only a dream brought about by her circumstances but her dream is vindicated by what occurs afterwards on the very days established by the departed in the dreams.

In my dream. I thought I was in this room, lying on the sofa, as I really was-the door opened, and my mother came in with a large book in her hand, bound in black velvet...She came to the side of the sofa and opened the book and said, 'read!' and she pointed with her finger to the *line* ...I read the date of her death. Then the door opened again, and my father entered as she had don"...Linny brought her a glass of water and tried to soothe her, alleging that it was only a dream, and that women in her situation often had unpleasant dreams.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Catherine Crowe. *Linny Lockwood*. Vol. II (2 Vols) (London: Rutledge & Co., 1854) 187-188, 195, 202, 207, 212.

This dream is prefaced and concluded by Linny's rational advice which reminds Catherine of her bad sleeping posture, that dreams often seem real and that her situation has put her in the proper mind set to see such dreams driven by guilt and circumstance. Here Linny is the helper, friend and rational physician who offers explanation and remedy. Catherine's adamant refusal based on the dreams recurrence and lucidity is not accepted as valid. It is not enough to experience the supernatural, it must be validated by an empiricism other than itself to be undeniably veridical. Here the act of reading takes place. The visitation and order to read is symbolic but it is also a play on biblical motifs of visitation and instructions to read. The apparitions here seems merely traditional but with Crowe's modern nuance of using the periodical to validate Catherine's vision of her father's death. Linny cannot read Catherine's dream but on reading the paper, she finally gets the proof that was wanting, when the plain print supports the symbol. It is interesting that the SPR would make newspaper confirmation important later on in its research on validating dates of death.

Susan has another dream that shows Crowe's ideas of symbolism during the dream state alluded to in the previous chapters. It takes place when she is in Transylvania with her mistress, who has married none other than Andrew's killer Remorden, whom Susan believes is a colonel:

but her mind being less tranquil than the others, her sleep was less sound.

She dreamed uneasy dreams about her brother and Gaveston, and the strange, silent woman; then she thought the melancholy-looking man was Andrew, and that the count and colonel were going to murder him, and

that she interfered to save his life. This crisis woke her, and she opened her eyes.<sup>418</sup>

The supernatural coupling of the silent Andrew who only exists as a momentary phantom that speaks only in dreams and clues left behind with the mute and purgatorial Valentine is a striking example of Crowe's narrative skill, as it turns out that the count and colonel are the very people who killed Andrew. Through the dream he returns but Susan will not be able to tie either the pieces or the visions together until the very end. When Susan returns to the house again she witnesses two people come out of a hole in the basement who will later on turn out to be the count and colonel:

She could never explain what impelled her, but she had an idea that they were going to assassinate the young gentlemen she had seen sitting with the soldiers, and she felt an uncontrollable desire to endeavor to save him. So overpowering was this sentiment that she was utterly indifferent, or at least insensible to the danger she might incur by her interference.<sup>419</sup>

The young man stationed at the house, whose life she saves, turns out to be Harry Leeson, the disinherited son of Major Leeson. Like many purported cases in *Night Side* the overpowering feeling that drew the ridicule of Dickens, can at times be epistemologically valid and lifesaving, in this instance saving Leeson's son from the same people who had killed him. Susan has accomplished at the very end what Mr. Leeson failed to do: allow intuition to guide him and save his family's life. Susan, the female servant, has become the one who has utilized all epistemological methods, including both reason and intuition, rather than simply accepting appearances at face

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<sup>418</sup> *Susan Hopley*, 210

<sup>419</sup> *Susan Hopley*, 268

value. She has suffered into truth, and thus becomes the heroine, in place of the impotence of the blind faith that destroyed a rich and respectable family.<sup>420</sup>

A crisis apparition is used in a similar way in *Lilly Dawson*, as well, in a scene which involves the novel's secondary characters Winny and Shorty. Shorty had been spending a lot of time trying to find a body for a reward. Evening comes and there is no word of Shorty. However, that night he is seen by Winny and Mrs. Weston:

'Shorty?' 'Ay! Shorty, as plain as ever I see him in my life.'" "Did he speak?" inquired Jane, in a low tone. 'No, replied Mrs. Weston. 'He stood there for, I dare say, the space of a minute, looking at us.' 'And did you speak?' asked Jane. 'I didn't; but Winny just said the word Shorty, as soon as she saw him; and then something came over her, she says, that she couldn't say any more.' 'But how do you know it wasn't Shorty, after all? Perhaps it was a trick.' 'No,' replied Mrs. Weston; 'it's natural enough for a person that didn't see him to think so—but it was no trick.' 'Well, but what did he do next? Did he go away?' 'Why, he stood there, as I told you, for perhaps a minute—we two staring at him, not able to say a word—and then he came in....' 'Came in!' exclaimed Jane, growing paler than before. 'Ay, did he. He just stepped in and walked across the room, close by where I was standing; and went in at that door,' said Mrs. Weston, pointing to the door of the bedchamber.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> For a similar use of prescient dreams, See Catherine Crowe. "Gaspar Mendez." *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal*. Vol. XVII No. 418 – 443. (Edinburgh; William & Robert Chambers, 1852) 21. Alexandra Malfia dreams of Gaspar Mendez, interestingly enough the antagonist, being killed by a masked man. Gaspar takes the dream seriously and acts accordingly. See also Catherine Crowe. *Arsitodemus*. (Edinburgh; William Tait, 1838) 46. Corysandra's symbolic dream that is realized Act III.Scene. III.

<sup>421</sup> *Lilly Dawson*, Vol.I.117.

In the vein of traditional ballads, he points to where the death blow came and his bloodied clothes attest to murder. But that is where the similarity ends as nothing is explained, the proactive ghost testifying on its own behalf becomes simply Shorty entering the room after a period of absence. Shorty's actions are that of a normal routine, so much so, that Winny goes after him, thinking it is really him.

This happens to Winny and Mrs. Weston but Mrs. Weston then tells Jane Groby. The oral chain of transmission has gone from event to testimony amongst the social setting of female servants and one sees again the nature of discursive inference at reaching the veracity of an event. Jane doesn't accept the event without questioning the actions of all those present. She asks Mrs. Weston about a possible escape out the window, how Shorty looked, what he was wearing, and if she saw anything afterwards.<sup>422</sup> Very much in the vein of a detective she believes her friend but wants to figure out what happened or whether they had just interpreted the situation wrongly. It is not the passive acceptance of the event by an uneducated commoner, a stereotypical superstitious female telling nursery stories but the genuine desire to reach a state of knowledge through cross-examination. The questions are meant to ascertain possible explanations, rule out trickery and find answers. When Mrs. Weston is done Jane uses another jurisprudential method of pointing to accumulative testimony:

"I've heard of such things," said Jane. "My first husband's mother, old Mrs. Methwin, used to declare that when her son David was drowned at sea, she had been wakened out of her sleep by hearing the splash in the water, and a dreadful cry. She knew it was David's voice and she woke

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<sup>422</sup> Lilly Dawson, Vol.1118-19.

her husband and told him what she'd heard; but he called her a fool and bade her go to sleep. But soon after there came a letter, telling how, that very night, David had fell off the mast and was drowned."<sup>423</sup>

This oral accumulation of corroborative testimony handed down from person to person is given as a possible support. Though Jane doesn't say for sure what her final take is on what happened, it is something that has been attested and strengthens the case. What validates her former mother in law's story is that David did indeed die around the moment she heard him. The two events are too close to be coincidental. This is a mode of empirical reasoning based on eye-witness events that counteracts the accepted normative interpretation of hysteria.

Winnie knows intuitively that Shorty is dead.

Yet, even then she tries desperately to find out his whereabouts and not rest her conclusion solely on this supernatural experience. This episode proves to be of the veridical type where there are multiple witnesses for it turns out much later in the novel that he is indeed dead. That never stops Winnie, like Susan, from trying to find out the truth of what happened or reach a final interpretation of the supernatural episode until she has reached certainty based on an investigative, rational search of all the facts. This crisis apparition doesn't solve the murder or point to a murderer. It does not serve as a gothic interpolation that illuminate the protagonist to a speedy course of action. Winnie and Lilly with the help of other do by taking clues and putting evidence together and that doesn't happen until the end of the novel.

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<sup>423</sup> Lilly Dawson, Vol.I.119-120.

## How Ghost Stories are Made: Oral Testimony and Folk Epistemology

In *Susan Hopley* the use of domestic servants and the polemics of class has been noted by Lynch. She points out that domestic servants were, like apparitions, liminal existing in the household, appeared and disappeared, silent but also bearers of family secrets, epistemologies not based on reason, and usually the ones who saw the ghost before the master and mistress of the house did. She writes that supernatural literature of the time was able to show a “spectrum of the social anxieties of the day.”<sup>424</sup> Though her essay focuses on the work of Braddon and stories written after 1860, her insight can be applied to Crowe’s work. Catherine Crowe advocated the respectability and plausibility of lower-class witness testimony in *Nightside* and in her fiction. However, unlike Lynch’s generalization of the ghost and lower classes, Crowe also showed that servants could also be as narrow and faulted in their inferences and testimony as that of the ruling class. Her stance is present in her earlier and later work as well, in which Crowe attributes authoritative inferential speculation to domestic servants and people of lower socio-economic status.

The servants and people in the area know the character and history of the aristocratic Remorden family well. Hay surmises that ghost stories of this period are interested in the relationship between the fragment and totality unlike the realist novel which “resists the way that as the nineteenth century progressed knowledge became

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<sup>424</sup> Eve M Lynch. "Spectral Politics: the Victorian Ghost Story and the Domestic Servant." *The Victorian Supernatural*. Ed. Nicola Brown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 67-8.



increasingly specialized."<sup>425</sup> One could argue that Crowe is both resisting the specialization of knowledge in this episode and also showing its fragmentary nature. The epistemology of the local people may be mocked, but their deductions are based on their experience and method of reasoning.

As Susan is forced to leave her residence because of the murder that has implicated her brother, she stops by a water pump to refresh. The village gossips had already gathered and the reader learns the history of the area. It seems the pump they use has poor quality water. There was another well the poor folk of the area used but the Remorden thought that they were too much of a nuisance. The family thought that they had solved their vulgar problem by filling up the well:

And what came of it!" said another – "why they never had no luck arter. The very next summer the little boy, that was the only son they had, fell into the well and was drowned afore they ever missed him; and when it was too late they boarded it up." "Ay said the crone, "they went to the dogs from that time, and many said it was a judgement on 'em for taking away the privilege of the poor."<sup>426</sup>

The Remordens suffer more bad luck, murder and loss until they are left with a vagabond George Remorden as the last inheritor, and the poor and uneducated interpret this fall in fortune as being due to their cruelty in filling up the well.<sup>427</sup> For someone like Hibbert, their reasoning would be considered a wrong inference of what is

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<sup>425</sup> Hay, 86.

<sup>426</sup> *Susan Hopley*, 22-23.

<sup>427</sup> Hay, 22-23.

simply coincidence.<sup>428</sup> Crowe situates it in the beginning of the novel and the full import of why is not made clear until the final revelations at the end, when it is brought to light that it is the very place where Andrew's body was disposed of, and that George Remorden partook in the crime itself. Though their epistemology is faulted in determining causality in a rational sense, it however is correct in its intuitive sense of moral causality and symbolically validated by the location of the hidden body. A similar validation of popular epistemologies can be seen in the fact that it is the servants who uncover the moral depravity of the family and another servant, Susan, who uncovers the body.<sup>429</sup>

In *Lilly Dawson* the "appearance" and disappearance of Shorty give a glimpse into how ghost stories are created by oral testimony and polemic within communities.<sup>430</sup> The episode is a springboard for a small debate in the village over supernatural occurrences. As Smajic points out, Eliot looked at the way knowledge circulated in rural communities in the form of debate between speakers and listeners from the bizarre to the common.<sup>431</sup> However, Crowe's treatment looks at it full complexity, giving the uneducated the benefit of the doubt and showing how it reaches the educated and continues the polemic. The lower and upper classes can both judiciously weigh evidence. Hay points out Ian Duncan's statement that the Victorian novel "incorporates an explosion" of genres and discourses and "draws together many plots and characters

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<sup>428</sup> For Crowe's narrative defence of coincidence and probability and its use in fiction, see *Linny Lockwood* 151. For a self-referential to its use in realist fiction see *Adventures of a Beauty*, 322.

<sup>429</sup> For something similar in her short-story work, See Catherine Crowe. "herberr." *The National Magazine*. Vol.II (London: The National Magazine Comp., 1852) 252-253

<sup>430</sup> For another example of this and the ensuing investigation brought about by a multiple witness sighting, See *Ibid.*, 250-253.

<sup>431</sup> Smajic, "Supernatural Realism," 10-11.

into a vast and complicated structure” that cuts across divisions, even the public and private.<sup>432</sup> Crowe provides examples of these, especially in its very complex elucidation on the supernatural and how it becomes a part of society and interpreted.

Crowe also shows the complexity of such methods of testimonial epistemology by showing a contrast where the wrong conclusion is reached.<sup>433</sup> In her realist method, Crowe shows the inherent trouble of reaching a conclusion on what is related orally. She is showing the *sitz im leben* of most paranormal testimony. It is a realist portrayal of how testimony is transferred and how ideas are debated in a domestic setting.<sup>434</sup> It was not the scientific journal that dealt with such discourses of the supernatural but it was present in communities, newspapers, periodicals and their readership and listeners. These testimonies are social strands of fragmented narratives each adding up to provide a totality of epistemologies and showing the social order at work.

Crowe shows how such narrations are spread by gossip and the desire for something to break the monotony of village life. In a an episode of first-person narrative imposition in the novel, she argues spectral narrations are also powerful because: ““let people laugh as they will, there is a chord in almost every human breast, though pride seeks to conceal it, which is instantly stirred by the conception that the dead do sometimes,” as Isaac Taylor suggests, “actually break through the boundaries that hem in the ethereal crowds; and so, as if by trespass, may, in single instances, infringe upon the ground of common corporeal life.”<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> Hay, 58.

<sup>433</sup> *Men and Women*, Vol.I.247-249

<sup>434</sup> For another episode see *Men and Women* Vol.I.258-261

<sup>435</sup> *Lilly Dawson*, Vol.I.145-146; Crowe only does it twice in the novel to advocate for a serious study of the supernatural and Women’s rights.

Jane Groby keeps the story in circulation, and it reaches the aristocrats of the area, Lady Longford and Sir Lawrence Longford. Lady Longford takes it upon herself to investigate the matter by interviewing Mrs. Weston and her daughter Winny:

The Tale was so simple and so direct, that the lady came away thoroughly satisfied that one of two things must be true; namely, that the women had, on that occasion, either seen the ostler himself or his apparition.<sup>436</sup>

This desire to get the testimony first-hand and not by anecdote or hearsay is an attempt to evaluate evidence. Their simple and direct testimony is a narrative of straightforward observation, free of embellishment. Lady Longford believes the narration based on Mrs. Weston's impeccable reputation and character. She advocates the power of testimony and experiential data to Sir Lawrence, who agrees in essence but still manages to laugh.<sup>437</sup>

Lord Longford is not mocking testimony or Mrs. Weston's credibility. He only contends that they are not enough. The rector Mr. Moore, like many skeptics, that such beliefs are the result of a superstitious education and upbringing. A lawyer then calls into question the power of testimony to the untrained, appeals to probability:

The agent who of course was, of course a lawyer, then remarked, that few people can observe facts or giving evidence...

The doctor next took up the subject, and informed the company that ghost-seers were merely the victims of spectral illusions, a by no means uncommon disorder; and, after a learned dissertation on hysteria and

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<sup>436</sup> Lilly Dawson, 147.

<sup>437</sup> *Lilly Dawson*, Vol.I.150.

delirium tremens, he of course concluded by relating the case of Nicolai, the bookseller of Berlin.<sup>438</sup>

Crowe here is taking on the skeptical polemic, much as she would in *Night Side of Nature* the following year. What the aristocrat, clergyman, lawyer and doctor have in common is rebutting the event based on the latest views on hallucinations made popular by John Ferriar, Samuel Hibbert and Brewster where ghost-seeing was presented as an associative problem of the imagination recalling images to the mind in vivid form. The testimony of Mrs. Weston does not compare to the latest physiological theories. Their testimony cannot surmount natural law based on a rational Newtonian universe. The testimony that is accepted is Nicolai the booksellers. This account is also a testimonial narrative but a long, detailed one by a member of the enlightened, intellectual community of natural philosophy. Nicolai hallucinated and saw strange apparitions but what separates him from other accounts is his realization that they are false and his recourse to physicians who heal him. It is natural philosophy that can exorcise a ghost and find the cause of effects. Testimony, unless by a person qualified in such physiological knowledge, was no longer enough in scientific circles.

Lady Longford does not detract from her stance but the polemic is at a standstill. There is simply not evidence either way. However, at the end of the novel, the reader finds out that Shorty was indeed killed in the manner intimated by the spectre and that he died the very night he appeared. Just as Jane's mother-in-law's story was brushed off, so is Mrs. Weston's along with Lady Longford's views. The narrator wants to show the short-sightedness of the skeptical camp. This is not done by condemning the

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<sup>438</sup> *Lilly Dawson*, Loc 1118-29.

spectral illusion theory – which Crowe has already used in the novel – but by calling it into question as one that accounts for *all* supernatural experiences. Sir Lawrence can laugh but he cannot explain away a multiple sighting. The truth is decided by the outcome of certainty that Shorty was killed that day. What Lady Longford does is maintain an openness to different interpretations of phenomena and uphold the ability of common people to infer on extra-ordinary events. The authoritative weight of aristocrat, lawyer, doctor and clergyman attempt to provide ideological closure but Lady Langford's Baconian approach of induction is her attempt at claiming a voice which is often dismissed against women and the lower class, something Crowe would do in much greater detail in *Night Side*.

This creation and engagement with a testimony for the supernatural gives one a snapshot into the “dialectical engagement” Hay alludes to as a “piece of literature ‘maps’ to the extent it provides an understanding of social relations.”<sup>439</sup> Indeed the “cognitive mapping” of the different people involved shows the complicated engagement of a society on a supposed event. Here the “dialectical engagement” between sight and inference, reason and feeling, experience and theory all come up against each other. The domestic conversation becomes a locus for discursive trading.

Crowe also shows the horrific effects of gossip and superstition in her works to present the complex nature of narrative and testimony and the brave inferential act of not believing gossip.<sup>440</sup> In *Men and Women* Crowe shows the effect of superstition by an Irish Catholic servant on Lady Eastlake where the curse and spirit world are

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<sup>439</sup> Hay, 60.

<sup>440</sup> *Men and Women* Vol.I.51-53, 126-127. 153, See especially on the role of calumny Vol.III.30; Gossip as a narrative, detective act in a comical setting *Susan Hopley*, 146.

portrayed as erroneous conclusions, in much the same way that circumstantial evidence can be faulty.<sup>441</sup> In *Linny Lockwood*, Crowe even addresses the role of gossip and fear of societal norms as “*Everybody*” showing the dual nature of society.<sup>442</sup> If there are episodes in the world where the inference is correct, there are also examples where testimony and narrative are false and destructive. Crowe is showing the problematic nature of the narrative act across gender and class lines. It is such gossip, calumny, false inference and superstition that arises out of ignorance which defaces the ability of people to “read” the language of reality by use of the “godlike” spirit.<sup>443</sup> What separates a fact from an opinion, a truth from skepticism or superstition is a validation by events that transpire aided by a multiple epistemologies, rather than just relying upon one.

### **Hallucination and Misinterpretation**

As I have discussed, some scenes in *Susan Hopley* feature seemingly supernatural occurrences whose reality is subsequently proven by later events. However, Crowe also has moments in the novel where one sees the complex method she uses to draw the opposite conclusion, employing a domestic gothic atmosphere of the explained supernatural. What seems supernatural turns out to be a misinterpretation of experience.

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<sup>441</sup> *Men and Women*, Vol.III.4-8; for a comical take, see Vol.III.195-196.

<sup>442</sup> *Linny Lockwood*, 112.

<sup>443</sup> *Men and Women*, Vol.III.182

In *Lilly Dawson*, an episode occurs at the beginning of the novel. Before Jacob dies he has the semi-literate Lilly read the Bible to him. He is on his death bed and his condition is worsening when he has a vision:

'See!' said Jacob, "they're coming to fetch me with fiery swords, and Sulphur and brimstone-don't you see how they blaze?" whilst his eye stared wildly at the window; and Lilly, now being thoroughly awake, became conscious that the room was actually lighted by a supernatural light-for it was mid-winter, and yet, though they had only a feeble rushlight, every object was illuminated by a lurid glare...'<sup>444</sup>

It seems that Jacob is having a deathbed vision that threatens to punish him for the sinful life he has led. This excerpt seems like it could have been taken from *Nightside*. With the "supernatural light" outside the window, she is bewildered and cannot make sense of anything. It seems as if the reader is being given a supernatural occurrence that validates a sense of cosmic justice. However, the deathbed vision collapses totally when it turns out the Mathew Ryalnd's mill is on fire. Crowe subtly makes it concurrent with Jacob's final moments so that one cannot say for sure whether Jacob actually saw something or he simply mixed his last moments in delusion with a fire in the background. Crowe does not make it clear as in reality it is something that would not have been easy to interpret for certain. It could be the last mad ravings of an old man upon seeing a light outside or it could be that he had intimations of judgement upon his criminal lifestyle. However, it does prove a suspenseful passage as the reader learns for the first time about Lilly's past and the fire puts into motion a series of events. As with

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<sup>444</sup> *Lilly Dawson*, Vol. I. 33.



*Susan Hopley*, Lilly cannot do anything with this new knowledge but will have to struggle and enlist the help of others in finding her place in the world and her own sense of being. This hallucination may show the complexity of experience and of the workings of the mind, allow the reader to gain information but it does little to bring the novel to a solution.<sup>445</sup>

Crowe's portrayal of the supernatural, both as phenomena and its growth in societal discourse, shows a complex interplay that allows for both a hallucinatory and veridical hypothesis of phenomena. It appears in her novels in a form that divests the supernatural of gothic conventions and more in a direct manner than contemporary novelists such as Emily and Charlotte Bronte. Oddly enough both Crowe and Charlotte Bronte were interested in mesmerism and phrenology and both had to deal with the scrupulous publisher T.C. Newby. They even met at a dinner in 1850 with George Eliot and Thackeray present in what turned out to be a dour evening with the reticent Bronte keeping to herself as opposed to the socialite minded Crowe. Larken only wonders what could have happened had both, who had so much in common, exchanged more than simple pleasantries.<sup>446</sup> Lord Lytton's occult-laden arguments in *A Strange Story* (1862) and George Eliot's portrayal of rural discourse on ghosts in *Silas Mariner* (1861) were still years away and still far from Crowe's serious portrayal. Crowe's novels were a unique instance of combatting dismissive physiological arguments of the supernatural

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<sup>445</sup> A more open-ended look at such an experience is present in *Arsitodemus*, Act IV, Scene III (73) Where one is unsure whether Arsitodemus does indeed see his dead daughter. Another example is Sir Theobold seeing his murdered wife while he holds her corpse in "Greenhill Hall," 299. Both characters are already portrayed as superstitious (especially Sir Theobold *ibid.*, 253) which makes their experiences questionable even if other phenomena in the latter is portrayed as more valid. For a protagonist that takes a curse as a stimulus to mania see Crowe's "The Herberts of Elfdale." *Once a Week*. Vol.III-IV No. 69 Oct 20-Nov 3, 1860. (London) pp. 505-507. George Elfdale begins to view everyone around him in a conspiratorial light after his father utters a curse before his death.

<sup>446</sup> Larken, "Charlotte Bronte & Catherine Crowe." *Bronte Society Transaction*. 17.3 (1978) 205-209: 205-206.

that predate not only these novels but even the rise of spiritualism where experiential epistemology was at the forefront of its defense. Her novels were an attempt at what Smajic termed “supernatural realism” where the ghost is not simply a tool for subversion but an entity at home in a discourse on reality. It was Crowe’s agenda to make the ghost uncommonly common by showing the reader what they already must have known, or heard and making it epistemologically veridical and objective.

### ***Ghosts and Family Legends***

Crowe’s final creative, veridical work on the supernatural, *Ghosts and Family Legends*, was divided into two parts: *Round the Fire* and *Legends of the Earthbound*. The first section resembles *Nightside* and is purported to be a word for word relation of a Christmas gathering in 1856 during eight evenings with an appendix of letters sent to Crowe. However, it is also a product of narrative framing and artifice, and could be classified as “factional:” it is made up of supposedly true narrations but reworked into an artificial narrative for the reader. The second section is made up of six tales some of which Crowe relates as being told to her but resemble the traditional tropes of ghost stories such as revenge, curses, missing treasure and property which Crowe ties to entertaining tales. However, they resemble traditional tales because Crowe believed that they indeed happened. Unlike Gaskell or Dickens who used them for ulterior criticisms, Crowe’s agenda was to show that they were veridical. This chapter will focus on the first part as it shows Crowe employing jurisprudential method already utilized in

*Night Side*. Schramm points out that ‘authors, like lawyers, must be able to argue a case, to master the manipulations of evidence and the construction of fictional and legal narrative,’ citing Rich Weisenberg who hold that literary texts are a medium of debate.<sup>447</sup> It is in the first section where Crowe is at her most jurisprudential.

*Ghosts and Family Legends* is innovative in its approach in that breaks with ghost stories of the time period. Briggs posits that psychical research had little effect on ghost stories during the mid-Victorian period, arguing that “Invented ghost stories differ from first-hand accounts in that they share with all fiction an artificially imposed pattern. They have some point to them, whereas only too often genuine experiences and apparitions in life have no discoverable meaning.” Such material was, in Briggs’ view, the reason why supernatural fiction made little use of material gathered from psychical research.<sup>448</sup> However, Crowe whose supernatural fiction predates the rise of the popular ghost story and even predates Gaskell’s supernatural fiction, did the exact opposite. Crowe’s supernatural stories are supposedly based on true narrations and Crowe’s major agenda, though she does deal with gender, psychological and social issues in her fictional work, is a presentation of empirical evidence of veridical supernatural phenomena in narrative form to be used as evidence. According to Dickerson, Gaskell’s supernatural tales are tied up to relationships between women in relation to power and psychological anxieties symbolized in the power of language.<sup>449</sup> Crowe incorporates her investigative methods and places it against traditional storytelling. One can see the interplay between real testimonials and tales which at times seem to overlap.

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<sup>447</sup> Schramm, 8.

<sup>448</sup> Briggs, 15.

<sup>449</sup> Dickerson, 131.

While Newby told Crowe in a letter that he felt the stories lacked the complicated philosophy and events seen in *NSN* and resembled fictitious tales, Crowe could not disagree more, as she viewed her cases as non-fictional and the products of frank testimony.<sup>450</sup> She even got into a polemic over the title with another publication that year with author James Hain Friswell who had just published *Ghost Stories and Phantom Fancies*. He claimed Crowe's title was too much like his. Crowe responded with a letter on Dec 4 stating she did not find his ghost stories but "burlesques. As mine are ghost stories of a serious character."<sup>451</sup> Friswell responded with a scathing letter stating that his stories were burlesque as any ghost story is inherently burlesque being the product of the mind. This echoes many of Dickens' statements and even Gaskell's incredulity of veridical ghosts (though she claimed to have seen one herself). It also highlights the polemic of Crowe's narrative as opposed to others. Crowe was not writing fireside tales for entertainment but serious records of testimony and accounts of the serious discourses that can take place in common settings, thus taking them out of the domain of the comical and sentimental. If Gaskell sought a story to lighten a dull party, Crowe sought one to enlighten the mind.<sup>452</sup> It is this distinction which separates her from other writers of the supernatural during this period.

The first section of *GAFL* is a rewriting of the Christmas tradition of telling ghost stories. What had been represented as a time as telling tales for entertainments is now a time for reflection on life. As the year ends at a country mansion Crowe is attending with friends when one of the party hears of a "serious misfortune." It leads to existential

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<sup>450</sup> Larken, 476.

<sup>451</sup> Larken, 479.

<sup>452</sup> Martin, 30-31.

questioning and a debate about a possible afterlife occurs. The gathering around the fire – as already shown a symbol of folk tales and superstition – becomes a venue where ideas and narrations are exchanged by sensible individuals. Even those who hold that ghosts do not exist still have stories.

Crowe promises the reader

I have told the stories as nearly as possible in the words of the original narrators. Of course, I am not permitted to give their names; nobody chooses to confess, in print that he or anyone belonging to him, has seen a ghost, or believes that he has seen one. There is a sort of odium attached to the imputation that scarcely anyone seems equal to encounter; and no wonder, when wise people listen to the avowal with such strange incredulity, and pronounce you at the best a superstitious fool or a patient afflicted with spectral illusions.<sup>453</sup>

However, in remaining anonymous they become semiotic representatives of the wider public, the reader who is brought into these fireside meetings and made a listener and juror of what is related. It is the confession of eye-witness testimony or secondhand testimony. The fear in giving it is related to the loss of societal credit. The witnesses do not wish to lose social currency in the realm of the public. The fireside, the anonymous initials create a discursive safe space for accredited narration. However, they also turn the narrators into both everyone and no-one, giving themselves a spectral identity.

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<sup>453</sup> *Ghosts and Family Legends*, vi-vii.

Crowe has a double duty: to relate fully what she was told and to bring the hidden experiences of testimony to the eyes of the reader.<sup>454</sup> She herself never says openly whether she has seen an apparition. It is interesting that she does not confide to the public but is willing to show testimonials to prove her case that not every sighting can be imputed to the illusion theory or superstitious mindsets. This could be the result of her being disparaged by people such as Dickens during her mental breakdown, but nowhere in her earlier writings does she ever call attention to her own experiences besides an event where her dog is the intuitive one. As in *Night Side*, Crowe is turning herself into a narrator that interferes with the text as little as possible, makes the topic central and like a natural philosopher lets the phenomena speak for itself without jumping to a hypothesis.

Crowe's only agenda is making the supernatural a serious, complex and veridical part of everyday reality. Unlike Dickens, Crowe made these private conversations a public matter of polemic. As shown in the previous chapters, Crowe made her topics the center of discussions at gatherings and used them as opportunities to collect testimonial data, not for recreational or ideological purposes, but to accumulate evidence. She made herself into the medium, not in a spiritualist sense, but into that of the author who takes oral testimony and translated it into literature. However, throughout the work she does preside by interlocution, tying the evenings together and challenging assumptions by dogmatic skeptics. The chapters are broken into eight evenings in total. Dickens's rooms are symbolic of the closed psyche whereas Crowe's evenings are a communal discursive event. The reader becomes a member of the group around the fire that

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<sup>454</sup> Crowe. *Ghosts and Family Legends: A Volume for Christmas*. (London, 1859) vi.

listens while each person provides testimony. It represents a type of immersive realism designed to show how society as a whole has such discussions and experiences. The names may be dashed out but the narratives are recognizable throughout the world.

The very first line of *Ghosts* begins with a skeptical statement: “‘But there are no ghosts now,’ objected Mr. R. This narrator represents the skeptical discourse based on scientific knowledge that has undone centuries of belief. Heholt argues that this is a masculine form of skepticism but one encounters women as well in the text who doubt their own experiences or that of others.<sup>455</sup> However, Crowe answers based on her own reasoning: “‘Quite the contrary...I have no doubt there is nobody in this circle who has not either had some experience of the sort in his own person, or been made a confidant of such experiences.’”<sup>456</sup> Crowe will continue thus through the first and second half of the work, using a Socratic method to loosen the hold of dogmatic skepticism. Like a detective or lawyer, she sifts through testimony, ideas and events to reach a conclusion that there are instances where such events show that life does continue beyond bodily death. On the first evening one hears a story about a man lost at sea. Crowe, like a lawyer asks, “‘And is it not true,’ said I, ‘remember we are upon honour; I should think it a very ill compliment if anyone attempted to mystify us with an invented story.’”<sup>457</sup> Here Crowe is calling the witnesses who come forth to take into account the idea of an oath. The testimony that is to be given must be honest and credit worthy as the participants, members of the middle and upper class, live in a society where both are linguistic

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<sup>455</sup> *Ghosts and Family Legends*, 4.

<sup>456</sup> *GAFL*, 1.

<sup>457</sup> *GAFL*, 14.

signifiers of their place in society. At this time, according to Schramm, credibility had been moving away from gentility and honour and one more by merit and academic criteria, and a freedom from economic interest in a matter but credit did become “sociological currency.”<sup>458</sup>

This jurisprudential method is part of her narrating method. Crowe is the narrator who connects the narratives over the eight evenings as over a court trial showing the reader, the jury of public opinion, her witnesses. One important aspect of this method was the rising importance of cross-examination which Crowe used to great narrative effect. Concerning a story told on the first evening

that happened in Scotland, Crowe argues with a Doctor W. over the veracity of the event:

Crowe: “Do you think the people who told you believed it?”

Dr. W “They certainly appeared to do so.”

Crowe: “And did it seem generally believed?”

Dr. W: “I can’t say but it did; but of course, one must have wonderfully strong evidence before one could believe such thing as that.”

Crowe: “Granted; but unless you had seen the thing yourself, you cannot have stronger evidence of a phenomenon of that description, than that it was believed by those who had good reason to know the grounds of their belief. They were able to judge how far Mr. Brown was worthy of credit.”<sup>459</sup>

Crowe delineates the events and how the people there would have been aware of inconstancies. The people who were there, people of good credit, should be able to

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<sup>458</sup> Schramm, 68.

<sup>459</sup> *GAFL*, 15.



infer the details of the case. Dr. W is put in a corner and seeks recourse to a stereotype that the Scots are superstitious. By doing this, the doctor seeks to undermine, not their credit, but their credibility. Crowe disagrees, arguing that the higher and lower classes are the same all over. The lower classes are always more traditional and hold “seeing is believing” whereas upper classes are indoctrinated by education to believe otherwise.

The doctor responds:

“You have heard, I suppose of spectral illusions?” said the doctor.

“Of course I have, and admit their existence; but we have many cases on our side, that doctrine will not cover and it is so impossible for you to prove that any particular case of ghost seeing falls under that head...It complicates the difficulty, but can never decide the question.”<sup>460</sup>

Crowe is using her skills at jurisprudential cross-examination, and from her experience as author and hostess, to pull apart the dogmatic position of the doctor. She shows that generalizations do not show intricacies. She calls the spectral illusion theory a doctrine, hinting that the doctor himself is seeking recourse to a scientific tradition that doesn’t explain what is happening any better than superstition does. The doctor is on oath; they all are as at a court to relate what they know or have been told. Crowe has put herself in the position of a defense counsel, defending the objective validity of ghost seeing. This narrative mode where, like a Socratic dialogue, she picks at the skeptical argument, is unheard of in any supernatural literature. It was seen *earlier in Lilly Dawson* between the Langfords. Both take place in a domestic setting but it becomes an arena where ideas are argued as at a law court. Furthermore, almost each narration is followed by a

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<sup>460</sup> GAFL, 16.

narrator giving their estimation of what occurred or to the character of they heard it from.<sup>461</sup> What takes place in a spatial area of the domesticated interior becomes a setting for dialectical polemics and the production of knowledge.

Crowe, being the serious investigator, holds no class of phenomena beneath studying. A timid narrator says:

‘But as you may not this story as it relates to a cat, I will, if you please, tell you another, in which I was concerned, although I saw nothing myself.’

‘We shall be very happy,’ I said, ‘but I am far from thinking your story wanting in interest, I fact to me it has a peculiar interest. There are few friends so sincere as the animals who have loved us... Besides, there is a deep mystery in the being of these creatures, which proud man never seeks to unravel, or condescends to speculate on.’<sup>462</sup>

Mrs. M has just finished a story on a cat. But coming right after a doctor feels she must tell a more ‘serious’ narration. Crowe, in her legal approach, stops her testimony and shows how all evidence matters and should stand on its own. She maintains a Baconian approach of gathering even the most unexpected phenomena and connects it to a greater scientific issue that needs to be addressed. The being of animals, as that of people, is a lacuna that needs to be filled by the truly impartial researcher. As a popular

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<sup>461</sup> GAFL, 102.

<sup>462</sup> GAFL, 23-24.

writer, she also reminds one that animals are an important part of life. Again, she is appealing to the reader/jury. Mrs. M's narrative is just as import as a doctor's. Towards the end of the sixth night, a Sir A.C. relates a story of a haunted house and ends on a jurisprudential note:

'They (children) then, on being questioned, described her appearance, which exactly coincided with the account given by the former tenants. I can vouch for the truth of these circumstances; and since these children had, certainly, never heard a word on the subject of the apparition, and had indeed, no idea that it was one, 'I think the evidence,' said Sir A. C., 'is quite unexceptionable.'<sup>463</sup>

The children in this episode uphold and corroborate testimony stretching back years. Sir A.C.'s vouching connotes a legal act. This shows a chain of evidential testimony. That here children are taken at their word is as exceptional as the history of the haunting itself. Mr. E., a barrister, claims that no evidence would be enough for him. Crowe retorts that it is a viewpoint, "in vain to contend with. I can only wonder and admire the confidence that can venture to prejudge so interesting and important a subject of inquiry."<sup>464</sup> Crowe is showing the barrister's inability to maintain the regulations of his own discourse. She cross-examines him and attempts to show he is unfit to declare a sound view on the matter as he will not be swayed by any evidence. As Schramm has pointed out:

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<sup>463</sup> GAFL, 108.

