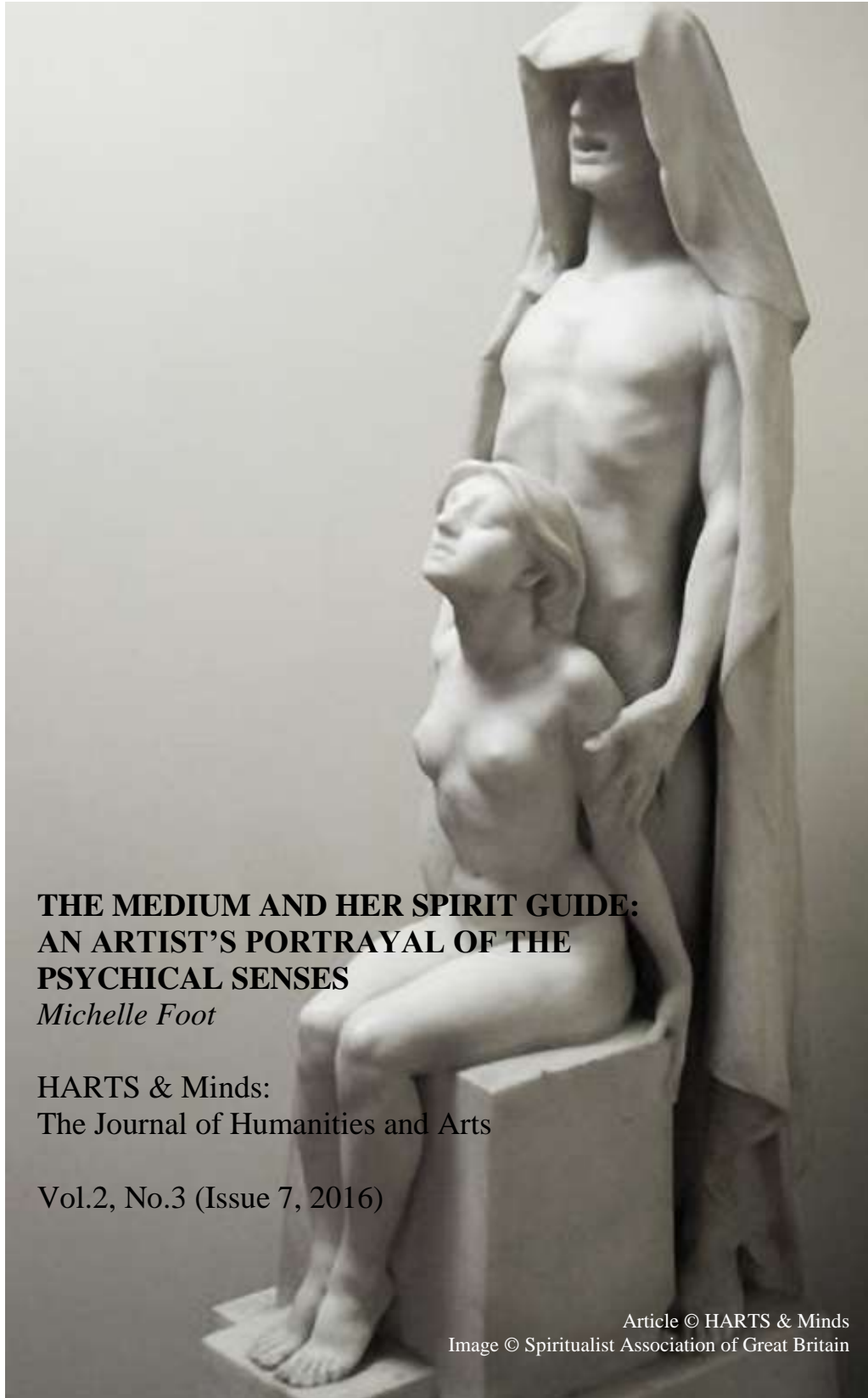


HARTS

& Minds



**THE MEDIUM AND HER SPIRIT GUIDE:
AN ARTIST'S PORTRAYAL OF THE
PSYCHICAL SENSES**

Michelle Foot

HARTS & Minds:
The Journal of Humanities and Arts

Vol.2, No.3 (Issue 7, 2016)

Article © HARTS & Minds
Image © Spiritualist Association of Great Britain

THE MEDIUM AND HER SPIRIT GUIDE: AN ARTIST'S PORTRAYAL OF THE PSYCHICAL SENSES

Michelle Foot

Abstract

Modern Spiritualism gained widespread popularity in Britain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, yet until recently its impact on British art has been little recognised. This paper presents a case study of George Henry Paulin's sculpture *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide* (1927), a work that deals with the subject of Spiritualism, and shows how the sculpture portrayed the psychical senses in their esoteric manner. The interpretation of *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide* has never before been explored, nor has it been discussed in an art historical framework, yet Paulin's sculpture reveals the extent to which Spiritualism entered mainstream fine art. By focusing on the context in which the sculpture was exhibited and how the sculptural representation of psychical senses intentionally appeals to the viewer, I hope to shed light upon the artist's intentions. This paper argues that the sculpture was used to defend spiritual mediumship from scepticism and, in so doing, demonstrates that Spiritualism featured in British art.

Key Words: Modern Spiritualism, Sculpture, Clairaudience, Clairsentience, Clairvoyance, Psychical Senses, Mediumship

Introduction

The Medium and Her Spirit Guide is a strikingly powerful sculpture and yet it is subtle in its portrayal of the full range of psychical senses understood by Modern Spiritualism. The Scottish artist, George Henry Paulin, presented this sculpture for exhibition in London at the Royal Academy in 1927 and in doing so gave a vivid elucidation of mediumistic powers in British art.¹

This article provides an interpretation of *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide* as Spiritualists understood it, and reveals how the sculpture was intended to impart the significance of spiritual mediumship while simultaneously defending Spiritualist beliefs from sceptics. Paulin's sculpture achieves this by instantaneously presenting the psychical senses of mediumship, such as clairaudience, clairsentience and clairvoyance. These psychical senses contributed to the most fulfilling experience in a séance, where the spirit was believed to conquer death by its survival. In Paulin's sculpture, the subtle yet clear realisation of these psychical senses is portrayed in a confident manner that hopes to convince the viewer of the genuine possibility of continued communication with the spirit world.