<sup>464</sup> GAFL, 109-110.

Time and time again in Victorian fiction we see the law ridiculed for its callous failure to acknowledge that behind the language of rights, duties, and sanctions lies a seething world of emotional turmoil and physical experience which defies easy categorization or description...The legal profession's semiotic weaknesses legitimize the author's own representation of the 'real.'<sup>465</sup>

Crowe points out the foolishness and irrationality of his ideological stand. This is made more poignant in the narrative as the frank testimony of children is placed against a biased lawyer. Crowe as the narrator, has the last word as it is the final in the chapter.

Crowe's text offers the reader twenty-seven narrators in all: fifteen (Crowe included) are women and twelve are men. Each narration again a narrative, social strand that coalesce into a portrayal of complex epistemologies. The members represent a cross section of middle- and upper-class society whose accumulative testimony is corroborative. Fellow listeners and witnesses uphold each other's stories or ones they have heard, pointing out similarities, strengthening the power of their narrative. Story making, empirical discourse is a communitarian event. Rather than attempting to undermine "masculine" ways of thinking, Crowe is showing that they (or other epistemological methods for that matter) are not the monopoly of any class or gender. Her argument is not with rationalism, but with *a priori* prejudice from either the skeptical or superstitious camps of discourse.

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<sup>465</sup> Schramm, 15.

## Investigation of a Haunted House

Suffering from gastric problems and tired from travelling, Crowe took upon herself the task of investigating a haunted house while on a trip back to Edinburgh in 1854 between 11pm and midnight.<sup>466</sup> It is this investigation which would be reproduced in *GAF* but it is interesting that Crowe never mentions her sickness in the account, as it was only a few weeks after that she would have her breakdown. This could be partly due to it weakening her credit in the narrative as it had already done for many but it would also be a continuation of Crowe's method of placing mental sickness separate from all supernatural phenomena and making her own experiences of tertiary importance in her texts. Crowe was not alone in the time period for investigating haunted houses. There were, according to Davies, many "'respectable' investigators of the time period searching supposed haunted homes."<sup>467</sup> It is interesting that Crowe's earlier cited investigation of haunted homes is a pre-spiritualist, unique example that predates this later format of middle-class, domestic investigation. However, for Crowe, this was not recreation or entertainment but serious research.

Dickerson, like Heholt, notices Crowe's attention to objective detail, citing her, "candor, her truthful and understated account of the particulars of her visit to the haunted house," by showing the "anti-climactic" narrative. She further points to the fact that Crowe took a lawyer with her to further protect herself from the charge of "female hysteria."<sup>468</sup> It is an appeal to professional authority to compliment other forms of

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<sup>466</sup> Larken, 420-422

<sup>467</sup> Davies, 90.

<sup>468</sup> Dickerson, 39.

experienced researchers. Indeed, lawyers help out heroines in *Susan Hopley* and *Manorial Rights*. Yet, this mirrors more closely the narrative of the *Seeres* where a clairvoyant is put in a position to speak with a presiding specialist to comment on events. It is the case of a specialist aiding another type of specialist, rather than one of professional authority overruling other forms of testimony. Crowe also took a clairvoyant with her. What is significant here is that she is not referred to as a medium. That Crowe does not use this term but opts for an earlier appellation popular with mesmerists especially one instead could point to Crowe's refusal to be tied to any one ideology. Crowe, even more interestingly, never once alludes to spiritualism throughout the entire book. It could be that she did not want the phenomena she was portraying to be dependent on the popularity of spiritualism.

Crowe's attempt was a group effort from the beginning. Crowe didn't take these two men just to support her but as "truth seekers, who if she were at the bottom of a well, would have thought it right to go after her." The clairvoyant is kept in the dark about the event which shows she is not an equal in the experiment as Crowe and the men are.<sup>469</sup> Crowe, in being the narrator who decides what to write is also here the investigative reporter and the scientist conducting an experiment. The clairvoyant cannot be influenced. This is not to say that Crowe is seeking to consciously control the event through narration but that she as writer and reporter is giving her own testimony to the event.

Nothing happens until the clairvoyant sees lights. No one else does so the clairvoyant asks Crowe for her hand:

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<sup>469</sup> GAFL 137.

I did so; and then at intervals of a few seconds, I saw thrown up, apparently from the floor, waves of white light, faint, but perfectly distinct and visible...Nobody saw it but she and myself; and we did not follow up the experiment by the others taking her hand, which we should have done.<sup>470</sup>

As Kerner ran tests on Hauffe, Crowe asks the clairvoyant (unnamed as with all participants) to squeeze her hand every time she sees the lights to see if her “seeing” corresponds to the moment of Crowe’s seeing the unexplainable lights. Crowe keeps other testing safeguards by withholding information that might sway the results.<sup>471</sup> It is true that she can only see the lights by touching her hand but the clairvoyant is simply a conductor. Crowe is not attempting to downplay the role of the men and lady in the episode, she even remarks she made a mistake by not holding their hands to see what results may have shown.<sup>472</sup> This further attested to the fact that she sees a “brilliant light” in the shape of a small diamond.

Her testimony is corroborated not by the medium but by Mr. Mc. N. the barrister who introduced her to the house. Crowe mentions the lights:

“Well,” I said, “I certainly did, and I never saw anything like it before.

Moreover, I saw another sort of light.”

“Did you,” said Mr. Mc. N. interrupting me; ‘was it a bright spark of light like the oxy-hydron light.”

“Exactly,” said I. “I could not think what to compare it to; but that was it.”

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<sup>470</sup> GAFL, 140.

<sup>471</sup> GAFL, 140.

<sup>472</sup> GAFL, 140.

“I was certain that he had seen the same thing as myself; he had not spoken of it from a similar motive; he waited to have his impression confirmed by further testimony.

“You see our results were not great, but the visit was not wholly barren to me.”<sup>473</sup>

It is here that Crowe and the lawyer meet as equals in the discursive space. Both wait to let the evidence speak for itself, both corroborate each other and comparing the light to oxy-hydrone gives the phenomenon a scientific quality. A group effort by educated individuals ensures that a level of objectivity is maintained. Knowledge and a veridical grasp of reality is a communal undertaking, rather than one in which the testimony of expert professionals automatically takes precedence over that of anyone else. However, it is Crowe and her barrister friends who do take the evidential weight by way of argument against hallucination and following up on other statements made about phenomena seen at the house, the clairvoyant becoming more of an instrument in the overall narrative, a microscope for Crowe to look into the workings of the supernatural. It is a testimony to Crowe’s method that this triad of a clairvoyant-researcher-skeptic (or qualified professionals) investigations continues to this day even in popular ghost-hunting shows.

It is interesting Crowe chooses this episode to end the first part of the book. What began as a communal gathering of personal testimony is ended on a philosophical note: “These facts are chiefly valuable, as furnishing cumulative testimony of the frequent

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<sup>473</sup> GAFL, 142.



recurrence of a phenomenon explicable by no known theory, and therefore as open to the spiritual hypothesis as any other.”<sup>474</sup> The experiment at the end is Crowe’s desire for a scientific concerted effort to move the discourse away from the fireplace to the field study. This was part of a larger tendency in narrative during the era: “The turn to science, the language of impartiality, the stance of “patient watching,” and particularly the ‘silencing of preconceived notions’ iterates once again the ideals of epistemology, its ethical force and its implicit story.”<sup>475</sup> Crowe the narrator, the lawyer ends as Crowe the scientist with the ethos of an impartial researcher willing to show that her results are not the product of the imagination but of sound, peer reviewed observation. Again, Crowe undoes the passive role of both author and spiritualist medium. Crowe here is pro-active, inductive and rational, taking the skeptics on using their own discourse, maintaining the nineteenth century ethos of making the observer as unimportant as the experiment allows.

What is striking is her omission of spiritualism. Crowe mentions mesmerism with her medium but does not allude to spiritualism at all throughout her book though she is using a medium. Even at the height of its popularity, Crowe does not tie herself to an ideology, something she had done since delving into phrenology: Crowe was not a writer to be classified. She knows testimony that points to a “frequent recurrence” shows that something considered supernatural is in the end natural. It must be discovered how and one way to find out is to research loci that have been known to contain such events. She begins in a Socratic and legal method but ends it in a Baconian one that calls for society at large to look at the subject with other individuals and discover new laws that

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<sup>474</sup> *GAFL*, 146.

<sup>475</sup> Levine, 7.

would explain it. Such an attempt would not be seriously undertaken until the rise of the London Dialectical Society and the SPR.

## Conclusion

Testimony is not simple in Crowe's fiction and factional work and no one epistemology can claim a faultless ability to ascertain reality. Reason and the dream state can work side by side and can both aid or fail in assessing an event. Both veridical and hallucinatory episodes do occur in the real world and both can be misinterpreted for the other. The social order, its accepted discourses and even the psyche are often mistaken for reality based on appearances, and it takes a divesting of preconceived notions to sift an event. What is important is that the testimony, whether written or oral, waking or dreaming, through the spirit or through the body be allowed to have its own say.

Crow herself showed up in the fictional world in character form and her texts likewise. Wilkie Collins' example has already been alluded to but *NSN* appears in fictional work of the time-period. She appears in a poem, "Dreaming on Graves."<sup>476</sup> Her magnum opus also appears in short stories.<sup>477</sup> Of more important note is that Crowe's stories have been in print since their publication. From *The Eerie Book* (1898) which

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<sup>476</sup> Mrs. Abbey. "Dreaming on Graves." *The Ladies Companion*. Vol IX 2<sup>nd</sup> Series (London: Rogerson and Tuxford, 1856) 129.

<sup>477</sup> Foresteira. "Appearances Often Deceitful." *Kidd's Own Journal*. No. 33 (London: William Kidd, 1852) 99. Also, Anon. "Hugh Miller." *Eliza Cook's Journal*. No. 265 Vol. XI April-October (London: Charles Cook, Sat 27, 1854) 67; An Englishwoman. "Life as I See It." *The National Magazine*. Vol.III (London: W. Kent and Co., 1858) 230.

contained stories like the “Swiss-Officer,” Montague Summer’s famous collection *Victorian Ghost Stories* (1936) to the very recent *The Wimbourne Book of Victorian Ghost Stories* (2017).<sup>478</sup> Just this year a collection of her literature has been published – though as with the others it does not demarcate between supposedly veridical and fictional work – in *Collected Supernatural and Weird Fiction of Catherine Crowe* (2018).

This is complemented by plenty of publications with Crowe’s stories included, especially that of *The Weirwolf*.<sup>479</sup> Interestingly, Crowe saw a literary afterlife as a writer of ghost fiction if these collections are a main indicator of how she has been viewed though she herself never claimed to be such a writer. Even through the medium of the printed word, her specialism, Crowe’s own testimony to the veridical has been supplanted by the supposedly fantastical. As part of the editing process, being relegated to the supernatural it has gone against her own desire that the night side of nature be seen as natural. Crowe did not seek to make the supernatural an end in itself in her fiction. Even *Mysteries* was collected to make unique stories accessible to question not only ghost-seeing or werewolves but hierarchal systems, the problematic nature of power whether in the hands of the few or the masses, the role of circumstantial evidence and anomalous phenomena. Crowe had got angry when actors would ad lib from her script in an attempt to stress an aspect, when editors told her to change a text

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<sup>478</sup> *The Eerie Book*. Ed. Margaret Armour (London: J. Sheills & Company, 1898); *Victorian Ghost Stories*. Ed. Montague Summer (London: Fortune Press., 1936); CROWE, CATHERINE. *COLLECTED SUPERNATURAL AND WEIRD FICTION OF CATHERINE CROWE: Thirty-five Short Stories of ... the Strange and Unusual including the Evening Tale*. Place of Publication Not Identified: LEONAU, 2018; See also, *Damas Oscuras: Cuentos De Fantasmas De Escritoras Victorianas Eminentes*. (Madrid: Impedimenta, 2018).

<sup>479</sup> *The Hounds of Hell*. Ed. Michal Parry. (Arrow Books Limited, 1975); *The Gentlewomen of Evil*. Ed. Peter Haining (London: Robert Hale, 1967). Haining, Peter. *Werewolf: Horror Stories of the Man Beast*. London: Severn House, 1987; Gorey, Edward, ed. *Ghostly Gentlewomen: Two Centuries of Spectral Stories by the Gentle Sex*. (New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1977); Schnack, Elisabeth, and Ambrose Bierce. *Uncanny Stories = Englische Gruselgeschichten*. (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1981)

or when writers dismissed her stories as simple ghost stories.<sup>480</sup> For Crowe, the supernatural was part of a greater whole: a whole that needed to be investigated in its particulars, and that allowed many simultaneous explanations of different but similar phenomena. When Crowe finishes her tale “Greenhill Hall” she allows the reader to see multiple, possible causes as to what happened in the story. While the Luptons discuss what could have or could have not been real, the reader is invited again: “They discussed the question, which the reader will perhaps have asked himself before this” and while she accepts possibilities of hallucination in some areas brought about by conscience and superstitious fear, she wants to show that:

from that day to this no other explanation has ever presented itself of the appearance of the White Lady at Greenhill Hall, which appearance, I beg to assure my readers, is a perfectly authenticated fact that occurred in this present century.<sup>481</sup>

The reader is part of the whole as well. This inductive approach of collecting and jurisprudential one of presenting was done in order to make a discursive space for the objectivity of the supernatural in opposition to an encroaching physiologically based hypothesis which looked to the trained observer and experiment to supplant the senses. For Crowe, it was an ideology that rested on bias and did not take althea evidence into consideration. The reader is a jury member, a guest at the fireplace, part of the whole. Crowe put her case before the public and rested it on the testimony of people they

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<sup>480</sup> Westland Marston. *Our Recent Actors*. 2 Vols. (Boston: Robert Bros., 1898) 93-94. Marston shows a furious Crowe who held little back at scolding Buckstone whom she felt had made his part larger and comical: “And it is a great liberty for anyone to rewrite my characters and to make me responsible for his dialogue. My night has been spoiled, and I am thoroughly indignant.” Marston shows a gentler and kinder Crowe with an aging Mr. Kimble, 139-140.

<sup>481</sup> “Greenhill Hall,” 299.

themselves would recognize. Perhaps they would see themselves beyond the letters of anonymity. This method of putting forward a case for the supernatural and the generation of public assent free of preconception and ideology who have to be a communal one in an investigative spirit. Lawyers like Mr. MacB- would continue investigating the phenomena and as spiritualism remained a social force generating more debate, more conversion and aversion, such groups composed of middle-class professionals would continue to do research. The next chapter will deal with just one such committee.

## Chapter 4: The Report of the London Dialectical Society's Committee on Spiritualism

This appears to be the plan of our Education. Life is a battle, and we advance by antagonism.<sup>482</sup>

Naturally, a great controversy arose, those who had been fortunate in their visit were strong on one side, those who had been disappointed were as strong on the other.

Those who had not been at all, reinforced the malcontents, asserting, that Mrs. Hayden was an imposter...<sup>483</sup>

The SPIRITUALIST'S *Locus Standi*-The Bar of Bow Street.<sup>484</sup>

When Mrs. Hayden came to England in 1852, she was the first spiritualist medium to step foot in Britain. Her arrival may not have produced supernatural phenomena but it did expand the rising controversy over observation and the aptitude of

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<sup>482</sup> *SAWLI*, 5.

<sup>483</sup> *SAWLI*, 101.

<sup>484</sup> [Tom Taylor]. "The SPIRITUALIST'S *Locus Standi*." *Punch* 21 Oct 1876.

trained judgement between layperson and the scientifically trained. Crowe saw such an antagonism as a battle in symbolically military terms, but one that resulted in truth. This clash of ideas applied to all new truths, echoing a dialectical exchange would result in some progression. This chapter deals with one such example. The chapter will explore the work of the London Dialectical Society and its Committee on Spiritualism's unauthorized *Report* (1871), which made the first attempt at documented, collaborative and scientific research into the claims of spiritualism in Britain. The document provides a glimpse into the ongoing debate over supernatural phenomena and the role of testimony and scientific method in research that was then ongoing in professional, middle-class circles. I shall argue that the publication demonstrates the contrasting approaches to testimony taken by professionals in disciplines of knowledge and specialists in the field of spiritualism. I shall delineate how the stances of skeptics and spiritualists differed according to their respective epistemologies and professional backgrounds. I shall then look at how the Committee attempted to surmount each group's exclusivity, and the falling-out of the committee with its Chairman, Dr. Edmunds, over his inability to accept the ruling of the majority. It will afterwards look at the influence of the report on later collective research into the supernatural. Criticisms that the LDS did little of note fail to recognize that the psychical research that followed it used it as a paradigm. It may not have brought closure, but it did indeed open up a method of maintaining the importance of testimony and experiments under careful observation that would be refined by Cox, Crookes and the SPR.

### **The London Dialectical Society**

In 1869 the London Dialectical Society took an important step in the history of supernatural research in Britain by organizing the first committee in Britain to investigate supernatural phenomena. This committee represented a concerted attempt to assemble a number of qualified and trustworthy witnesses to research supernatural occurrences. It had 33 members, six sub-committees, papers, reports and letters both pro and against psychical research as well as a bibliography at the end for those interested on literature on the subject.<sup>485</sup> This committee wished to apply scientific investigations and experiments to the phenomena under investigation, as well as using more experiential methods.

The LDS was an example of the rise of societies among educated, professional individuals to debate, dialectically, issues of the day. Huxley was a member, as were other scientifically or medically trained professionals such as Edmunds, whose role in the committee would prove controversial. It was founded in 1866 with the idea that truth was best served by putting topics, even the most controversial, to opposing opinions, and that polemical conflict was a method to arriving at truth. Its first publication stated that the society was created by professional individuals who had that common goal, that conflict was healthy, and that an “unstained character” was the only prerequisite to joining.<sup>486</sup> This is echoed throughout the text:

We have therefore good grounds for assuming that everything which has been described as occurring took place in the presence of ladies and

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<sup>485</sup> Oppenheim, 32-33; McCorristine, 14; *RS*, vi.

<sup>486</sup> *London Dialectical Society 1868-1869*. (London: Wertheimer, Lea and Co., 1869) 5-6.



gentlemen of honest purposes, whose conduct throughout the experiments was guided by the most perfect good faith.<sup>487</sup>

This requirement produced a link between normative middle-class behaviour and the ability to argue and produce knowledge – it was quality control for the bourgeois ideology. The society was unashamedly secular and did not aim for ideological respectability.<sup>488</sup> It did not shy away from the most controversial topics and allowed women to join.<sup>489</sup> The press reported on its meetings on topics such as “baby farming.”<sup>490</sup> It even held a meeting calling for the equality of women and their participation in professions, which was the topic of many articles from the *London Standard* to *Glasgow Herald*.<sup>491</sup> By 1869, it complained of its reports being published without permission and would do so again.<sup>492</sup>

This proclamation of unbiased endeavor and the healthiness of conflicting opinion in its statement would be compromised by the textual incongruity of accusation and counter accusation in the *Report* of 1871. It gives one a glimpse into the dialectic of ghost-seeing of middle-class Britain by a group that was consciously a part of a secular subculture that wished to direct society into incorporating a more scientifically minded look on the world. It was part of a larger effort by people like Huxley to educate Britain in a manner that favoured the sciences and free thought over religion and the classics.

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<sup>487</sup> *RS*, 40.

<sup>488</sup> C. M. Davies. *Heterodox London or Phases of Free Thought in the Metropolis*. I, II (London: Tinsley Bros., 1874) 137.

<sup>489</sup> The London Dialectical Society, 10, 21.

<sup>490</sup> “Baby Farming in London.” *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 13 Oct. 1870.

<sup>491</sup> “Admission of Women into the Learned Profession.” *Glasgow Herald*, 22 May 1869, 7.

<sup>492</sup> *The London Dialectical Society*, 25.

In 1871 the LDS published its findings in the *Report on Spiritualism, of the Committee of the London Dialectical Society Together with the Evidence, Oral and Written, and a Selection from the Correspondence*. The full title is called for as it indicates the nature of the committee's use of multiple epistemological methodologies. It was scientifically inclined and used scientific methods of observation of supernatural events. However, at the same time it was based on the testimony of witnesses regarding what these events actually signified. It attempted to define itself according to a specialized discipline of natural science while at the same time recreating the arena of spiritualism in the séance. The whole document is a testament to the narrative overlap of events and the contention of meaning through both skeptical and assenting testimony at all levels of the committee.

*The Report* based its findings on its investigative committees and proclaimed that the report and its sub-committees, "corroborate each other" and "appear to establish:"

- 1.-That sounds of a very varied character, apparently proceeding from articles of furniture...occur, without being produced by muscular action or mechanical contrivance.
- 2.-That movements of heavy bodies take place without mechanical contrivance of any kind...
- 3.-That these sounds and movements often occur at the times and in the manner asked for....
- 4.-That the answers and communications thus obtained are, for the most part of a commonplace character; but facts are sometimes correctly given which are known to one of the persons present.

5.-That the circumstances under which the phenomena occur are variable, the most prominent fact being, that the presence of certain persons seems necessary to their occurrence...

6.-That, nevertheless, the occurrence of the phenomena is not insured by the presence or absence of such persons respectively.<sup>493</sup>

The *Report* will be shown to be significant, not so much as a report on supernatural phenomena in and of itself, but as a demonstration of differing epistemologies in use during the mid-Victorian period. It was an example of the social production of “facts” in a largely legalist, middle-class group of individuals where there was a qualified acceptance of personal testimony based on bourgeois credibility. Of the 36 members of the Committee, only four were doctors, two MRCS, one Doctor of Divinity, two geologists and three women – though the number fluctuated during meetings. Most were from a legal background, like E.W. Cox and it shows in that large sections of the report depend on the jurisprudential method. It is interesting to note that two doctors: Dr. Drysdale and a Dr. Chapman refused to sit and others, not medical professionals took their place. It is interesting to note that Barrow sees the era after 1860 as one that moved away from the polyclinic nature of medicine to one of greater epistemological polarization.<sup>494</sup> Many medical professionals simply did not want to give a stage to belief systems that were tied to heterodoxic therapies. Lightman saw such differing groups of discourses as an “agency of groups” whereby non-specialists sought an epistemological space through what Noakes points out were “heterodox” sciences; this *Report* will be shown to be a moment in supernatural literature when such groups briefly sought the

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<sup>493</sup> RCLDS, 2-3.

<sup>494</sup> Barrow, 161.

same textual space of a Committee's report but which did not lead into either a synthesis or ideological truce.<sup>495</sup>

So far scholars have only mentioned the LDS's *Report* in the general terms of its detractors, as will be shown. However, the complexity of its contents and its relation to the multiplicity of mid-Victorian epistemologies has yet to be investigated. In it, scientifically trained skeptics, especially from a medical background, saw the variability and fantastical nature of the phenomena as antithetical to the nature of 'true' science. They accordingly favoured physiological explanations and centered all observable phenomena as issuing either from the body or stimulated from matter outside it. According to Ferguson, this was a particular strain of skepticism from the medical field.<sup>496</sup> Meanwhile mediums, though advocating their ability to interpret their spiritual correspondences, regarded both science and the LDS as still incapable of accurately reporting the phenomena they brought forth, or even of having the right terminology to discuss them. Some mediums, like Home, himself the "specialist" medium who inspired the formation of the Committee, even claimed not to understand it themselves, while traditional Christians, like Mr. Glover, interpreted it as a sacrilegious conjuring of spirits.<sup>497</sup>

All of these witnesses portrayed themselves as experienced, trained observers, and each reached different conclusions based on their ideological affiliations. If their epistemology allowed for immaterial, intelligent causation (spiritualist, traditional Christian) then they concluded that there was an immaterial force; if a skeptic came

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<sup>495</sup> Noakes, "The Sciences of Spiritualism in Victorian Britain," Loc 795.

<sup>496</sup> Christin Ferguson. "Recent Scholarship on Spiritualism and Science." *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth Century Spiritualism and the Occult*. (Farnham, Ashgate Limited Press). eBook. 22.

<sup>497</sup> *RS*, 205.

disregarding any verifiable force, then no amount of testimony could attest to anything but either error or imposture.

Each voice was that of a specialist in the field and claimed to have personal credentials (medium), scriptural evidence, or scientific education and experience that gave them authority to decide how to interpret phenomena. It also serves as a historically specific instance of what Ferguson writes was, “spiritualism’s defiantly democratic exotericism and science’s nascent professional status and cultural authority.”<sup>498</sup> Spiritualists, claiming a field that was once the domain of the traditionally esoteric, now sought to democratize the ability to witness and partake in supernatural phenomena, while the growing cultural authority of science sought to limit access to the ability to engage in scientific speculation though at the same time highlighting and promoting its importance.

This put the majority of LDS investigators at an investigatory disadvantage as they sought a median between both epistemologies. Their reliance on scientific and legal methods alone forced them to admit that they could not come up with the kind of categorical solutions that both believers and skeptics maintained that they had discovered. Professionals on both sides tried to incorporate the scientific method, but their approaches were inevitably influenced by their decisions regarding whom they identified as a trustworthy and credible witness. It was from such middle ground that these middle-class specialists, mostly from the legal tradition, tried to come to terms with the phenomena without endorsing a theory or belief. Modern scholarly research on

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<sup>498</sup> Ferguson, 20.

the LDS has tended to gloss over its importance, relegating it to a transitional period between personal research and the founding of the SPR.

Oppenheim only mentions it in relation to the medium Home, Wallace and Crookes.<sup>499</sup> This ignores its importance in changing the narrative of supernatural research as a seminal text that would influence later organizations like the SPR and The Psychological Society of Great Britain. McCorristine sees the LDS as a group of “urban professionals and men of letters eager to pronounce upon topics they considered wholly neglected” and that its conclusion was “significantly circular in manner.”<sup>500</sup> Brock focuses on the positive portrayal of its findings by Varley and Crooke’s reticence in joining the LDS as due to his preferment of informal investigation.<sup>501</sup> Georgina Byrne also sees the LDS’s Committee as a transitional waypoint to the SPR and argues that though Spiritualists claimed it a success, its rejection by scientists such as Lewes and Huxley stopped it from being more credible.<sup>502</sup> Luckhurst points out that Lewes did not reject the findings outright but that the verdict hid a bias for the spiritual hypothesis, was antithetical to scientific naturalism, and was a repudiation of Crooke’s recent findings. What none of these scholars have done is to look seriously at the *Report* itself as a literary artifact within which the use of testimony interacts with scientific experimentation, providing insight on how people with similar backgrounds and qualifications could witness the same events and yet reach different conclusions, making their narratives part of a collage of views that made their way into the final

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<sup>499</sup> Oppenheim, 236,279,290.

<sup>500</sup> McCorristine, 14.

<sup>501</sup> Brock, 124-125, 142-145.

<sup>502</sup> Byrne, Georgina A. *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England: 1850-1939*. (Boydell Press, 2010) 53-55.

report. It is the dialectical image of a debate raging from many epistemological vantage points.

. Most of the Committee were avowedly professional and of credit, meaning their educated middle-class backgrounds allowed their testimony to be viewed as trustworthy. They were “urban professionals” and came mainly from legal backgrounds.<sup>503</sup> They may not have been scientifically trained but they were trained investigators of testimony and narrative, coming from the epistemological point of view that by questioning and cross-examining it was possible to ascertain the validity of testimony, and that observation that was qualified in court could be transferred to observable phenomena. They performed experiments designed to rule out trickery. Once this had been done, they argued that any observable phenomena were able to be taken seriously as imposture had been ruled out. Accordingly, they favoured the use of unpaid mediums of worthy credit, being from middle or lower-middle class families with no pecuniary motive.<sup>504</sup> Each was a specialist in sifting evidence. They would neither vindicate the Spiritualists or skeptics, adopting a middle position with a new terminology designed to create a new discourse (and discursive space from both) on what they saw as unexplainable, immaterial causation that seemed intelligently guided. To see what produced this dialectic, it is important to go through the positions of contemporary skeptics and Spiritualists and then into the Committee’s attempt to move beyond the impasse between their discourses.

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<sup>503</sup> *RS*, vi. Of the 36 people who participated: 6 were medical professionals, 1 Doctor of Divinity, 3 women (spouses of male participants), 2 CEs, 1 from the GS, 1 from the FRGS with the rest being either with a legal background, BA, PhD and Esq.

<sup>504</sup> *RS*, 1-2.

## The Skeptics and Specialist Testimony

The writers of the text can be divided into three epistemological camps: the skeptics, the spiritualists, and the many of the members of the committee who either withheld judgement or a hypothesis as to causation. The skeptics were represented mainly by specialists in the medical and scientific fields. Their starting point was a growing scientific naturalism that would not allow variable, extra-sensory causation deemed conscious but tied to traditional beliefs of immaterial causation. For them, spiritualism was a vestige of a superstitious world, and any unseen forces at work were observable, invariable and able to be given a law. Dr. James Edmunds and D.H. Dyte, coming from an established medical career where the physiological school of causation had solidified itself, refused to entertain a meta-physiological explanation. Medical professionals such as they sought to protect their discipline from the supposed pseudo-scientific, non-specialist claims of mediums and believers.

In their view, electricity and magnetism were forces but they were fixed and measurable: their laws of operation showed a complex design that was invariable and not the pretense of intelligent outpourings that a séance induced. The phenomena reported by spiritualists had physiological explanations, and as such scientists and doctors were best suited to observe them. This is not to say that skeptics did not investigate: As will be shown, Dr. Edmunds investigated spiritualism, as did Huxley since the 1850s, reporting back to Darwin later in life after an investigation.<sup>505</sup> Many scholars tend to reproduce Huxley's dismal of the Committee's invitation in full -

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<sup>505</sup> Oppenheim 290-292.



something that the *Report* does as well.<sup>506</sup> Scientific naturalism and the rationalists could simply not accept the hypothesis of immaterial, intelligent causation outside of physiology, since they believed that there was nothing immaterial to begin with. All testimony to the contrary revealed inability rather than invisibility

Two prominent scientific skeptics who addressed Spiritualism in the period between 1850-1875 were Michael Faraday and William Benjamin Carpenter. In 1853, due to a large number of letters requesting insight into table turning, Faraday set out a series of experiments with a table, replete with instruments, to ascertain what caused tables to move during séances. His publication explaining the movement of tables by an unconscious, involuntary movement of the muscles was widely publicized, and his authority was accepted by many prominent physicists, including Kelvin and Tyndall, as the final word on the subject.<sup>507</sup> It targeted the spiritual hypothesis in general and the idea of the electric force as the mover of tables specifically. According to Faraday, it was the muscles (the domain of physiology) which moved the table, and not forces from the domain of electricity, which he had made his own.<sup>508</sup> Faraday wanted to protect his domain of science against spiritualist appropriation, against the “great body” of testimony and people who did not care about learning real science or cause and effect.<sup>509</sup> This mass of the uneducated and their mass testimony did not carry epistemological weight. For him, the testimony of the public was like a body without a mind to control it or properly “read” an event.

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<sup>506</sup> McCorristine, 24. Byrne, 54. Byrne also cites a large portion of Edmunds’ rebuttal – also printed in the report.

<sup>507</sup> Michael Faraday. “Observations on Mental Education.” Whewell, William, et al. *Lectures on Education*. (John W. Parker and Sons, London, 1855) 51. See Oppenheim, 327-328.

<sup>508</sup> Geoffrey Cantor. *Michael Faraday: Sandemanian and Scientist*. (The Macmillan Press LTD, Hampshire 1991) 149-150.

<sup>509</sup> “Table-Turning,” 8.

Faraday appealed to his use of instruments to substantiate his claims, creating his own instruments that could detect the slightest movements of muscle. He maintained that, due to his scientific expertise, he could see what the lay observer could not, and was thus the true medium who allowed the facts to speak through his inference. In his view, the testimony of the multitude could not be trusted, especially when it came from people who had not been properly educated. As he wrote, “What can this imply but that society, speaking generally, is not only ignorant as respects education of judgement, but is also ignorant of its ignorance.”<sup>510</sup> That is not to say he totally ruled out the spirit: Faraday believed in the sacredness of scripture and divine revelation but only in the confines of religious belief, as Ferriar and Hibbert. He felt the supernatural was a vestige of superstition, not true religion, and that it weakened not only the critical faculties but the power or the will.

For decades, spiritualists and mesmerists had been using the electric forces, Faraday’s specialism, as a possible way to explain immaterial phenomena.<sup>511</sup> This may partly explain why Faraday addressed an issue that *Punch* saw as beneath a respectable scientist, even playfully accusing him of being simple minded when it came to human nature for taking it on.<sup>512</sup> However, Faraday, largely self-taught, may have himself wished to distance himself from other self-taught investigators or spiritualists who encroached on his discipline by appropriating his findings to spiritualist ends.

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<sup>510</sup> Winter, 296-297.

<sup>511</sup> Richard Noakes. “Haunted Thoughts of the Careful Experimentalist: Psychical Research and the Troubles of Experimental Physics.” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, vol. 48, 2014, 46–56. 46.

<sup>512</sup> “To Professor Faraday.” *Punch* (London, England), Saturday, July 16, 1853; 22; Issue 627.

Faraday himself sought an explanation of unconscious muscular movement in the writings of William Benjamin Carpenter, a physiologist, who had already spent years in a polemic against animal magnetism. His *Principles of Human Physiology* (1842) had at first been condemned as materialistic but had slowly been accepted into mainstream physiology, becoming textually authoritative by the 1850s.<sup>513</sup> According to Carpenter, it was the “ideo-motor motion” of the mind acting independently of consciousness which allowed the most trustworthy witness to be fooled against his will. He saw animal magnetism as inductive of aberrant states of mind akin to mental illness.<sup>514</sup>

The importance of the will and its cultivation for normative behavior was important to Carpenter.<sup>515</sup> Carpenter, a devout Unitarian, believed in free-will and did not rule out immaterial causation even if he did the spiritual hypothesis of common supernatural phenomena. His advocacy of complete abstinence from alcohol showed the danger he felt existed when the will was subsumed under erroneous influence.<sup>516</sup> The superstitious nature of the supernatural was an extension of this public danger His explanation of “unconscious cerebration” meant that people were not in full control of their mind, that they lacked the ability to always interpret reality properly.<sup>517</sup> This pertained not only to mentally unstable individuals but to all individuals, and to crowds and multitudes who through “contagious” delusion could misinterpret reality *en masse* given the right stimuli. In an age where Chartists and reformers wanted people to have more say in political

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<sup>513</sup> For a detailed look at how Carpenter gained institutional acceptance for his controversial views see Alison Winters. “The Construction of Orthodoxies and Heterodoxies in the Early Victorian Life Sciences.” *Victorian Science in Context*, edited by Bernard Lightman, (University of Chicago Press, 1990) 35-44.

<sup>514</sup> Winter, 290-292.

<sup>515</sup> McCorristine, 77-78.

<sup>516</sup> Carpenter, William. *Carpenter on Alcoholic Liquors*. (Henry C. Lea, Philadelphia, 1866)

<sup>517</sup> Oppenheim, 241-244.

affairs, Carpenter's physiological arguments served to remind the educated about the danger of the multitude.

However, Faraday's appeal to Carpenter's authority, reproducible experiments, and his own specialist expertise was not convincing to all.<sup>518</sup> Crowe was a dissenting voice against Faraday's experiment in *Spiritualism and the Age We Live In*:

And although one very qualified person did condescend to bestow a little attention to the subject, I take leave to suggest, that it was rather with the design of dispelling the delusion and putting an end...by the influence of his name, than with any real desire to ascertain the facts, upon which he had formed a decided opinion before he commenced the investigation.<sup>519</sup>

For Crowe, Faraday thought his name would be an authoritative stamp against the phenomena rather than any real investigation. She decried what she saw as his condescension and half-hearted experiment that was not exhaustive and did not look at all the purported phenomena. As Crowe pointed out, Faraday's experiments did not explicitly show muscular movements at all times, and Carpenter's ideas could not account for phenomena that people had witnessed that didn't fit in with his theories such as immaterial causation of movement, apports or knowledge that could not have been available to a medium.

Robert Chambers also took issue with Faraday's dismissal of the ability of people to properly interpret experiential data. He compares the elitist, skeptical position of Faraday with that of Bacon:

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<sup>518</sup> Noakes. "Haunted Thoughts of the Careful Experimentalist: Psychical Research and the Troubles of Experimental Physics." *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, vol. 48, 2014, 46–56. 48.

<sup>519</sup> *Spiritualism and the Age We Live In*, 102-103.

I must also make bold to say that the skeptical view appears to me out of harmony with the inductive philosophy. Bacon gives us many warnings against preconceived opinions and prejudices; but he does not bid us despair of ascertaining facts from our own senses and testimony...What is still of more consequence, we do not find in Bacon any dogma like that of Mr. Faraday, that 'the laws of nature are the *foundation* of our knowledge in natural things,' and that these form our only safe form of test...<sup>520</sup>

Chambers write this explicitly in response to Faraday's publication and in it appeals to Abercrombie and Chalmers – as did Crowe in NSN – to show the philosophical and religious weight of testimony. This tract, like *Vestiges*, was anonymous. It argued specifically for the pre-Enlightenment form of Baconian inductive research Crowe advocated. It also contains aspersions of a priori bias and lack of committed investigation on Faraday's part. Faraday's method and skepticism was unscientific.