George Henry Paulin was born in 1888 in Muchkart, Clackmannanshire, Scotland. He received his early artistic training at the Edinburgh College of Art where he won a travel bursary to further his studies in London and Paris.² He eventually settled in Florence, Italy, where he established a studio between 1911 and 1914. At the outbreak of the First World War Paulin was forced to return to Britain and saw active service. After the war Paulin opened his studio in Glasgow, before relocating to London in 1923.³ It was here that Paulin produced a sculpture titled *The Control*, which was presented at the Royal Academy's annual exhibition of 1927.⁴ The sculpture was then later retitled as *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide*.⁵ After Paulin's death in 1962, the artist's widow presented the sculpture to the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain where it has remained to this day. Little is known about Paulin's private life, and with no surviving documentation to confirm that the artist was himself a Spiritualist it is difficult to ascertain his personal beliefs. However, it is certain that the artist

was aware of the complexities surrounding the subject of his sculpture, indicating that he was at least familiar with Spiritualism.

In response to the first showing of the sculpture at the Royal Academy, the London Evening News reported:

A very favourable comment is being passed upon exhibits of Mr. G. H. Paulin, the Scottish sculptor, who not long ago removed from Glasgow to London. He is represented by two groups King Robert of Sicily (shown at the RSA) and The Control. The latter ought to interest Spiritualists. It shows a medium in trance with the figure of the spirit 'control' standing behind.⁶

Modern Spiritualism began in America in 1848. The origins of the movement are attributed to the Fox Sisters of Hydesville, New York.⁷ Catherine and Margaret Fox both claimed to hear knocking or rapping in their home and came to believe that the cause of these noises was a spirit attempting to communicate with them. The idea that it was possible to contact the spirits of those who had died became a core belief in Spiritualism.⁸ Spiritualism quickly gained widespread popularity across America, Europe and indeed Britain in the 1850s and continued to maintain momentum well into the mid-twentieth century.⁹ The reason for this was that Spiritualism combined traditional religious ideas about the afterlife with scientific enquiry and investigation. This scientific aspect allowed Spiritualism to refer to itself as 'Modern', and also allowed Spiritualists to claim that Spiritualism's core belief was founded on the basis that evidence of spirit survival was derived from empirical observations of spirit phenomena. Additionally, the proclamation of a scientifically verified belief, that it was still possible to communicate with the spirit of those who had died, provided much comfort for the bereaved. Contact with the spirits often took place in a gathering known as a séance circle which was led by a medium whom the circle recognised as having a peculiar sensitivity to spirit communication. During such séances these mediums would sense the presence of spirits in a multitude of different ways, whether they felt the touch of a spirit hand, heard the whisper of a spirit voice, or saw the spirit as it emerged from the afterlife.

The Medium and Her Spirit Guide

Paulin's marble sculpture, *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide* (Figure 1), portrays all these mediumistic powers at once. The sculptural group features two nude figures: a female sitting on the plinth with her legs together and her arms by her sides with her face tilted upward, and a male standing behind her with a heavy cloak draped over his head, which hangs down the full length of his body.¹⁰ Although the two figures are intimately positioned their bodies have minimal contact, with the only touch being the male's gentle caress of the female's arms with his fingertips. The intimacy of the composition and a singular haptic bond creates an incredibly sensual connection between this sculptural dyad.

The remainder of this article presents a close reading of the sculpture and proposes an explanation of how the work can be interpreted. Firstly, the cloak draped over the male indicates this figure is a spirit. This may be iconographic as a symbolic reference to the Veil, an ethereal barrier which separated the mortal world from that of the spirit world, in which case the spirit has passed through the Veil in order to make contact with the living. The phrase 'through the Veil' was a regular hallmark of Spiritualist literature, and Spiritualists would have immediately understood the symbolic reference of the cloak.¹¹ Secondly, the cloak also conforms to what was expected of spirit appearances. Photographs taken during séance sittings were thought to capture spirits adorned by such large and voluminous cloaks. The examples shown in figure 2 are not dissimilar to the cloak worn by the spirit in the sculpture. The cloak therefore not only resembles the Veil but also identifies the spirit in no uncertain



Figure 1. George Henry Paulin, *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide*, 1927
Spiritualist Association of Great Britain.

terms. The given title of the sculpture implicates this spirit as the medium's guide. A spirit guide, or control, acted as a counterpart to the medium in the spirit world while working with the medium in a partnership across the Veil. The title further suggests the female figure should be interpreted without hesitation as the medium.

Paulin's sculpture has a dual agenda. The first of these is to promote Modern Spiritualist beliefs and stress the significance of the role mediums play within the Spiritualist movement. Secondly, and simultaneously, the sculpture seeks to defend mediumship from scepticism.

By 1927 Modern Spiritualism had been widely practiced for almost eighty years. During this time Spiritualism attracted great opposition from orthodox religion and scientific institutions, and received a great deal of criticism due to a developing reputation of fraudulent practice. Sceptics denied any possibility of psychical senses and denounced mediumship as a falsehood. Scientific investigations regularly revealed false mediums or charlatans working under the auspices of Spiritualism.¹² The photographs in figures 3 & 4 were taken during the séance of an early twentieth century medium and captured typically dubious images which inspired much of the sceptical criticism directed at spiritual mediumship.



Figure 2. Photograph by Frank Hudson, 1875, for the Society of Psychical Research. The photograph shows a séance attendant sitting surrounded by three spirits.



Figures 3 & 4. Photographs taken during séances with Helen Duncan. Originally published in Harry Price's *Leaves From A Psychist's Case-Book* (1933).

The above photographs show the moment when the Scottish medium Helen Duncan (1897 - 1956) entered into a trance and summoned her ethereal energy to create ectoplasm. This ectoplasm was then borrowed by the spirit to enable the medium's spirit guide, 'Albert', to form a physical impression in the séance. Ectoplasm was a spirit-type substance, which in the photograph appears as an umbilical cord emerging from the medium's face.¹³ Sceptics accused Helen Duncan of concealing cheesecloth and muslin in her throat and regurgitating it when she wished to produce the alleged ectoplasm, and as for her spirit guide, 'Albert', this spirit was argued to be nothing more than a papier-mâché mask on a coat hanger.¹⁴ Helen Duncan is seen sitting between the drawn curtains of a séance cabinet: this was a small secluded space at the back of a séance room in which a medium would often sit concealed from sight. The theory of the séance cabinet proposed that a smaller contained space better allowed the psychological energies from the medium to become concentrated. The medium's concentrated energy would allow ectoplasm to form and this would facilitate spirit phenomena. The theory continued that a darkened space created by the cabinet also protected the spirit from any detrimental light during the critical formation of such phenomena.¹⁵ Adhering to this theory, mediums would sit behind the curtains of the séance cabinet and spirits would soon appear from the enclosure to reveal themselves to those attending the séance circle, whilst the medium would remain hidden from sight. When the séance was finished the spirit would return to the cabinet and only then would the medium be seen again. This set-up made it easy for charlatans to take advantage of the situation. Many of the reports from scientific investigations concluded the proceedings with an account of an investigator grabbing the supposed spirit and exposing the medium in the act of fraudulence.¹⁶ This faked spirit phenomena was achieved by the use of gadgets and accomplices or impersonating the spirit itself.¹⁷ Such accounts of false mediumship irrevocably damaged the reputation of Spiritualism and sceptics encouraged mistrust towards all claims of spirit phenomena.¹⁸

Paulin's sculpture, *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide*, is a reaction to this scepticism. The artist responded by sculpting an idealised partnership between two beautiful forms of the human body, both spirit and mortal respectively. Unlike the uncomfortable image in the photograph of Helen Duncan producing ectoplasm from her face to enable 'Albert' to emerge into the mortal realm, the endeavour of Paulin's medium is shown as prepossessing and effortless. The medium in the sculpture is also seen in a spiritual trance. Her eyes are closed and the expression on her face is one of calm serenity. She too is working to bring the spirit forth through the Veil, but where Helen Duncan's 'Albert' is malformed in his appearance, Paulin's spirit guide has a handsome physique. The connection between the medium and her spirit guide is remarkably tender compared to the ectoplasmic cord connecting Helen Duncan and 'Albert', which borders on the grotesque. In this case Paulin uses his art to idealise the partnership between his medium and his spirit.

The idealised form of the medium and spirit also lends itself to Paulin's assertion of truthful mediumship. The nudity of the figures is reminiscent of depictions of classical heroes, a concept Paulin would be familiar with after his training as a sculptor. By stylistically heroicising the medium through classical associations, Paulin highlighted the adversity mediums received as the targets of outspoken scepticism. Furthermore, the nudity of Paulin's figures not only idealises the purity of their spiritual partnership but also exposes both medium and spirit not as cheats but as genuine participants of a successful séance. At séances under scientific investigation it was a regular practice for the séance to begin with a thorough examination of the medium's person to seek out any concealed gadgetry that could be used to deceive the séance circle. This was to rule out the possibility of the medium faking spirit phenomena or cheating in the séance by creating the illusion of psychological senses in action.¹⁹ These intrusive examinations often included vaginal inspections.²⁰ Paulin's sculpture may indicate his sympathy towards those required to undergo this uncomfortable process by

showing the medium exposed entirely to the eye of the viewer. The medium's shoulders are rolled back and her chest is openly displayed without any attempt to cover her nudity. However, she does not appear to be vulnerable to the viewer's voyeurism and scrutiny, instead she radiates confidence as a depiction of an honest medium, who, it can be observed, has nothing to hide. There are no hidden gadgets to be seen here, and the spirit that she has channelled forth must therefore be taken as genuine.

In terms of artistic intent, there is a clear distinction between what the photographs of Helen Duncan and Paulin's sculpture try to achieve. Photographs taken during séances were closely associated with the scientific inquiry of Spiritualism: Paulin's sculpture differs from this scientific agenda. Although photographs were sometimes used by Spiritualists to prove the 'truth' of Spiritualism as evidence of spirit survival, *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide* is less concerned with scientific proof and more with convincing the viewer through artistic expression. Whilst photography was used as a mechanical tool of scientific investigation, *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide* attempts to elevate the status of Spiritualism by giving it a place in high culture; Paulin introduces mediumship as a subject worthy of Fine Art.²¹

Paulin's sculpture is cleverly arranged with a series of emphatic contrasts to counter scepticism and argue for the genuine abilities of the medium, including her psychical senses. The first of these is the obvious contrast between the genders of the two figures, where the dual articulations of the male and female forms simply states that these figures are separate beings. The different positions of the figures in the composition's arrangement, one standing and one sitting, also serve to differentiate between the medium and the spirit, preventing the possibility of confusing their identities. Furthermore, as both figures are visible in the same instant, it is impossible for the medium to be accused of impersonating her spirit guide as was often the case in reports of exposed frauds. Other contrasts exist in smaller details: the medium's eyes are closed but the spirit's eyes are open, as are the medium's and spirit's mouths respectively - if any words are spoken they will come from the spirit and not from the medium. These contrasts differentiate between the two figures by establishing their separate identities despite their close partnership and intimate connection; thus, it is clearly insisted that the mediumship depicted in the sculpture is genuine, and the medium cannot be accused of falsehood.