Faraday did not only face detractors from those who saw his experiments as lacking in scope concerning spiritualism, but he had faced a similar accusation in court. In 1819, he had been called for the defense, an insurance company, in *Severn, King and Company v Imperial Insurance Company*. Faraday, at that time Chemical Operator at the Royal Institution, was asked to prove that the factory's new method of heating whale oil caused a fire so he set about a number of experiments to prove it. It pitted him against none other than his mentor Sir Humphry Davey who concurred with Thomas Thomson's full-scale replica experiments, who were hired by the plaintiffs. When the

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<sup>520</sup> Robert Chambers. *Testimony: Its Posture in the Scientific World*. (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1854) 8.

plaintiff pointed out Faraday's experiments were neither exhaustive or comprehensive, Faraday retorted that "It was not always necessary in experiments for matters of science to have the apparatus as large as they are in nature, or the ordinary process of art."<sup>521</sup> This is an argument that would be used to defend his dismissal of spiritualism just as much as the accusation would be used again against him. Chief Justice Dallas and the jury ruled against the defense, and by extension, Faraday. Yet, what unnerved him, caused a public outcry as well:

A vast body of evidence had been laid before the jury; medical men, chymical men, eminent men in every department of science, had been examined in the course of the trial; but what was the lamentable result?

The Jury had heard of opinion opposed to opinion, judge to judge, theory to theory, and what was still more extraordinary, they had seen the same experiments produce opposite results? Who should decide this mighty controversy?<sup>522</sup>

It is this controversy which this chapter will show in the LDS' *Report on Spiritualism*. What is significant is that this polemic continued in the realm of spiritualism as well. The expert witness was not an impartial witness but became to be seen as more as an "advocate" for the side called for and put in a position of contention not only with the rules of cross-examination but other specialists as well. The veneer of the gentleman, impartial researcher gave way to the professional who was professionally hired.<sup>523</sup> The

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<sup>521</sup> Golan, 63-67.

<sup>522</sup> Golan, 68.

<sup>523</sup> Golan, 61.

jury, not the scientific society, became the arbiter of truth in claims. This left both professions, the lawyer and physician, are partakers of a generation of assent.

Faraday and Carpenter's criticism of spiritualism had its expert support.

It was defended, in the main, by other scientists, and in many proceedings in the newly formed British Association for the Advancement of Science. Scientists such as Carpenter and Tyndall had only recently gained intellectual and scientific authority, and the BAAS had been founded just a generation earlier, in 1831. The rising scientific discourse of which they were the spokesmen could not be seen to accommodate proponents of the immaterial, spiritualist theory, or the use of scientific terminology by such spiritualists in the service of their polemical and epistemological arguments.<sup>524</sup>

These skeptics consequently sought to defend their newly-gained prestige and their portrayal as true defenders of the scientific method from what they saw a spurious and contentious spiritualist appropriation.<sup>525</sup> It was their testimony, based on specialism and reproducible experiments, which, in the view of a growing number of secular naturalists, outweighed that of the mediums and their believing audiences. Spiritualist phenomena could not be reproduced at will each time with the same results. They lacked the order that accompanied scientific discoveries. In their view, this variability, as well as its uniqueness within common experience, made its "evidence" suspect and less credible than that of scientific experts such as Faraday.

Faraday's and Carpenter's theories functioned very much like those of Ferriar and Hibbert: they were the narratives of professionals using testimony based on their

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<sup>524</sup> Richard Noakes. "The 'Bridge Which Is between Physical and Psychical Research': William Fletcher Barrett, Sensitive Flames, and Spiritualism." *History of Science*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2004, 419–4640. 431-432.

<sup>525</sup> For a good but brief discussion see Oppenheim, 326-329.

experience to advocate against the immaterial basis of supernatural phenomena. However, what made Faraday and Carpenter's theories different is that they were founded upon experimentation, the results of which they claimed to be able to authoritatively interpret. Their work would be the cornerstone of skeptical polemic for a large part of the rest of the century.

The purpose of the *Report* was not to discover a theory of causation of supernatural phenomena, but to ascertain whether they were factual and not the products of trickery or delusion. It fused both scientific and jurisprudential methodologies: the experiment and witness testimony along with cross examination. Credibility was no longer enough and cross-examination was utilized in order to extract the truth.<sup>526</sup> It also fused the loci of the societies' rooms, the scientific laboratory, and the domestic space bringing both men and women to partake in the investigation. It called together across gender and disciplinary lines by a public call for evidence that had not been seen since Crowe and would not be seen again until the *PSGB* and *SPR*.<sup>527</sup>

The committee was made up of well-educated observers of "high character and great intelligence" in their respective fields and was to hold experiments under controlled conditions. That most were from the legal profession is reflected by the importance given to testimony in their reports. For the LDS, professionalism and standing were criteria of good character and in turn to reliable testimony. Many in the committee still considered such testimony to be fully capable of interpreting events, no matter how unusual.

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<sup>526</sup> Schramm, 57.

<sup>527</sup> *RS*, 108.



The *Report* stated that multiple witnesses had witnessed multiple and repeated events of supernatural phenomena which they could not ascribe to deceit. Compounded with the written and oral testimony of others, the Committee ruled that the, “subject is worthy of more serious attention and careful investigation than it has hitherto received.”<sup>528</sup> This (in)conclusion was interpreted by others based on where they stood on the matter. For skeptics, it showed that there was not much that was verifiable while to proponents it was a promising start to a young field of research, as will be shown. The method was one agreed upon by all, but the interpretations differed and its inherent openness to multiplicity of voices made a coherent, verifiable interpretation problematic if not impossible. The variability of phenomena and the differences of inference would not allow them to claim any discovery beyond the idea that the phenomena of supernatural occurrences defied a solid interpretation.

Though the report stresses its use of the scientific method, only the first 50 pages deal with experiments and findings, “The Report” and “Report of the Experimental Sub-Committees,” along with the last twenty which cover the “Minutes of the Sub-Committee.”<sup>529</sup> These experiments provide one with a good sample of experimentation with controlled conditions and safeguards, carried out by avowed skeptics.. However, the body of the text is composed of “evidences” in the form of testimony and correspondences, a large portion of which come from people who support the spiritualist hypothesis. Thus, the jurisprudential, experiential method is the most employed. *The Report* based its conclusion on the outcome of the experiments and the accumulative, corroborative testimony. In its findings, it states:

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<sup>528</sup> *RS*, 6, 13.

<sup>529</sup> *RS*, 1-50, 373-395.

14.-That our experience in regard to the phenomena we witnesses appears generally to be corroborative of the statements of many of the witnesses examined by you upon the subject, to the extent that such phenomena have, or appear to have, a basis of intelligence.<sup>530</sup>

The *RS* makes no bold claim at first glance but seen in its context and by the ensuing pages, it does become remarkable. What the committee did was lend an appearance of objective validity to the phenomena, while not furthering the discursive agenda of the main groups contending over what was really transpiring.<sup>531</sup> It ruled out delusion and trickery in all cases, but did not allow the spirit hypothesis to explain anything. It was simply delineating what it perceived to be an observable fact that material objects could be moved by an immaterial force, unlike any known, that had the intimations of some sort of intelligence. Scholars such as Oppenheim and McCorristine who say the LDS did nothing of real note miss the whole purpose of the committee. It was not argumentatively inclined and had no *a priori* hypotheses to protect: “Your Committee confined their report to facts witnessed by them in their collective capacity, which facts were *palpable to the senses, and their reality capable of demonstrative proof.*”<sup>532</sup> It was a collective endeavor, not the individual testimony where delusion could impede the veracity of the narrative. It simply wanted to allow the phenomena to speak for itself and guide future endeavours of the study of the phenomena.

It is described according to legal and scientific terms such as “carefully conducted experiments” set “after trial by every detective test.”<sup>533</sup> It was an attempt to

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<sup>530</sup> *RS*, 15-16.

<sup>531</sup> *RS*, 15.

<sup>532</sup> *RS*, 8.

<sup>533</sup> *RS*, 9.

use the skills of both disciplines in a way that would give institutional authority to the investigations. In this manner, they wanted to make it a communal set of exhaustive experiments to get a more expansive look at either positive or negative results, unlike Faraday who relied mainly on his own experiments. It was the combination of impersonal, repeated communal experiment and personal, legal testimony that allowed the phenomena to be studied in a way that had never been done before, fusing disciplines and locations. During the mid-nineteenth century the reliability of the senses was coming under increasing scrutiny by physiologists, but they were evidently still regarded as reliable by members of the LDS from both a scientific and legal background, especially with multiple simultaneous attestations. This is because such data was used in aspects of daily life, such as legal trials, and that the LDS did not wish to ideologically restrict possibilities that were being attested without trial. The *Report* even claims most of its investigators were skeptics, though this would be debated. However, the five-page report reads like a confident narrative of being unassuming and objective, and it is the rest of the publication that gives a glimpse on just how this narrative came to its conclusion. It also gives prominence to dissent, providing space for people like Edmunds and others to give their extended viewpoints on both the committee and supernatural phenomena.

The *Report* of the committee contains the reports of the sub committees and ends with the minutes of the sub-committees' experiments. Names are only given when necessary and even then, they are usually given by the "intelligences."<sup>534</sup> The majority of the narrative is a series of impersonal note-taking and verbatim reporting, where

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<sup>534</sup> *RS*, 49.

items are just as important as the people present. It is an attempt not to impede the narrative of observation by imposing individual testimony on what happens. In the editing process, the committee wished to begin and end its portrayal of its own objectivity to the reader with its experiments. It wanted to “frame” its overall narrative as essentially a scientific report supported by the collective testimony of witnesses able to go into scientific detail on phenomena. The experiments take center stage and the Report closes with the minutes, narratively encapsulating the whole enterprise.

The intermediate sections of the *Report* betray the fraught relationship between the experiments, observers and witnesses. If the experiments show an easy delineation of fact and event, the other sections show the problems of inferential imposition. These sections are a collection of “Communications” given by the observers, “Evidences” of important people on the subject of the supernatural both pro and con, correspondences, letters, communications from non-members, and notes on séances other than the experiments. The Communications involve a raging debate within the committee over a pro-spiritualist bias by Edmunds will be handled later. The focus now will be the role of the “Evidences” and the correspondences. The “Evidences” were testimonies by people who had been invited because of their experience in spiritualist phenomena. Some read like conversion narratives where the skeptic becomes convinced after witnessing phenomena.<sup>535</sup> Others, like that of Mr. Jones given on May 11, 1869, are more interesting. He was part of the Norwood Committee which “consisted of two editors of district newspapers and four other gentlemen of good standing, who had hitherto laughed and joked at Spiritualism.”<sup>536</sup> His example shows a series of sittings at his own

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<sup>535</sup> *RS*, 136.

<sup>536</sup> *RS*, 146.

house where the accordion plays temperance songs and other religious music over a series of nights.<sup>537</sup> Here Jones' committee tries a diary entry form, but the narrative aligns itself to more of a flowing testimonial narrative of the kind customary among spiritualists.

However, the narrative also shows the desire to have a scientific method employed by a lay investigator in cross-examining witnesses at the end of their testimonials, whether they are spiritualists or skeptics. The narrations here are mostly pro-spiritualist, yet this does not make the report an advocator for spiritualism, as it gives room to religious, scientific and medical dissent to the phenomena. These evidences put in a quasi-legal setting are edited into a fixed location away from primary "evidence" of the experiments, the spiritualists are questioned throughout, and the LDS never favours one interpretation over another. However, Edmund disagreed, and saw this preponderance of spiritualist testimony as evident bias.<sup>538</sup>

The editors of the committee's report wanted to portray the report as unbiased, impersonal and scientific, with an experienced editor such as Cox. It orders its narrative as primarily experimental to prove its objectivity. It allows skeptics to disagree at length, but they are retorted with footnotes. It is they who are portrayed as unobjective. The spiritualists are also refuted by the experiments.<sup>539</sup> All is meant to support its findings of unexplainable phenomena as truly happening but also to support its self-representation

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<sup>537</sup> *RS*, 146-149.

<sup>538</sup> *RS*, 51.

<sup>539</sup> The *Report* switches from experiments 7-50 to testimony from skeptics and spiritualists and ends with notes from experiments not part of the Committee 359-392. It is clear the experiments of the Committee take prime stage and those outside get placed at the end. Hence, the report places the experiments as that which binds the text. For an interesting example of where the editorial process takes part in the debate between members and the press, see: 67, 78-81. For Cox's response to what he saw as breaking of Committee protocol by Edmunds and others, see his Memorandum in the *RS*, 96-104. Here Cox one of the editors takes it upon himself to refute the skeptics while still not embracing a spiritual hypothesis.

that it is neither a part of the spiritualist discourse, nor that of skeptics or the religious traditionalists. In true dialectic fashion it shows differing discourses coming up against another but creates a third option that it portrays as based primarily on the evidence. The skeptics and Spiritualists were working from a *priori* discourses, physiological and immaterial. No “facts” would induce either to look at possible alternative hypotheses. The Committee, which tried to portray itself as objective, had to allow the experiments and results to guide the possible hypotheses.

### **Testimony and Cross-Examination**

What makes the “Evidences” interesting is the employment of the legal method of cross-examination in the proceedings that intersperses with the narrative meant to ascertain the verity of testimony.<sup>540</sup> The committee asks the witnesses questions concerning the validity of what they testify, or to elaborate on what their views are as to causation. One interesting episode takes place between E. W. Cox and John Edmunds questioning Mr. Hockley. Hockley claims he knows a Seeres that can read mirrors and a crystal ball.

Cox: “Are you of opinion that this is in any way connected with spirits?”

Hockley: “Yes.”

Cox: “You think the spirits appear in the glass.”

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<sup>540</sup> RS, 97.

Hockley: "I have no means of telling whether the spirits are there. I believe it is a spiritual manifestation, because I receive answers to questions which the Seeres could not fabricate."

Cox: "Is there any evidence that the things seen are objective and not subjective?"

Hockley: "Yes, the book I alluded to, which was too small to read; when I got the glass the Seeres could read it."

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Cox: "Supposing she had never heard anything about it?"

Hockley: "It would have been the same."

Cox: "Do you think the spirit is in the glass or the mind of the seer?"

Hockley: "I have no means of forming an opinion."

Cox: "Then why do you believe that spirits have anything to do with the matter?"

Hockley: "Because she speaks Hebrew and languages which she knows nothing...."

Dr. Edmunds: "You believe it is spiritual, because nothing else will account for it; if I had a cheque in my pocket now, could a seer read it?"

Hockley: "No."<sup>541</sup>

Cox, the legal expert and newspaper editor, and Dr. Edmunds, the physician, question not his veracity but his interpretation of events. They point out that he depends on the theories of Swedenborg, textual sources for validation and explanation. They point out

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<sup>541</sup> *RS*, 186-189.

that he does not see what the Seeres “sees” but continues to stand by it. Of most importance is Cox’s desire to find any objective standing for his testimony whereat Hockley must depend on the Seeres. They show that Hockley, far from being a witness, cannot see with his own eyes but sees through the lenses of his books and mediums. They tell him what to see. Dr. Edmunds, the consummate skeptic and chairman of the LDS points out by his questioning that Hockley only determines it is spiritual because his limited understanding cannot point out anything else. The irony of his fetching glasses so the Seeres could read the book in the crystal ball was probably not lost on them.

Hockley’s narrative is the anti-thesis of the LDS’s experiments: it is personal, theoretical and theatrical, it depends on secondary sources and a second pair of eyes. Here testimony is at the forefront and Edmund, a doctor, crosses over to the legal tradition as an extension of being a questioning doctor. Cox uses his field of specialty to do likewise. They parse his testimony and look for elucidation of points or point out flaws in his line of reasoning. They are, however, limited in their ability to reach conclusions when the variables are words and not events.

Edmunds in his “pocket” example is alluding to his own testing of mediums in which the medium could not guess how much money there was. Hockley is the credulous spectator whose lack of understanding ensures that he would accept a spiritual hypothesis because he cannot think, unlike Edmunds, of anything else. Cox’s position, that of the Committee’s report, does not rule out the phenomena but questions Hockley’s rush to judgement on a hypothesis. Hockley can neither really explain the event but determines he can interpret its causation, nonetheless. Cox and Edmunds,



like Hockley with the medium, interpret from a distance. They too can only watch and interpret Hockley's narrative from their ideological standpoint, whether skeptic or ambivalent. All three positions in the end become circular and no conclusion can be reached.

### **The Séance**

The séance was the major locus for the spiritualist movement. Lamont rightly assesses their importance:

Séance phenomena were, after all, the primary reason given by spiritualists for their initial conversion to spiritualism and for their continuing beliefs. Written accounts of such events were invariably presented to the wider public as evidence that séance phenomena were real.<sup>542</sup>

Ghost-seeing had never previously been tied to a specific location, but supernatural phenomena in spiritualism was tied to the gathering of a group around a table, with the medium as the focal point for manifestation. For Barrow, the tests were personal, empiricist based where the participants judged on the validity of supposed results, making it more democratic than authoritative, orthodox epistemologies.<sup>543</sup> The figure of the medium as a conduit or machine for the supersensory phenomena was problematic. Mediums, especially paid mediums, were seen by skeptics as deceitful or delusional.

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<sup>542</sup> Lamont, 898.

<sup>543</sup> Barrow, 141.

The séance was also seen as subversive as it offered an arena where women could undermine Victorian middle-class norms of propriety, especially lower-class female mediums, and be put in a position of special prominence in proceedings.<sup>544</sup> This double-edged sword of the medium and the séance made their testimony either sacrosanct or scurrilous, depending on which view one took. Unlike testimony in court or scientific society, it was outside traditional bounds of accepted epistemological importance: it came from the same location as “table-talk.” It could not be taken as valid as long as it was created in a setting that was unscientific amongst those unlearned in what was considered scientific proof.

What the LDS did was portray the séance in a manner that took it out of the spiritualist and skeptical narrative. Professionals and scientists had studied séances before, but Noakes points out that “these hybrid spaces needed to create the conditions that would persuade scientific critics that fraud and experimental error had been eliminated but these conditions often conflicted with those that the chief instrument of research the mediums insisted were required for producing effects under investigation.”<sup>545</sup> The LDS provided the first collaborative and scientific exception. It did this by employing safeguards against trickery, providing closed experiments under conditions controlled by “trustworthy” individuals, but also allowing mediums to testify on behalf of their own experience. Unlike Faraday, it depended on more than one observer’s theory, and its experiments were repeated at different locations and with different people to get a better grasp of the phenomena. Its report did not represent the

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<sup>544</sup> Owen, 50.

<sup>545</sup> Noakes, “Haunted Thoughts of the Careful Experimentalist,” 47.

lone voice of a specialist, but the communal voices of all those involved, each taking part in ascertaining what was valid or not.

The experiments of the Committee undid the special aura of authority of the medium using a method that would be taken up by the SPR years later:

Your Committee have avoided the employment of professional or paid mediums, the mediumship being that of members of your Sub-committee, persons of good social position and of impeachable integrity, having no pecuniary object to serve, and nothing to gain by deception.

Your Committee have held some meetings without the presence of a medium (it being understood that throughout this report the word “medium” is used simply to designate an individual without whose presence the phenomena described either do not occur at all, or with greatly diminished force...<sup>546</sup>

The *causa celebre* and/or notoriety of the medium gave way to simply a designated person needed for results. The paid professional is substituted by someone known to their peers, someone whose integrity is “impeachable,” hence of reliable testimony. This most likely meant someone from their middle-class, professional circle of peers. In this context, trickery or fraud was ruled out. However, this jury of peers and investigators was a professional, paid (apart from the wives) group of friends. Edmunds, in his rebuttal of the report in the report, presents the work of mediums as the “ministrations of a harpy” who worked on the primal fears of the audience, an “advisor of women and rival of the priest.”<sup>547</sup> This distrust of the paid mediums was based on a suspicion of

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<sup>546</sup> *RS*, 8.

<sup>547</sup> *RS*, 57.

lower-middle and lower- class women who had made a living by being mediums. Owen has pointed out:

Public mediumship was associated not only with the working class but also with middle class assumptions about lower class morality. The rationale that working class mediums needed to earn a living and might therefore be more tempted to legerdemain if their gifts deserted them or failed came up to scratch merely cloaked other class-based anxieties.<sup>548</sup>

Monetary interests were tied to class and gender: results with respectability. In this, the Committee and Edmunds seemed to be in testimonial and ideological synchronicity. The medium was a part of the experiment that had to be conditioned, closely watched and measured like any mundane phenomena. In an inversion of spiritualist protocol, the table was at times untouched, while the medium was held hand and foot.<sup>549</sup> The attempt at objectivity was a conscious move to mitigate the role of the medium held in such high regard in spiritualist circles. It is important to note that mediums were only seldom named in experiment citations and they only get to become known in individual statements to the committee. It is as if individuality was viewed as a contamination of objectivity in the proceedings. Propriety may have played a part in withholding identities, but it could also have been an attempt to simply look at phenomena without the distorting effects of celebrity that was rife in spiritualist circles. Testimony during trance was part of the phenomena, hence more important than the medium, and the only real qualification important to the medium was being of a respectable character.

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<sup>548</sup> Owen, 50-51.

<sup>549</sup> *RS*, 214.

Observation and the writing of the reports supplanted the centrality of the medium, giving importance to the professionals and their spouses. The observation and marking down of results at times took the place of the medium. The report also mentions several instances when phenomena occurred without a proper séance taking place. One marked example that continued over several meetings for Sub-Committee No. 1 was the playing of a piano, raps that sounded like detonations and communication. Once it even transpires when they are having refreshments and not discussing the phenomena at all. In fact, the spontaneous phenomena are judged by them to have been the most productive and interesting.<sup>550</sup> There are even instances where the phenomena start and even increases when the mediums leave.<sup>551</sup> These observations flew in the face of preconceived notions by both spiritualists and skeptics as they witnessed the least phenomena while in the dark, the séance was not always needed and that, “we have not discovered and conditions identical with those ordinarily deemed necessary to the production of the so-called electro-biologic or mesmeric phenomena – but often the reverse.”<sup>552</sup>

These observations form a narrative of testimony that upset the notions propagated by both major parties and represented just how much the Committee went in undermining preconceived notions in its findings. The medium was no longer the locus or focus of the experiment nor the protagonist in the traditional narrative of the séance. The LDS had to wrest the discourse away from the medium, while sticking their ideas into testimonial consideration, to make the medium even more of a medium. The

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<sup>550</sup> *RS*, 18.

<sup>551</sup> *RS*, 384-386.

<sup>552</sup> *RS*, 43.

medium was to remain a conduit but one of observation and not esoteric truths. This allowed the trained, credible observers to interpret them and the event rather than have the medium do all those traditional roles. This was vital if the experiment was to be separate from the experimenter. This demarcation supposedly helped to ensure a level of objectivity and greater chance of reaching a factual stance.

### **Controlled Narrative and Experiment**

One remarkable way the LDS turned attention away from the prominence of the medium was to focus solely on phenomena and inanimate objects. Here once again testimony is paramount as a medium, but it is a testimony through the prism of the experiment, a testimony that is limited in its ability to show causation but imperative in a proper delineation of measurements and events. The LDS viewed objects in much the same way. Objects were phenomenal clues to collect or reject evidence. The narrative of the observer's testimony or the mediums speech gave way to "reading" of how objects behaved during the experiment, to let the things "speak" for themselves. Rooms were delineated with all items being accounted for. The items also became part of a controlled environment, a redacted area where the committee framed its experiments. One case in point is the tables used in the séances. The importance of furniture in the séance is well known but the LDS makes it a point of being specific with their weight even delineating the dimensions of the smallest one.<sup>553</sup> A point is made to be specific

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<sup>553</sup> *RS*, 7.

with giving dimensions of a room, the table used and how much pressure would be needed to replicate the phenomena using the involuntary muscular volition.

#### Experiment XXXVIII

*Movements without contact*, -Question: "Would the table now be moved without contact?" Answer: "Yes, by three raps on the table."

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Then all placed their hands behind their backs, kneeling erect on their chairs, which were removed a foot clear away from the table; the gas was also turned up higher, so as to give abundance of light, and under these conditions, distinct movements occurred, to the extent of several inches...

The above described movements were so unmistakable, that all present unhesitatingly declared their conviction, that no physical force, exerted by any one present, could possibly have produced them; and they declared further in writing, that a rigid examination of the table, showed it to be an ordinary dining table...<sup>554</sup> There are even experiments where no one is touching the table which moves of its own accord showing that Faraday and Carpenter's explanations are wanting.<sup>555</sup>

This presentation of rigorous examination and safeguard undoes the stereotype of the renaissance. The medium is subsumed into the background, people are not hand locked, light not darkness allows them to see and no one is touching the table. The

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<sup>554</sup> *RS*, 42-45.

<sup>555</sup> *RS*, 390-391. See also: 33, 373, 382-383.

movement creates a “generation of assent” of all involved who put their testimony into writing, giving it an authentic, narrative weight to this séance/experiment.

The LDS also contains diagrams of tables and sitting arrangements. This pictorial representation mimics the scientific literature of the era. It solidifies its pretensions to narrative reproduction of facts and phenomena by plain diagram whereas most spiritualist literature abounds in verbal explanation as a method of persuasion.<sup>556</sup>

Everyday objects become charged with significance beyond their daily meaning: a book, paper, and even a glass tumbler become loci for the phenomena.

The paper has added import as it is a medium for communication where words could translate into narrative meaning, reading the purpose of the movement of items is more difficult. Even a music-box plays on its own and becomes a method of communication.<sup>557</sup> The very room itself becomes a witness by the rappings that take place. It seemed the phenomena spoke by the use of the room for its “rappings and tappings.” Just as the committee uses the room, so do the “intelligences” use it and the items in it as instruments to testify to the objectivity of the phenomena, or to simply make a joke. The spiritualist argument as the medium as instrument gives way to everything being an instrument and the traditional secular space of the experimental lab sees the investigator’s authority undermined by phenomena that takes over the experiment. This is a narrative that allows the event to testify and the recorder to mark down in a scientific idiom. It is a form of testimony that accepts the template of scientific authenticity by accepting its template.

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<sup>556</sup> *RS*, 393-4.

<sup>557</sup> *RS*, 117-8, 383-386.



Indeed, one way the Committee sought to make its findings secure from fraud was to hold meetings at the houses of its own members, even those who were skeptical, in the belief that this would help to rule out trickery. It took the medium out of their own theater of action into surroundings where they could be kept under better surveillance and have no recourse to staging an event. It puts the séance into an enclosed position, a semi-lab that straddles the domestic and institution. There had been investigations of the séance before, but not under these conditions, which would later be replicated by Crookes and the SPR. The effect of holding the séance in a location unknown to the medium changes the setting from the narrative of the special presider over some phenomena due to a peculiar ability to a gathering of observers who watch the phenomena the way a biologist watches bacterium in a microscope. To empower the phenomena objectively, the subjective power of the medium must be overcome. The Committee was trying to control the narrative of experimentation rather than depend simply on a medium's testimony. It wished to invert the spiritualist paradigm for more scientific validity. The space was still domestic but the locations, people, and safeguards were meant to ensure the testimony could not be tainted by deception and the manipulation of space.

This allowed the Committee to turn the "domestic laboratory" of the séance into the scientific. It sought to meet the discourses of Spiritualism and the scientific method halfway. It may also be because of this that it would ultimately lack results deemed credible by the skeptics and their premise of a physiological explanation. A controlled experiment in a home was still spatially and institutionally separate from the domains of many specialists. However, the Committee in distancing itself from both the Spiritualists

and the skeptics but not their modus operandi only sought an alternate hypothesis using the methods of both, a dialectic relationship between discourses to reach progression.

### **Intelligence as Proof: Validation of Language**

Earlier it was shown how Crowe used new words or called into question terminology in explaining new or unexplained phenomena. The Committee for the LDS did so as well. New words were needed to show their testimony in a new light without the weight of connotations of other words to inhibit opinion. The LDS in its publication does not use the word ghost or apparition. The word spirit and soul are seldom employed, and the word “intelligence” has prominence when phenomena is recorded. When they are employed, it is only for referential purposes of an as-of-yet unknown force.<sup>558</sup> The effect is that the weight of association carried by such words no longer weighed heavily on the phenomena being recorded. It also protected the participants from preconceived notions which would affect the experimental method. The LDS was seeking to break new ground in applying scientific rigour and the need for new language as part of the discourse had to become part of reintroducing the supernatural in more skeptical and physiologically minded circles. This allowed a new narrative to be created one that would not be the terminological possession of either spiritualists or skeptics. The testimonies of the investigators could not be tainted by words used by both skeptics and spiritualists to different purposes.

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<sup>558</sup> *RS*, 29.

As with Crowe, it was not enough for there to be corroboration but also a form of validation that could be verified. The “intelligences” are used to just such purpose in presentation of the report. The “intelligences” have their own methods of narrative such as rapping and automatic writing. The report’s finding shows that, “the phraseology of communications was mostly succinct, redundant words or terms being seldom, if ever, employed.”<sup>559</sup> The information they have to communicate takes time to understand and here questions again are employed to narrow down who an “intelligence” intends to relay a message.<sup>560</sup> The purpose is to show, that though the experiments are portrayed impersonally in protocol, that the phenomena were indicative of something that exerted not only intelligence but even individuality. One case in point is the communications from an “intelligence” called Henry. <sup>561</sup> When “Henry” reappears, it is assumed that it was the same one:

We had all expected that the spirit would have announced itself as the relative of the lady referred to, but it did not do, the name given being that of a stepbrother of our hostess who had died fourteen years previously. This spirit replied in the usual manner to questions put to it by the director (who had never before known or heard of the existence of Henry K--) stating truly the name of the place where and the year in which it had left the flesh...<sup>562</sup>

This experiment undoes narrative expectation. The generic “Henry” turns out to be another “Henry.” The investigators are proven wrong. Furthermore, the investigators

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<sup>559</sup> *RS*, 26.

<sup>560</sup> *RS*, 48, 64.

<sup>561</sup> *RS*, 31.

<sup>562</sup> *RS*, 33.

point out that the medium had no idea of his existence. What is important is that years and places are validated giving the spirit a fleshly individuality of date, relation and locality. The results guide the investigation, not the investigators.

“Henry” continues to surprise the investigators. He states:

“I love dear M- (the Christian name of our hostess) very much, although I NE.” At this point our hostess, remembering that her brother had been an irregular correspondent, suggested “never wrote.” “No.” ...The interrupted sentence was resumed –“glected her when I was: - “Alive?” Somebody suggested. “No.” “Living?” “No.” A rap clear and distinct, and strangely suggestive of annoyance being experienced by the spirit at the interruption of its communication...”on earth. She ought to have had a L”-“A letter,” suggested the hostess...”No.” The next letter rapped at was “L.” “We already have L” said the director...This interruption produced a series of sharp and petulant raps from the spirit, as if it were calling the speaker to order. “Then the spirit means double ‘L,’ and the sentence runs, ‘She ought to have had all.’” “My property” was next spelt out.<sup>563</sup>

One gets here a reader’s side view of the séance. We along with the director, hostess and sitters take part in a cliff edge of suspense and letters. We are constantly proved wrong. The expectation of a simple message, so often a treasure of linguistic derision by skeptics, becomes more than just reassurance of the continued life of the spirit. This thesis has already shown what Dickens thought of “spirit messages” and that was axiomatic of the skeptical position. Huxley excused taking part in the Committee’s

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<sup>563</sup> *RS*, 33-34.

work comparing it to the “chatter of old women:” “And if folk in the spiritual world do not talk more wisely and sensibly than their friends report them to do, I put them in the same category.”<sup>564</sup> What this experiment does is undo such categorization.

One gets validation as the topic turns to financial considerations. Yet, the financial revelation of a will and trustee who could not be trusted are not the treasure finding tropes of earlier tradition: they are only used for validation. The concrete world of wills and forgotten letters become corroborative evidence of corresponding dates. Furthermore, and this was important to Crowe, it shows a personality, a will behind the phenomenon of the “intelligence.” The séance as experiment has results that are variable as “facts| that go beyond stereotype. Once “Henry” can communicate to the hostess (his half-sister) he validates information only she could have known. The other information he gives is later validated by the woman’s husband later.<sup>565</sup>

This contextual confirmation is traditionally used to validate the objectivity of the occurrence. This was important to both who saw a psychological cause and those who held to the idea that it was evidence for the soul. The very fact these “intelligences” had stories or messages to give was accepted as evidence. However, the narrative showed what transpired not its cause, nor was that the purpose of the experiment. The short messages mirror the language of the scientific aspects of the report in their terseness to a purpose of only relating specificity.

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<sup>564</sup> *RS*, 229.

<sup>565</sup> *RS*, 51-55

## Edmunds the Chairman and the Limits of Testimony

Edmunds, the very Chairman who passed the motion for the Committee to be set up did not agree with its findings. His disagreement resulted in a long narrative:

I shall not be accused of having plagiarized the admirable phraseology of the report, if in introducing my observations, I adopt its method...

The independent diagnoses of distinguished spiritualists and this delineation, hereto subjoined, substantially corroborate each other, and would appear to establish the proposition that it is my duty to cast aside all diffidence as to my own personal qualifications for speaking my mind upon this delicate but important subject.<sup>566</sup>

Edmunds is parodying a part of the report (cited earlier) but rewording it to show him as the brave physician who must not withhold his qualified voice from speaking. It is a playful way of dismissing the findings and portraying himself as a victim of mass delusion. It begins his narrative wherein he is the true investigator who has had his qualified voice drowned out by the popular, uneducated opinion which happens to have a numerical majority in the committee. He will maintain this sarcasm throughout his narrative.

Winter has pointed out that the Medical Registration Act of 1857 helped regulate the medical disciplines and furthered the demarcation between medical professionals and the public.<sup>567</sup> The registered practitioner became institutionalized and their importance extended into the jurisprudential sphere. However, their role was

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<sup>566</sup> *RS*, 53.

<sup>567</sup> Winter, 300.

problematic as many manuals attested to the need for the expert witness to be wary of testifying to anything outside their medical boundaries and that one's expertise could become subject for cross-examination.<sup>568</sup> However, as Hamlin has shown, the medical profession was becoming more authoritative in its advocacy for public health reform. Furthermore, this increased authority and credibility still had to vie with animal magnetism and the popularity of heterodoxic medicine, often tied to heterodoxic ideologies ranging from socialism to spiritualism.<sup>569</sup> Spiritualism thus challenged physiological based medicine's hegemony. Owen states that spiritualists attacked the "blind elitism of monopoly medicine" which was seen largely as a "gentlemen's club."<sup>570</sup> This blurring of disciplines and solidifying of the authority of the medical profession also shows itself in *The Report* in the person of Dr. Edmunds who represents the skeptical medical professional who sought to expand his authoritative role in the face of what he saw as a regressive, unscientific popular movement which was dangerous to both individuals and society.

Yet, Edmunds the sceptic was met with other experts who disagreed. Edmunds' narrative was an attempt at vindication against being outvoted by the other members of the Committee who had reached a different conclusion based on the evidence. He was living, however, in an era where jurymen and lawyers saw themselves just as capable to reaching a verdict based on scientific evidence, evidence experts disagreed in interpreting that had been concomitant with the rise of the working, paid expert

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<sup>568</sup> Robert George Glenn. *A Manual of the Laws Affecting Medical Men*. (London: Stevens & Sons, 1871) 280-284; See also Alfred Swaine Taylor. *A Manual of Medical Jurisprudence*. (Philadelphia: Henry C. Lea, 1868). 10-21.

<sup>569</sup> Barrow, 105.

<sup>570</sup> Owen, 112.

professional.<sup>571</sup> Edmunds, who was indeed a working professional and not a man of independent means saw this as interference whereas other saw it as democratizing:

Here, sooner or later, he is sure to see all the authorities in natural philosophy and applied mechanics...not as they are in the habit of dealing it out in instruction to their pupils, but struck out in the course of a fierce conflict of wits which leaves no mercy for the vanquished.<sup>572</sup>

In the social production of knowledge, the expert had to encounter the public and defend by argument and suffer cross-examination. It is almost a dialectic, even Darwinian, take on the process. It is a process Edmunds did not partake of and sought the solace of the written narrative-cross-examined by Cox's footnotes (the lawyer and editor could not help himself).

Of the five doctors who were selected for the committee, two refused to sit.<sup>573</sup> Their places were filled by others, among them E.W. Cox and Wallace. That these two refused to sit shows, like Huxley, an antagonism to even taking seriously anything that went beyond the physiological. Only one doctor, G. Fenton Cameron, requested the testimony of Hardinge but the reader is told nothing else.<sup>574</sup>

The only doctor besides Edmunds that is mentioned at length is D.H. Dyte M.R.C.S. Dyte's medical background and physiological standpoint towards phenomena is evident throughout the *Report*. Dyte, like Edmunds as will be shown, was a professional from within the ranks of the medical establishment, and his actions show a

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<sup>571</sup> Golan, 106.

<sup>572</sup> Golan, 131.

<sup>573</sup> *RS*, vi.

<sup>574</sup> *RS*, 109.



defence of the recently institutionalized role of the doctor in the legal sphere. He was a coroner and took part at inquests and gave evidence.<sup>575</sup> He was even elected as a lecturer at Edmunds' Ladies Medical College a year before the committee began.<sup>576</sup> Working at Edmunds' institution and advocating a physiological position then comes as no surprise. Also worthy of notice is that this defence of physiology and medical expertise came from both Edmunds, the son of an Independent Minister from East London, and Dyte, who came from a Jewish background. Their rise in the medical profession represented a change from the gentleman physician of the eighteenth century to one based on merit and qualifications, vindicating a new progressive albeit middle class bourgeoisie order.<sup>577</sup> Like Carpenter and many other Unitarians, the growing physiological specialism and secular polemic of the period allowed minority groups avenues to flourish, and their defense of the discipline went in tandem with a defense of progress against anything metaphysical that had ties, however tenuous, with traditional thought.

Dyte took part in the Homes séances and in one sitting claimed the sounds emanated from the table's legs, whereat Home accommodated his suggestion and moved with the sounds still emanating. A few moments later, the Master of Lindsay's arm goes rigid. Dr. Dyte examines it and sees nothing wrong-something Edmunds does as well at another sitting

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<sup>575</sup> "London Police Courts." *Reading Mercury*. 13 September 1862, P. 7 "Inquests." *The Times*. 23, March 1892, 12; Interestingly enough he actually gave medical evidence at the divorce trial of Jenner Gale Hillier, a member of the committee: "An Extraordinary Clerical Divorce Suit." *Cambridge Independent Press*. 15, August 1885, 2

<sup>576</sup> "This Evenings News." *Pall Mall Gazette*. 4 September 1868, 6.

<sup>577</sup> Cooter, 70-71.

.<sup>578</sup> His line of reasoning when questioning Hardinge focused on imposture, and on whether skeptics could channel phenomena.<sup>579</sup> He asked a witness if his wife was prone to fits.<sup>580</sup> At another meeting he asked a witness if he has ever come across information from a medium that could of a surety not have been known by anyone.<sup>581</sup> During the evidence of Mr. Shorter he asked if he has ever seen clairvoyance that could not have been the product of thought reading.<sup>582</sup> Yet, this was the same Dyte that motioned for Cox and Wallace to be the editors of the final report. For him, the medium and the believer were loci to cross-examine and peel away at until physiological explanations revealed themselves.

Some of the other skeptics who took part on the committee and society still felt that the medium was central, but for different reasons. Dr. Edmunds, who chaired the committee, felt that it was the machinations or delusions of the medium that accounted for phenomena. Coming from an epistemology rooted in physiological explanations, he could only see a negative effect arising from believing in the spiritual hypothesis. He had investigated the matter himself, and served as part of the Committee, but saw nothing that he could not explain away. He employed the testimony of mediums as an argument against their reliability based on his professional background. For him, the medium's testimony was important, but only in that it showed the symptoms of mental aberrance, that they, "tend to unhinge the mind."<sup>583</sup> His prognostications were apparently proved right in the postscript of his letter:

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<sup>578</sup> *RS*, 47-48.

<sup>579</sup> *RS*, 114.

<sup>580</sup> *RS*, 133.

<sup>581</sup> *RS*, 143-144

<sup>582</sup> *RS*, 177.

<sup>583</sup> *RS*, 76.

Since this hurriedly written communication has been printed ...one person has been the subject of a well-marked mental illness, and another has been confined in a lunatic asylum...I may also add that a prominent member of one of the Sub-Committees...was frequently remonstrated with by me as to the injury he was doing to himself and, perhaps, also to others. It is painful now to have to add that in August 1870, a few weeks after that dark séance (mentioned on p. 76), he was seized with a mysterious form of paralysis.<sup>584</sup>

His letter to the committee, which is part of the publication, lashes out at mediums.<sup>585</sup> Edmunds thus depicted himself as a medical prophet who, as the medical expert, sees the onset of madness, each case strengthening his. As Ferguson has pointed out that the medical establishment was more averse to spiritualism than other scientific disciplines such as physics or chemistry, and its use of institutionalization, or the threat of, had been used often for prominent spiritualists.<sup>586</sup> In the backdrop of the Lunacy Act of 1845, there was a fear that spiritualism encouraged a descent into insanity and that practitioners risked losing their social credit when moving away from adopting behaviour norms and beliefs systems, as Owen has pointed out.<sup>587</sup> Spiritualism was considered by skeptics such as Edmunds to be a “medico-pathological menace”<sup>588</sup> This menace was analogous to disease, which also at this time took ontological implications from the idea of an imbalance to a disease, a weakened constitution and will.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> *RS 80-81.*

<sup>585</sup> *RS, 50-81.*

<sup>586</sup> Ferguson, 23.

<sup>587</sup> Owen, 141.

<sup>588</sup> Henson, 121.

<sup>589</sup> Carrington & Payne, 59.

Dr. Edmunds went to great lengths throughout his career to make his testimony authoritative in many circles, especially the medical profession. His professional and personal history shows him to have been a man who wished to be authoritative, and who often clashed with committees, papers and people in the court of law and public opinion when feeling slighted. That a medical professional sought jurisprudential and popular approbation whilst insisting on the limited epistemological validity of both shows a complexity of character, if not double standards. Edmunds seems to have simply had trouble with knowledge production in social settings, where disagreement could lead to opposite conclusions, and he could not rely upon his medical authority to grant him the final word. Yet, he constantly made recourse to it whether in court, the press and even in *The Report*.

Around this time Edmunds had been himself embroiled in the legal world, having been assailed by another doctor because of supposed calumny. Dr. Eastlake accused him of rough treatment at the Lying-In Hospital in London, and a committee was appointed to investigate.<sup>590</sup> Edmunds thought that the *British Medical Journal* and its editor were biased against him and threatened them with libel action. As with the LDS, Edmunds retorts were reprinted in the medical press, but his inconsistencies were shown.<sup>591</sup> The committee, while not condoning Dr. Eastlake's tone of proceeding, still condemned his hasty dismissal from his post and ruled against Dr. Edmund's charges against the editor of the *British Medical Journal* as baseless.<sup>592</sup> Edmunds was even

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<sup>590</sup> "Dr. Eastlake and the British Lying-In Hospital." *Medical News* March 14, 1868 305

<sup>591</sup> "Notes on Current Topics." *The Medical Press and Circular* Feb 12, 1868 pp. 139-140; Correspondence. *The Medical Press and Circular*. Feb 26. 1868 pg. 195; "Notes, Queries and Replies." *Medical Times and Gazette* Feb 8, 1868 166.

<sup>592</sup> "British Medical Association: Metropolitan Counties Branch Special General Meeting." *Medical News* June 6, 1868 620-621.

beaten, and if one believes his testimony, threatened with his life by another Governor of the Board, Dr. John Snow Beck.<sup>593</sup> Both these incidents show a doctor with strong views whose position encouraged strong opposition that sometimes ruled against him. Dr. Edmunds' insistence upon the validity of his own testimony was not without its detractors, who believed he had either rushed to judgment or had spoken inappropriately against the character of editors and fellow doctors. Perhaps the most amusing example of Edmunds' temper is a letter he wrote to *Punch*, complaining about being lampooned as a "humbug and prig" in an anti-tobacco spoof. *Punch* replied they had not meant him, had never known him, and were bemused by his angry letter.<sup>594</sup> Edmunds' professional medical career was centered around being a coroner, giving inquest testimony as to what caused death, hospital oversight, and the medical education of women. He gave lectures for the society on "The Medical Education of Women" and was, like Carpenter, very much for temperance.<sup>595</sup> In his view, Spiritualism was like alcohol, in that it unbalanced the mind and led to derangement. He advocated for women in the medical profession but not as full-fledged doctors.<sup>596</sup> The spiritualist press did advocate for a Female Medical Society, in contradistinction.<sup>597</sup> For Edmunds, a supposedly female-dominated profession such as mediumship was problematic, as its

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<sup>593</sup> "Fracas between Physicians." *Western Daily Press* (Yeovil, England), Friday, January 1, 1869, Vol. XXII, Issue 3361, 3; "Extraordinary Fracas between Two Physicians." *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (Manchester, England), Friday, January 1, 1869, Vol. XLV, Issue 3787, 4

<sup>594</sup> "British Anti-Tobacco Society." *Punch*. March 28, 1868. 136; "Some Misunderstanding." *Punch*. May 2, 1868. 187.

<sup>595</sup> *London Dialectical Society*, 29.

<sup>596</sup> "Obituary: James Edmunds." *The Lancet*. 25 Feb 1911, 551. For claims that he helped found the Medical College for Women see "Dr. James Edmunds." *Times*, 17 Feb. 1911, 11. *The Times Digital Archive*, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/8Q88h7>. Accessed 21 Nov. 2018. And; Anne. Witz. *Professions and Patriarchy*. Routledge, 2016. 112-120. For a letter stating he did no such thing, See: Mary Throne "The Origin of the London School Medicine for women." *British Medical Journal* vol. 1,2618 (1911): 530. Thorne cites Edmunds College as having no ties to the London School for Women.

<sup>597</sup> Owen, 121.

premise allowed for symptoms of mental disease to be taken as valid knowledge and ran counter to his physiological premises for all phenomena. Speaking at another meeting of the LDS on the enfranchisement of women, his remarks are significant, in that he not only stresses women's inability to be equal but also draws a divide between legal ability and epistemology and physiological fact, his position being that even though "it should be useful that everyone should be equal in the eyes of the law. He did not find that that proposition held good in the other arrangements of nature. [hear hear] There must be a guiding principle and some subordination" and any talk in favour of equality was "totally contradicted by all the anatomical and physiological facts with which we were communicated."<sup>598</sup> For Edmunds, what was applicable to law could not surmount the law of physiological facts as interpreted by the medical profession. This placed Edmunds in the uniformist position that was present not only in the scientific field but also the legal one. In 1863, the legal scholar Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, also concurred that matters of fact rested on the present uniformity of nature; yet, he also left room for testimony and the senses.<sup>599</sup> Edmunds position was an elitist epistemology.

He saw mediumship as representing the miseducation of women, for it turned medically diagnosable hysteria into pseudo-scientific, esoteric knowledge which he viewed as counterproductive and harmful. It ran counter to the reforms and progress he was advocating. For him, the medium was indeed a conduit, but one who was either propagating dangerous pretensions of supernatural power for gain, or a victim of undiagnosed mental illness: either way, the phenomena they produced were ultimately

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<sup>598</sup> "Enfranchisement of Women." Norfolk News, 31 July 1869, 6. British Library Newspapers, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/8Q7oj4>. Accessed 21 Nov. 2018.

<sup>599</sup> Golan, 96.

based on physiological causation. Edmunds felt that his expertise allowed him to point out such dangers, and that such testimony could only be handled within a skeptical, medical narrative of inference.

Within the *Report*, Edmunds' "communication" comes across in a way like that of the "intelligences." His "communication" begins by claiming a narrative and reductive coup by the pro-spiritualist camp. What began as an "impartial" and "laborious duty" becomes futile.<sup>600</sup> In an ironic twist, Edmunds claimed that he was placed in a position to fail in his ability to observe properly which was his purpose, just as many mediums who denied strict testing claimed that it impeded their movement and hence phenomena,. He mentions another experiment before the creation of the committee where he, being seated at Mrs. Guppy's (a lower-class paid medium) house the "result was that I, who had come to investigate the phenomena, found myself in a helpless position."<sup>601</sup> As previously discussed, Edmunds usually sought recourse to public opinion and the law when he felt his views were not being rightly understood, but this produced mixed results whenever he allowed his role as specialists to take a back seat to other discourses of epistemology.<sup>602</sup> Edmunds the coroner who testified in front of the jury, who explained the processes of death as both doctor and testimonial expert, held himself to be above judicious error,<sup>603</sup> and while he sought the approbation of the public he also saw his specialism as overriding others, even in his own profession.

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<sup>600</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>602</sup> "Legal Intelligence: Court of the Queen's Bench." *The Medical Circular*. 21. June, 1865, 416

<sup>603</sup> For one example, See: "Coroners' Inquest: Death by Poison." *The Sunday Times* (London, England), Sunday, September 16, 1866, Issue 2266, 5

Mrs. Guppy's séance was not the first time Edmunds had fumed over feeling cornered at a meeting. It had happened in his medical work as well with other professionals and he now, as then, made his displeasure very public after being unanimously forced to resign from the Beaumont Institution for thinking he should be automatically made part of the committee for offering an amendment earlier regarding coroners and post-mortem examination.<sup>604</sup> This happened with the Committee as well: Edmund felt he had his authority infringed by fellow members and broke out in declamations against both the committee and its findings, and insinuated conspiracy theory by Spiritualists.

The investigator, according to Edmunds, here became the observed and penned up specimen under the watchful eyes of the medium, and the "communication" is the counter-narrative that Edmunds so often employed in his professional and legal disputes. In his view, the specialist who should have been able to have a more important say was, like reason, overturned by desire to believe phenomena. Edmunds saw the remaining report and the whole process of collection, redaction and publication is an area of usurpation by those who had no real ability to comment on a fact. It also reads as a victim's ordeal where mediums are "stalking horses" and skeptics are "silenced" by apologies for spiritualism's lapses by imposters working their craft on the suffering and credulous.<sup>605</sup> Edmunds thus effectively claimed that the LDS suffered from same lapses that he claimed for Hockley earlier. One editorial saw such scientific angst in the courtroom:

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<sup>604</sup> "Coroner's Inquest: Meeting at the Beaumont Institution." *The Lancet*. 11, Feb. 1865. 194 See Edmunds' vociferous response claiming he was specifically targeted unjustly: James Edmunds. "Coroner's Inquest: Meeting at the Beaumont Institution. To the Editor." *The Lancet*. 25, 1865. 221.

<sup>605</sup> *RS*, 76.



A pitiable specimen, that poor man of science, pilloried up in the witness box, and pelted by the flippant ignorance of the examiner! What a contrast between the diffident caution of the true knowledge, and the bold assurance, the chuckling confidence, the vain gloriousness of self-satisfaction, and mock triumphant delight of his questioner!<sup>606</sup>

This describes Edmund's travail at the séance. Both the courtroom and séance enclosed the scientific expert. They were loci where their expertise did not translate always to authority. They were simply one among others. Edmund's narrative, like this editorial, turns him into the victim of the ignorant masses. Yet, Edmunds' narrative is meant to undo that enclosure and rework the event into a moment of scientific bravery against the other sitters who lacked his skill at observation.

Indeed, it is the lack of inferential ability that allows appearances to command the force they do in the report for "propositions at variance with the solidest experiences of humankind." These "silly stories" question the value of reports, evidence both oral and written of events so contradictory to human experience, at least as Edmunds saw it. He uses the analogy of legal disciplines: each witness in the committee and spiritualists to him are trustworthy and honorable and that, "if on a trial of murder, they were witnesses, and I were a juryman, I should rely with entire confidence upon their evidence as proof of all matters not inherently incredible or inconsistent."<sup>607</sup> Here

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<sup>606</sup> "Cornelius O'Dowd upon Men and Women, and Other Things in General," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. Sept 1864; Golan, 52.

<sup>607</sup> *RS*, 55-56.

Edmunds is not taking from the vantage point of a specialist but to his conception of common sense. It is everyday experience which is being employed to counteract the narrative of abnormal events. It is the quotidian that is well-known that is being threatened by observers who undermine the real by the supposedly fantastic. For Edmunds, mundane reality is not enough for people and they seek recourse to “silly stories” and a desire to retain the “longing for immortality” or the “renewal of miracles.”<sup>608</sup> It is this emotional need for a world of metaphysical wonder that allows the human mind to create its own inferential method, affect its own testimony to impose its own narrative on the real world. For Edmunds, such testimony could not possibly be accepted as real when it was claiming the unrealistic. He was a respected and experienced professional whose testimony as both chairman, letter writer and cross-examiner reflected his many years of encountering the mentally ill. For him, the testimony of the report resembled that of mediums, and he could not help but link the two. Furthermore, his own experience with Home and others had disillusioned him by lacking any solid results. If others had seen and believed, he had seen and thought there was nothing in it believable, and he maintained that other members of the committee should have been willing to defer to his authority on this.

The CLDS did not shy away from showing the tension in its own committee. Dr. Edmunds, the very chairman had serious disagreements with many members. Edmund’s sceptical discourse is a reflection on the sometimes-contentious proceedings of the committee. What makes his argument significant are the footnotes by the committee that point out their divergence of view on what transpired. What ensues is a

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<sup>608</sup> *RS*, 58-60.

series of commentary on a letter about a report by the head of the committee itself. One is given a glimpse on how differing opinions intellectually fought over the area of an event to lay claim over the best interpretation.

Once again, Edmunds claims that the narrative of the report is “the offspring of their own imagination, rather than an account of the facts.” He breaks down the process of interpretation, memory and redaction as contextually influenced by motives. If six people are asked to write about an event one will get six different accounts that differ; “Narratives...after running the gauntlet of a few criticisms, get pruned and polished up, until it is impossible to expose them by laying hold of internal inconsistencies.”<sup>609</sup> This seriously complicated pretensions of democratic epistemology but the LDS sought its specialized testimony: credible, middle-class professionals and their spouses and their testimony, though not unanimous, was in their view unified enough to vouch for the objectivity of the phenomena as outside material, physiological causation. Indeed, he claims this process of redaction and deletion happened in the report of one of the séances (Sub-Committee No 2.) with the “intelligence” named Henry. He even claims *The Easter Post* of July 24<sup>th</sup> contains a more independent report. The footnote below calls this into question. The very writer, a “member of the legal profession” worded it carefully, “the communication reflecting upon a person in all probability still living and contained legal terms.” The main reason was to divest the narrative of legal jargon “for the sake of readers of ordinary intelligence.”<sup>610</sup> If anyone could redact such a report with legal implications, surely it would make sense for a specialist in that discipline who

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<sup>609</sup> *RS*, 77.

<sup>610</sup> *RS*, 78.

could do so to make it accessible. It is portrayed as redaction of narrative to allow more lay people to understand the supernatural event without being confused by legal jargon. Edmunds employed ironic questioning to dismiss the testimony of other. Twice during cross examining, it is obvious he, and Dr, Dyte, do not take the format seriously, especially when Mr. Homes is being questioned and is discussing how his observations have led him to the view that spirits progress in the afterlife:

Mr. Dyte: "As to future rewards and punishments?"

Mr. Home said that bad spirits see the continuous results of the wrong they have done, and in some cases have endeavored to repair it by declaring where concealed papers were. Spirits retained or showed special marks of identity, scars, &c.

The CHAIRMAN: "Suppose a man dies after coming out of prison, will his hair still be what is vulgarly called 'cropped?'"<sup>611</sup>

Dyte and Edmunds focus on traditional tropes: ideas of reward, punishment and why ghosts appear the way they do. The hypothetical question of prison haircuts is answered serious enough but the line of questioning is meant not to investigate but portray the derided discourse of the traditional ghost even after Home has pointed away from such categorization in terms of self-progression.

The second example is Edmund's criticism of the "evidence" of Mr. Hain Friswell. Here he is joined again by none other than Dyte and two co-workers take turns as doctors and lawyers in allowing Friswell to rant about his religious powers, egging him on by questioning. Friswell relates how he believes all the "intelligences" are malevolent

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<sup>611</sup> *RCLDS*, 192.

entities echoing the sentiment of certain traditional Christians on supernatural phenomena as demonic. He describes a séance at Mrs. Marshall, a paid medium, where demonic possessions take place and he can stop them by invoking God as protection.<sup>612</sup> Edmunds and Dyte uphold Friswell's testimony, though not the interpretation:

Dr. Edmunds: "We often see in a sick ward a hysterical seizure of one patient followed by the seizure of a number of others. And if a pail of water be thrown over one it will cure all the others. No doubt a strong effort of the will might similarly cure them all."

Hain Friswell: "I never knew a doctor put his hand on a patient in a strong effort and cure him by the mere contact. Some are very clever; they cannot do that."

Dr. Edmunds "I believe medical men in the room will bear me out when I say that firmness of will on the part of a doctor can do this."

Mr. D.H. Dyte: "You put your hand on the table when you willed that it should all cease"

Hain Friswell: "Yes, I put my hand gently on the table and rose repeating mentally the adjuration."

Dyte: "Had the adjuration anything to do with it?"

Mr. Hain Friswell: "As a Christian I believe so. The governess of my children, one of my daughters, and another young lady have sat at a table

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<sup>612</sup> *RS*, 223.

and had raps, answers to foolish questions, &c. I put a stop to it all by the use of the adjuration."<sup>613</sup>

The medical specialists called at inquests and to lecture on anatomy here allow their witness to continue at length allowing Friswell to appear superstitious and Marshall ridiculous. If Marshall is right, then Friswell is wrong. If Friswell is right, then Marshall is wrong. However, what is inferred by their questioning is a scene of something more akin to the dark ages than an esoteric meeting where sublime metaphysical phenomena takes place. It also shows a modern take on the “discerning of spirits” aspect of daemonology and the jurisprudential methodology applied by demonologists and researchers into different classes of spirits. Here, in this excerpt one sees a continuance of pre-Enlightenment epistemology still in force and running concurrently with a scientific objective methodology.<sup>614</sup> Edmunds and Dyte try to turn the meeting into a theatre of diagnosis where the patient can rant on to the observation of the specialist. Yet, what it shows is a fusion of methodologies by a competition of different specialists: skeptic, demonologist and medium. Its very presence in the report’s final redaction not only shows Edmund’s polemic but a certain tolerance by the editors to include sections which might have allowed the committee to seem ridiculous.

What is remarkable for Edmunds is that he alludes to Mrs. Marshall’s letter to *The Evening Post* where Edmund claims that Marshall disavows Friswell’s testimony. It is meant to show how mediums and even believers cannot agree on events where even both were present. The editorial staff at the LDS felt the need to write out Marshall’s letter in full under Edmund’s statement where she claims that Friswell confused two

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<sup>613</sup> *RS*, 224.

<sup>614</sup> For another interesting example, see *RS*, 203-206.

séances together. The possession episode, Marshall claims, was due to two actors who wanted to play a prank on the séance. It seems they managed to upstage her.<sup>615</sup> She was after all a paid medium, which the LDS did not employ, and even Friswell joked in his deposition that he has paid her many a crown. Again, here Edmunds, from a position of authoritative specialism, appeals to the public and cites the press for validation. The shortfall of this was he succumbed to the focus group and medium that spiritualists utilized as well, where specialization gave way to rhetoric and propagation of ideas. Writing a letter to the editor allowed the other party to do so in turn and appealing to the public was an appeal to the masses, with results less variable than a corpse for an autopsy.

It was at a séance with Mrs. Marshall that Edmunds the Doctor played Edmunds the medium. Why Edmunds seemed to focus on Mrs. Marshall may have been since she was a “paid” medium, just as he was a paid professional. It is clear Edmunds wanted to show his abilities in mediumship. One report stated, “In the first experiment Mr. Jaffrey wrote a number of names of persons who are dead and fixing one in his mind was about to point to each when Dr. Edmunds said that he himself could guess from the manner of writing. Which was the name that Jaffrey specially thought about. This he did without appealing to the spirits.” He does this twice and complains about a tumbler that received apports was “rather nearer to Mrs. Marshall than when he placed it.”<sup>616</sup> This presentation took place in Edmunds’ house and Edmunds would not let the medium be the master of ceremony. His constant interpolations (or interruptions) and

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<sup>615</sup> *RS*, 79.

<sup>616</sup> “Spiritual Manifestations.” *Daily Telegraph*, 17 June 1869, 2

upstaging changed the focus of concentration from one professional, the medium, to the another, the doctor, something he relishes even in his communication. That said, the article does mention inexplicable, violent movement of a table.<sup>617</sup> Edmunds is not represented as trying to get in its way. It could be that he saw the attempt to explain away the phenomena, guess better than the medium and demystify the séance as an extension of his career. If the séance was the theatre of either the hallucinatory or fraud, Edmunds would be able to spot it as well as he answered where the medium guessed. This event of mixed results was axiomatic for many séances. The skeptic and spiritualist stressed the hits and left out their respective misses.

For Edmunds, it was important to show the medium as the starting point for a conditioned exposition of conjuring tricks. He portrays himself as the antithesis who is the passive observer that can see past the controlled conditions of trickery:

I sat next to Mrs. Marshall and felt her strike the foot of the table with her toe in the most business-like manner, so as to produce every rap that was made. Yet, while I deliberately watched this proceeding, I witnessed most intelligent friends at the other side of the table in a state of solemn perturbation, and in the full conviction that they were conversing with the spirits of departed relatives. I observed that Mrs. Marshall intently watched the person in communication with the spirit and seemed to regulate the raps accordingly.<sup>618</sup>

This excerpt shows a narrative of double observation: the doctor watching the medium and both watching the sitters. If Edmunds saw this a discursive battle of methodology

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<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>618</sup> *RS*, 70.



and authority, he shows it at work here. It is Mrs. Marshall, the paid medium, who is “business-like” being she is guided, not by spirits but by pecuniary motives. Edmunds, the specialist of observation looks on as his friends, the creditworthy peers whose credit he would not call into question, let their rational will get subsumed by the calculating medium. It is Edmunds the doctor who can see the unseen, see what is really at work and the contagious sickness and expert manipulation of the event.

Home is portrayed as failing when he is put to experimental conditions. During a séance, Edmunds tells a medium to move slightly away from the piano and the noises stop. The Davenport brothers, like Home, feel indisposed to recreate their abilities when under his medical gaze when outside their realm of theatre. The only real medium of any veracity is the medical declaration of possible hidden psychosis. It is the doctor, the new prophet of a positivist age, whose diagnosis, like a prognostication comes true when mediums and their supporters become hospitalized. Edmunds could talk to the hidden spirit world of disease which only the trained eye can discern. It is in the significance of the medium that the LDS’s experimental foray seems the most radical from both supporters and detractors of the spiritualist theory.

Here one sees many layers of narrative overlapping with appeals to letters and news articles. The footnote and the communication vie for attention of the reader. The responses to Edmund’s criticism have the last say even with the smaller print. A letter by Alfred Wallace is put right after that criticizes Edmund’s argument against abnormal and supernatural phenomena. What concerns me here is the different discourses seeking to show just which side has the better explanation over an event, the validation of a fact. The report becomes an exercise in self-reflection where outside contemporary

sources and testimony vie within and outside the report itself. Edmunds' "communication" is not the only skeptical narrative in the Report. The LDS published others. It is the most prominent as he was the chairman who believed that the table of proceeding had been moved away from facts and observation, not by spirits but by spiritualists. The publication of his objections shows a committee that did not silence opposition but engaged with it. The committee may state its findings at the beginning, but the rest of the document shows a grappling with phenomena, giving a glimpse to arduous task of ascertaining where facts begin and where narrative ends. This should not be surprising as the LDS according to its manifesto did not shun controversy. Most members of the committee thought the findings of the *Report* were valid and if that meant leaving them between the position of skeptics and Spiritualists, then it was never meant to take either position. However, it is in its position that its weakness would be found. It did not take an ideological stand amongst two positions which had numerous resources in organizations and different media. *The Report* was a discursive island used by Spiritualist and skeptics as a stopping point and not tied to either, though Spiritualists used it as validation. It did, though, show there indeed was an audience for enquirers whose curiosity looked for a new discursive space for the supernatural.

### **The Spiritualists**

Like the skeptics, the Spiritualists had their specialists from various backgrounds.

Specialists like Varley and Wallace thought that secular reasoning was circular in that it

precluded the bounds of the possible.<sup>619</sup> The Spiritualists appealed to a Cartesian mind-body dichotomy, and the testimony of followers who attended and validated séances, to show that there was immaterial, conscious causation that could interact intelligently with people. In this epistemology, the locus for knowledge and instrument were one and the same: the medium. The role of observer and recorder was an interplay between the medium and onlooker who were able to validate phenomena. For Spiritualists, the survival of the spirit was the only possible explanation for the phenomena that they observed, and the medium was the “true spiritual scientist.”<sup>620</sup> The “facts” of a séance at a dining room table “proved” scientific materialists were wrong and hence called into question scientific materialism’s authority and epistemology.<sup>621</sup>

One spiritualist medium who was interviewed repeatedly by the LDS and whose ability is alluded to often by other interviewees was Daniel Douglas Home (1833-1886). His mediumship is interesting: Home was a man at a time when spiritualist mediumship was viewed as mainly a female phenomenon, he was not a professional medium (meaning he didn’t get paid) which was a prerequisite for the middle-class respectability of the experiments, and his circle included aristocrats and society figures. Due to his gender, skeptics did not charge Home with hysteria, though they did accuse him of fraud. He had standing, aristocratic connections and celebrity status, and had never been exposed as a fraud. Home is featured in three roles in the *Report*: as interviewee, experiment and authoritative source of testimony. In looking at how Home testified and created his own narrative, one can see how his persona was portrayed to the

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<sup>619</sup> Oppenheim, 299.

<sup>620</sup> Noakes, “The Sciences of Spiritualism,” Loc 863.

<sup>621</sup> Noakes, “The Sciences of Spiritualism,” Loc 969.

Committee and public through newspapers, and how the media of the day articulated the polemics of belief, disbelief and criticism.

The *Report* describes how Home was set to participate in controlled experiments under Sub-Committee No. 5. What stands out is its lack of anything remarkable happening as opposed to other sub-committees. Home was a famous medium whose abilities achieved renown. Dyte and Edmunds were present and made sure they checked Home and even made him wear special clothing. This anti-climactic series of experiments was explained by Home as due to him feeling ill and the fact that spirits could not always be counted on. Edmunds explained the table movements that did occur as being the result of muscular exertion, though not all were convinced.<sup>622</sup> The *Report* actually puts Edmunds aforementioned communication after this experiment. To look at just how the Committee portrayed these episodes in more ambiguous language, it is worthwhile to look at how proponents of Home viewed them. Lord Adare (1841-1926) wrote of supposed psychic manifestations that occurred after these meetings. In his *Experiences of Spiritualism with Mr. D.D. Home* (1873) he claims that after a séance that was “not satisfactory” Home went to a friend’s house where a séance produces important information.<sup>623</sup> Lord Adare circulated the book privately as early as 1870, hot on the heels of the experiments.<sup>624</sup> The Committee does not portray Home as a fantastic medium of miracles as Adare does but as another witness, albeit a major one. His was indeed a unique case, but still just a case in the report. Adair could fawn but the Committee sought an impartial to make its findings read as a testimony to objectivity.

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<sup>622</sup> *RS*, 47-50.

<sup>623</sup> Viscount Adare. *Experiences in Spiritualism with Mr. D.D. Home*. (London: Thomas Scott, 1872) 166-168.

<sup>624</sup> “Lord Adare on Spiritual Manifestation.” *The Mayo Constitution*, Saturday, Jan. 29, 1870.

While distancing itself from blanket skepticism, the committee did not accept the hero worship of mediums. It treated Home as a subject to be tested, who was given prominence as a specimen known to be better at producing phenomena. There was no need to embellish or seek an explanation for his lack of results. They are marked down the same way other sessions were reported. The *Report* wanted to portray the discourse of impersonal scientific objectivity in its experiments, and Home's individuality is only given in his testimony, cordoned off from the main scientific narrative to show a conscious segmentation according to two different disciplines.

Home's testimony is an example of an anti-climactic experimentation compounded with an unassuming testimonial. It exemplifies the Committee's ability to undermine the expectations of both skeptics and proponents regarding spiritualist phenomena. It divests Home of his veneer of inimitable ability amongst the spiritualist community, but it also takes him seriously as a witness. Home is brought forth to give testimony before the committee and again what stands out is the lack of certainty and theory behind the phenomena. The committee in its Minutes does admit that it was the phenomena of Home which was partly responsible for its formation.<sup>625</sup> Unlike "scientific spiritualists" such as Emma Hardinge, Home relished being a celebrity medium, allowing the witness to contact the newspaper, committee, diary and let their narrative strengthen his. To further seal his uniqueness, he would disclaim esoteric knowledge of the essential causality of his powers and easily admit the prevalence of fraud amongst mediums. He could condemn spiritualists and scientific circles as long as his sphere of influence widened, leaving his image of infallibility unblemished.

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<sup>625</sup> *RS*, 108.

Home goes on to negate stereotypes of the phenomena: they do not depend on belief, they can happen at any time, in or out of trance.<sup>626</sup> He forgoes any knowledge of his levitations or cures, citing that witnesses would be best suited to answer as he has no recollection.<sup>627</sup> Home's testimony is an appeal to that of others to speak for him. The scientist William Crookes was in the process of investigating him which will be dealt with in the next chapter. If he could not convince Edmunds or Faraday and Brewster years before, he could allow others to speak for him.<sup>628</sup> Home was able to divest himself of ideology but maintain the charisma and following of an ideologue. This would put him in a position to admit to the imposture of others, and even show how such imposture could be achieved, while affirming his own honesty and ability. Home was not alone in allowing the living to speak on his behalf. The spiritualist depended on the affirmation of believers or the recently converted for quantitative, though not always qualitative, proof of phenomena. If mediumship had variable results, the spiritualist press was invariably relied upon to show its positive occurrences and propagate it to followers and believers. Home allowed others to speak for himself just as the medium spoke on behalf of spirits. He relied on their testimonials to further his credibility. His defenders helped him in their own testimonials before the Committee and in letters to the press which had a wide circulation. In one séance, for example, Home depends on the letter by Mrs. Trollope as proof of a levitation, which he claimed not to realize was happening until told it was so.<sup>629</sup> These testimonies were meant to be accumulative proof in place of lackluster

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<sup>626</sup> *RS*, 189.

<sup>627</sup> *RS*, 191.

<sup>628</sup> "Pretensions of Spiritualism - The Life of D.D. Home." *The North British Review*, vol. 39, Aug. 1863, 174–206. For Brewster's séance with Home see 182, for Faraday's criticism see 185 and for mention of Ferriar see 205.

<sup>629</sup> *RS*, 190.

experimental results. The very next testimony is of a Mrs. Cox (no relation to E.W. Cox) that Home did indeed levitate on another occasion.<sup>630</sup>

However, this testimony is in passing and is overshadowed by Benjamin Coleman, Lord Lindsay and Jencken's testimony for Home.<sup>631</sup> They all took part in creating a narrative of the dependable middle-class medium who was beyond fraud, and who did not hesitate to be investigated. He sought to defend his character and credit by the testimonials of other important figures. If results sometimes lacked, they were to be put in the context of other results that did show phenomena. Variability was justified on ignorance of both the medium who admitted not knowing the underlying laws as to why things sometimes did or did not happen, though sometimes excuses were given as well. Home could use ignorance to make his testimony appear authentic, and drew upon the testimony of very credible, affluent circles as support. A series of poor results could not negate a history of powerful phenomena.

This was especially the case in the spiritualist press which made its way into the *Report*, showing how testimony and outside texts slowly became a part of the *Report* itself. Appeals from such supporters also ran to the press. The *Report* is filled of citations of spiritualist newspapers that go into greater detail for Home's abilities or the "proof" of Spiritualism.<sup>632</sup> The Spiritualist press itself covered this aspect of the Committee often. Every issue of *The Spiritual Magazine* from 1869-1871, following the progress of the LDS' committee almost every other month. *Medium and Daybreak*, a weekly newspaper, doing very much the same. Both London centered spiritualist papers

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<sup>630</sup> *RS*, 194.

<sup>631</sup> Report Coleman on Home: 137-140. Lord Lindsay: 213-215. Mr. Jencken 115-122

<sup>632</sup> Jencken cites Nov-Dec 1868 issues *The Spiritual Magazine* and *Human Nature*; Blanchard cites *The Spiritual Magazine* Sept 1860; other citations and even reproductions of articles see *RS*, 247.

and provincial newspapers saw the importance of such testimony. Even the mainstream press reported on Home's testimony. In the hundreds of articles on the progress of the committee from 1869-1871, the press from London to Cork covered Home.

That this part of the LDS' committee was the most cited points as a testimony to the celebrity value and shock value of spiritualism, and many articles came with a dismissive caveat. Articles were printed and reprinted in other publications in an echo of skeptical polemic.<sup>633</sup> Home was depicted as an individual with no character besides a love of celebrity, preying upon the aristocracy and the gullible. In this view, any testimony, even by the reliable, was not reliable testimony. However, the *Report* kept a dialectic distance from both camps as portrayed in the press, allowing all to speak but separating them in format and conclusion.

Home himself profited from the attention of both the LDS and Crookes' investigations. After the *Report*, he published a revised edition of his *Incidents in my Life* (1863) in 1874, first written when he attained notoriety in his return to Britain. In the second volume, Home claims, quite remarkably, that it was the notoriety of his court case and experiments that helped create the Committee.<sup>634</sup> He doesn't mention the London Dialectical Society or Crookes again in the book. For him, the Committee was just another footnote in his career, its formation just another testament to his ability and persona, not as an investigation in itself. Furthermore, they were unproductive, even more cause to play them down. Home wanted to have the final say in his reflective narrative and attempted to control his own celebrity through the medium of

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<sup>633</sup> For some examples on Home and Napoleon III see "The Spiritualists." *The Pall Mall Gazette*, June 24, 1869. 7 (This article was reprinted or cited all over the country) "The Spiritualists." *The Aberdeen Journal* Wed, June 30, 1869

<sup>634</sup> D.D. Home. *Incidents in My Life*. Vol. II. (New York: A. K. Butts and Co., 1874) vii-viii.



autobiography. He wanted the credit for being the inspiration for the Committee but didn't want to engage with its findings and had to counteract his critics. Autobiography, unlike the legal method of cross-examination employed by the Committee, was a narrative that did not have to deal with questioning and it is such narratives that exemplified the spiritualist testimony given in the spiritualist press. Home's was anything but unique in that respect. It was an epistemology that still favoured the ability to narrate what one saw without the fear of specialist imposition. It consciously contended with the institutional discourses of traditional religion but also materialist naturalism. From such a perspective, knowledge of the supernatural was still possible just as much as that of the quotidian and banal.