The sculpture reinforces the necessity of true mediumship within Spiritualism by portraying the psychical senses in action. As the spirit passes into the mortal realm from the spirit world, he is perceived serially by different senses. Specifically, these psychical senses are clairaudience, sense by sound; clairsentience, sense by touch; and clairvoyance, sense by sight.²² During the late nineteenth century Spiritualists classified these psychical senses into an unofficial hierarchy of mediumistic powers and corresponding spirit phenomena on the basis of what provided the most satisfying séance experience.²³ This classification was divided into mental and physical mediumship.²⁴ Mental mediumship was introspective, when the medium alone could perceive the spirit due to an internal power and inherent sensitivity to spirit communication. However, others attending the séance circle were unable to discern the presence of spirits. In this case the medium was necessary to mediate between spirits and mortals. Conversely, physical mediumship entailed spirit phenomena that would take place in the external environment around the medium; this meant that the séance circle could also perceive any suggested spirit activity as it occurred. Mediums were still required on these occasions, however, lending their energy in order to allow the spirit phenomena to occur. The photograph of Helen Duncan and her spirit guide, 'Albert' (Figure 3 & 4), is an example of physical mediumship. Mediums practicing physical mediumship were rare, however, so any convincing results from this form of mediumship were prized most highly by Spiritualists.²⁵

The hierarchy of mediumistic powers and spirit phenomena was formalised to an extent in Edward Walter Wallis' discourse on *A Guide to Mediumship and Psychical Enfoldment* in the

1880s. Wallis explained, "Through the gateway of mediumship the spirits make themselves known in a variety of ways. There are many phases of mediumistic phenomena".²⁶ These phases could overlap and a talented medium could exercise multiple different abilities at the same time.²⁷ This also included blending both mental and physical mediumship.²⁸ Mental mediumship was thought to impact on corresponding physical mediumship and vice versa, 'When the spiritual faculties [mental mediumship] are more fully developed, materialisation and external phenomena generally [physical mediumship] will be comprehended'.²⁹ All of the phases of mediumistic phenomena, including a variety of psychical senses, were considered important to Spiritualism.³⁰ Their value was subjective in each individual case, depending upon the perceived capability of the specific medium and the aims of those attending the séance circle. It is therefore unsurprising that there was some debate and discrepancy between Spiritualists over which mediumistic power was most impressive and valuable as a display of sensing spirit communication.³¹ Nonetheless, these phases of mediumship were seen as part of a hierarchy, where one phase would lead to another, ultimately providing a fulfilling experience in the séance. By considering *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide* alongside this hierarchy it is possible to demonstrate how the portrayal of each psychical sense leads the viewer through the phases of mediumship to understand the significance of the medium.

Clairaudience

Clairaudience is placed on the lower level of hierarchy, if only because this was the most common of mediumistic powers.³² Clairaudience was defined as the medium's ability to hear or sense the spirit by sound. This was typically categorised as a mental form of mediumship, as the medium alone had the ability to hear the voice of a spirit speaking during a séance. Clairaudience literally means 'clear-hearing', and it was through this clear-hearing that the medium was able to relay the spirit's privately-spoken message to the séance circle, as the other participants were unable to hear it. As a form of physical mediumship the corresponding audible spirit manifestation was rapping in the séance room. Paulin's sculpture portrays clairaudience: The spirit's mouth is open, showing that he has a desire to be heard, whereas the medium's lips are not parted but her ears are visible. The connection suggests to the viewer that the spirit is speaking and the medium is listening. Looking upon the sculpture, the viewer is made aware of their own lack of clairaudient powers, thus emphasising the necessity of the medium, as the receiver, and indeed mediator, of the spirit's message. Such a spirit message would remain unheard by those who surround the medium until she shares what she has heard. *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide* encourages anticipation in the viewer, to await the reception of a message from the spirit world via the medium, and in doing so the responsibility and the position of the medium is strengthened.

At this point, it is worth considering a possible artistic reference for Paulin's sculpture. Gian Lorenzo Bernini's sculpture in Rome, *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (c.1647 - 1652) at the Cornaro Chapel, Santa Maria della Vittoria, may have served as a visual source for Paulin's sculpture.³³ As has been previously stated, Paulin spent part of his career working in Italy and during this time the artist travelled to Rome where he had the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of Bernini's celebrated sculpture. Despite much opposition to Spiritualism from the Roman Catholic Church, there was a counterargument from many Spiritualists who claimed the Catholic saints were early mediums and many of the angels in their visions were spirits returned through the Veil.³⁴ Additionally, it is appropriate for a sculpture of Saint Teresa to be a model for Paulin's medium and spirit, because Teresa was herself a mystic, and it was Teresa's ecstasy, as a trance-state of communication between the mortal and spirit world, which was given as an example in Frederic Myer's book *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*.³⁵ Mediumistic trances were occasionally described as moments of mystical ecstasy. This text was widely read by contemporary Spiritualists.³⁶ Paulin may have

read this text prior to or during his conception of *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide*, and thus may have been further influenced to use Saint Teresa as a model. Although stylistically Paulin's work is less dynamic than the Baroque master, there is a similarity in the spiritual engagement depicted in the two sculptures. Teresa's open mouth in Bernini's depiction is suggestive of an audible sigh during her moment of ecstasy. The gentle parting of her lips is visually similar to those of the spirit in Paulin's sculpture, which also suggests some kind of vocalisation escaping from the spirit. Moreover, the serenity in Teresa's face as she responds to the touch of a spiritual force appears to be emulated by Paulin's medium, as the spirit speaks to her clairaudience.