Some spiritualists felt that such conditions during séances amounted to impositions which would limit results, and even questioned the efficacy of such a method. In the minutes of the Committee, Emma Hardinge, an American medium with over 20 years of experience, felt that Britain had as of yet no really qualified mediums. In her view, mediums were loci for spiritual force. She describes them with the technological language of the day: a galvanic battery that stores spiritually charged energy. Mediumistic powers changed with climate and location. Her own power had suffered greatly since leaving America and could only be revitalized by a stay in the Scottish Highlands.<sup>635</sup> She represents the typical medium as a heterodox professional, and was antithetical to Edmunds in that she represented a specialist in a discipline that denied his physiological premises. Her expertise allowed her to create the narrative of the virtuoso medium. Hardinge was also touring the UK as a spiritualist missionary, a

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<sup>635</sup> *RS*, 101.

special attraction for those interested in spiritualist circles, and believers regarded her as having the authority to declare which instances of mediumship were or were not valid. Though the Committee allows her to give her testimony, she used it to undermine the Committee's narrative.<sup>636</sup> She used her testimony to subvert what she may have viewed as an attempt at research which was most likely not going to produce much results. Like Edmunds, interestingly, she doubts the Committee's ability and the ability of mediums of Britain in general. She is the seasoned "professional" medium here who gives her take on the inexperienced spiritualists and scientists who want to study the supernatural. In her niche, she is the expert giving expert testimony.

The opinions of Home and Hardinge are extremely telling. Home benefitted from the spiritualist movement but made his celebrity the focus, he was the phenomenon. Hardinge, the American medium, was the specialist medium, full of years of experience and esoteric knowledge on how the whole process worked, who argued that the controlled experiment by scientists might sometimes be too controlling, to the point of being counterproductive. They all embraced science but differed to the extent that scientific methods and nomenclature could help explain the supernatural. They had all reached their conclusion that Spiritualism was objectively valid, and believed that science would validate it, but were wary that the methods themselves lacked validity. For them, science was a means to prove the spiritualist theory correct.

## **Publication and Reception**

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<sup>636</sup> *RS*, 109-110.

The publication of *The Report* became a locus for reviews not only on the publication but about the subject in general. It became an object itself and the reviews and testimony of participants on the findings mimic the diverse findings of the very committee. The publication became a medium for the differing epistemologies that published their appraisal of the committee's success, shortcomings or outright failure. The Committee published its report and its very publication was controversial. *The Medical Gazette* wrote a balanced review claiming that not much had changed as to result but begins by pointing out that Edmunds and the LDS voted on not officially publishing it.<sup>637</sup> Other newspapers saw it as validating that there was truly something worthy of further study.<sup>638</sup> Other papers also took a balanced approach to its findings.<sup>639</sup> The spiritualist press saw it in a decidedly positive light, even if it had shortcomings. As Noakes has pointed out, the Spiritualist press was used as the press in general: "for reflecting and shaping the identity of cultural groups."<sup>640</sup> Burns, editor and owner of the plebian *Medium and Daybreak* compared the findings to cream and milk that "invariably float on the top."<sup>641</sup> In fact, he published the reprint, pasting the detracting reviews and allowing the reader to judge the findings for themselves, as Barrow has remarked.<sup>642</sup> He also published a joint slim booklet with Freethinker Charles Bradlaugh lauding it in *Human Immortality Proved by Facts: Report of a Two Night's Debate on Modern*

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<sup>637</sup> "The London Dialectical Society on "Spiritualism."" *Medical Times and Gazette*. Saturday, Oct 29, 1871. 528.

<sup>638</sup> "Report on Spiritualism." *The Derbyshire Times*. Saturday, November 11, 1871. 7. See also Review in *The London Quarterly Review* October 1871. 519-523.

<sup>639</sup> "Spiritualism Investigated." *The Western Morning News*, Saturday, October 21, 1871. 3 for a dismissive review see "Report on Spiritualism." *The Scotsman*. Tuesday, Sept. 26, 1871. For a scathing one see "Our London Letter." *The Evening Telegraph*. Wednesday. October 18, 1871.

<sup>640</sup> Noakes, "Sciences of Spiritualism," Loc 1033-1045.

<sup>641</sup> James Burns. "The London Dialectical Society's Report." No. 87 Vol. II London, December 1, 1871. 3.

<sup>642</sup> Barrow, 106-107.

*Spiritualism*.<sup>643</sup> Burns would also later collect and print William Crookes' early research from his *Quarterly Journal* in a very affordable volume showing an authoritative scientific view on the supernatural.<sup>644</sup> Proctor wanted to make its findings, the product of a generation of assent accessible to many at a very low price. The "scientifically inclined" *Spiritual Magazine* hailed its findings and even reproduced whole sections of the report. For them, it confirmed their spiritualist leanings and the investigations of Crookes.<sup>645</sup> For a society that courted controversy, it seems the LDS went out of its way to make clear it had nothing to do with its publication. Mocked before as claiming "There is no God but Malthus" and of lecturing women on improper medical subjects, some saw their foray into spiritualism as proof of its notoriety and foolishness.<sup>646</sup> It might be in such criticism that might explain The LDS's Secretary Fredrick A. Ford's letter to *The Daily Telegraph* wherein he wants to make it clear that the LDS did not have anything to do with the publication.<sup>647</sup> However, unauthorized publications had been a problem before for the LDS. It may have been that this *Report* was not only beyond the demonstrable but also lacked a conclusion that could be based on sound reproducible experimentation, or maybe members like Huxley thought it was not a desirable subject that warranted an official publication. The papers could ridicule spiritualism, but they could not deny its popularity. The reviews and letter could not provide the narrative closure to the *Report*. The findings spilled over into lectures based on its popularity and

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<sup>643</sup> Charles Bradlaugh, James Burns. *Human Immortality*. (London: James Burns, 1873).

<sup>644</sup> William Crookes. *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*. (London: J. Burns, 1874)

<sup>645</sup> See "Some Further Experiments on Psychic Force." *Spiritual Magazine* S2 V6 N11 Nov 1871 506-508 and "The Report on Spiritualism of the London Dialectical Society." *Spiritual Magazine* S2 V6 N12 Dec 1871. 540-550.

<sup>646</sup> "The Spirits and their Friends." *The Hull and Eastern Counties Gazette*, Thursday, April 29, 1869. 3 – reprint from *The Pall Mall Gazette*.

<sup>647</sup> Fredrick A. Ford. "Spiritualistic Experiments." *The Daily Telegraph*. Tuesday, October 24, 1871. 2

even towards the end of the century it was still being cited by the SPR where the same polemic was a vital part of its organization.

Edmunds may have been the chair of the committee, but he found himself at odds with the intended publication of the report and his “communication” is printed in full in the *Report*.<sup>648</sup> The *Report* thus becomes a self-referential document that portrays just how problematic a creation of a “fact” could become. Edmunds was worried that an event became synonymous with “fact” simply because the observer could not figure an explanation. While this may have shown his bias, it also points to the problem of when one can go simply from testimony to something to testimony of a surety. One may say they have experienced an event but if it runs counter to most such events, common sense, and lacks proper scientific safeguards, it just might be a testimony to unverifiable, subjective experience.

Edmunds never doubted the sincerity of testimony if it came from his circle and peer group, he just doubted they were competent:

I intended that a limited number of competent observers should be selected to form a special jury of impartial and able investigators, who would carefully test and fully report upon evidence that might be tendered.<sup>649</sup>

The Committee claimed to have done that but it is obvious Edmunds thought this jury lacked the proper credentials medical professionals such as he and Dyte had. As Barrow has pointed out, “social respectability could not buy conceptual

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<sup>648</sup> *RS*, 68-69.

<sup>649</sup> *RS*, 52.

respectability.”<sup>650</sup> Yet, how does he answer for the corroboration and accumulative testimonies of integral, creditworthy witnesses? By alluding to accumulative testimony: If not driven to record a verdict, I should remain a sceptic on the ground that the alleged fact was at variance with an infinite mass of other experience, and because any other course would cause the mind to lose all anchorage in what we call material fact.<sup>651</sup> Crowe thought that questioning accumulative testimony on the supernatural was by default questioning all history, reducing it to phantasmagoria. Here Edmunds does likewise but as a retort. The mass of human testimony and common sensory experience overwhelmingly showed the phenomena was not common, that those who pointed to a multitude of witnesses excluded the exponentially more that never had such an experience.

Herein lay the crux of democratic epistemology, that by whether appealing to the self or to the masses risked a circularity of inconclusion. The very amorphous nature of the data depended on what one chose, making it difficult to either escape a hierarchy or reach a stable inference. Wallace, one of the six “avowedly” spiritualists in the committee of 32, argued it was never proven “that a large number of independent, honest, and sensible witnesses, *can* testify to a plain matter of fact which never occurred at all.”<sup>652</sup> He, like many proponents, as Crowe and Colquhoun did, used the method of an appeal to precedent, even pointing to the previous ridicule of evolution. Whose mass had more weight. Whose testimony was part of the narrative of reality? It

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<sup>650</sup> Barrow, 92.

<sup>651</sup> *RS*, 56.

<sup>652</sup> *RS*, 84.

is this inferential quagmire that the London Dialectical Society's Committee tried to surmount but became a dialectical image for the discourses in contention.

## Conclusion

Though the LDS's leaders forsook the report, it remained popular. Four thousand more copies were reprinted in 1873 and it proudly displayed the derision of skeptical reviewers at its beginning, stating that they had "willfully suppressed or grossly misrepresented" the actual experiments and that an, "edition so inexpensive as the present will enable the public to read and judge for themselves."<sup>653</sup> The public was to be the judge in whose testimony was of more weight.

The Committee, a gathering of middle-class professionals operating mainly from London provide one with dialectics at work. The society's document with all its discordant voices was a conscious attempt to show it at work. Though "short-lived," the LDS offered a new paradigm of supernatural research and some spiritualists like Emma Hardinge Britten saw it as a watershed moment.<sup>654</sup> In its attempt to portray itself as scientific, it pushed unattested testimony and argumentative hypotheses into the backdrop of repeated and objective experimentation to show that the phenomena were

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<sup>653</sup> *RS* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, iii

<sup>654</sup> Emma Hardinge Britten. *Nineteenth Century Miracles*. (New York: Lovell and Co., 1884) 80, 188-202.

real and not accomplished by material contact. The set conditions in different houses turned the domestic sphere into a lab and the “sacred space” of mediums into a controlled environment. It allowed the results of its experiments to change the nature of the explanation of the events. It made the event center stage, not the medium or the explanation. It overturned stereotypical notions of the séance and proper conditions for phenomena just as naturalists were undoing traditional notions of animal life by way of *in situ* observation.

As Crowe used her collected testimony with minimal interference, the LDS allowed the experiment to remain impersonal and concise with a lack of superfluous description. It is the experiment as narrative which shows the desire for both realism and reality. It was a realism that was collaborative and a social experiment where even though men wrote down their notes of the experiment, women took an active part in the actual experiments. Meta-narratives and metaphysical explanations were quarantined between two sections of their description where they were relegated a different space to contain them. The one thing that could not be contained, explained or barely named was that force – the “ghost” of the narrative – that the *Report* tried hard to define. Far from being ineffectual and producing little of not as Oppenheim assumes, Lamont points out that the press saw its and Crooke’s findings as proof that more investigation was needed, and that the earlier dismals of Carpenter and Faraday no longer seemed able to account for the phenomena especially that of immaterial causation as witnessed by multiple educated professionals simultaneously. However, others saw it as an example of the debilitating nature of the subjective experience.<sup>655</sup> Even if the *Report* claimed that

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<sup>655</sup> Lamont, 913-4.



many of the investigators who began as skeptics became believers, they only became so in the validity of the phenomena and not in the spiritual hypothesis. They only met both extremes of the debate halfway and found themselves without a solid ideology to rest their observations.<sup>656</sup> Their neutrality assured that they would not have sustained support, whereas both skeptics and spiritualists had their respective societies and presses to create their own sub-cultures. It would take Cox's attempt to create a disciplinary niche in the Psychological Society of Great Britain to continue the Committee's agenda. *The Report* would not become a seminal text in supernatural research but it was a liminal one leading to a new method of research.

The CLDS changed the template supernatural research and for the remainder of the nineteenth century its legacy would be seen with the continued work of Cox, the founding of Britain's first psychological society and later with the SPR who all employed its template in many of their investigations by making use of a communal effort of educated individuals employing the latest scientific methods, as well as emerging sciences like psychology, to study the phenomena. It had changed the narrative by offering an alternative way of viewing supernatural data away from the medium and lone specialist and widening both the scope and participation. It also sought to validate the jurisprudential method. One need not be a specialist to qualify reality – an assertion Wallace makes in his retort to Edmund – one need only be credible. The phenomena were to be investigated and judged on by one and one's fellow peers during an event where unanimity was not always required. It was between the specialist and blanket democratic testimony that the facts could be ascertained under conditioned

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<sup>656</sup> *RS*, 2.

experimentation for a discipline that itself called for such an epistemology. A verdict could be reached or there could be called for a new trial. But whose experiments? Whose conditions? Even if those were agreed upon, whose interpretation or whose opinion would be valid?

In *the Report* Edward W. Cox makes a statement in his communications to the committee, lauding the steps being taken to ascertain scientifically supernatural phenomena:

I am glad to learn, has already been commenced by Mr. Crookes, F.R.S., and others, with the aid of appropriate apparatus for examining the conditions...of this Psychic Force...A Psychological Society is also in progress of formation, for the collection of facts, the trial of experiments, and the promotion of discussion relating to the entire question of the mutual relationship in man of life, mind and body.<sup>657</sup>

Cox, who was the main editor of *The Report* balancing skeptical and non-skeptical views, placing them side by side and allowing retorts by many viewpoints in footnotes, was referring to his own idea of a society. This society was to be Baconian as well, and like Crowe was meant to collect facts that would lead to a synthetic form of psychology that would look at all phenomena that in turn would be put before the jury of the public. The CLDS and Crookes would be the impetus of this inductive approach that would again fuse jurisprudential and scientific methods. However, though it seems Cox was contemplating beginning this society in 1871, he would not be able to for another five

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<sup>657</sup> RS, 102.

years. Patient observation of phenomena was needed and sometimes just patience to even begin. Crowe stated in *Spiritualism and the Age We Live In*:

But there is a department of knowledge which, as far as we yet know, is not reducible to experimental science, and in relation to which our ideas, inasmuch as we have any, are extremely vague and unsatisfactory. I allude to the knowledge of *ourselves*.<sup>658</sup>

The mechanism of man was known, yet “Psychology is a name without a science:” both Crowe and Cox saw this as a lacuna that left an area for the experiential method to make progress, where observation and enquiry could be used to collect facts and lead to new ontological insights, where testimonial evidence could carry weight.

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<sup>658</sup> *SAWLI*, 7.

## Chapter 5: Evidence and Testimony in E.W. Cox's Writing

Psychological science, strictly so called...has been for a long time greatly neglected in this country, and its phenomena...have been almost entirely disregarded, although of paramount interest to every intelligent, living being, and of the utmost importance to the philosophy of man.<sup>659</sup>

The "learned Serjeant" knows as much about chemistry as a washerwoman does of "wave theory," the display of impromptu learning he makes is positively astounding. Armed with an hour's reading of Beck and Orfila, the great man comes down to court to puzzle, bewilder and very often to confute men of real ability and acquirement.<sup>660</sup>

Though not meant for Serjeant Cox, this diatribe against the supposed presumptuous character of the legal world and ignorant jury could easily be applied to the views of physicians such as Carpenter against Cox, one of the last Serjeant-at-Laws. This chapter will deal with the supernatural research and writings of Edward William Cox, along with his creation of the Psychological Society of Great Britain (1875-1879), the first British society to be devoted to the study of anomalous phenomena without a medical or Spiritualist agenda. It will show Cox's methodology, influenced by

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<sup>659</sup> Colquhoun, *Isis Revelata*, Vol.II.25

<sup>660</sup> Cornelius O'Dowd, 284.

his legal and editorial background, united both legal and scientific approaches to the study of such phenomena into a nascent discipline, 'psychology,' that yet had neither been institutionalized or demarcated discursively. It will also show that Cox continued the paradigm of the LDS' *Report* in balancing a jurisprudential and experimental methodology. Cox's stressed the role testimony was at the center of his polemic in demanding that a new discipline such as psychology needed recourse to as it was situated between the authoritative discourses of physiology and theoretical studies of the mind and philosophy. Cox called for a new paradigm of investigation that approached mental states and behaviour in a way different from both disciplines, as the physiological one sought causation in the body, and the other was speculative and unobservant of actual behaviour and phenomena. It was also an attempt to divest the research away from spiritualist psychology to a discipline that could represent itself as objective and neutral.

This chapter will explore Cox's legal and editorial background to show his predisposition towards democratic epistemology. Graham Richards, in his essay 'Edward Cox, The Psychological Society of Great Britain (1875-1879) and the meaning of an institutional failure', touches Cox's vision of what Richards describes as a "Tribunal of Science" in *Mechanism of Man* (1873-4) over the medical and scientific institutional disregard for the most elementary forms of proof. For Richards this points to the fundamental differences of scientific and jurisprudential methodology that needs to be elaborated on.<sup>661</sup> This chapter will explore this topic, and show that this use and advocacy for an epistemology more in line with the legal tradition was used by Cox

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<sup>661</sup> Graham Richards. Edward Cox, "The Psychological Society of Great Britain (1875-1879) and the meaning of an institutional failure." *Psychology in Britain*. (BPS Books; Leicester, 2001) 44

throughout his literary output on the supernatural. Cox claimed to be a judge, but in these works he was both judge and advocate, pleading to the jury of the public.

This will be assessed by examining Cox's *Spiritualism Answered by Science* and his *Mechanism of Man*, in which Cox used his legal expertise to place Crookes as the star witness to the validity of immaterial causation, while using textual cross-examination against Carpenter's counterarguments. It will then move on to discuss the Psychological Society of Great Britain with the controversies that the society provoked and the influence that it had on later investigators. It will be shown that Cox's writings and the work of the PSGB constituted a defense of the legal method, an attempt to lay claim to a level of epistemological authority for empiricism and jurisprudence that had previously been reserved for scientists, while at the same time advocating the scientific method in an attempt to validate both by a balance of methodologies.

## **Legal Experience**

Oppenheim considers supernatural research after 1860 as representative of its practitioners' professions, writing that: "Much of the time-consuming and often tedious work of these groups was accomplished by people who often combined such chores with the responsibility of lawyers, doctors, clergymen, politicians, professors, journalists and literati of all sorts."<sup>662</sup> This middle-class and professional aspect to psychical research, rather than being merely an expression of tedious note-taking, was actually an earnest effort into collecting evidence either for or against psychic phenomena. It

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<sup>662</sup> Oppenheim, 29.

was a new way of ascertaining the observable world and making sense of it: the committees, details, experiments, statistics and new terminology were all designed to allow phenomena to be described with greater specificity via experimentation and observation. Oppenheim commends Cox's diligence but claims he accomplished "little of note."<sup>663</sup> Oppenheim even erroneously describes Cox's PSGB as spiritualistic.<sup>664</sup> However, his method would influence psychological literature from the time of the Committee of the LDS onwards, where his consensus-building method of epistemology, blending science and jurisprudential methods, would continue to be employed after his death.

If Cox's life is an attestation of anything, it is of taking notes of events, facts, and of desisting from blanket theories before taking in the evidence. Edward William Cox (1809-1879) had a prolific career that relished the "tedious", and that spanned many disciplines at a time when Britain's legal system was changing drastically. He was a poet, lawyer, advocate, editor of many newspapers, a writer and, for a brief period of time, a politician. There are two aspects of his life that deserve special attention as they pertain to his psychological research: his legal and editorial careers. They will show someone who saw the need for affordable print, precise collection of facts and a wider participation of the populace as vital to any investigation. This agenda would carry over into supernatural research and would remain until the end of his life.

Cox began his legal career as an articled clerk in Taunton, where there was no systematic method of study. He had to read on his own and depended on practical experience as he completed his five years of training. In his view, it was thus not the

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<sup>663</sup> Oppenheim, 30.

<sup>664</sup> Oppenheim, 238-239.

reading of treatises which gave the attorney the ability to handle a case, but the daily experiential dealings with actual cases and people which allowed one to reach the proper conclusion.<sup>665</sup> Cox's attitude towards legal work in Taunton would continue to remain for the rest of his life: to allow "facts" to "speak for themselves" as the only guide to reaching a formed conclusion, rather than adopting a set narrative where facts are accepted according to a pre-set criteria of what is acceptable or possible. He felt this monolithic method of approaching data existed in both legal and scientific institutions.

Cox also had a short-lived career as a poet, publishing *The Opening of the Sixth Seal* (1829) and *1829, A Poem* (1829) which went through two additions. They show a Cox driven by a need to order history and society's institutions, reject materialism and promote self-help. His poetry was intensely religious with moments of apocalypse being prominent. Both volumes treat history in a comprehensive manner seeing a pattern of ignorance and enlightenment. *1829* is addressed to Wellington and oscillates between a desire to empower the masses while at the same time fearing that the newly educated public may be unable to use its knowledge properly:

Scavengers, educate at Infant Schools,  
Curse while they sweep, and call their masters fools;  
Cobblers converse of politics and state,  
And revolutionary tales relate;<sup>666</sup>

This contrasts with a view that looks with sympathy on the masses.<sup>667</sup> There is also an interesting preoccupation with new periodicals and law courts, making the poem a

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<sup>665</sup> Peter Spiller. *Cox and Crime: An Examination of Edward William Cox (1809-1879)*. (Cambridge, Institute of Criminology Cambridge, 1985) 4.

<sup>666</sup> E.W. Cox. *1829, A Poem*. (London: Samuel Maunders, 1829) 109.

<sup>667</sup> *A Poem*, 44-47.



hybrid of Swiftian satire and Christian eschatological thinking.<sup>668</sup> *The Opening of the Sixth Seal* focuses on the spiritual but in a portrayal that seems millenarian and would be echoed by spiritualist thought and poetry:

Thought, canst thou  
 Number them,-  
 The myriad,-myriad Spirit forms that trod  
 The unfathomable void?-With what in heaven  
 Or on Earth that host cans't though compare,  
 To what things liken it?<sup>669</sup>

These spirit forms are the souls of the departed, angelic being and innumerable others that inhabit the worlds. *1829* looks at the printing press, law courts and church that need to be reformed. *The Opening* looks at the final Judgement and human spiritual awakening. All of these, plus the imaginative impulse of a grand revelation, mass enlightenment and the soul, would continue to be a feature of Cox's writings, as will be shown later.

Cox preferred quarter sessions to the Superior Courts, where argumentative reasoning held more sway than evidence in front of jury, which may seem a contradiction to his supposed ideal of putting evidence over rhetoric.<sup>670</sup> This contradiction was one that Cox would never fully reconcile, even in supernatural research. Though he wished to stress facts based on collected data, he also supplied hypotheses to further his argument, especially when using experts for his arguments.

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<sup>668</sup> *A Poem*, 97-102.

<sup>669</sup> E.W. Cox. *The Opening of the Sixth Seal*. (London: Longman and Co., 1829) 92.

<sup>670</sup> Spiller, 8-9.

Furthermore, his recourse to Crooke and experts shows that while he sought to propagate his ideas and society to the masses, he still utilized the specialist in place of common observation. In this respect, he was similar to Carpenter and Tyndall who used specialization with a clear agenda to order phenomena, educate and reform. What sets Cox apart was that his version of ‘psychology’ still needed the public to partake in collecting data, rather than viewing only data collected by professional experts as being reliable. This semi-democratic epistemology would be used to make a case for the supernatural. Cox was not an authority, but he wanted his agenda to become authoritative.

From 1858 until his death, Cox presided as a recorder and judge at Falmouth, and was a magistrate at Middlesex. As a judge, indeed one of the last Serjeants-at-Law, he was critical of summary jurisdiction, arguing that it was formatted in the prosecution’s favour and infringed the need for the jury to decide, based on evidence, each case on its own merits.<sup>671</sup> For Cox, the petty jury was the cornerstone of a fair trial, the “twelve free minds” were invaluable to maintaining the primacy of evidence and as a safeguard against judicial error.<sup>672</sup> The method of arriving at truth was an arduous task of allowing the collected evidence to arrive at a conclusion. It should also be a collective experience and not a recourse to established authority, which may at times fall victim to its own belief in infallibility or negligence. Even the *Pall Mall Gazette* noticed Cox as judge who would be outspoken when it came to the right to give testimony:

We trust that some remarks made by Serjeant Cox, at the Middlesex Sessions yesterday will not be allowed to pass unnoticed by Parliament.

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<sup>671</sup> Spiller, 44.

<sup>672</sup> Spiller, 50-51.

At the sitting of the second Court, Mr. Serjeant Cox, addressing Agnes Wiggins, the prosecuterix in a recent case threatening a witness, said:-“In consequence of the threats which had been used towards you for the purpose of preventing you from appearing to give evidence, I felt it my duty for the protection of witnesses generally, and for the vindication of the administration of justice, to direct the prosecution of the offender.”<sup>673</sup>

This had to do with protecting her testimony and right to do so freely and even to make sure the Treasury reimburse the prosecution even if it was not covered the Prosecutors' Expenses act. Cox viewed the act of testifying as a brave narrative act that should be protected. Being practical, he also saw the role intimidation and money played as well in factoring just how much people would be willing to risk to speak.

### **Cox as Editor**

Cox was also a creator and editor of journals, newspapers and legal treatises, and the same need to collect, simplify and make available which is visible in his work as an editor was repeated in his supernatural research and in his role as head of the *PSGB*. His redaction of evidence through a sifting of what was most substantial and productive proved successful in his editorial work, and he tried to recreate this with his work on the supernatural. Cox's work was a complex interplay between his intention of championing the social production of knowledge, and his desire to order it according to

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<sup>673</sup> “Occasional Notes.” *Pall Mall Gazette*. 20 January, 1875: 4

his viewpoint when sifting what was excluded and retained. He worked as an editor for the LDS's report, which was dealt with in the last chapter. The first paper that he founded, and the one that had the longest lasting influence, was the *Law Times* (1843) which he edited for twenty years. He founded it after realizing that such a journal was lacking in the legal world. It contained statutes, legal cases, judicial statistics and debates in parliament. It was meant to be a collection of facts and decisions which would create an informed readership and database for the profession. However, its purpose was not simply informative. Spiller points out: "He wrote of the need for a 'free press to awaken men's minds to a perception of wrongs,' and of his journal's 'special duty...to keep watch upon the ministers of the law, as well as to rebuke them when they do wrong, as to support them when they do right.'"<sup>674</sup> This had led him to a spat within the Tory party earlier in life against Disraeli and what Cox perceived were his Radical underpinnings tied to his past.<sup>675</sup> For Cox, advocacy, information and stance were tied to a consistent morality and ethos. The will, which would feature prominently throughout his writing, was vital to credibility. That is why Cox had misgivings of the M'Naughten Rules which defined insanity during the act of murder. He appealed to both to common sense juries and physiology as a case for human ability to comprehend its own actions, arguing that that, save an undeniable impulse, it made no sense to argue insanity and was not applicable to common life.<sup>676</sup> This appeal to the common sense of the jury, of

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<sup>674</sup> Spiller, 12.

<sup>675</sup> For an interesting glimpse of the controversy between the two see Benjamin Disraeli. *Letters: 1835-1837*. Ed. John A. W. Allen et Al. Vol. 2 (University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 1982) 10-45

<sup>676</sup> Martin J. Wiener. *Reconstructing the Criminal: Culture Law and Policy in England 1830-1914*. (Cambridge: CUP, 1990) 272-273.

ordinary people and an embrace of physiology when it suited his agenda, never went away.

In addition to this, Cox reworked the way cases were portrayed, employing an ‘omnibus report’ that allowed a new style of reporting the case in a clear manner where the most important information of the case was available. These Law Reports became semi-authoritative and were quoted all over Great Britain at trials.<sup>677</sup> In 1844 he launched Cox Criminal Cases Verulam Reports. This was meant to be a clear and concise collection of criminal court cases and judges’ decisions, either verbatim if publicized or in essence if extempore. The report was to be sent to the judge to make sure it was correct in its wording. The effect of these reports was to unify decision making as far away as Ireland and help judges to follow earlier decisions, thus helping to facilitate “uniformity and regularization.”<sup>678</sup> Cox’s *The Law and Practice of the County Courts in England* (1847) did the same for British elections, and was used by administrators in elections up until 1874.<sup>679</sup> In this respect, Cox was attempting to systematize knowledge in lieu of the pattern of the period. A collection of cases, like a classification of species by a naturalist, allows hypotheses to be created. It was an attempt at observing the law courts, classifying all cases and important ones in depth to reach a conclusion about the legal profession, precedents and possible new methods and new laws.

Cox’s life was one of collecting data and making it accessible to both professionals and lay people. Judging by the energy he employed whilst simultaneously

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<sup>677</sup> Spiller, 15.

<sup>678</sup> Spiller, 18.

<sup>679</sup> Spiller, 22.

being a lawyer and magistrate, one can easily see that this was a passionate enterprise for him. The act of editing material called for a subservience to events and data, but in way that was clearly relayed and accessible. In his view, this editing was, not carried out in order to control the narrative, but to make sure it did not go into a state of inertia but progressed due to new views and facts on the ground. However, his actions as editor and redactor implies the opposite. His choices implied a narrative, and the editing process is one of choosing what is and is not accessible. Cox defended his choice as the most expansive and least prejudicial, but he was still accepting some and rejecting others, nonetheless. Cox would continue this method, not only in his editorial position with the LDS but in his publications on psychical research and his last creation of collaborative investigation, the Psychological Society of Great Britain, where Cox wanted to make his final case for investigating possible evidence of an immaterial self, the psyche.

### **The Advocate**

Cox wrote *The Advocate*, the first monograph and manual on advocacy in English, in 1852. Gaines' article points out that it became semi-authoritative and was quoted often, helping usher in an era of such manuals on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>680</sup> *The Advocate* lays out the foundations of what Cox saw as the proper study of law, and its essential prerequisites that tie morality to practice. This desire for an overarching

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<sup>680</sup> Gaines, Philip. "Writing the Discursive Proto-Culture of Anglo-American Advocacy: Edward William Cox's 'The Advocate.'" *American Journal of Legal History*, vol. 51, no. 2, Apr. 2011, 333–359.

manual would reappear in his psychological works where he again laid the groundwork for the proper investigator of the supernatural.

In it, one sees a Cox fearful of an adversarial relationship developing between advocates and attorneys and given the backdrop of the adversarial relationship of expert witnesses, it seems pertinent:

This will certainly be the result if they should be tempted, by an excess of anxiety to compete with the Attorneys for the business of the County Courts, to rescind the rule that forbids them to take instructions and briefs directly from clients; for thus they will come, in no long time, to do the duties of Attorneys, and a ruinous rivalry will be established between the two branches of the Profession, who, in their proper duties and capacities are not rivals nor have any occasion for rivalry or jealousy, but are only two limbs of one body-two parts of one great whole.<sup>681</sup>

His fear was, as it was of many scientists, that this would lead to rivalry, a pecuniary-centered development of the law and loss of estimation in the public eye for a profession that until the rise of the medical professional was the most esteemed profession in Britain, as Golan has pointed out.<sup>682</sup>

Cox saw just such a similarity:

An Advocate (and, as it is said, a Physician), are the only two Professions which, while compelled to a large expenditure, cannot, by any ability, or any conceivable good fortune, earn their inevitable expenses for many years, because they are the only two professions in which age and

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<sup>681</sup> Edward William Cox, *The Advocate, His Training, Practice, Rights and Duties*. 2 Vols. Vol.I (London: Law Times Office, 1852) Vol.I.x

<sup>682</sup> Tal Golan. *Laws of Man, Laws of Nature: The History of Scientific Expert Testimony in England and America*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) 5.

experience are requisite to confidence-and really to competency,-with this added disadvantage in the case of the Advocate, that the ascent of honour and profit does not depend upon ability alone...<sup>683</sup>

This statement is eerily prescient as Cox would find himself in a war of polemics with Carpenter years later, seeking to demarcate where physiology's limit stopped at the human body and the lawyer, an expert in human behaviour has a discursive space for research in psychology. What is significant as well besides simply the pairing of professions but pointing to the problems of revenue both professions faced and, most importantly, the need for experience for a full competency in judgement for both.

Cox held that experience and research was essential in being a good advocate but one also sees an allusion to a sort of intuition that borders on the psychical:

The first faculty required by the Advocate, and that in an eminent degree, is PERCEPTION;-keenness of observation;-clearness and quickness of comprehension. A subject must be seen and understood in its entirety and in its details almost at the same instant and with the rapidity, as it were, of an intuition. For the Advocate there is no time to ponder upon a thought, and turn it over and over in his mind, and master it by degrees. He must grasp it faster than speech can convey, and measure it as he grasps.<sup>684</sup>

Cox, as will be shown, had been researching mesmerism by attending demonstrations, as did Crowe. This intuition goes beyond reflection and rationalization. It is a holistic understanding that transcends speech but must be represented by the advocate. This was vital to the advocate. In an attempt to keep the profession away from a pecuniary

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<sup>683</sup> Cox, *The Advocate*, Vol.I.42.

<sup>684</sup> Cox, *The Advocate*, Vol.I.15.



based one, he made it an ethical one where the true professional not only has an ethos but an understanding that bordered on the supersensuous. It is an advocacy where even the imagination and empathy are needed as a base to build upon.<sup>685</sup>

Both Cox and Crowe saw research and gathering data as not only an intellectual enterprise but a desire to make knowledge an ontological extension of being. He would never stop using the ethos of the advocate and utilizing its transferable skills. Like Crowe, he took his specialism and applied it to this amorphous, heterodox field.

Where Crowe had narrative and storytelling, Cox had the manual on how to investigate, the legalistic defense and jurisprudential method.

In terms of democratic epistemology and the ability to properly testify and narrate one's own experience, one sees Cox uphold a universal ability:

You are a MAN. Let *that* be your title of honour, than which no higher can be conferred by kings. You have a *mind*, whose freedom is a birthright given by its Creator, whose liberty is in your own keeping, which no power on earth can enslave... You have a *mission* here, which...if you could rightly comprehend how even a thought of yours may modify the destinies of your own and all coming generations,-would awe you by its magnitude.<sup>686</sup>

This is not simply the language of a nascent self-help literature nor simply a religious tinge. It is that and more. Like Crowe, Cox took the idea of humanity in God's image as an empowering theme. It is that being which equals social status among all. The allusion to thought even has a magnetist connotation. It is the ability of the individual not

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<sup>685</sup> Cox, *The Advocate*, Vol.I.18,21.

<sup>686</sup> Cox, *The Advocate*, Vol.I.62.

only to comprehend based on an inherent ability and dignity but the ability of that person to change their surroundings. This pathos would continue in his writing on supernatural research.

This manual was not simply a practical guide but a manifesto of aligning professional expertise with an objective and almost religious desire to arrive at truth. For Cox, the process of observation was not a simple one. An observer had to be of good character, disinterested when accounting phenomena, and someone who placed the truth above their own argument or bias.<sup>687</sup> Cox linked the profession, ability and morality together. Being professional was a calling. This would carry over to the PSGB where psychological research called for acute observation and a moral dedication. As Phillip Gaines has pointed out, Cox believed the advocate meant advocate in a wider sense than simply a legal career, that an advocate must 'master the Philosophy of Mind and one that entails pathos and mental sympathy.'<sup>688</sup> That this carried over into his supernatural research shows a thread, an ethos that Cox maintained until the end of his life. A legal professional was an expert on human behaviour, even empathetic, showing certain overtones that remind one of mesmeric ideas of rapport.

Cox continued to use this tone in what was in many ways his "manual" on the advocacy of supernatural research, *Spiritualism Answered by Science; with The Proofs of a Psychic Force*, in 1872, only a year after the LDS's *Report*. It is also a spirited defense of the experiments being made by William Crookes at the time. If the LDS used Home as their star witness, a medium who had not been either paid or caught faking

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<sup>687</sup> *The Advocate*, 46,98,122.

<sup>688</sup> Phillip Gaines. *From Truth to Technique at Trial: A Discursive History of Advocacy Advice Texts*. (Oxford: OUP, 2016) 90-120.

phenomena, Cox's star witness was Crookes: the scientist who discovered new elements, the specialist whose observational and instrument making skills made him an authority of knowledge and impeccable character. Cox brought his legal and jurisprudential background and methodology into the domain of the supernatural. Its phenomena, based largely on testimony, provided an easy starting point for him to transfer his skills to this new avenue of research, while his editing career gave him experience on what material was worthy in his estimation of retaining. These would, in turn, serve his experiential epistemology in his writings, in which he offered a defence of the supernatural by bringing the courtroom to the public so the reading jury could decide just what had really happened at a supposed supernatural event.