Clairsentience

Clairsentience was adjacent to clairaudience in the hierarchy of mediumistic phenomena, and was defined as the medium's ability to feel the presence of a spirit, including mentally tuning into the emotions of those close to the medium, and physically sensing the touch of spiritual energy. A corresponding manifestation of clairsentience in physical mediumship was the tilting of tables, or objects moving independently about the séance room (these occurrences have alternatively been described as poltergeist activity). Occasionally those attending séances would claim to feel a spirit breathing on the back of their necks or invisible hands taking hold of their own.³⁷ In Paulin's sculpture the spirit makes contact by touching the medium's arms, and in doing so demonstrates clairsentience in a haptic bond. Where the sculpture encourages anticipation in the viewer by suggesting clairaudience, implied clairsentience demonstrates the importance of mediumship in enabling direct engagement with a spirit.³⁸

The concept of engagement is heightened in the viewer's experience of the sculpture. The viewer intuitively considers the intimate proximity of the spirit's body to that of the medium and is somehow aware that, even without the spirit's fingertips touching the medium's arms, the medium must surely sense, or feel, the presence of the spirit standing closely behind her. The intimacy of the composition forces the viewer to become engaged with the sculpture by recognising a preternatural sense which allows the viewer to empathise with another person at a distance, and to sense what they feel. Spiritualists became fascinated with intuitive connections and related them to psychical abilities, such as clairsentience, when theories of magnetism were adopted to explain aspects of mediumistic powers:

There resides in bodies, animate and inanimate, a certain force or influence which is felt by certain individuals, who are more or less strongly, and in different ways, affected by it. That this force or influence is the same which, in a peculiar form, gives rise to the magnetic phenomena and to magnetic sympathy is in the highest degree possible.³⁹

In the case of *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide*, extrasensory awareness occurs despite the impossibility of the marble sculpture having any real sentience (let alone clairsentience). Nonetheless, the sculpture fosters the viewer's understanding of mediumistic abilities by providing them with some insight into a medium's psychical senses through an extrasensory engagement with the sculpture.

Clairvoyance

Returning to the hierarchy of mediumistic powers and moving through the prescribed phases, clairvoyance occupies a high position in the ranking.⁴⁰ Clairvoyance is defined as the medium's ability to see a spirit. It was often the case in mental mediumship that the medium alone would see the spirit during the séance and so was required to describe the spirit to the

rest of the séance circle. Alternatively the medium would describe visions of the spirit-world, or other earthly locations outside the séance parlour, or the medium would claim to see the past or the future.⁴¹ As the spirit in Paulin's sculpture is visible, the viewer's experience itself may be likened to clairvoyance. Paulin's sculpture is ultimately a visual experience of a spirit coming through the Veil.

However, the visual experience of the spirit within Paulin's sculpture is given even greater meaning when the apex of hierarchical spirit phenomena is considered. The greatest parallel of clairvoyance was its correspondent form in physical mediumship when the spirit materialised during the séance. Materialisation was placed at the apex of such a mediumistic hierarchy because it provided the most fulfilling séance experience. The spirit would manifest in such a way as to be visible to all attending the séance circle – but materialisation was not exclusively visual. Materialisation allowed all the psychical senses to be utilised during this form of spirit phenomena so that the materialised spirit could be also be heard, touched, and even smelled (clairscent).⁴² Materialisation was the most desired form of spirit phenomena because it allowed the spirit to behave as though it were still mortal, with a corporeal presence. For many séance sitters suffering from bereavement the idea that they were able to once again see, hear and touch their loved ones proved to be deeply comforting and fulfilling.

The initial reaction of the viewer is to discern the nature of relationship of the medium with her spirit guide. It is only by understanding the subtle phases of mediumship and meditating on the representation of the psychical senses in this sculpture that the viewer becomes aware of the third essential party to complete the ensemble. The medium is in trance with her eyes closed, thus she brings forth the spirit not for herself but for the benefit of the viewer. The viewer therefore takes on the important role as a witness to the materialisation of a spirit. This supports the argument that only with true mediumship can a spirit be witnessed as a survivor of death and that mediums are essential to upholding the core tenet of Spiritualism.

It is important to note that whilst the sculpture imitates the performative aspect of a séance, the sculpture can neither replace the séance experience nor does it attempt to. There is a stillness to the sculpture, which lacks the sense of movement that was sometimes crucial to mediumship.⁴³ At first glance, however, this stillness appears to capture a moment of hush when the medium slipped into a trance and the séance circle waited for spirit phenomena to begin.⁴⁴ And yet, whilst the psychical senses are supposedly active through the mediumship presented in the sculpture, the lack of movement is not problematic. Rather than trying to depict movement, Paulin deliberately negates it. In doing so, he concentrates on the mental phenomena of the séance and not the physical manifestation (except perhaps the image of a materialised spirit). The stillness seen in the sculpture references an Egyptian style; this is particularly evident in the seated position of the medium on the plinth with her knees close together. This stylistic reference gives the sculpture a formalised static identity. Such inherent stillness in the work itself forces the viewer to concentrate on the mental activity of the medium and the psychical senses at work through her. Nonetheless, sculpture cannot replace the performativity of a medium, it can only represent it as an imitation. *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide* could not emulate the real experience of a séance no matter how successful the sculptural group was in conveying the importance of mediumship. Paulin's sculpture is therefore about encouraging the viewer to appreciate true mediumship, but also encouraging the viewer to attend a real séance and witness the psychical senses in action.

Conclusion

The Medium and Her Spirit Guide portrays the psychical senses of clairaudience, clairsentience and clairvoyance and shows how the phases of mediumistic power culminate into a materialisation of a spirit. If the experience of the sculpture were to evoke comfort in

the viewer or persuade them of Spiritualism's core belief - that communication with the spirit world is possible - then the sculpture would successfully defend mediumship against scepticism, whilst simultaneously imparting the importance of mediumship within the Spiritualist movement.