## **Conclusion**

Carpenter recollected:

Several years ago, an eminent Colonial Judge with whom I was discussing the subject on which I am now to address you, said to me "according to the ordinary rules of evidence, by which I am accustomed to be guided in the administration of justice, I cannot refuse credit to persons whose honesty and competence seem beyond doubt, in regards to facts which they declare to themselves to have witnessed; and such is the great body of testimony I have received in regards to the phenomena of spiritualism." In arguing this matter with my friend at the time, I took my stand upon the fact , well known not only to lawyers but to all men of large

experience in affairs that thoroughly honest and competent witnesses continually differ extremely in their accounts of the very same transaction, according to their mental prepossessions in regard to it.<sup>689</sup>

Even a madman could provide logical testimony, it all depended on how it conforms to uniformity and probability.<sup>690</sup> Again, we have an allusion to the pathological condition, an echo of Dr. Edmund's reasoning and the Lunacy Acts. Carpenter saw the great divide between the two professions but also their complementary nature and supposed epistemological spheres of influence. The physician was the authority over the laws of nature and lawyers only over those of man. Yet, in pointing out how people conflicted through testimony and narrative over an event, he failed to notice that it was that very point that plagued physicians and the scientific expert in law courts, that it was an argument that could easily be used against Carpenter. Cox saw this contradiction and made the most of it, not only to show Carpenter as biased but also to empower the common person to continue to testify in a valid, objective manner. Carpenter and the judge in this excerpt take on a different polemic when Cox is the judge whose texts are a response, a response Carpenter does not give his judge.

If Carpenter gave a supposed conversation with a judge to provide an example of the debate, it is interesting that upon his death November 1879, Spiritualists were more preoccupied with Cox's ties to Spiritualism than any legacy of his work, as were mainstream papers who took it for granted that he was a believer.<sup>691</sup> The PSGB mentions at the beginning of its compilation that there had erroneous speculation that

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<sup>689</sup> Carpenter, *Mesmerism, Spiritualism &c.*, 56.

<sup>690</sup> Carpenter, *Mesmerism, Spiritualism &c.*, 59.

<sup>691</sup> 'The Late Serjeant Cox.' *The Western Times Gazette*, (Wed November 26, 1879) 2; 'The Late Serjeant Cox.' *The Illustrated London News*. ( Dec 6, 1879) 530.

he was a spiritualist in some circles.<sup>692</sup> These rumours continued with testimony for and against.<sup>693</sup> Supposedly Cox came through during a séance by medium Mrs. Everitt and finally stated that the spirit hypothesis was correct.<sup>694</sup> Something that his old debunker, Dr. Forbes had done, according to spiritualists as well! There is no conclusive proof that Cox was a spiritualist but there is proof from his youthful poetry towards his final address and its pantheistic musings and citations of Wordsworth that his spiritual yearnings always remained imaginative and present.<sup>695</sup> That they drove him is obvious but how far they may have made him prejudicial is debatable. Even a recent blog has got it wrong when it claims Cox's idea to change the name from Psychology to Pneumatology was only a rumour, and that his concept of psychology had only to do with the soul and not the mind.<sup>696</sup>

Frank Podmore (1856-1910) in *Modern Spiritualism* (1902) a two-volume work largely dismissive of spiritualistic beliefs, paid homage to Cox's desire to seek an alternative to the spiritual hypothesis but still erroneously called the PSGB spiritualist:

The aim of the Society...was the scientific investigation of "psychology" which term Serjeant Cox violently appropriated to designate what has since, for want of a better name, should have been termed psychical research...Its founder and president was a man without any real knowledge either of psychology, as commonly understood, or the physical

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<sup>692</sup> *PPSGB*, xii.

<sup>693</sup> For Against: "Was Serjeant Cox a Spiritualist?" *Spiritual Notes*. (January, 1880) 242. For Pro: "'Doubting Doubt.'" *Spiritual Notes*. *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>695</sup> *PPSGB*, 262, 295.

<sup>696</sup> Marc Demarest. 'The Psychological Society of Great Britain: 1875-1879.' *Ehbritten.blogspot.com*, 3 September, 2013, <http://ehbritten.blogspot.com/2013/09/the-psychological-society-of-great.html>

sciences...The *Proceedings of the Society*, a thin volume with reports of the papers...contain little of permanent interest and Cox's own book...derives its chief value from its reflecting with tolerable fidelity the metaphysics of the man in the street.<sup>697</sup>

Podmore's verdict refashions Cox as did the spiritualists after his death, but in a historical revisionist sense. "As commonly understood" to Podmore in 1902 was not as it was understood in Cox's time. Psychology as Richards has already pointed out was a fluid amorphous discipline. Rick Ryalnce echoes his sentiments of psychology during the time period, citing that people such as Lewes and Bain were both from non-specialist backgrounds and that psychology covered various schools of thought ranging from a medical based one to an idealist school.<sup>698</sup> Podmore ignored this context, a context one can argue still existed in his time as psychology had still not set any boundaries that would be totally recognizable today. However, what Podmore does show is a connection from Cox to the SPR, though he leaves out Myers was a member. His appellation of "metaphysical" to Cox's work belies Cox's very attempts to stay clear of any. Cox indeed, in a qualified form of democratic epistemology, active sought the man (and woman and child) in the street and wanted their approbation. That Podmore equated Cox with popular, supposedly uninformed writing, betrays his own prejudice and Cox's strength. The person on the street was a person who was well capable of holding their own and testifying to it, in a court of law or a societal gathering.

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<sup>697</sup> Frank Podmore. *Modern Spiritualism: A History and Criticism*. 2Vols (London: Methuen & Co., 1902) Vol.II.170, calling Cox a Spiritualist, Vol.II.174.

<sup>698</sup> Rick Ryalnce, "'The Disturbing Anarchy of Investigation: Psychological Debate and the Victorian Periodical.'" *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth Century*. Ed. Louise Henson et Al. (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2000) 241-242.

Cox, who had been so successful as an organizer of data, editor of magazines touching on public mass consumption, and manuals for an increasingly complex profession, failed to maintain momentum in his last enterprise. Part of the answer lies in his adamant neutrality which left him open to charges of indecisiveness, that willfully putting himself against both Spiritualists and skeptics he had no third audience to pander to. One could possibly look at Cox's attempt to carve a niche in psychology as an echo of his failed foray into poetry. However, Cox the poet never died but was transferred into a search for proof of the soul.

According to Richards, Cox deserves a place in the historiography of psychology and not as just an oddity. He claims that was one who "fell so foul of the pride and prejudice of the discipline's canonical British founding fathers" of psychology. It would seem that the advocate could defend others like Crookes and Huggins but found no one to argue his case. Like Crowe, he stayed clear of imposing theories and waited for others to advance research on such anomalous phenomena. The editor could create papers, journals and societies that could collect data and make them accessible but found his contributions edited out by both spiritualists and other psychologists and unable to raise money for the PSGB to publish its own. Richards points out, "one might go further and argue that, Galton aside, the first manifestation of experimental methods in British psychology came in the investigation of spiritualist phenomena undertaken by Crookes, Huggins, Cox and sometimes Galton."<sup>699</sup> However, the PSGB, which Cox envisioned as a society of many voices of research and fact gathering, fell apart at the death of one individual, Cox himself. Yet, it may be partly this inability to continue

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<sup>699</sup> Richards, 38.

Crookes' method that may have undone the PSGB's popularity. It simply did not fit into an ideological or methodological niche in an area where specialization was becoming more the norm. His psychology lacked the institutional acceptance of Maudsley's Medico-Psychological Association and it lacked the hard support of Spiritualists who sought the BAAS to start its own investigations according to a scientific paradigm. The empirical, legal approach had already been used by spiritualists for years though it fell short of Cox' jurisprudential standards. Cox's psychology also lacked the growing popularity of evolutionary psychology as Richards has rightly pointed out. Cox's own writings of appealing to possible existences of forces or "something" proved weak in the face of the identity of departed spirits or the tracing of fossils and brain size. Cox held his inability to explain as a sign of intellectual bravery, his vagueness was an honest attempt at realizing the limits of knowledge based on the conditions.

As a lawyer, he could only look at the evidence and it remained circumstantial. *MoM* was meant as a defense and apology for psychical research and was not meant to prove anything. It was a continuation of the LDS in that respect, but Cox refused to compromise his epistemology because of his ideals. It rested its case by trying to show the verdict of pseudo-science placed against it by skeptics was groundless. Spiritualists gave results, materialists gave results, but Cox only gave possibilities based on supposed evidence. This factored into the inability of the PSGB to maintain its momentum. Cox's address to the society sound more like spirited legal defenses than scientific methodology. Yet, this boundary of psychology and psychical research, or the claim that Cox's ideas were a failure, are to an extent arbitrary and unfounded.



The call for testimony and facts, a new vocabulary, and an integration of science would all be taken up by the SPR. As pointed out Myers and Barrett had both been members. Indeed, Myers was present as one of the founding members and Cox hailed Barrett's paper before the BAAS on induced somnambulism as a forerunner for better days for the Society and Psychology.<sup>700</sup> This leaves one with a chain of membership and transmission concerning supernatural research from 1869-1882. The SPR had in its membership prominent physicists, psychologists, scientists and even non-professionals. The PSGB might have ended but Cox's idea of a society to study anomalous psychical phenomena such as the SPR ensured the spirit of his enquiry lingered on. The LDS committee ended only to continue with Crookes and Cox's PSGB. When that ended, the SPR took its place and had a far wider impact on society towards the end of the nineteenth century. Cox regrettably admitted he had seen no conclusive proof for the human soul but saw probable cause to continue looking. "The battle of the Soul must be fought with the same instruments with which science has maintained the existence of Magnetism."<sup>701</sup> Cox did not live long enough to see that battle through – unless one believes the medium Mrs. Everitt - but that "glorious mission" to search for evidence continued with renewed vigour and resources, and though Cox may have been forgotten, his method continued.<sup>702</sup>

## **William Crookes and the Battle of the Press**

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<sup>700</sup> *PPSGB*, 161-162

<sup>701</sup> *PPSGB*, 221.

<sup>702</sup> *PPSGB*, 232.

The dynamic between specialist, observer and testimony played out between journals in 1870 after Crookes's publication advocating a "psychic force."<sup>703</sup> Crookes became the joint creator and joint editor of *The Quarterly Journal of Science* in 1864, becoming sole editor in 1870. He used his position as scientist, writer and editor to propagate his ideas. This was counteracted by Carpenter's attacks on Crookes by way of *The Quarterly Review*: a journal that had a long history of attacking new or radical ideas, including those of excluded, non-conformist groups such as Unitarians. By Carpenter's time the Unitarians had made inroads, Carpenter being a prime example, but the journal's tendency to dismiss claims outside accepted science remained. Noakes has masterfully elucidated the main ideological forces at work in the debate between Crookes and Carpenter, as have Brock and Luckhurst.<sup>704</sup> What this section will address is the use of legal methodology to show Crookes' defense and the role the adversarial expert witness paradigm took in the controversy.

Both Crookes and Carpenter depended on base readership to champion their respective causes, in a manner that resembled a legal method of appealing to the jury against a witness rather than any form of scientific method. The epistemological stance held by each side determined how the testimony would be interpreted: *The Quarterly Review* defended and propagated authoritative, materialist epistemologies, while *The Quarterly Journal* allowed Crookes to do the same for his ideas of a "psychic force".

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<sup>703</sup> Crookes, William. "Spiritualism Viewed by the Light of Modern Science." *The Quarterly Journal of Science*, VII, July 1870, 316–321.

<sup>704</sup> Brock, W. H. *William Crookes (1832-1919) and the Commercialization of Science*. (Ashgate, 2008) 126-7, 361-64  
 Luckhurst, Roger. *The Invention of Telepathy: 1870-1901*. (Oxford Univ. Press, 2007) 32-36.

Crookes might have his supernatural research snubbed by TQR or the Royal Society, but his own paper gave him the power to circumvent their ideological boycott.

Carpenter limited the role of testimony. All testimony had to be seen in light of “prepossession,” that subjective element in observation that was detrimental to scientific progress. As already shown, Daston saw this objective scientific period as a conscious attempt to minimize the role of the observer into a passive one. Like the medium, the true man of science would “will” themselves to will-lessness and record data and experiments. Carpenter held this view. In “On Fallacies of Testimony Respecting the Supernatural,” he states:

While scientific probability of uniform sequence has become stronger, the value of testimony in regards to departure from it has been in various ways discredited by modern criticism...

Circumstances have left me from an early period to take a great interest in the question of the value of testimony...the general result of these enquiries has been to force upon me the conviction that, as to all which concerns the “supernatural”...the allowance that has to be made from “prepossession” is so large as to practically destroy the validity of any testimony which is not submitted to the severest scrutiny to the strictest scientific methods.”<sup>705</sup>

Probability, not possibility counted. Carpenter, a uniformist as most enlightenment and objective thinkers were, could not allow this uniformity to be questioned as it questioned the very basics of natural philosophy after Newton. Uniformity, conformity and

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<sup>705</sup> William B. Carpenter. “On the Fallacies of Testimony Respecting the Supernatural.” *The Popular Science Monthly*. Vol. VIII. November 1875-April 1876: 570-586. 572.

hegemony was needed for science, to be seen as impartial and objective, free from the variability of belief systems. Carpenter here also portrays himself as the physiologist as adventurous investigator. It is only after many years that he can state that testimony is just simply of a low evidentiary value when it comes to science. The fact that it is his own testimony and experiential knowledge that leads him to that conclusion is not addressed. That was written by Carpenter in 1876 but it pertained to the Crookes controversy.

Crookes, who was a member of the Royal Society and who had discovered Thallium, and who was still making strides in spectroscopy and photography. The ability of the medium to prove proof of the supernatural was thus supplanted by the ability of the scientist to interpret phenomena.<sup>706</sup> In “Spiritualism Viewed in the Light of Modern Science,” Crookes claimed to be scientifically trained and to have no preconceptions, but stays clear of Faraday’s “circular” reasoning that one must first determine what is possible or impossible before they begin.<sup>707</sup> He depended on controlled experiments and facts, introducing the claims of spiritualists as they “tell of” the phenomena of séances. If McCorristine found the LDS circular, Crookes found Faraday circular as well. In his view, it was the work of the scientist to take such testimonies and see if they are observable facts:

It has been my wish to show science is gradually making its followers the representatives of care and accuracy. It is a fine quality that of uttering

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<sup>706</sup> William Crookes. “Experimental Investigation of a New Force.” *The Quarterly Journal of Science*, VIII, July 1871, 339–349.

<sup>707</sup> William Crookes. “Spiritualism Viewed in the Light of Modern Science.” Rep in *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*. (London: J. Burns, 1874) 4.

undeniable truth. Let, then that position not be lowered, but let words suit facts with an accuracy equal to that with which the facts themselves can be ascertained...let it be shown that there is a class of facts to be found upon which reliance can be placed, so far, that we may be certain that they will never change.<sup>708</sup>

The expert, the man of science is the credible testimonial witness. Words were to become equal to what they signified. The problematic nature of the inference was to be smoothed over by honesty. Credibility had a place in science. Also, a “base of facts” had to be established. Since Crowe this base as a collection of verifiable phenomena had been called for. It was only until such a base had been established could there be any inferences to build on.

By the second essay “Experimental Investigation of a New Force,” Crookes has come to the conclusion that what is being observed are the effects of a “psychic force.”<sup>709</sup> The use of the term “force” was a conscious attempt to place it line with both electric and magnetic forces, giving it a scientific connotation free of spiritualist influence and its spiritual – as in spirits of the deceased - hypothesis. It was not done to appropriate science but to seek a scientific explication for phenomena whereby immaterial causation was caused upon matter, usually in an animal-magnetic or spiritualistic context in a way unexplained by any known laws of nature. The focus was now on experimentation, mainly on Homes and a Lady. His repeated, controlled investigations of Home come with diagrams, copious notes and drawings.<sup>710</sup> In his

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<sup>708</sup> Crookes, “Spiritualism Viewed.” 8.

<sup>709</sup> William Crookes. “Experimental Investigation of a New Force.” *Quarterly Journal of Science*, July 1, 1871. Rep in *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*. (London: J. Burns, 1874) 9.

<sup>710</sup> Crookes, “Experimental Investigation,” 13, 15.

account, Home is no longer the star of the séance but part of a diagram to be measured before and after an experiment. Yet, the experiments are also corroborated and witnessed by credible individuals and Crookes makes a point of that:

The investigators present on the test occasion were an eminent physicist, high in the ranks of the Royal Society, whom I will call Dr. A.B.; a well-known Serjeant-at-Law, whom I will call Serjeant C.D.; my brother; and my chemical assistant.\*

\*It argues ill for the boasted freedom of opinion among scientific men, that they have so long refused to institute scientific investigation into the existence and nature of facts asserted by so many competent and credible witnesses, and which they are freely invited to examine when and where they please.<sup>711</sup>

This mixture of family members and respected members of the Royal Society are all united by social position and credibility. However, the consequences of heterodox opinion and fear of losing status are as present here as with Crowe. The freedom of opinion, beyond matters of fact, was a site of contention among scientists at both law courts and investigations. The respectability of an opinion influenced the respectability of judgement.

His observations were corroborated by another fellow of the Royal Society, Dr. Huggins (Dr. A.B.), and by Cox (Serjeant C.), who wrote supporting letters, Cox's letter giving us the earliest mention of his idea to create the PSGB even before the RCLDS.<sup>712</sup>

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<sup>711</sup> Crookes, "Experimental Investigation," 3.

<sup>712</sup> Crookes, "Experimental Investigations," 18-19.

The narrative is one of a specialist's testimony, in which epistemological authority is transferred from medium to séance member:

I have now given a plain unvarnished statement of the facts from copious notes written at the time the occurrences were taking place, and copied out in full immediately after. Indeed, it would be fatal to object I have in view – that of urging the scientific investigation of these phenomena – were I to exaggerate ever so little; for although to my readers Dr. A.B. is at represented by incorporeal initials, to me the letters represent a power in the scientific world that would certainly convict me if I were to prove an untrustworthy narrator.<sup>713</sup>

It is the plain language, as opposed to the pseudo-scientific spiritualist language Crookes condemned, that shows the importance of fact over opinion, an easy transfer of information from what is observed to what is written down. Crookes' note taking, done not under the passive planchette of a medium, but under a similarly passive recording of information is disinterested and happens in real time reflecting scientific methodology. In true jurisprudential mode, he gives his testimony the context of a safeguard: another respected, specialist observer. Crookes testimony is protected from embellishment and exaggeration by another rational observer. The language of "conviction" condemning a scientist as quasi criminal for a sort of perjury is very marked. The "incorporeal" nature of the initials, like a spirit intelligence but here a scientific one, hovers over his writing, ready to correct or condemn.

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<sup>713</sup> Crookes, "Experimental Investigation," 16.

Yet, Crookes found himself being seen in certain circles as not the impartial scientists but as an advocate.<sup>714</sup> His credibility was called into question:

Others, - and I am glad to say they are very few, - have gone so far as to question my veracity:-“Mr. Crookes must get better witnesses before he can be believed!” Accustomed as I am to have my word believed without witnesses, this is an argument which I cannot condescend to answer. All who know me and read my articles will, I hope, take it for granted that the facts I lay before them are correct, and that the experiments were honestly performed, with the single object of eliciting *the truth*.<sup>715</sup>

It is not the call for more witnesses, it is the calling into question of Crookes' ability and veracity that elicited this response. He, like many men of science, took it for granted that their word was enough and that one could just reproduce their investigations to reach a similar conclusion. Most research was taken on the supposition that findings by an individual would be acceptable and were. As an “advocate” Crookes would be seen as less scientific or a scientist for hire as in the law courts, something he detested. His call for credibility interestingly is a call to both peers and readers, a call to the private and public who are the jury of his credibility and veracity. They are witnesses for the defendant.

This focus on personal credibility came to a head with the publication “Spiritualism and Its Recent Converts” in *The Quarterly Review* in October 1871 written anonymously that condemned both Crookes and Cox. Crookes responded in force. This topic has already been handled very well by scholars but this section will address

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<sup>714</sup> William Crookes. “Some Further Experiments on Psychic Force.” *Quarterly Journal of Science*. October 1, 1871. Rep in *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*. (London: J. Burns, 1874) 21.

<sup>715</sup> Crookes, “Experimental Investigations,” 14.



Crookes' method of defense in examples to show how scientific authority intertwined with legal methodology in narrative presentation of evidence. It was supposed that Carpenter had written the damning article and Crookes presents the reader with a conversation between both men during a meeting of the British Association at Edinburgh as Carpenter's article was being written:

When I had the opportunity of observing the curiously dogmatic tone of his mind and of estimating his incapacity to deal with any subject conflicting with his prejudices and prepossessions...we were introduced-he as a physiologist who had enquired into the matter fifteen or twenty years ago; I as a scientific investigator of a certain department of the subject; here is a sketch of our interview, accurate in substance if not identical in language.<sup>716</sup>

One here is reminded of Crowe in *GFL* where she encountered the sceptic, and a desire to fully recreate the conversation showing the cross-emanatory method of social interaction. Here Crookes becomes the scientist observing not phenomena but another scientist. He wants to show that it is Carpenter who suffers from incapacity and prepossession, something that Cox would utilize as a method of retort as well. Also, present is a portrayal of the conflict of generations between an older Carpenter who investigated some phenomena years ago to Crookes who is using the latest methodology.

There is no need to go into detail of Crookes' use of narrative skill and legal methodology and one example should suffice:

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<sup>716</sup> William Crookes. "Psychic Force and Modern Spiritualism: A Reply to the 'Quarterly Review.'" Rep in *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*. (London: J. Burns, 1874) 46.

‘Ah Mr., Crookes,” said he, ‘ I am glad I have an opportunity of speaking to you about this Spiritualism you have been writing about. You are only wasting your time. I devoted a great deal of time many years ago to mesmerism, clairvoyance...and all the rest of it, and I found there was nothing in it, I explained all of it in my article I wrote in the *Quarterly Review* I think it a pity you have written anything on this subject before you and yourself intimately acquainted with my writings and my views on the subject. I have exhausted it,’

‘But Sir: I interposed, ‘you will allow me to say you are mistaken, if I —‘

‘No, no!’ interrupted he, ‘I am not mistaken. I know what you would say. But it is quite evident from what you have just remarked, that you allowed yourself to be taken in by these people when you knew nothing whatever of the perseverance with which I and other competent men, eminently qualified to deal with the most difficult problems, had investigated these phenomena. You ought to know that I explain everything you have seen by unconscious cerebration...

‘But Sir-‘

Yes, yes; my explanations would clear away all the difficulties you have met with. I saw a great many mesmerists and clairvoyants and it was all done by ‘unconscious cerebration’...

‘Pardon me,’ I interrupted, ‘but Faraday himself showed --.’ But it was in vain, and on rolled the stream of unconscious egotism.<sup>717</sup>

Crookes has combined the scientist, lawyer and writer. One gets a lively portrayal of a one-sided conversation, a cadence of cut-offs. Here the older scientist simply will not let Crookes speak. As a lawyer he is not allowing the witness to testify, forcing down opinion over testimony of fact, showing a purposeful exclusion of evidence. It shows a scientist who claims to be able to explain all away. It shows Carpenter as hemming in Crookes the same way he describes a trickster medium enclosing an untrained observer. It is Carpenter who is the unscientific one, depending on his authority over data, and showing of all things, prepossession. Crookes shows himself as respectful, allowing Carpenter to speak at length and simply as a true scientist, observing his peer and specimen. This narrative portrayal, supposedly as realistic as the actual conversation, is meant to show Carpenter, not Crookes, was the one in dereliction of a scientific ethos. Cox would do likewise.

Carpenter years later would continue this train of thought in lectures. Even though Crookes never said he was a spiritualist, Carpenter still saw him as an advocate:

If, then, the high scientific attainments of some of the prominent advocates of ‘spiritualism’ and our confidence in their honesty, be held to require our assent to what they narrate as their experiences... That they were true to him (Swedenborg), I cannot doubt; and in the same manner, I do not question that Mr. Crookes is thoroughly honest when he says he has repeatedly witnessed the ‘levitation of the human body.’<sup>718</sup>

Carpenter would echo this a year later:

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<sup>717</sup> Crookes, “A Reply to the Quarterly Review,” 46-47.

<sup>718</sup> William Carpenter, “On Fallacies of Testimony,” 576.

I cannot but believe that if Mr. Crookes had been prepared by a special training in the bodily and mental constitution, abnormal as well as normal, of the human instruments of the spiritualistic enquiries and had devoted them to the ability, skill, perseverance, and freedom from prepossession, which he has shown in his Psychological researches, he would have arrived at conclusions more akin to those of a great body of scientific men who I believe to share my own convictions on this subject.<sup>719</sup>

It seems Carpenter had still not finished his conversation. Crookes is compared to Swedenborg, who had heterodoxic opinions. His training is called into question, not his character. What is striking is the allusion to the “body of scientific men.” Crookes could not generate assent, could not convince this jury that Carpenter as advocate feels he already has brought over to his verdict on the supernatural. It was this special jury of peers that mattered. Carpenter, the Unitarian who, though questioning the testimony of scripture still held revelation valid, the divine valid, present as the role of the sciences gained increased authority, could not allow a discursive regression to supposed forces tinged with the connotations of the supernatural no matter how much Crookes tried to break free from spiritualist trappings. Cox would see Carpenter’s advocacy and call attention to it.

When John Spiller, a fellow chemist finally admitted to circulating damning rumours in the *Echo in October of 1871*, Crookes lashed out at what he saw was a libelous breach of scientific and middle class etiquette.<sup>720</sup> Crookes responded by

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<sup>719</sup> William Carpenter, *Mesmerism, Spiritualism, &c. Historically and Scientifically Considered*. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1877) 70.

<sup>720</sup> William Crookes, “A Reply to the Quarterly Review,” 67.

publishing his article against a side presentation of his detractors showing the evidentiary fallacy of their position. He reproduces his letters and Spillers showing Spillers contradictions. This attack on character would not make Crookes back down, at least in that decade. He like Crowe had a “bas of facts:”

However, on going over my notes, I find such a wealth of facts, such a superabundance of evidence, so overwhelming a mass of testimony, all of which will have to be marshalled in order that I could fill several numbers of the ‘Quarterly.’<sup>721</sup>

Crookes would not get into a “paper war” with Spiller or even Carpenter. He like Crowe had an “embarrass de riches” of testimony. His position was just as popular as Carpenter’s and he had his own evidence to prove it. Cox would take up where Crookes left off, using Crookes’ authority and his own legal expertise to build upon this base.

### **What am I? *Spiritualism Answered by Science and Mechanism of Man***

Crookes was not alone in answering detractors. E. W. Cox published two major works on the supernatural in which he wished to make a case for its serious study and subsume it under psychology. The first was *Spiritualism Answered by Science* in 1871 which took fresh inspiration from the *RS* and Crookes’ research. It was followed by a second, revised and expanded edition only a year later with the reviews of provincial papers put at the very front. Though living in London, Cox as Serjeant at Law did assizes and saw the opinion of provincial areas as more in tune with national sentiment

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<sup>721</sup> William Crookes, “Notes of an Enquiry into the Phenomena Called Spiritual During the Years 1870-73,” *The Phenomena of Spiritualism*. (London: Burns, 1874) 83-84.

than the press in London.<sup>722</sup> Cox as editor, as Burns had done, wanted to show what people thought of the book to make it more enticing. This desire to break from a hegemonic monolith of opinion is seen throughout *SAS* in both versions. It was meant to stay clear of spiritualism and appeal to scientific research while maintaining a base in the public and its ability to narrate its own testimony and interpret reality.

The Second major work was the two volume *Mechanism of Man: An Answer to the Question What Am I? Vol.I. The Mechanism* (1876) and *Vol.II The Mechanism in Action* (1879). Both volumes are meant to be “popular introductions” and as such were meant for a wide market. Cox even printed favourable reviews to subsequent additions, calling attention to how the book quickly sold out.<sup>723</sup> Popularity meant pockets of assent and the public was Cox’s jury. He wanted to do what Crowe, Coombe and Chambers had done. Crowe wrote about the “mechanism” of man and wanted to prove the soul existed through a German like investigation and holistic synthetic psychology. Cox also saw this form of psychology as the best method of collecting supernatural phenomena and the texts start with the human physiology, altered mind states to a polemic on proof for the immateriality of being. It was a discipline that could address issues the physiologist could not:

He cannot even discern them by either of his senses, nor with the help of his most powerful instruments. What then remains for him?...Obviously he can only do this by studying their *manifestations*. Their substance being imponderable and imperceptible, the Psychologist having no tangible

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<sup>722</sup> E. W. Cox. “The Provincial v. The London Press.” Letter to Ed. *The Spectator*. 5 Aug 1876: 979-980.

<sup>723</sup> *MoM*, Vol.I.viii.

material wherewith to work, can investigate Mind and Soul only by observing the movement they impart to material organs...<sup>724</sup>

Psychology had room for the lawyer, a discipline that called for serious observation of both speech, movement and expression. This observation of human behaviour called for an expertise different from that of a physiologist for it went beyond simple body movements. It called for being able to read pronouncements and nuances only an experienced lawyer, or in Crowes case, and experienced writer, could discern.

The very title of *Spiritualism Answered by Science* was an affront to spiritualism, for it contains the connotation of a skeptic's polemic, and it intimates a binary opposition between supernatural views and science. Cox was continuing Crookes' method and like Crookes, responding to the article "Spiritualism and its Recent Converts." However, while it did confront spiritualist beliefs, it did not defend the skepticism of the natural physiologists and scientists like Carpenter, Tyndall or Maudsley. It articulated the supposedly objective, unprejudiced skepticism of a serious researcher who did not accept a spiritualist narrative of causation. Cox wanted to aid scientists like Crookes and supernatural research by creating a new niche in the undermarketed discipline of psychology, and he thus needed to divest the supernatural of nomenclature that conjured up the spirit hypothesis. He felt the need at the very beginning of the first edition to answer the charge that he had converted to spiritualism.<sup>725</sup> However, he also declared that he, along with Crookes and Huggins, was seeking proof of supernatural phenomena by way of the scientific method, in contradistinction to the dogmatic ridicule

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<sup>724</sup> *MoM*, Vol.I.xii

<sup>725</sup> Edward William Cox. *Spiritualism Answered by Science*. 1st. (New York: Henry L. Hinton, 1872) iii.

of theologians and the prejudice of materialist science.<sup>726</sup> He tried to employ his research against this binary opposition, and to point out how both had recourse to a *priori* reasoning, whereas he sought to assemble proof and then attempt an explanation.

Like Crowe, Cox wanted to observe and collect “facts” – but where Crowe looked to testimony of many different forms, Cox wants to show that the narrative of a proper scientific investigation could produce results, although he admits its shortcomings when it comes to investigating the immaterial. This desire for institutional specialization mirrors that of other sciences at the time that sought institutional approval by demarcation of expertise by subject. Cox aimed to change the narrative of institutionalized doubt into a new discourse that showed the validity of “psychic” research against scientific materialism, one that would ultimately make it possible to prove the existence of the ‘psyche’. His new title for this specialization was “psychology.”

Cox did not employ the terminology of the spiritual or supernatural, introducing the word “psychic” instead of the spiritualist term “medium”. The terms “medium” and “animal magnetism” give way to “psychic force”.<sup>727</sup> In this, his method resembled that of another lawyer, Colquhoun, who sought to make mesmerism respectable by replacing the terminology employed by mesmerists. The word “soul” is seldom used, as is “ghost”, and “spirit” with qualifications. He claims that he is defending “Psychism” and the collection of admissible and observed facts that show a “psychic force.” In a time when even terms such as “scientist”, and “anthropology” had only recently been introduced, this specialization of “Psychic” research, psychology, was meant to bring the

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<sup>726</sup> SAS, iv.

<sup>727</sup> SAS, 46.



phenomena away from superstition and into a scientifically valid paradigm. Throughout the book he even refers to it as “non-corporeal something” and uses non-definition as a way of delineating the lacunae in explanation.

### **The Expert Witness**

It has been gravely asked by some of our critics, what right have I, a practical Lawyer, to concern myself about science? My authority as a witness to a simple mechanical experiment has been impugned on a plea of the incapacity of Lawyer to understand the principles or observe the phenomena of science.<sup>728</sup>

Cox, like Colquhoun and Crowe, knew he would not be seen as qualified to discuss supposedly complex scientific questions even if meant discussing the movement of a simple table. For Cox, the text became a medium for advocacy where he could bring to trial the position of Carpenter and the Spiritualists, and argue in favour of Crookes, instead. His texts are inspired by the legal method, employing tropes and methods of representation while casting the readers as jurymen. In *Spiritualism Answered by Science*, Cox builds almost his whole case on the viability of testimony and experience on Crooke’s expertise. His analogy is simple enough:

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<sup>728</sup> SAS, 18.

The argument a priori is equally foolish and fallacious. Modern Science was suppose to abjure it utterly. Her boast has been, that assertion that a thing *cannot* be because it is apparently opposed to some established law of nature, can never be accepted as an answer to averment of facts by credible persons which, according to the rules of evidence, would be accepted by any judge or jury. But Science is not bound to *believe* on testimony of witnesses, however competent and credible. The duty that devolves upon her in such cases is to test by patient and careful examination the truth of the fact so asserted; if, upon such fair and impartial trial it be found to be a fact, to proclaim it and to show, as always may be shown, how that new fact accords with other facts of nature.<sup>729</sup>

Though Cox meant this to be read by the public, he could be alluding to the analogy of the expert jury convened for special cases.<sup>730</sup> Whatever the case, Cox like Crowe realized common testimony could only hold so much evidentiary worth, though it was valuable. They both along with Crookes saw investigation and experiment as vital to proving. What was important was not belief but conviction in a move since Crowe from a faith-based discourse on the supernatural to one based on evidence. In common terms, a fair trial would allow the evidence to be heard without the excusatory nature of a priori arguments which blurred opinion and fact. Once proven the newly found law could take its place among others. Cox would continue this analogy throughout the decade until his death. A new fact of nature became a case precedent.

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<sup>729</sup> SAS, 8.

<sup>730</sup> Galon, *Laws of Men, Laws of Nature.*" 19.

Cox knew his ideas alone would not be taken seriously. Even though Crookes was a physicist and not a medical expert, he was ideal for alluding to anything dealing with phenomena that was abstruse and tied to forces rather than the body. Crowe had sought the views of German physicians and philosophers to counteract skepticism by British physicians and other. Where Crowe used German theories and mass testimony, Cox had the specialist who was both witness and judge.

William Crookes is portrayed not the dogmatic scientist protecting a theory but one seeking to find new facts; he does not ask, “their *acceptance* on his own authority; he asks only that the experiments he has tried....may be tried by others, and by them honestly reported.”<sup>731</sup> Cox points out that Crookes was even pleased to hear that other scientists had already carried out such tests on the continent.<sup>732</sup> Crookes wanted a concerted effort by many at replication to find out the facts. It is science as a collaborative effort to prove or disprove by experimentation not blanket dismissals.<sup>733</sup> They argued that Faraday was compromising himself by not adequately investigating the matter and looking at the experiments or observations of others. The LDS went in with an inquiring mind and used up all explanations, even Faraday’s and Carpenter’s.<sup>734</sup> Like Crookes, they had to change their mind when all explanations had proved of no success and the “same results were witnessed no less than *thirty-four* times,” leaving the “authority of Faraday, completely demolished.”<sup>735</sup>

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<sup>731</sup> SAS, 2.

<sup>732</sup> SAS, 30.

<sup>733</sup> SAS, 10.

<sup>734</sup> SAS, 14.

<sup>735</sup> SAS, 16.

Cox wanted to put Crookes into a position analogous to that of Braid, who made mesmerism institutionally valid by stripping it of its more mystical components, but this time for supernatural research. This appeal to the expert by Cox, however, laid him open to the possibility of skeptics appealing to experts of their own. Both Carpenter and Crookes, Faraday and Huggins had investigated the phenomena, but the opposite conclusions that had plagued Elliotson and Forbes were still apparent. Cox pointed out that mesmerism had become accepted as 'hypnotism', but as of yet doing the same for immaterial, supernatural phenomena was more difficult. Cox could point out that Crookes did more experimentation over a longer period of time but the "court of public opinion" in terms of readership was further complicated. The *Quarterly Review* was a more respected paper based on its better educated and specialist readers. That Crookes had to publish his paper in his own journal because it was rejected by the Royal Society was a point of contention which Carpenter used against him.

That Cox addresses the rejection of Crookes' paper shows him yet again confronting controversy. Yet, he framed the entire correspondence in such a way as to show that the rejection had to do only with interpretation of phenomena, rather than with Crookes' ability to be a trustworthy scientist:

Surely this was not an offence calling for *personal* vilification. The Old Bailey practice of "If you cannot answer the facts, abuse the prosecutor and his witnesses: ought not to be admitted into scientific discovery. When Mr. Crookes announced his discovery of a new metal, when Dr. Huggins published his observations of the new lines in the spectrum, they were not met with the assertion that they were incompetent or untrustworthy, their

apparatus worthless, their eyes deceivers, and their senses and judgement befooled;<sup>736</sup>

It is interesting Cox uses the same phrase as Crookes by alluding to the Bailey.<sup>737</sup> It is obvious both equated personal attack in a legalistic sense on both research and personal credibility. What Cox wanted to do was show that the sceptics who had been misrepresenting the evidence and attacking the witness were going against social, scientific and legal boundaries.