Paulin's sculpture responds to scepticism which denounced the experiences of Spiritualism and the psychical senses through expressing the psychical senses and using their portrayal to appeal to the viewer. Clairaudience is alluded to in the parted lips of the spirit as he speaks to the listening medium and awakens an anticipation in the viewer to await the spirit-message; clairsentience is represented by the gentle touch of the spirit's fingertips on the medium's arms and this gesture acknowledges the engagement between the spirit and mortal worlds; and clairvoyance is suggested by the very visual presentation of the spirit to the viewer. The visual, and indeed material, depiction of the spirit insinuates the séance phenomenon of a materialisation, which brought together all the phases of mediumship to provide the most fulfilling experience. The purpose of the sculpture was to aid the argument that with true mediumship the spirits are not lost to a distant afterlife, but that it is possible to communicate with the spirits after death. This was why mediumship, and the psychical senses which it entailed, were necessary for Spiritualism.

Paulin presented his sculpture to the Royal Academy during a critical period for Spiritualism. The interwar years saw increased division in opinions on Spiritualism due to the consequences of widespread social bereavement after the First World War. During this time Spiritualists were earnest in repeating their assertion that their mediums had the ability to contact the dead whereas sceptics were increasingly polemical against practitioners who they perceived as charlatans taking advantage of the emotionally vulnerable.⁴⁵ The Catholic Crusade Against Spiritualism was formed in 1926, the third International Congress of Psychical Research took place in Paris in 1927, and London hosted the International Spiritualist Congress in 1928, all of which demonstrates the significance that Spiritualism continued to hold. Whether or not *The Medium and Her Spirit Guide* had any bearing on the debate is uncertain, and it is unlikely that the extent of its impact will ever be known. Yet if the tone of the London Evening News report, quoted above, is in any way indicative of how the public viewed the sculpture, it suggests that the sculpture was able to gain 'favourable comment'. This shows that it was possible for fine art on the subject of Spiritualism to be well-received in a mainstream artistic institution such as the Royal Academy in spite of continued scepticism. Indeed, it demonstrates that, at the very least, Spiritualism had made an impact on British art.

Notes

¹ This is the only known sculpture to date that directly depicts this subject matter in British art.

² 'George Henry Paulin', *The Dollar Magazine*, 18:71 (1919), 99-100 (p. 99).

³ Paulin's addresses and years of residence in Florence, Glasgow and London are given in *The Royal Scottish Academy Exhibitors 1826 – 1990*, ed. by Charles Baile de Laperriere, 3 (Edinburgh, Himarton Manor Press, 1991), pp. 448–449.

⁴ See *Royal Academy Exhibitors 1905 – 1970: A Dictionary of Artists and Their Works in the Summer Exhibitions of the Royal Academy of Arts*, 5 (Yorkshire: E. P. Publishing, 1981), p. 284.

⁵ The title of the sculpture had certainly changed by the time Paulin's widow presented it to the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain. See Roy Stemman, *One Hundred Years of Spiritualism: The Story of the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain* (London: SAGB, 1972), p. 62.

⁶ 'Scot's Sculpture at the RA', review in *London Evening News* (1927), held in the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain archive.

⁷ This is covered in greater detail by Barbara Weisberg in *Talking to the Dead: Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism* (San Francisco: Harper, 2004).

- ⁸ For a thorough contemporary overview of Spiritualism see Emma Hardinge Britten, *Nineteenth Century Miracles: A Complete Historical Compendium of the Great Movement Known As Modern Spiritualism* (New York: Lovell & Co., 1884) and Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism* (London: Cassell & Co., 1926)
- ⁹ The following texts provide a comprehensive overview of a general history of Spiritualism in Britain during this time and the reasons for its popularity: Logie Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians 1850 – 1910* (London: Routledge, 1986); Georgina Byrne, *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England 1850 – 1939* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010); Alex Owens, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (London: Virago Press, 1989); Jenny Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society Between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
- ¹⁰ It was not uncommon for female mediums to have male spirit guides. The issues surrounding gender in the Spiritualist movement have been widely discussed by Owens, *Darkened Room*; Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society*; Marlene Tromp, *Altered States: Sex, Nation, Drugs and Self-Transformation in Victorian Spiritualism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006).
- ¹¹ The titles of Spiritualist books include *Rifts in the Veil: A Collection of Inspirational Poems and Essays Given Through Various Forms of Mediumship; Also Poems and Essays by Spiritualists* (London: W. H. Harrison, 1878); George Owen, *The Life Beyond the Veil* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1921) and Mary Wallace, *The Thinning of the Veil* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1919).
- ¹² See Todd Leonard, *Talking to the Other Side: A History of Modern Spiritualism and Mediumship* (Lincoln, Nebraska: iUniverse, 2005), pp. 124–130.
- ¹³ French Spiritualist Dr. Charles Richet was the first to propose the metaphysical hypothesis of ectoplasm and argued his theory in *Thirty Years of Psychical Research* (London: Society of Psychical Research, 1923).
- ¹⁴ For more on Helen Duncan and the controversies of her séances see Harry Price, *Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship* (London: National Laboratory of Psychical Research, 1931).
- ¹⁵ Owens, *Darkened Room*, p. 69; Tromp, *Altered States*, p. 22.
- ¹⁶ One such report describes this in a published account released by the British National Association of Spiritualism council, ‘The Seizure of Mrs Elgie Corner’, *Spiritual Notes*, 1:19 (1880), 251–255. Another example was described in the report ‘Exposures of Mr Craddock’, *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 12 (1906), 266–268, 274–277.
- ¹⁷ Georgina Byrne, *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England 1850 – 1939* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010) pp.71–72; Daniel Dunglas Home, *Light and Shadows of Spiritualism* (London: Virtue & Co., 1878), pp. 324–351; Harry Houdini, *A Magician Among the Spirits* (London: Harper & Brothers, 1924), p. 142.
- ¹⁸ Sceptical discourse encouraging mistrust of Spiritualist claims of spirit communication and phenomena are outlined in the works of many psychical investigators who were not convinced by what they experienced; Joseph MacCabe, *Is Spiritualism Based On Fraud?* (London: Watts & Co., 1920); Hereward Carrington, *The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism: Fraudulent and Genuine* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1920), pp. 230–275.
- ¹⁹ This pre-séance examination was a condition set down by the Society for Psychical Research as part of their scientific investigations. See Renée Haynes, *The Society for Psychical Research 1882–1892: A History* (London: William Heinemann, 1982).
- ²⁰ Price, *Regurgitation*, p. 69; Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society*, p. 218.
- ²¹ This is discussed further in Jennifer Tucker, *Nature Exposed: Photography as Eyewitness in Victorian Science* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013).
- ²² The psychical senses listed here are specific to those portrayed in the sculpture. This list not exhaustive of all the psychical senses and mediumistic powers (both mental and physical), as such a list would be too extensive to include for the purposes of this short article. For further reading, most books in this article’s bibliography include discussion on other psychical senses and mediumistic powers.
- ²³ Hudson Tuttle, *Mediumship and Its Laws* (Chicago: Progressive Thinker Publishing House, 1900), p. 9.
- ²⁴ The theoretical division of mediumship into mental and physical classifications was widely discussed by Spiritualists and scientific investigators. Some contemporary texts which discuss these phases of mediumship, their definitions and the role of the medium in each, are discussed in Tuttle, *Mediumship and Its Laws*; Edward Wallis, *A Guide to Mediumship and Psychical Enfoldment* (London: Office of Light, date of publication unknown (1880’s)); Elmer Sprague, *Spirit Mediumship: Its Various Phases – The Medium’s Companion and Guide* (Detroit: Rev. E. W. Sprague, 1912).
- ²⁵ ‘Form Manifestation’, *The Spiritualist*, 9:21 (22 December 1876), 242–244 (p. 242); Wallis, *Guide to Mediumship*, p.52; Sprague, *Spirit Mediumship*, p. 54; Leonard, *Talking to the Other Side*, p. 120.
- ²⁶ Wallis, *Guide to Mediumship*, p. 8.
- ²⁷ Tuttle, *Mediumship and Its Laws*, p. 33.
- ²⁸ Sprague, *Spirit Mediumship*, p. 54.
- ²⁹ ‘Clairvoyance and Clairaudience’, *The Medium and Daybreak*, 13:616 (20 January 1882), 41–42 (p. 41).