If the debate taking place between Crookes and his critics was taking place in papers, Cox designed his book as textual advocate for what Crookes was trying to accomplish: scientific proof for supernatural phenomena. Cox used his editorial skills to reproduce correspondences and articles by all sides in full, to allow the reader to see how Crookes was being maligned based on ideological opposition rather than a neutral search for the truth. The press, like the court room, thus became the scene of witness and cross examination. *Spiritualism Answered* ends with a reprint of the correspondence between Crookes, Carpenter and the Royal Society.<sup>738</sup> It is ordered to show how Crookes' experiments were not being represented properly and how his scientific integrity was called into question. It begins with a letter by Carpenter and ends with him being censured for impropriety for discussing matters of the society in an unprofessional matter. Cox was thus able to show the unprofessional condemnation of Crookes, not through his words but those of the Royal Society. Crookes, again, would

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<sup>736</sup> SAS, 12.

<sup>737</sup> Crookes, "Psychic Force and Modern Spiritualism," 68.

<sup>738</sup> SAS, 1-10.

do the exact same thing to show to the reader that their testimony was more credible and was attested by letters.<sup>739</sup> It was proof that Crookes, Huggins and Cox were being honest and their detractors either misrepresenting or outright lying, in clear betrayal of a scientific or legal ethos.

A public debate that crossed months and newspapers was thus condensed into a form that upholds Cox's perceived version of events. As in the *Report*, the dissenting voice was subsumed into parameter of the page, and Crookes is given the last say. Carpenter's *ad hominem* objections to the abilities of Cox become equated with the attacks on Crookes. Cox is using Crookes' testimony, along with Huggins, to prop up his credit and their common argument. Carpenter's views are portrayed as prejudicial and become secondary to the narrative. His dissenting voice becomes a dismissed voice.

Cox took the debate between Crookes and Carpenter, which took place between journals edited by both, and uses it as part of his cross-examination of Carpenter under the constructed persona represented by his arguments. This textual cross-examination of Carpenter's ideas puts scientific materialism in the category of tainted testimony by way of bias and inability to judge the situation and allowed Cox to defend psychical research in a discourse where Cox was the specialist. For all his talk of experimentation, he was effectively taking materialism to court in his text in a show of rhetorical narrative.

### **Attacking the Witness: Mesmerism and Past Controversy**

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<sup>739</sup> For example, see Crookes, "Psychic Force and Modern Spiritualism," 73-80.

Cox felt the need to defend the experiments of the *RS* as well:

Yet the Athenaeum resorts to the wretched explanation of this well-attested phenomenon that all the eleven persons present were deceived by their senses, and that the table did not really move at all! Could scientific dogmatism further go? I should like to see the writer of this piece of nonsense addressing his argument a jury in a court of justice.

'Gentlemen, eleven witnesses have told us that they were standing together in a well-lighted room, at a distance of three feet wide, and that this table swung round untouched by any of them, and knocked down a lady who was in its way. I cannot impute to these witnesses intentional falsehood, but I contend that they were mistaken-that the table never moved at all, and I ask you to find a verdict accordingly.' What a shout of derisive laughter would greet such an argument in the court, and what ridicule would be cast upon it in the journals. Yet that which would be scouted from any court of justice in the world is gravely advanced by men who call themselves "scientific" and think themselves sensible, and is accepted and printed, without consciousness of its utter absurdity, by the editor of a literary journal!<sup>740</sup>

The article called the experiments of the *LDS* and *Crookes* into question. Cox knew *Crookes*' credentials were already solid even without his defence. As a lawyer, he comes to the cause of the *CLDS* and makes it a matter of common sense. The men of "science" are litigating against common sense. Their grave language is juxtaposed to

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<sup>740</sup> *SAS*, 16.

their insane request that a jury not believe eleven credible witnesses as to the movement of a common table. Cox here changes the ridiculing sceptic into that of the ridiculed in a polemic role reversal outside their discursive comfort zone. This hypothetical narrative is meant to show just how abstruse the skeptical position is by its flouting of the ability of the human senses to interpret the simplest of acts. In the courts of justice, the sceptics are unjust and funny.

Cox's earlier research would come back to haunt him. As with Crowe, he had been an investigator of supernatural phenomena during the period in which mesmerism had become popular. He would account this as experience whereas Carpenter took an opposing view. Carpenter's article exemplified his polemic by showing how past inferences disqualified most people, especially those who were not scientifically trained, from being able to judge any investigation or event. Carpenter, in attacking Cox, sought to tie Crookes' and Cox's polemic to the early debates against animal magnetism. The purpose was two-fold: to attack the ability of Cox as a specialist even in his own profession, and to make Crookes appear to be just another manifestation of an earlier heterodox pseudo-scientific discipline.

Carpenter dismissed Cox's narrative based on a past investigation by Cox and charges of fraud. Cox was neither a novice in investigating supernatural phenomena nor unused to controversy. He had vigorously studied animal magnetism and had run his own investigation with the help of friends. It was based on the investigation of a young clerk, George Goble, in 1845. According to Carpenter, Goble was proved a fraud by Sir John Forbes; hence, this made the eyewitness testimony so lauded by Crookes negligible. Cox was one of "the most gullible of the gullible" claiming, whatever his



qualifications, his inability to detect fraud had been known for many years.<sup>741</sup> In Carpenter's view, this episode demonstrated that what was needed to determine truth was not a group of trustworthy and educated individuals, but people who had been scientifically trained for a number of years.<sup>742</sup> However, Carpenter's use of character assassination essentially represented the use of legal rather than scientific methods to argue against the validity of the experiment.

John Forbes (1787-1861) was physician to the royal household and founded *The British and Foreign Medical Review* in 1836. The journal was intended to raise the standards of British medicine and he published a lengthy article condemning mesmerism in 1839 and 1845.<sup>743</sup> Forbes used his editorial vantage point but the mesmerists used their magazines, with the *Zoist* offering a retort from 1845-1846 for both occasions against Forbes.<sup>744</sup> The accusation against Goble was made by Forbes in his book *Illustrations of Modern Mesmerism from Personal Investigation* (1845).<sup>745</sup> It contains the testimony of Forbes and some detractors with a detailed look at a series of experiments with George Goble wherein Forbes claimed to have discovered his imposture.<sup>746</sup> The mesmerist press was angry at what it saw as Forbes' prejudicial look at animal magnetism, citing that he relied on a few impostures to denounce the many experiments that were unexplainable. In their view, he simply refused to look at all the

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<sup>741</sup> Carpenter, William. "Spiritualism and Its Recent Converts." *Quarterly Review*, vol. 131, 1871, 301–353, 343

<sup>742</sup> William, 351.

<sup>743</sup> Forbes, John. "History of Mesmerism in France, Germany and England." *The British and Foreign Medical Review*, vol. 7, no. 14, Apr. 1839, 301–352.

---"On Mesmerism." *The British and Foreign Medical Review*, vol.19, Apr.1845, 428-485.

<sup>744</sup> "Dr. Forbes the Real Imposter." *The Zoist*, III, no. XII, Jan. 1846, 537–544.

"Dr. Forbes and Our Prophecy." *The Zoist*, III, no. IX, April. 1845, 116–118.

<sup>745</sup> Forbes, John. *Illustrations of Modern Mesmerism from Personal Investigation*. (London. Churchill, 1845) 63-87.

<sup>746</sup> Forbes, *Illustrations*, 63-90.

evidence.<sup>747</sup> The Goble case even appeared in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in a scathing article on somnambulism.<sup>748</sup> Podmore of the SPR would later also dismiss Goble's abilities based on Forbes' testimony.<sup>749</sup>

Cox is not named by Forbes, but he was present, and was a staunch defender of Goble. Cox defended himself employing the same strategy of the *Zoist*. In his view, Forbes had not done a thorough study considering the somnambulist state and had rushed to judgement.<sup>750</sup> At the time of writing, there was no proof that Carpenter had written the article, and Cox gave him the benefit of the doubt. However, for Cox, this use of an early case, one that was validated by Elliotson and represented the state of hypnotism, was an attempt at character assassination, of the kind employed by inferior lawyers in court. As he put it: "If you cannot answer the facts, abuse the prosecutor and his witnesses."<sup>751</sup>

For all their recourse to experimentation and observation, the case presents us in reality with a difference of testimonial narratives that was endorsed by professionals using their own editorial authority and publications to further an acceptance of their interpretation of events. If Forbes had the BaFMR, the mesmerists had *The Zoist*. Each was supported experiments, well-educated practitioners, testimonials and even letters by detractors. For all talk of objectivity, it came down to who one believed. This polemic resurfaced again with Cox and Crookes in their differences with Carpenter.

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<sup>747</sup> For a look at Forbes' past with Phrenology see Cooter, 29, 95-96. It seems he was an advocate of an earlier "pseudo-science" until he was made physician to Prince Albert in 1841. According to Cooter, this was a trend amongst many.

<sup>748</sup> "Somnambulism." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 8th ed., XX, (Little, Brown & Co., 1860), 438-439.

<sup>749</sup> Podmore, Frank. *Modern Spiritualism*. I ed., II, (London. Methuen & Co., Printers, 1902) 273.

<sup>750</sup> Cox, *Spiritualism answered by Science* 10-12

<sup>751</sup> Cox, SAS, 12.

Cox accepted Carpenter's theory of unconscious cerebration as a method by which some aspects of the psychic force may manifest itself. He interestingly points out that even that theory was derided at first, but Carpenter bravely stuck to it.<sup>752</sup> However, Carpenter becomes a textual witness not only against himself but scientific expertise when in the role of witness and advocate. Based on his experience, Cox knows that witnesses called are usually biased, writing of "the painful exhibition, so frequent in our Courts of Justice, of the evidence of Experts biased unconsciously by the interests of the party for which they are called."<sup>753</sup> This carries over to Carpenter who is now represented as not a scientific judge but a witness for the prosecution against supernatural research. He wants to show prepossession on the part of Carpenter. He also becomes an advocate who argues according to a bias against a position and not as a judge weighing the evidence.<sup>754</sup> Cox attempted to change the discourse by regrouping its critics according to a terminology he was comfortable with, taking the polemic out of their discursive sphere to one he was experienced in. Cox knew witnesses were problematic, but this was a double-edged sword which he also sought to employ against the skeptics.<sup>755</sup>

What Cox was against, more importantly, was not Carpenter's ideas but his insistence that his theory encompassed all the phenomena, even though it failed to explain anomalies. Cox is appropriating Carpenter and reversing his role as authority. He is hinting that Crookes is his present equivalent, sticking to his theory despite

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<sup>752</sup> *SAS*, 13; *PPSGB*, 51.

<sup>753</sup> *PPSGB*, 38, 290, *MoM*, Vol.I.xvi, Vol.II.53-54.

<sup>754</sup> *MoM*, Vol.II.365-366.

<sup>755</sup> *PPSGB*, 162.

criticism just as Carpenter once had, and that Carpenter's views are limited at creating a grand narrative.

Carpenter is part of the argument; his theory is part of the explanation but the whole is more than his concept of reality can comprehend. Cox does this on the very same page where he provides a completely anti-spiritualist statement of psychic phenomena. Cox, the editor and lawyer, has subsumed his theoretical opponents as citations in his collection of facts and erroneous theories. They remain in the narrative, but he can see where the story is going.

Cox's final section of *Spiritualism Answered by Science* is titled, "How to Investigate," where, as in *The Advocate* with litigation, he offers advice on how to continue this research and calls on others to carry out more like tests such as Crooke's along with the ethos required which echoes *The Advocate*.<sup>756</sup> Cox defended the right of people to properly testify and interpret events and be their own specialist:

All the forty experimental meetings of the sub-committee of the Dialectical Society, and almost all the further experiments here reported, were conducted with Psychics found in private life, among personal friends and acquaintances, and not with professional, paid or public Psychics...But Psychics of all classes, of both sexes, and of all ages, have been observed for thirty years by thousands of persons, sitting at the same table with them and holding their hands and feet, and in no single instance has ingenuity or accident discovered the contrivance (if it be one) by which what is seen and heard is performed.<sup>757</sup>

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<sup>756</sup> SAS, 75-77.

<sup>757</sup> SAS, 20-21.

Here Cox united the experiments of the Committee with the thousands that had taken place in family and private circles. It is a resounding attestation to a mass of experiment and experience even if it had not been recorded. A séance table of family friends in other words of peers had already done what a body of scientific sceptics refused to do. Their expertise accounted for more than theirs in reality. Cox also, with the exception of a bias against a working Psychic, also undermines the stereotype of the average psychic: a psychic could be any one person regardless of gender, age or class. What Carpenter, Edmunds and Huxley saw as a limited group of hysterical enthusiasts or fraudsters was actually a good section of society which went unrecorded but was a mass of testimony and experiment as any other.

Carpenter's limit is his prejudiced mind. He is unable to explain the cause of prepossession, not because there is no answer, but because he is "prepossessed as he is by the dominant idea that the whole mind is employed in every mental act."<sup>758</sup> He, like the spiritualist at the séance is unable to see where the phenomena lead to. He cannot realize his own limits, a charge that Carpenter himself had previously levelled against Crookes. This was because Carpenter is not the impartial scientists but an advocate, a biased witness:

Hence the painful exhibition, so frequent in our Courts of Justice, of the evidence of Experts biased unconsciously by the interests of the party for which they are called. Every experienced Solicitor knows that any amount of scientific evidence can be easily obtained to support any side of the

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<sup>758</sup> *MoM*, Vol II, 21.

question, alike to prove or disprove. In railway accidents, half a dozen medical men can be brought to swear that in their judgement the injured person will never be himself again; an equal number swore that there is nothing the matter with him...According to one set of "mad doctors"...no man is sane.<sup>759</sup>

Cox here places Carpenter in the position of hired scientists and experts. He appeals to both his own experience as a lawyer, to the public which had grown weary of experts reaching different conclusions on the same evidence, but it is also aimed at scientists who partook of this debate. Cox is creating doubt based on precedent that shows Carpenter and others cannot always be trusted to give an impartial verdict. Ending it with "mad doctors" alludes to the controversial use of doctors to plead insanity but it also harkens to the connotations of an earlier era were doctors had yet to receive the societal prestige they had recently begun to enjoy only two generations previously. Cox knew he was going beyond his bounds by writing about science but he wants to show, remind rather, people what happens when scientists and experts cross into his area of expertise. This inability of experts got in the way of ascertaining facts. Carpenter is that kind of witness:

He has been content to purchase a cheap popularity by assuming the attitude of an Advocate, indeed, but still only and Advocate, and making a case on one side only-a feat that would have done him infinite credit as a Lawyer, but which, it must be confessed, is not creditable to a Man of Science.<sup>760</sup>

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<sup>759</sup> MoM, Vol.II.54

<sup>760</sup> MoM, Vol.II.366.

Cox turns Carpenter into a paid scientist but who trades in the exchange of social status. It is he who seeks cheap popularity at the expense of his credit as a scientist. Cox is the opposite: it is he who neither goes the way of the sceptic or the spiritualist. It is Cox who looks at the whole case, not as an advocate but as a judge.

In *MoM*, Cox asserted: “A fact can only be disproved by experiment. It cannot be answered by argument. Try it for yourself if you doubt the authority. *If it is* you will find it.”<sup>761</sup> This call for democratic, experiment driven science was to build a collection of facts that all would have access to, and thus help to build a new discipline. It is in *Mechanism of Man* that Cox is more theoretical. Positivism and practicality were major ideological driving forces in the Victorian era. The very word “fact” was an area that proved contentious. Cox refers to a “fact” as “anything, or any state or condition of anything, the existence of which is proved by evidence.” However, this leads to the problem of evidence. Cox wanted to make psychology practical, collaborative and experimental. *MoM* is not a quest for absolute truth, which he claims is “wholly unattainable.” The human being, like the séance or the lab, is fraught with conditions that make certainty an impossibility. It is an apology for psychology, a call for arduous investigators and the “whole truth and nothing but the truth.”<sup>762</sup> It, like the intelligences of the psychic experiments or the workings of the force of gravity, is a spectre that cannot be proven but its effects can be shown.

It is “relative truth” compounded with multiple witnesses, reasonable inference and statistical probability which makes facts what they are, facts. It is this working model

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<sup>761</sup> *MoM*, Vol.I.xiii.

<sup>762</sup> *MoM*, Vol. II, 582.

of “reality” that is echoed by Lewes in his ideas of causation. It allowed one to create a stable chain of events tying an explanation together. It is the syntax of a narrative of reality that can be used to find new words to describe events and observations. It is the epistemological narrative “superstructure of Science” that is made up of proof built on evidence which is mediated by reason,<sup>763</sup> True reality remains ghost-like, beyond grasp, but it can be seen in its effects through media, especially the senses which are still practical instruments. Effects can be observed, and inferences can follow upon them. Admitting barriers to absolute knowledge works in Cox’s favour: he can show that the inability of a skeptic to explain away a phenomenon is reflective of just how little is known. Any attempt at dogmatic finality betrays a prejudice and even hubris that the absolute has been attained.

It is the *a priori* method of narrative imposition that impedes science. Cox refers to this contention as “one unvaried tale” of the history of science which does not allow relative truth and knowledge to progress.<sup>764</sup> Indeed, in order to progress: “You must look to *things* and not to *words*.” It is not the ideas of a philosophers but the apple of Newton and the kite of Franklin which lead to discoveries.<sup>765</sup> However, Cox knows that many of his assertions read like *a priori* assertions. He tries to counter this by claiming that, while they may to appear to be so, they are not because they are simply “possible” explanations for proof of the “soul or “psyche.” Cox does, however, admit that his *a priori* reasoning are simply arguments against their own *a priori* ones. It is a linguistic

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<sup>763</sup> *MoM*, Vol.I.35.

<sup>764</sup> *MoM*, Vol.I.29-30.

<sup>765</sup> *MoM*, 62.



duel of rhetorical devices designed to show just how traditionally unscientific some modern scientific, “materialists” have become.<sup>766</sup>

### **Testimony in Cox**

Cox sought the legal method of pleading antecedents to support his case: previous scientists and discoveries were at first rejected only to be later accepted. The jury of the public and judges of the supernatural had to take into consideration these cases. In this respect, Cox realized, as Crowe did, that lack of expertise called for expert help. Building a network of fact-finding professionals and credible witnesses was advocated, but it is the expert that Cox still used in his witness box to guide his narrative. This guides the movement of what is considered objective and what its import is in the grand narrative of reality. Specialists like Carpenter and scientists and Faraday felt that they had explained away the phenomena of spiritualism, and many echoed their sentiments based on their authority. The prejudicial nature of materialists against anomalous phenomena was the new superstition of the age. He points out that the LDS went into its investigations expecting to meet with failure and delusion, but the facts made them change their minds.<sup>767</sup> This reversal of roles for natural science is to show what he considers to be its dogmatism, as opposed to its role as seeker of truth.

Cox defended testimony in his work. However, his defence of testimony was more nuanced than either in Crowe who accepted the anecdotal or the LDS which interviewed mediums in its accumulation of evidence. Anyone tied to possible pecuniary

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<sup>766</sup> *MoM*, Vol.I.403. See Vol. II, v, 41.

<sup>767</sup> *SAS*, 16, 26; *MoM* Vol.II.339.

interests, and lack of education lacked the credentials to testify. Cox's supernatural research was an expression of middle-class notions of expertise and self-referentiality. He wanted to make supernatural research respectable. Cox defended the integrity and objectivity of his readers and their social station:

Many communications, volunteered by readers...narrating cases of Psychism in the families of writers where many of the phenomena described in these pages are of daily occurrence," and that, "my correspondents are persons of social position, Magistrates, Physicians, Clergymen.... who in confidence append their names to their narratives.<sup>768</sup>

Like Crowe and the Committee, he actively sought testimony of instances, but with the caveat of having to be from a higher class or professional background-though most of Crowe's testimony come from just such a background. This however was meant to be in conjunction with the need for people to take it upon themselves to do the experiments as well. It was a communal undertaking of testimony and more importantly experimentation.<sup>769</sup> His witnesses are professionals, people trained in being observant to detail, of the middle-class and have the repute of being honest. Cox, like a true lawyer, wants them to send more which he will keep in the strictest confidence. Their testimony is valuable and helps one see how prevalent the psychic is in everyday life:

A long list might be made of practical men, accredited by the world with possession of more than average keenness of observation, shrewdness of judgement and strong common sense, who not only assert that they have personally witnessed the alleged phenomena many times, under various

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<sup>768</sup> *SAS*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed., x.

<sup>769</sup> *MoM* Vol. I.xiii

conditions, but who have made full report of their experiences, containing the minutest details of what they had seen. Among these are many lawyers of repute, practiced in cross-examination of witnesses, in the testing of testimony, in weighing evidence and forming a fair judgement. Others of the witnesses are men of business, who have proved their capabilities by their successful enterprises, and whose evidence in the witness box would be accepted without hesitation by any jury, in any Court, upon any matter affecting life, liberty or property<sup>770</sup>

Cox believed that having psychic capabilities transcended gender, class and education. However, as far as testimony was concerned, most could give it but not all could judge it. His “long list” is part of a theme of using corroborative evidence but in the category of middle-class professionals. It is interesting how he equates ability to judge not just by experience but success, even in business. Credit and success come together to create a better witness, a more truthful narrative. The attention to minute detail in law courts and business number crunching is transferred to recording instances of the supernatural.

However, as a lawyer and judge, Cox was a specialist in certain types of evidence. He even questions himself by addressing charges that even he isn't a competent witness, that as a lawyer he has no right declaiming on scientific subjects. He responds by claiming other lawyers have been successful scientists and that he was experienced in the, “practical knowledge of the principles of evidence, the daily habit of

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<sup>770</sup> *MoM*, Vol.II.328.

looking for the very truth...with long practical experience in the art of sifting and weighing proofs before forming an opinion.”<sup>771</sup> Much as Crowe realized her limitations but also her ability to see the value of accumulative testimony, Cox claims, not to be a specialist, but an acute observer who can spot a new phenomenon that were yet to be explained properly.<sup>772</sup>

As a lawyer, he purported to possess the experience and training to read evidence, clues and events and construct a probable narrative from them and not out of his imagination. Objecting to the critiques of the skeptics, he wrote: “We are fools for accepting the evidence of our senses. *We do not* see what we see nor hear what we hear. The Scientist, though he shuts his eyes and ears, knows what occurred much better than we who witnesses it.”<sup>773</sup> Cox is appealing to the “We” against the “Scientist”, framing the dispute as a battle between authoritarian dogma and common sense. It reflects his wariness of allowing judges to be arbitrary and have no oversight over judicial decision making. The use of readily available information, legal or psychic, was to allow people to make informed decisions and make sure the authorized expert was doing so as well. His experience is practical as opposed to theoretical, metaphysical or speculative. He, however, realized that it was not totally scientific. However, both scientists and lay person had done much:

Not only is the evidence by which the phenomena of Psychic Force are established stronger than any upon which the criminal courts daily convict and punish even with death; it is at least equal to the evidence upon which

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<sup>771</sup> SAS, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed. 6.

<sup>772</sup> MoM, Vol.II.316.

<sup>773</sup> SAS, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, v.

most of the other sciences are founded. The experiments with the Psychic Force are in all respects as perfect and trustworthy as those exhibited by Professor Tyndall at the Royal Institution. They are plain to the eye, as palpable to the touch, as audible to the ear, as any witnessed in that famous lecture room.<sup>774</sup>

Cox, for all his recourse to specialists like Crookes, puts the dining table on par with Tyndall's tables, the dining room with the lecture room and the familial gathering with students of science. The demonstration with the séance. It validates the testimony of the common person and the reliable data that they receive through their senses. Cox purposefully equates it to a law court for in his estimation it was essentially the same in its epistemology, experiential and inferential based on data. It was even more experiential as the events, unlike a trial, were witnessed by the people. The jury and witness become one. Here the specialist expert became superfluous.

The Victorian positivist spirit of applicable knowledge is to be used in creating a solid basis for further research into this "force" whatever it may be in the end. Cox takes it one step further, "If the senses of honest and intelligent observers are not to be trusted for a fact so obvious to the eye as that of a table, a chair, a sofa, a book, a box, and a hundred other articles, being moved untouched over spaces of several feet, in a full blaze of light, how is the common business of life to be conducted? We must close our courts of justice, for upon evidence infinitely more disputable than that attested by

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<sup>774</sup> SAS, 21.

the Scientific Experimentalists and the Investigative Committee,” people have been sentenced.<sup>775</sup>

This spirited defense of supernatural research is also partly a defense of the legal tradition and its station in ontology. What skeptics like Carpenter, Tyndall and Huxley do not realize, according to Cox, is that they are calling into question the whole legal system, the very need for witnesses and even common sense. He also portrays them as calling into question reality itself in almost a Berkeleyan mode of philosophy. The very natural scientists who depended on a positivist outlook and observable objective world, have implicitly wiped experience of any solid validity. They have, theoretically, almost turned the world into a phantom presence. Cox saw his role as that of a “detective” who needs to piece together where the evidence leads one.<sup>776</sup> Cox takes this evidence outside the realm of the scientific laboratory, arguing that it was analogous to everyday experience, and that “Any man in the enjoyment of his senses can attest the motion of a table, and if it is or is not touched when it moves.”<sup>777</sup>

### **Multiple Witnesses**

Cox wanted to “limit the inquiry to that which is capable of *positive proof*, and accept only evidence that would be admitted in the witness box, and upon which a judicial judgement could be given.”<sup>778</sup> Here he upholds the debate against single testimonies of ghost-seeing which, even though true, are inadmissible as demonstrative

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<sup>775</sup> SAS, 7.

<sup>776</sup> Spiller, 30.

<sup>777</sup> SAS, xix.

<sup>778</sup> SAS, xiii.

proof and could simply be the result of “mental impressions.” It is only audible and physical phenomena that can be held as proof since they can be verified by demonstrative experimentation.<sup>779</sup> Countering spiritualist polemic, he argues against the objective reality of ghosts as the souls of the dead. When he does mention them, it is usually in quotations. Yes, they are real in that people see them and they exist, but they are extensions, somehow, of the “self.” Proof of this is that they offer no new knowledge, confirm the biases of the one who sees them and do not bear cross-examination. Cox declares at the end that:

For my own part I have sought in vain for an *authentic* ghost. I have searched books, I have examined living witnesses, but I can find no *unexceptionable* testimony. The evidence always breaks down somewhere.<sup>780</sup>

This put him at odds with many spiritualists, who could have provided him with a greater base of support such as Crookes received. Cox’s refusal to placate the ideas of both believers and skeptics was a deciding factor in assuring his method would not find support until the founding of the SPR.

According to Cox, scientific and legal methods are very similar in that they both depend on credible witnesses, but he claims that one difference is that, “hearsay is not rejected altogether by Science. It is a necessity of science that statements of fact shall be accepted on the report of competent and credible persons.”<sup>781</sup> This takes part in a discussion on the burden of proof when making a claim. Cox felt that Crookes and the

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<sup>779</sup> SAS, 2.

<sup>780</sup> MoM, Vol. II, 542-544.

<sup>781</sup> MoM, Vol.II.35.

LDS had shown proof of material objects being moved by an immaterial source. The burden, in Cox's view was on materialists to offer evidence against it and part of his consternation was that they were not even trying to do so. They just accepted the hearsay of people who claimed in an *a priori* fashion that the phenomena could be explained away as nothing of importance.

However, Cox wanted to limit hearsay:

We begin by excluding nineteen out of twenty as *hearsay*-tales told by somebody to somebody, and which can be traced to no authentic reporter. In Science, as in Law, the best evidence can only be accepted-the same kind of evidence alone that would be admissible in a Court of Justice and permitted by a Judge to influence the verdict of a jury in a question of life and death. Nothing less than the testimony of a credible witness as to what he had himself seen, and that testimony sifted and tried by cross examination, should suffice for the establishment of any truth in Science.<sup>782</sup>

Cox here is employing the hearsay doctrine and the opinion doctrine. Hearsay, taken out over the need for personal observation -except under strenuous circumstances - and the role of opinion was circumspect and designed not to be confused with facts.<sup>783</sup> Cox wants to show that sceptics freely use both and that he, in the spirit of true legal and scientific methodology will not employ either. The best evidence is the most weighted and serious as his allusion to a verdict in a murder trial suggests.

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<sup>782</sup> *MoM*, Vol.I.436.

<sup>783</sup> Golan, *Laws of Man, Laws of Nature*, 38.



Single testimony was weak as conclusive proof. Crowe realized this as well and looked to accumulation to make up for it. Cox realized the nature of the accumulation but surmised the mass of testimony took the argument no further. Cox, like Crowe, looked to the multiple sighting as evidentiary strong. When more than one person of “credit” - social standing or respectable position - were to witness that they saw a ghost at the same time, then the probability of a mental impression decreases:

But, if precisely the same form was seen by two persons at the same place at the same time, we have *evidence*, and very cogent evidence, of the actual existence of such an object, by reason of the extreme improbability that the identical hallucination should arise in two minds at the same moment. If three or more persons beheld the same object at the same time, the proof amounts to almost demonstration, for the chances against such a concurrence of mental actions are as infinity to one.<sup>784</sup>

Cox knew these were rare, hence the importance of the séance where the domestic laboratory of mind and soul could interact. Like Crowe, probability is vital to looking at the event. This is something the SPR would continue. This appeal to a communitarian form of testimony was not to dismiss a democratic epistemology but switch it to an epistemology of a mass. There was safety in numbers and the idea of contagion as a skeptical dismissal made no sense as it could be used to prove that immaterial connection the sceptics adamantly denied. As with Crowe, the purpose was not to verify ghosts but seek evidentiary proof, built on testimony and investigation of the soul.

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<sup>784</sup> *MoM*, Vol.I.435.

Each time more than one person sees it, it becomes less probable to subsume under hallucination or delusion.<sup>785</sup> This is further strengthened when there are multiple “specially qualified witnesses” and thousands of “intelligent spectators.” To argue conversely would be to argue for an, “improbability amounting almost to impossibility.”<sup>786</sup> This did not mean that the phenomenon perceived was actually a disembodied spirit – that was argumentative speculation. What interests Cox is simply ascertaining that an objective event happened that could be registered amongst others as proof.

Cox realized that even the most astute observer and group may still at times be subjectively inhibited from stating a fact. He answers this by appealing to the workings of instruments designed to detect fraud. It is the introduction of experiment driven instrumentation in this new discipline that is to make it appear objective and scientific. He mentions a device created by Crookes that would not allow any muscular force to move it from one end. Not only did it show no muscular force being used at all but it was even used in five different ways to preclude mistakes.<sup>787</sup> This would appear to put Cox at a disadvantage but Cox qualifies which testimony is presentable as “positive: proof and the importance of having an observer of the instrument who is willing to allow the results, not preconceived notion, to guide how they are interpreted. Instruments were to be used as the new mediums between subjectivity and truth. Unlike a normal witness, it could not be accused of trickery, bias or delusion: “*Metal and wood*, he argued, have no

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<sup>785</sup> PPSGB, 16, 22; MoM Vol II 110-11, 177

<sup>786</sup> PPSGB, xx.

<sup>787</sup> PPSGB, 25.

emotions; they cannot be biologized; *they* have no imagination; *they* neither deceive themselves nor others.”<sup>788</sup>

Instruments were not enough. To bring this study of manifestations of people Cox needed a community that could bring it about, collect the facts, carry out the experiments, and bring forward their case. He did this by forming the Psychological Society of Great Britain. It would take a society with a Baconian approach much like the early period of the Royal Society to help bring forward a holistic, experientially based form of psychology.

### **The Psychological Society of Great Britain**

In *Spiritualism and the Age We Live In*, Crowe wrote:

But there is a department of knowledge which, as far as we yet know, is not reducible to scientific experimental science...I allude to the knowledge or science of ourselves. Of our bodies, as mechanical constructions or instruments, we have, within a comparatively short space in time, learnt a great deal; but of ourselves, as composite beings, we know absolutely nothing. Metaphysics gives us words without any distinct ideas, and Psychology is a name without a science.<sup>789</sup>

Crowe thought the future lay with the latter and that would deal with ultimate facts rather than opinion. Cox’s supernatural research and adoption of psychology addresses just

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<sup>788</sup> PPSGB, 26.

<sup>789</sup> Crowe, *Spiritualism and the Age We Live In*, 7.

this. He had entertained the idea for a psychological society in Britain in 1871 but did not form one until February 1875 at his house at 36 Russell Square, with Crookes and F.W.H. Myers present, both of whom would become founding members. It would continue until Cox's death in 1879, and the PSGB only published one volume of 19 of its proceedings in 1880, even though members such as Cox and Harris published their papers at their own expense. This society would seek to study manifestations of anomalous phenomena that could not be rooted to a physiological cause and find evidence of the soul:

What then, in Psychological Science, is *spirit*? As distinguished from *matter*, it is simply non-molecular structure, that is to say, some one, or more, possibly all, of the many combination of atoms other than the molecular, but which combinations are imperceptible to our senses. *Spirit is all of being that our senses are not constructed to perceive.*<sup>790</sup>

The PSGB was an extension of the premise elucidated in *Mechanism of Man* in its redefinition of spirit from the spiritualistic and traditional connotation to a modern atomistic one that went beyond the senses and even beyond physiology. It was a redefinition away from terms such as “ghost” or “hobgoblin” to one that would further demarcate not only a movement away from spiritualism but one that would create a scientifically respectable term that would fit in a psychological paradigm. Cox wanted to use a new language just as Crowe used German terms to achieve the same effect. It made the atomic phantasmal and even today apologists allude to the sub-atomic as an

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<sup>790</sup> Cox, “Matter and Spirit.” PPSGB, 128.

argument for the soul. Cox, like Crowe, was looking to prove an ontology that proved the soul.

Graham Richards discusses the historical significance of the Psychological Society of Great Britain as taking place during a time when psychology was not a set discipline and the subject was still vaguely demarcated. He cites the years 1873-1879 as a "Site of Historical Interest" where competing groups sought to promote it through different methods.<sup>791</sup> Richard's purpose is to "rescue" the PSGB "from historical limbo."<sup>792</sup> He portrays Cox's failure as not one of methodology but a mixture of professional and intellectual embargo. He tries to show that psychology was not the domain of one class but ideological lines where Cox did not fit into any group, even the spiritualists who themselves began to use the word psychology. However, he wrongly states that it was made up of mainly people from the legal profession when the sum is less than one-quarter of the total.<sup>793</sup> Interestingly enough, the PSGB had eight members from the medical establishment, a number exceeded only by the number of solicitors and barristers. It is important to note that of the eight founders, five were from a legal background but all were members of the middle-class.

Richard states that the PSGB was not mainly interested psychical subjects because only a fifth of the *Proceedings* deal with topics that pertain to spiritualism.<sup>794</sup>

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<sup>791</sup> Richards, 49.

<sup>792</sup> Richards, 35.

<sup>793</sup> Of the 105 total members (excluding women subscribers): 9 were solicitors, 9 Barristers and 4 J.P. Adding in E.W.C. this brings the number to 23 which, though a prominent minority, does not allow it the PSGB to be seen simply as a legally inclined society.

<sup>794</sup> Richards, 47, 32. According to Richards, only 10 of the 49 were tied to "spiritualist" themes and only 25 of its 105 members were from the legal profession. Only three were from the Royal Society.

Cox's membership was varied and even though he employed legalist tropes in his writings, the other papers in the PSGB lack it and are not put forth by people from a legal background. They were, however, as Richards points out, "amateurs" in their field, which he conclusively shows was still possible in psychology and anthropology – itself recently evolving from Ethnology – where "self-professionalization" allowed scholars like Bain and Spencer to rise to prominence.<sup>795</sup> Stockbrokers, architects, MPs and clergy all took part in a society that resembled the 'Lit and Phil' societies of the early nineteenth century, forbidding talk of religion and politics and focusing on matters of the mind in an inquisitive but relaxed setting. Yet, as Richards has pointed out, their subject matter was still amorphous compared to other disciplines. It was an area where the professionally educated could still find a discursive space to practice an empirical approach.

This desire to chart unclaimed ideological space was evident in Cox's first publication/manifesto of the Society, *The Province of Psychology* (1875) where the aim was to collect facts and study psychological phenomena the same way scientific societies studied Astronomy.<sup>796</sup> It would be reprinted after Cox's death, and was followed in 1876 with *The Mechanism of Man*, which argued in detail for a new look at psychology.

The PSGB was based in Cavendish Square, London but it wished to become a locus for the accumulation of testimony. It appealed to the public:

COLLECTION OF FACTS AND PHENOMENA

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<sup>795</sup> Richards, 42-43

<sup>796</sup> Edward William Cox. *The Province of Psychology*. (London: Longman and Co., 1875) iii-vi.

The Society invites communications from all quarters of facts and phenomena witnessed by the writer, or obtained from authentic sources, on the following questions in Psychology:-

1. Remarkable cases of Heredity in Man, Animals or Plants.
2. Psychological Phenomena that may have given rise to the belief prevalent in all countries in the existence of "the Double," as exemplified especially in the Second Sight of Scotland and the Doppel-ganger of Germany.
3. Facts and Phenomena illustrative of the power of supersensuous perception alleged to be exhibited in somnambulism and other abnormal conditions.