- ³⁰ These psychical senses are fully described and explained in Richard Stocker, *Clairvoyance, Clairaudience, Psychometry and Clairsentience* (London: L. N. Fowler, 1907).
- ³¹ Subtle discrepancies can be found between statements by Tuttle, *Mediumship and Its Laws*, Wallis, *Guide to Mediumship*, and Sprague, *Spirit Mediumship*.
- ³² ‘Our Circle Members and Their Experiences’, *Borderland*, 1:4 (April 1894), 257–258 (p. 257).
- ³³ Also perhaps to a lesser extent Bernini’s *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni* (1671 – 1674) at the Altieri Chapel, San Francesco a Ripa, Rome.
- ³⁴ See Fielding Ould, *The Wonders of the Saints In Light of Spiritualism* (London: J. M. Watkins, 1919); James Peebles, *Seers of the Ages: Embracing Spiritualism Past and Present* (Chicago, Progressive Thinker Publishing House, 1903), p. 230; Geoffrey Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 47; ‘Our Gallery of Borderlanders – St.Teresa de Jesus de Avila’, *Borderland*, 1:5 (July 1894), 411–20.
- ³⁵ Frank Flinn, ‘Teresa of Ávila’, *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006), p. 593.
- ³⁶ Frederic Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, 1 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1903), p. 5. This book remained in print until the 1940s.
- ³⁷ An account of invisible hands referenced in ‘Correspondence: A Séance in Hyde Park Terrace’, *The Spiritual Magazine*, 1:11 (November 1860), 524–526 (p. 525).
- ³⁸ Additionally, in spirit healing the conventional laying on of hands is usually on the sitter’s shoulder or upper arm. Although it is usually the medium who channels the healing, here the sculpture reinforces the notion that it is spirit energy behind the mediumistic power which is the source of healing.
- ³⁹ William Gregory, *Letters to a Candid Inquirer on Animal Magnetism* (Philadelphia: Blanchard and Lea, 1851), p. 115.
- ⁴⁰ ‘Clairvoyance - Its Importance and Scope’, *The Medium and Daybreak*, 13: 615 (13 January 1882), p. 25.
- ⁴¹ Tuttle, *Mediumship and Its Laws*, p. 86; ‘Lucid Magnetism, Clairvoyance, Double Sight’, *Light*, 1:35 (3 September 1881), 273–274.
- ⁴² For a full discourse on materialisation see Edward Brackett, *Materialized Apparitions* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1908).
- ⁴³ The issue of how to communicate movement through a static art form has long been a recognised as a limitation of the medium of sculpture, but this problem is no more acute for Paulin than any other sculptor.
- ⁴⁴ Many accounts of séances include mention of ‘the pause’ in their descriptions of the medium entering a trance. For example, ‘Signalling movements ceased. After a brief pause, the trance-medium slowly rose as another individual’ in ‘To The Editor’, *The Spiritualist Magazine*, 2:4 (1 April 1861), 191–192 (p.192).
- ⁴⁵ Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society* pp. 14–15 (p. 19).

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- ‘Our Circle Members and Their Experiences’, *Borderland*, 1:4 (April 1894), 257–258.
- ‘Our Gallery of Borderlanders – St.Teresa de Jesus de Avila’, *Borderland*, 1:5 (July 1894), 411–20.
- ‘George Henry Paulin’, *The Dollar Magazine*, 18:71 (1919), 90–100.
- ‘Lucid Magnetism, Clairvoyance, Double Sight’, *Light*, 1:35 (3 September 1881), 273–274.
- ‘Clairvoyance - Its Importance and Scope’, *The Medium and Daybreak*, 13: 615 (13 January 1882), 25.
- ‘Clairvoyance and Clairaudience’, *The Medium and Daybreak*, 13: 616 (20 January 1882), 41–42.
- ‘Correspondence: A Séance in Hyde Park Terrace’, *The Spiritual Magazine*, 1:11 (November 1860), 524–526.
- ‘To The Editor’, *The Spiritualist Magazine*, 2:4 (1 April 1861), 191–192.
- ‘Form Manifestation’, *The Spiritualist*, 9:21 (22 December 1876), 242–244.

'Exposures of Mr Craddock', *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 12 (1906), 266–268, 274–277.

'Scot's Sculpture at the RA', *London Evening News* (1927) [Spiritualist Association of Great Britain archive].

'The Seizure of Mrs Elgie Corner', *Spiritual Notes*, 1:19 (1880), 251–255.

Rifts in the Veil: A Collection of Inspirational Poems and Essays Given Through Various Forms of Mediumship; Also Poems and Essays by Spiritualists (London: W. H. Harrison, 1878).

Brackett, Edward. *Materialized Apparitions* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1908).

Britten, Emma Hardinge. *Nineteenth Century Miracles: A Complete Historical Compendium of the Great Movement Known As Modern Spiritualism* (New York: Lovell & Co., 1884).

Carrington, Hereward. *The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism: Fraudulent and Genuine* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1920).

Cowell, Eugene. *The Identity of Primitive Christianity and Modern Spiritualism*, 2 volumes, (New York: The Two Worlds, 1881).

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The History of Spiritualism*, 2 volumes (London: Cassell & Co., 1926).

Gregory, William. *Letters to a Candid Inquirer on Animal Magnetism* (Philadelphia: Blanchard and Lea, 1851).

Home, Daniel Dunglas. *Light and Shadows of Spiritualism* (London: Virtue & Co., 1878).

Houdini, Harry. *A Magician Among the Spirits* (London: Harper & Brothers, 1924).

Leadbeater, Charles. *Clairvoyance*, 2nd edition (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1903).

MacCabe, Joseph. *Is Spiritualism Based On Fraud?* (London: Watts & Co., 1920).

Myers, Frederic. *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1903).

Notzing, Baron Von Schrenk. *Phenomena of Materialisation: A Contribution to the Investigation of Mediumistic Teleplastics* (New York: Kegan Paul, 1923).

Ould, Fielding. *The Wonders of the Saints in Light of Spiritualism* (London: J. M. Watkins, 1919).

Owen, George. *The Life Beyond the Veil* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1921).

Peebles, James. *Seers of the Ages: Embracing Spiritualism Past and Present* (Chicago: Progressive Thinker Publishing House, 1903).

Podmore, Frank. *Modern Spiritualism: A History and a Criticism*, 2 volumes (London: Methuen & Co., 1902).

Price, Harry. *Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship* (London: National Laboratory of Psychical Research, 1931).

- Price, Harry. *Leaves From A Psychist's Case-Book* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1933).
- Richet, Charles. *Thirty Years of Psychical Research* (London: Society of Psychical Research, 1923).
- Sprague, Elmer. *Spirit Mediumship: Its Various Phases – The Medium's Companion and Guide* (Detroit: Rev. E. W. Sprague, 1912).
- Stocker, Richard. *Clairvoyance, Clairaudience, Psychometry and Clairsensience* (London: L. N. Fowler, 1907).
- Tuttle, Hudson. *Mediumship and Its Laws* (Chicago: Progressive Thinker Publishing House, 1900).
- Wallace, Mary. *The Thinning of the Veil* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1919).
- Wallis, Edward. *A Guide to Mediumship and Psychical Enfoldment* (London: Office of Light, date of publication unknown (1880's)).

Secondary Sources

- Royal Academy Exhibitors 1905 – 1970: A Dictionary of Artists and Their Works in the Summer Exhibitions of the Royal Academy of Arts*, 5 (Yorkshire: E. P. Publishing, 1981).
- Barrow, Logie. *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians 1850 – 1910* (London: Routledge, 1986).
- Byrne, Georgina. *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England 1850 – 1939* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010).
- Crowell, Eugene. *The Identity of Primitive Christianity and Modern Spiritualism*, 2 volumes (New York: The Two Worlds, 1881).
- Flinn, Frank. 'Teresa of Ávila', *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006).
- Haynes, Renée. *The Society for Psychical Research 1882 – 1892: A History* (London: William Heinemann, 1982).
- Hazelgrove, Jenny. *Spiritualism and British Society Between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
- Laperriere, Charles Baile de, ed. *The Royal Scottish Academy Exhibitors 1826 – 1990*, 4 volumes (Himarton Manor Press, Edinburgh: 1991).
- Leonard, Todd. *Talking to the Other Side: A History of Modern Spiritualism and Mediumship* (Lincoln, Nebraska: iUniverse, 2005).
- Nelson, Geoffrey. *Spiritualism and Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).
- Owens, Alex. *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (London: Virago Press, 1989).
- Stemman, Roy. *One Hundred Years of Spiritualism: The Story of the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain* (London: SAGB, 1972).

Tromp, Marlene. *Altered States: Sex, Nation, Drugs and Self-Transformation in Victorian Spiritualism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006).

Tucker, Jennifer. *Nature Exposed: Photography as Eyewitness in Victorian Science* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013).

Weisberg, Barbara. *Talking to the Dead: Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism* (San Francisco: Harper, 2004).

Biography

Michelle Foot is undertaking a PhD at the University of Aberdeen, UK. Her current research focuses on Modern Spiritualism and Scottish Art between 1860 and 1945. This includes investigating both the paintings and sculptures by Scottish Spiritualists and the wider influences of Spiritualism on mainstream Scottish artists, such as associates and members of the Royal Scottish Academy and the Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts. Other research interests include exploring the relationship between Spiritualism and the Celtic Revival in Scotland.