#### CORRESPONDENTS

Are requested to observe the following conditions:

1) To report only facts and phenomena-

(a) That they have personally witnessed.

(b) That they have received from a reliable witness.

(c) That they have found in some book of accepted authority, ancient or modern.<sup>797</sup>

This call to the public in this format would not be made again until the SPR and start of *Borderland* by William Stead. The PSGB actively sought to engage the public and bring them into its discourse. The call was experientially based with direction towards a jurisprudential approach. One is reminded by Crowe's appeal to the reader to contact her with data and there is little difference between what the PSGB was willing to accept and what Crowe accepted. This was to blur the lines between member and non-member and appeal to a Baconian, inductive approach to the study of the supernatural.

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<sup>797</sup> Frontpage of MoM, Vol.I and II.

It was also meant to show that it meant to study not only the supernatural but first and foremost altered mind states and evolutionary discourses as well. It was an attempt to recreate the early format of the Royal Society of eliciting data from all over the world and have papers read before the empirically based society.<sup>798</sup> It was to make psychology have the format and trappings of a respectable discipline.<sup>799</sup> The PSGB met twice a month and in 1876 instituted a Special Investigation Committee that held private sittings with the Society voting in 1879 to change its paradigm to “viva voce evidence from its members.”<sup>800</sup>

Psychology was not new in Britain. By the time the PSGB had formed, the Medico-Psychological Society had been in existence for over a quarter of a century. However, as the first half of the name suggests, it was physiological in premise. Cox was aware of this but saw *The Journal of Mental Science* and *Brain* as limited in scope.<sup>801</sup> The former was focused on the mental health system and insane asylums and the latter with mental health and physiological research. However, interestingly enough, the *JMS* had a relatively balanced view of Cox’s writing in 1873, but remained wary of his “regions of speculation” where he takes up the soul and its progress.<sup>802</sup> Philosophy had dealt with science, but it was through the premise of self-reflection and speculation. Richards has already elucidated very well the ideological boycott of the PSGB by *Mind*. Cox was cognizant of this boycott all too well, citing the BAAS in particular as ignoring

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<sup>798</sup> Lorraine Daston, “The Empire of Observation, 1600-1800,” *Histories of Scientific Observation*. Ed. Lorraine Daston and Elizabeth Lunbeck (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2011) 38.

<sup>799</sup> *PPSGB*, vi. “6. That the Society shall consist of an unlimited number of Members, to be elected by the council.”

<sup>800</sup> *PPSGB*, x.

<sup>801</sup> *PPSGB*, 259.

<sup>802</sup> “Review. What Am I?.” *The Journal of Mental Science*. July, vol. XIX (London; Churchill, 1873) 288.



psychology because it was unscientific but easily publishing papers on other disciplines.<sup>803</sup>

Cox did not want the PSGB to become a debating society or one where the focus was on delivering papers before an audience.

It is established for more important purposes than that of a debating Club. Papers and discussions are a useful interchange of opinion by thoughtful minds. Science however, must be based on facts, or it is not Science, and these facts must be many and various, collected from many sources and stamped with a sufficient assurance of authenticity...As our brother and ally “the Anthropological” displays its skulls and its battle-axes..as the Entomological in this very room produces its beetles and its humble bees; so do we collect reports from observers everywhere (who authenticate them to us)...<sup>804</sup>

This is ironic as the PSGB’s only published document is not much more than a compendium of inaugural, seasonal presidential addresses and a few papers. For example:

The Province of Psychology: The Inaugural Address, Serjeant Cox April 14, 1875<sup>805</sup>

On Some of the Phenomena of Sleep and Dream, Serjeant Cox<sup>806</sup>

Some More Phenomena of Sleep and Dream, Serjeant Cox Feb. 1, 1877<sup>807</sup>

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<sup>803</sup> *PPSGB*, 240-241.

<sup>804</sup> *PPSGB*, 159.

<sup>805</sup> *PPSGB*, 1-37.

<sup>806</sup> *PPSGB*, 37-57.

<sup>807</sup> *PPSGB*, 165-176.

The Psychology of Memory, George Harris F.S.A.<sup>808</sup>

Cerebral Psychology, Charles Bray<sup>809</sup>

Natural Law as Automatic Mind or Unconscious intelligence,  
Charles Bray<sup>810</sup>

Psychology Proved by Physical Science, James Croll, March 15,  
1877<sup>811</sup> (abstracted and read by Cox)

Besides Cox, one only gets papers by George Harris (1809-1890) a lawyer and judge who in 1871 was elected vice-president of the Anthropological Society of London. Another was Charles Bray (1811-1884) a successful manufacturer and free thinker influenced by Coombe. His publications included *The Philosophy of Necessity* (1841) a two-volume work influenced heavily by phrenology. All three were autodidacts from the mid-forties trying to make inroads in the growing fields of psychology and anthropology. They also had the financial means to publish these papers privately. All these papers – Croll (President of the Geological Survey) did not personally read his article – deal with the role of memory and identity, the role of facts, nascent ideas on molecularity and being and are for a theory of the brain which is compartmentalized unlike like Carpenter's unitary theory of the brain. They are also non-controversial in that their argument, when given for the soul, stays clear of any ties to spiritualistic phenomena. However, they were still just papers and not experiments or testimony, keeping it within the realm of ideas, theory and opinion.

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<sup>808</sup> PPSGB, 62-69.

<sup>809</sup> PPSGB, 207-218.

<sup>810</sup> PPSGB, 191-206.

<sup>811</sup> PPSGB, 179-189.

However, this was not Cox's intention. He believed, like Crowe, that accumulated testimony and facts could lead to a solid foundation in building a new discipline. Like Crowe, he believed it should not be initially exclusive until it could ascertain authenticity. However, unlike Crowe, he stressed the role of scrutiny and cross-examination to sift testimony.<sup>812</sup> Crowe, as far as is known, never provided an explanation of what she chose and didn't, or that she rejected anything at all that she received. This is not to say that her compilation was erratic as others, both supporters and detractors, have claimed. As a lawyer, Cox knew that not all data was evidential and that not all evidential data was strong enough to present.

The purpose of this was to build a mass of accumulated "facts." These facts would then provide the data for the new discipline of psychology to start crystallizing better theories and ideas.<sup>813</sup> Until then, Cox believed that all amassed data should be collected and printed. Importantly, he believed it should be printed without commentary. As with Crowe, he wanted to publish reports without theoretical intrusion.<sup>814</sup> He mentions several times throughout the meetings of the PSGB that his Society had collected copious amounts of data and wished to publish them but lacked the funds. He hoped to publish his own periodical of facts, as he had done earlier with the law courts and to have them at the public's perusal:

Our meetings show no lack of interest in it, for this room is usually crowded. Our papers are various and instructive and our discussions vigorous. In these respects we can compare advantageously with any

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<sup>812</sup> *PPSGB*, 32-35.

<sup>813</sup> *PPSGB*, 15, 161.

<sup>814</sup> *PPSGB*, 160.

other scientific society...We should like to print our proceedings but cannot without the funds that numbers only can supply...We ought to print *all* our papers. But those only can now be printed of which the writer pays the expenses.<sup>815</sup>

Popularity showed a level of assent, or at least a serious interest. However, here one sees why so little of what took place at the meetings is known. That said one sees a Cox still confident that the PSGB intellectually and publicly could hold its ground. It was in the inability to investigate more and disseminate that held it back. Cox, seeking a discourse against both sceptics and spiritualists left himself in a precarious situation, even a pecuniary one. Cox advocated a democratic epistemology. He never went into fine detail on where the legal method would end and the scientific one began. However, the society looked to the public to supply the phenomena and for the society to recycle it in its distilled, scrutinized form that would give a better foundation to allow psychological discipline to progress.

Like Crowe, Cox wanted a database of facts. He had done this for the legal world but it was also to keep the ‘facts’ free of theoretical imposition. Like Crowe he did not want to support a single theory: “not to advance any system, or maintain any theory...We are not teachers but learners – pupils not masters.”<sup>816</sup> However, he did support the dual brain hypothesis, arguing that the brain was dual in nature and not a unified organ as Carpenter asserted, and used medical and scientific authorities to support his case just as Crowe had. The appeal was to the public but Cox’s awareness of his limits and that of psychology showed itself in its use of specialist theory and a

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<sup>815</sup> *PPSGB*, 233.

<sup>816</sup> *PPSGB*, 151.

dearth of data, no matter how much Cox professed to put data over theory.

Furthermore, his call for experimentation did not appeal to spiritualists whose journal bounded with “facts” supporting the hypothesis, medical experts who had their own method of institutional research, or mental philosophers. The former had been experimenting for years and publishing their findings through the voice of public testimony and specialist respectively. However, this data was under the prism of a priori reasoning under the Spiritualist hypothesis, there was no sifting of the evidence as any judicial, competent observer would require. Cox’s refusal to back any ideology put him at a disadvantage. Supposedly the epistemologies were similar, the media similar but the agenda determined who was supported and who would be ignored.

Such structures were brought within psychological bounds by the observation of their effects on people.<sup>817</sup> It was only by combined observation by numerous witnesses and experimentation that the senses could be validated. The senses still had an advantage over the solipsistic frailty of the mind.<sup>818</sup> Reality was constructed by the narrative of multiple testimony over an event. “The Senses, therefore, although very untrustworthy witnesses individually, are the most trustworthy, indeed the only reliable, witnesses collectively.”<sup>819</sup> It was the jury-like ability of many to agree on what really happens that can overcome both superstition and the dogma of the skeptic. For Cox, then, physiology was the province of matter, and psychology corresponded to whatever pertained to people but was not part of the structure of the “mechanism” of the body.<sup>820</sup>

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<sup>817</sup> *PPSGB*, 6-7,17.

<sup>818</sup> *PPSGB*, 279. Here one sees one of the very few mentions of ghost-seeing. Cox posits that if two people see “*some form*” then indeed there was a form there though it “would not be evidence that the form so seen was a ghost.” Cox does not want to provide a causal explanation, only observe phenomena.

<sup>819</sup> *MoM*, Vol.I.280.

<sup>820</sup> *MoM*, Vol.I.14.

It was a venture to find the “ghost” in the machine by studying its effects that would point to a “vital source” unreducible to molecules – a study which would, necessarily, be dependent upon testimony.

### **The Tribunal**

Richards quotes Cox’s “Tribunal of Science” from his early writings. However, Cox repeated this statement and elaborated on it a few weeks before his death.

Some years ago I ventured a suggestion that a vast advantage would be won for Science if a scientific tribunal could be established for trial of alleged scientific experiments and observations, by whom witnesses might be heard to detail the facts, to whom arguments based on those facts might be addressed, and thus the truth ascertained by the hearing of both sides under the test of cross-examination, precisely as we pursue the truth in disputed matters in the business of life and in our Courts of Justice.

The suggestion found very general approval, but there were obvious practical difficulties in the way of its adoption as a scheme applicable to all scientific research.<sup>821</sup>

Cox mentioned this at the beginning of the PSGB and a few weeks before his death. Given the backdrop of public and legal angst over the role of the expert in court, the role of expert juries and skepticism, Cox’s idea of a tribunal makes better contextual sense.

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<sup>821</sup> *PPSGB*

Chadwick also advocated legislation to rework the role of the expert, calling for a tribunal of science where the “true scientist might befittingly and confidently appear.”<sup>822</sup> He based it on the French model where the government would have recourse to officially approved scientists who would submit their findings in writing. However, this was meant to take the authority of the scientist away from cross-examination and a jurisprudential domain in the traditional sense. It was also meant to maintain the status of the expert against the loss of popular stature brought about by the adversarial relationship between scientists at court. It was designed to limit the role of the common individual and it is interesting that Crookes advocated something similar.<sup>823</sup> Chadwick saw the judge and jury as an ignorant mass when it came to science.<sup>824</sup> Yet, again, that was not unanimous in the scientific community. Cox was not the only popularizer of science and magazines to advocate such a democratic scientific tribunal. Richard A. Proctor (1837-1888) was a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society (1866) before becoming Honorable Secretary in 1872. Proctor sought to make science accessible to a wide audience, starting *Knowledge* in 1881 as an illustrated magazine. Luckhurst points out that Proctor as well railed against monopolized, hierarchical science, and advocated a “Republic of Science” where scientific knowledge would be put before the court of public opinion.<sup>825</sup> If experts could be brought to court over patents, why not over the patent of a fact? For Cox an experiential event was the domain that most could partake in interpretation. This would bring the public beyond consumption of popular science

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<sup>822</sup> Golan, 113.

<sup>823</sup> Golan, 129.

<sup>824</sup> Golan, 132.

<sup>825</sup> Roger Luckhurst, “W.T. Stead’s Occult Economics.” *Culture and Science in Nineteenth Century Media*. Ed. Louise Henson (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007) 204-209.

and make them participants in its growth. Again, Cox points out the popularity of the idea. It is such a popularity that makes it more credible.

Cox claimed that its sessions were surpassed in attendance and popularity only by those of the Geographical society.<sup>826</sup> For Cox as editor, popularity meant interest and subscription. It also meant he was supplying a need where before there had been nothing to fill it. He had done the same by creating *The Law Times*. He felt this enterprise was called for and that he would once again be able to collect the information, gathering data on psychical phenomena just as he previously had on legal trials, and let the public and the properly trained reach their own conclusions as to what it meant.

Cox even incorporated it into two meetings to great success and approbation as part of a new phase of the Society.<sup>827</sup> He wished other societies might adopt this fusion of legal-scientific methodology, at least until psychology got on to a better footing. This seems a *modus operandi* of the committee, but Cox had found it productive in the discipline's nascent stages. One can only surmise what would have happened had Cox remained alive to continue this method. This was to be compounded with frequent publications of data that would be easily accessible. He realized the shortcomings of such mixing of methodologies and had no clear answers. The witness could still observe and help establish a fact, but how this was to be done is not given. However, in this epistemological setting the lay person could impart as much special information as the specialist. The periodical report would be the equalizing text to a mass public. The fact that the PSGB's only societal publication is a collection of essays which are filled

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<sup>826</sup> *PPSGB*, A2. The society had 5 members from the FRGS and FGS.

<sup>827</sup> Notes. *Spiritual Notes*. (January, 1880) 245.



with speculation and even mental philosophy – the very thing Cox argued against – is proof of the Society’s failure, which was due in part because of funding and the early death of Cox. All major contributors mention scientific authorities such as Wigan, Ferrier and even Tyndall.

It also abounds with references to Hume, Locke, Descartes and even Spinoza. Spencer’s psychology and its ties to hereditary laws and evolution are also lauded but seen as too narrow.<sup>828</sup> This mixture of empiricism, metaphysics, and the latest discourses shows a Society as amorphous as the protoplasm Cox addressed, admitted and used to question the materialist account of the creation of life.<sup>829</sup> This lack of any data or accounts of experiments may give the impression that the Society was indeed simply another debating society. However, it is known that experiments indeed took place and that Cox was determined to cut down on the amount of theoretical speculation, albeit too late. Psychology as Cox wanted it to be was in its stage of genesis, the protoplasm had yet to evolve. *The Spiritualist* could remark that he was the soul behind a Society that was likened to a “body with very little life in it” but it did so behind a body of spiritualist institutions which Cox never sought approbation from and suffered because of it.<sup>830</sup>

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<sup>828</sup> PPSGB, 75-76, 196, 198, 218, 172, 280-281.

<sup>829</sup> PPSGB, 277-296.

<sup>830</sup> “The Psychological Society.” *The Spiritualist and Journal of Psychological Science*. Vol.XVI No.1 (London, Friday Jan 2, 1880) 6.

## The Edited Editor

E.W. Cox, the editor who wanted to accumulate testimony, authenticated reports and have a society of experimenters in turn saw his work edited by the Society he had created. The PSGB was, for all its members, an extension of Cox's ideas and his yearly address was included in its first and only volume. However, what is missing is anything that pertains to the supernatural. In its list one sees "The Phenomena of Trance," "Thought Reading," "Abnormal Experiences," "On Apparitions" but none of these were chosen to be printed. To get any sense of this one must go the papers which discussed those meetings, where participants go into interviews with murderers who hear voices telling them to kill and attestations of ghosts.<sup>831</sup> Even comic publications offer more insight into experiments at the PSGB:

There are some people who are so fond of a delusion that they will not be convinced. For instance, a meeting of the Psychological Society, under the presidency of Mr. Serjeant Cox, a paper on the alleged phenomena of slate writing was read, and at the close of the discussion the Chairman made the following lucid remarks:-"From a scientific point of view, the question to be solved was, by what means the phenomena were produced, and, admitting the agency at work to be spiritual, it would be difficult to understand how even a spirit could pass through the pores of a slate, and mark it in the manner described." ... Still more experiments are,

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<sup>831</sup> "The Value of Testimony in Matters Extraordinary." *The Nottinghamshire Guardian*. Fri, June 14, 1878 3; "Alfred Stokes and the Whitechapel Murder." *Edinburgh Evening News* Feb 5, 1876 4; "Psychic Phenomena." *York Herald* Jan 3, 1877. 3

we learn, to be made, with the view of finding the most suitable position for Cleopatra's Needle.<sup>832</sup>

One does not know if the quote is a paraphrase or a true citation. On its own it is neither spiritualistic nor dismissive. Knowing Cox never adopted the spiritualist position the supposed quote of it being admittedly spiritual is suspect. It is simply a question. However, the introduction, comic take and the context of the paper make it appear nonsensical. It is known that Cox testified at the Slade trial. *The Spectator* was more lenient when it came to Cox as witness:

The Slade prosecution was concluded on Friday, when the charge of conspiracy was dismissed...and the defense was taken on Saturday, when written evidence given by Serjeant Cox (who was unwell)...Serjeant Cox's letter was very curious, as containing statements of facts about which it is not very easy to suppose that a sane and sensible man, and one well used to sift the weak points of evidence, could have been easily deceived.<sup>833</sup>

Here Cox's testimony and experience as lawyer and judge are taken into serious consideration. This thesis looks at the use of jurisprudence in the polemic between spiritualists, sceptics and alternative investigative viewpoints and will defer at looking at actual cases. However, what is interesting here is Cox's written evidence to sittings with Slade. It shows a specialist testimony in which others like Alfred Wallace defend Slade. Slade fell under the Vagrancy Act that condemned the "using of subtle and crafty means and devices" of defrauding people and he was not the only medium be

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<sup>832</sup> "Spirit and Sense." *Judy, or The London Serio-Comic Journal*. 12 Dec, 1877: 91.

<sup>833</sup> *The Spectator*. 4 Nov, 1876: 1362.

charged with as many women had been charged under the Lunacy Act in relation to spiritualism as Owen has elucidated. *The Spectator* also notes in a strange twist of fate that the appeal would have gone under Serjeant Cox's appeal court but surmises that Cox will defer, out of conflict of interest, to a fellow judge and friend. Here Cox is the reliable witness and expert who knows how to balance his private and public sphere.

From the volume one gets the notion that spiritualism was a taboo subject, but it is well known that Cox and members of the PSGB did indeed attend séances as Hardinge attested to in her work concerning a lively event with Mrs. Guppy the medium mentioned in the last chapter. In it one reads of Cox arriving unannounced to prevent fraud, controlled conditions, apports and many other phenomena in front of twenty witnesses. Supposedly this had all been read by Cox in a paper before the PSGB now lost.<sup>834</sup> Instead what one gets in the volume are: The Province of Psychology

Duality of the Mind

Calligraphy as a Test of Character

Heredity and Hybridism

The Psychology of Memory

Psychology of Hamlet<sup>835</sup>

Calligraphy, memory and psychological studies of Hamlet were new territories for the society, but the lack of the supernatural was a conscious attempt at ideological respectability. However, other topics and papers cited but not reproduced seem more akin to later psychical research and one wonders how much F.W.H. Myers, a member

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<sup>834</sup> Hardinge Britten, 160-161

<sup>835</sup> PPSGB, viii-ix.

of its council, was influenced in the four years of attending meetings or is he was responsible for some of the topics or papers:

The Human Voice considered Psychologically

Supersensuous Perception

Alleged Clairaudience

On Apparitions

Automatic Mind-Unconscious Intelligence

Evidence in Psychological Research

The Value of Testimony in matters Extraordinary

Artificial Somnambulism and Electro Biology

Psychology its Data and Desiderata<sup>836</sup>

The volume depicts a version of Cox that is only interested in more acceptable disciplines of research on topics such as sleep and the increasingly popular topic of hereditary. It is quite telling that it is only on Cox's ideas of hereditary characteristics that are cited, though argued against, in the *Quarterly Journal of Science*.<sup>837</sup> Novel but not contentious areas could be more readily accepted but they came at the price of the impetus of the founding of the society by Cox. He wanted to take the supernatural away from the specialist and spiritualist. The volume just took it away completely with the exception Cox mentioning it in his addresses to the Society. However, this may just have been that that the Secretary Munton just republished papers Cox and others already had.

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<sup>836</sup> PPSGB, viii-ix.

<sup>837</sup> "Hereditary." *Quarterly Journal of Science* (1875) 162-163.

The Spiritualists too had embraced psychology. As Noakes has pointed out, Hardinge in particular stressed the importance of the “science of the soul”, by which she meant the soul in the spiritualist, disembodied sense.<sup>838</sup> However, her psychology was often tied to mesmerism, magnetism, and even ethnological invocations of South Asian mystics and Native American belief.<sup>839</sup> In this she resembled Crowe earlier who looked to such groups as indicators of a lost knowledge. Cox too in *The Province* upheld this very phrase, “science of the soul” but quickly shows it as “something,” and “intelligent something” that does not preclude either physiology or the spirits of the departed. “Facts” were important to all and Cox’s view was an attempt to steer clear of both groups, casting himself as an impartial judge of his new jurisdiction of mentally related phenomena.

Cox was aware of this appropriation and suggested the PSGB change the name of Psychology to Pneumatology to distance the PSGB from groups he said were driven by the same narrow-mindedness as materialists, but in favour of the spiritual hypothesis.<sup>840</sup> Indeed, the periodical *Spiritual Notes a Monthly Epitome of Spiritual and Psychological Societies* (1878-1881) shows a number of spiritualist “psychological societies” and gives detailed accounts of experiments clearly designed to prove the spirit hypothesis. What is of interest here is that though it reports extensively on the Brixton Psychological Society, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, and others, it ignores the PSGB almost entirely. Cox was being boycotted by many Spiritualist groups as well. When *Spiritual Notes* did comment on the PSGB, it was usually to question Cox’s knowledge,

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<sup>838</sup> Noakes, ‘The Science of Spiritualism in Victorian Britain: Possibilities and Problems,’ loc 989.

<sup>839</sup> Emma Hardinge Britten. *Nineteenth Century Miracles*. (New York; Lovel and Co., 1884) 17, 115, 267, 295, 316.

<sup>840</sup> *PPSGB*, 36, 258.

such as when it queried his interpretation of somnambulism in a paper he read before the PSGB.<sup>841</sup> Another issue is more scathing, accusing Cox of being protean and indecisive and ignoring the spirit hypothesis as the most simple and valid explanation of phenomena.<sup>842</sup> Even *The Spiritual Magazine* wrote of him and Carpenter in the same vein as people who have “babbled charmingly.”<sup>843</sup> It is of interest to note that Cox would not address the boycott until a few weeks before his death, though he did foresee such a thing happening at the very first address. One can only conjecture how his suggested name change and the acquisition of more funding to create his own periodical might have affected the growth of the PSGB.

Cox’s Psychological Society of Great Britain nonetheless did manage to gain some notoriety in its early phase, even in *Punch*, which erroneously portrayed it as a séance-based group.<sup>844</sup> This was echoed by Carpenter who in a lecture compared Cox and the PSGB and its activities to spiritualistic trickery of a Mr. Hewes and “Jack” undone by Forbes, even alluding to the Goble case, again, though without mentioning Cox:

And here, again, we see how, but for the interposition of a ‘sceptical’ expert a case of sham *clairvoyance* would have been published to the world with the same unhesitating affirmation of its genuineness, as that which now claims credit for the exercise of ‘Psychic Force’ in causing

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<sup>841</sup> Notes. *Spiritual Notes*. January, 1879 (London; Allen) 96.

<sup>842</sup> ‘Mr. Serjeant Cox on “Psychism.”’ *Spiritual Notes*. May, 1879 (London: E.W. Allen) 138; also, *Ibid.*, Notes. 147-148.

<sup>843</sup> ‘Spiritualism According to the “Obervatore Romano.”’ *The Spiritual Magazine*. (July, 1876) 296.

<sup>844</sup> “Shows and Autre Chose.” *Punch*. (Nov 25, 1876) 231.

accordions to play, and heavy tables to turn round or even rise into the air, without muscular agency.<sup>845</sup>

Carpenter cites a letter by Cox in a footnote, directing the remark against Cox.

This is the letter:

The first question is, - "What persons in private life have exhibited psychic force in my presence, by causing motion in solid bodies without contact?"

I answer, at least twenty persons of my own social position, friends and acquaintances, men, women and children. They can only be seen in confidence, for the ignorant howl against deters them from making known their power, save to confidential friends. I cannot give names but their callings will call for themselves... There can be little doubt that psychic force is possessed by all human beings, but to the extent requisite for external exhibition only in certain constitutions, in certain abnormal conditions of the mechanism.

The second question put to me is this, - "what has occurred within my own personal knowledge, in the presence of these private psychics?"

I have taken careful notes of more than one hundred and twenty of these experiments. I have seen heavy bodies moved without contact no less than eighty-three times, often very heavy bodies indeed.<sup>846</sup>

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<sup>845</sup> Carpenter, *Mesmerism &c*, 87.

<sup>846</sup> E.W. Cox, "'Psychic Phenomena' Letter to the Editor." *The Spectator*. 11 Nov 1876: 1406



This letter was in answer to a previous letter he sent on Nov 4<sup>th</sup> speaking of his experiments and divesting them of the spiritual hypothesis. Cox looked to the public and his responses show a desire to engage with his target audience. Carpenter placed paid mesmeric performers but Cox here is discussing private mediums and his tying that to Cox's letter shows a loose, even misrepresentative connection, It is here we see Cox at simultaneously showing a preference for the middle class but also being universal, a conundrum that Crowe had as well. Cox's circle are the credible trustworthy witnesses whose position entitles them to belief and the very least lack of a motive for imposture. Cox wanted to show that their position could even stand in place of a name. Their calling is their status. It is the universal aspect which also points to Cox's democratic epistemology where age, race, gender and class do not have anything to do with access to the psychic force. Another facet of democratic epistemology is the private, self-reflective empiricism prominent in many private circles where "tests" were personal affairs, as Barrow has pointed out.<sup>847</sup> Spiritualism was seen by people like Burns, as Owen points out, as a domestic institution.<sup>848</sup> This was to divest it from spiritualistic stereotypes perpetrated by both sceptics and spiritualists. Interestingly, Cox like Crowe and Colquhoun stressed abnormal mental conditions as conducive to evidence. Cox the lawyer and autodidact shows he is taking copious notes and reports of the many, many cases he has seen. Unfortunately, these notes were lost with the exception of cases that Munton sent to Myers and the SPR. Cox wanted to show that the PSGB was not spiritualistic, or a circle of professional mediums but that the sittings were professional and overseen by trustworthy professionals.

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<sup>847</sup> Barrow, 141.

<sup>848</sup> Owen, 75.

## Conclusion

Cox may have gone into obscurity following the dissolution of the PSGB, but his methods had not. McCorrstine points out that the “the PSGB represented a new ghost-seeing-investigative model in late Victorian culture through its grounding in psychology, its formation of special investigative committees and, perhaps more importantly, its public orientation.”<sup>849</sup> He goes on to say that the SPR represented a “new intellectual phase” of ghost-seeing investigation basing itself on the latest psychological theories and methods.<sup>850</sup> Given that it was made plain by Cox and the PSGB that they were not a society of ghost-seeing investigations, even spurning the very word ghost, McCorrstine is correct in showing that the PSGB represented a new phase of investigation as well. In fact, the PSGB’s methods would be adopted and expanded by the SPR – which, based on his final address, seems to have been the kind of organization that Cox had wanted the PSGB to grow into.

The very fact that people like William Barrett and F.W.H. Myers took part in the PSGB shows an unbroken line of organizational membership of psychical committees from the LDS up to the SPR. The very use of the word psychical is a plain appropriation of a term made popular by Crookes, Cox and the LDS’ committee. The growth of supernatural research, which had begun with the lone investigations or domestic-based

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<sup>849</sup> McCorrstine, 104.

<sup>850</sup> McCorrstine, 104-105.

research of Crowe, moved into a committee with the LDS, and then become a society with the PSGB and then the much larger SPR, shows the growing complexity and institutionalization of a strand of supernatural research tied neither to skeptical or Spiritualist ideology. Supernatural narratives went from being “stories” with Crowe, to reports with the LDS, to the SPR’s designation of “cases”, showing a shift in how these narratives were viewed and classified. That a sub-culture of supernatural research and its investigators resembled the growing complexity and institutions of the two ideologies of materialism and Spiritualism shows a desire to validate an epistemological position different from both positions in the organizational methods of that era. It shows a contemporary alternative empirical, democratic epistemology that had combined with a growing scientific discourse while grounded in an older one a Bacon, Glanville, Boyle and Defoe would have recognized. It was not a fossilized version but a modern one that Colquhoun, Crowe and Cox partook in where growing disciplines like psychology allowed a discursive space, where human testimony and narrative could compete with the scientific experiment. It also showed how both overlapped, that the line between inference and opinion was blurred, that objective and subjective blurred, that testimony depended on one’s narrative.

The idea of a publishing a journal and proceedings as the SPR did, providing cases and methodology, was something Cox had wanted to do since 1876.<sup>851</sup> For societies to publish journals was commonplace, but the template of using a journal to call for testimony, providing a discursive space for supernatural research that would steer clear of skeptics and Spiritualists and adopt a more scientific method, was

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<sup>851</sup> *PSPGB*, 29,32, 125.

uniquely Cox's. Though the JSPR and the PSPR fell short of Cox's idea of making a complete database of cases available, they did provide a selection of the best cases assembled with an accompanying classification that recalled his editorial bent. William Barrett may have been portrayed as the "pioneer" of the SPR, but he had already been given an eerily prescient prominence by Cox, who saw his work on thought transference as a possible cornerstone of psychical research.<sup>852</sup> Indeed it was such thought-transference, called "mental communion" by Cox and later "telepathy" by Myers, that would provide the bulk of SPR work in the early years of the society, culminating in *Phantasms of the Living*.

Also telling is the series of committees set up by the SPR to study different phenomena, which was a method envisaged by Cox.<sup>853</sup> The SPR had 6 committees on thought transference, hypnotism, Reichenbach's Od Force, testimony of apparitions and hauntings, Spiritualistic phenomena, and collecting published material on the supernatural.<sup>854</sup> Though not directly influenced by Cox, he had called for separate phenomena to be investigated in their own right. Here we can see a clear linkage from the LDS and its investigation of Spiritualistic phenomena via its sub-committees, to Crookes' investigations and Cox's PPSGB. Terminology such as psychic or apparition was appropriated on purpose to keep the SPR from being associated with Spiritualism or the idea that apparitions were necessarily of the dead, and even "supernormal" was to be used in place of "supernatural" because of its superstitious or Spiritualistic

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<sup>852</sup> *Phantasms of the Living*, Vol.I.vi, PPSGB, 161-162.

<sup>853</sup> PPSGB, 34.

<sup>854</sup> PSPR, Vol.I.2-4.

connotations.<sup>855</sup> As with Cox, the main bulk of the society's work was geared to showing immaterial

The previous paragraphs show the origins of the SPR's format. More importantly, they point to just what Crowe and Cox accomplished in an age where there was no set method of investigative research of supernatural research. Even more remarkable than that is the defense of personal testimony and narrative. If the SPR, skeptics and Spiritualists narrowed their view on the possible, Crowe and Cox tried to retain the narrative against interpretive imposition. The senses could still relate objective reality even if the events were not common. Even the idea of the common was enlarged to allow these supernatural events that happened to many people. Crowe, as a writer, knew many people had a story to tell. Cox the legalist knew the witnesses were willing to testify on behalf of the supernatural. Whether it was pointing out the problem with prejudicial a priori bias, circumstantial evidence in Crowe's case or the erroneous idea of what constituted "common sense" in Cox's, evidence, testimony and the senses should not be relegated to an epistemological position of subservience. What was at stake was not only the right of the average person to testify on their own behalf or write their own narrative, but an ontological position. It was the defense of being beyond the physiological totality or Spiritualist imposition which often culminated in quasi-theosophical beliefs.

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<sup>855</sup> *PL*, Vol.1.7.

Crowe's *NSN* was not a collection of folklore, it was a modern defense of the ability to explain reality based on one's experience, a personal epistemology that was saved from solipsism by being placed among other individuals into universal phenomena. It was like Colquhoun a spirited use of empiricism that showed a continued use of an alternative, inductive epistemology that valued testimony and the ability of the average person to interpret their lives. Crowe was not a writer of "ghost stories" but took the experience of the diary entry and combined it with the newspaper report, the anonymous letter with the signed affidavits of physicians into a pastiche of popular epistemology to defend an immaterial ontology. It was not totally unlike a "cabinet of curiosities" in that it collected all it could but that was to build upon its accumulation of data. This went beyond the hegemonic writings of Coombe, the reports of physicians commenting on case studies, the grand theories of Chambers in his *Vestiges*. *NSN* was not meant to prove or explain but only to show the reader something recognizable, something the reader may have heard of from someone or even experienced themselves. Crowe may have joked and criticised the concept of "everyone" but she did appeal to everyone. *NSN* provided the testimony of ages, peoples, classes and all ages to partake in an ontological construction. Her magnum opus was not a book on ghosts, it was a work that incorporated phenomena that would never be placed together in such copious variety and made available until the SPR's *Phantasms of the Living*. Legends were placed against testimony, superstitions against modern cases in an attempt to employ ethnology and extract the kernel of truth. While Coombe compared lumps, Crowe

compared phenomena, while Darwin was comparing beaks, Crowe compared narratives pointing to common phenomena.

Cox the legalist knew testimony could be problematic but Like Crowe saw that such widespread testimony pointed to a subject that needed to be treated seriously. His *Mechanism of Man* and the *PSGB* may have been a failed attempt but the overall argument was adopted by the SPR. Cox, as the last of the Serjeants-at-Law gave a methodical, jurisprudential style defence for an epistemology with the testimonial witness as valid in a cross-disciplinary sense. His trial by jury was made in the public of his peers, the reader. Rather than judge how his *PSGB* fell short of its aims, one must see the uniqueness of his writings in a Victorian era of Spencerian psychology, self-help literature, and Darwin. Cox wanted to do for psychology and immaterial ontology what Coombes did for phrenology. The appeal to testimony, the need for common people to write, experiment and investigate on their own were methods to enfranchise a populace to partake of the great debate over being, epistemology and the ability to defend their own experience. Facts, the “whole truth” were taken out of the terrain of the court case and placed in the jury of the public. This appeal to the reader and not above the reader makes Cox’s method a rare case of late Victorian nascent psychology that empowered the individual. Furthermore, his desire to created public databases and publication provides a unique example of a need to order and simplify supernatural phenomena and make it accessible to the public. It was not meant to be a specialist publication but a popular method of accumulating facts. This communitarian epistemology of

making research a public act was unheard of. It was unlike the medium centered publications of testimonial wonder or the specialist declamations of physicists. Both had centers of authority. For Cox, the authority would rest with the public based on testimony and experimentation. The narrative act was an act of interpretive power, a self-authoritative act where the fact would be paramount.

Crowe's method of allowing personal testimony on its own remains to this day in the new media of the digital age. Shows such as *Ghostly Encounters* (2005-), *A Haunting* (2005-2017), *Paranormal Witness* (2011-) and *The Haunted* (2009-) all base their supposed verity behind the testimony of witnesses, sometimes anonymous as it was with Crowe. Stories are recreated but the narrative is essentially based on personal experience. Now the viewer can watch and partake of the supernatural experience of the average person. Even Crowe's method of bringing educated observers and a medium to investigations of hauntings remains a popular method of ghost shows such as *Paranormal State* (2007-), and *The Dead Files* (2011-). Here the lay-experimentation and research of people is portrayed as non-specialist and something the average viewer could do on their own. Here Crowe and Cox's desire for people to do their own experiment has become part of popular culture with thousands of YouTube DIY investigations which run the gamut from spoofs to supposed proof of the supernatural.



Brian Cox, the modern popularizer of science, claimed that the LHC finally proved that ghosts do not exist.<sup>856</sup> The Cox of this thesis looked to the sub-atomic, for him the “immaterial” world to prove the possibility of the soul. Some scientists now claim to have some proof of telepathy, Cox’s idea of mental communion and the telepathy of Barrett and the SPR.<sup>857</sup> The controversy has not gone away. The specialists are still debating and people are still telling their stories and of course “ghost stories” provide a popular genre to explore social anxieties. In a world in search of the God particle that gives mass, there is still a strong desire to use the narrative act in the hope of finding a parcel of proof for the soul. The supernatural still defies category, moving from story to “story,” from the ether to sub-atomic, from the dayside to the nightside of human experience.

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<sup>856</sup> Andrew Griffen. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/ghosts-brian-cox-large-hadron-collider-cern-real-truth-standard-model-physics-a7598026.html>. 26 Feb 2017. 16 Feb 2019.

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