



University
of Glasgow

Ferguson, C. (2007) *Eugenics and the afterlife: Lombroso, Doyle, and the spiritualist purification of the race*. *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 12 (1). pp. 64-85. ISSN 1355-5502

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/5974/>

Deposited on: 24 June 2009

*Eugenics and the Afterlife:
Lombroso, Doyle, and the Spiritualist
Purification of the Race*

Christine Ferguson

In 'Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims' (1904), inventor, explorer, and statistician Francis Galton anticipates the triumph of eugenic philosophy through its eventual supernaturalization. If the public could only be taught to view eugenic principles, not as the restrictive dictates of a cruel and materialistic science, but as the natural fealty due to a benevolent God, their objections to selective human breeding would disappear.

[Eugenics] must be introduced into the national conscience, like a new religion. It has, indeed, strong claims to become an orthodox religious tenet of the future, for eugenics co-operate with the workings of nature by securing that humanity shall be represented by the fittest races ... The improvement of our stock seems to me one of the highest objects that we can reasonably attempt. We are ignorant of the ultimate destinies of humanity, but feel perfectly sure that it is as noble a work to raise its level ... as it would be disgraceful to abase it. I see no impossibility in eugenics becoming a religious dogma among mankind, but its details must be worked out sedulously in the study.¹

This article examines the fulfillment of Galton's desire for a merging of religion and eugenics within the occult movement that he himself had explored throughout his career:² modern spiritualism. Flourishing in the West from its 1848 'discovery' in Hydesville, New York until well into the twentieth century, spiritualism was a maverick faith that combined the traditional Christian tenet of the soul's post-life survival with a zealous, albeit flawed, modern empiricism. Spiritualists did not simply believe that the dead still existed, but that this existence was materially manifest, as evidenced by spirit photographs, séance-room materializations, slate writing, and messages rapped on tables. Its critics have presented the incredibly protean movement as the product of an epidemic of insanity or mass hysteria, as a proto-modernist rejection of rationalism, as a vehicle for working-class solidarity, or as an important

forum for female empowerment and radical gender politics.³ It was also a crucial site for the dissemination of the same ideas about racial fitness and hereditary improvement that culminated in modern eugenics. In tracing the dialogue between spiritualist philosophy and emergent eugenic principles, I seek to provide a new context through which to understand the ‘conversion’ of Arthur Conan Doyle and Cesare Lombroso, two prominent writers and men of science whose late-life adoption of spiritualism is all too often read as an abandonment of their earlier interest in race, nation, and criminal anthropology. Read as an extension, rather than a rejection, of materialist theories of deviance, spiritualism appears as the logical and perhaps necessary culmination of these two men’s life-long fascination with the body’s potential to signify racial, national, and criminal type.

In making this argument, I seek to balance the celebratory tendency of some of the recent scholarship on Victorian spiritualism with a discussion of its ideological complicity with both positive (the attempt to breed the ‘fittest’ individuals) and negative (the effort to prevent the ‘unfit’ from breeding through law, sterilization, or euthanasia) eugenics. The current scholarly emphasis on the feminist and socialist aspects of spiritualist belief suggests a perhaps premature willingness to take the faithful at their own valuation as progressive humanitarians whose belief in the afterlife, like the commitment to vegetarianism and anti-vivisection that often accompanied it, bespoke a morality far in advance of their age. While it is certainly true that spiritualism gave a voice to the socially silenced – to women, to the working classes, to non-Whites – it could also act as a safe forum through which the body politics and cultural attitudes that marginalized these subjects might be articulated and transformed. My article challenges the kind of wishful critical thinking that equates unorthodoxy with subversion. This is not to say that a resistance to repressive cultural beliefs is impossible, or that all nonconformist movements are inevitably bound to repeat the exploitive patterns of the system they oppose. Rather, I simply suggest that we can no more assume the inherently radical nature of non-normative social bodies than we can of physical ones. Although few studies of spiritualism commit the latter fallacy explicitly, many do so implicitly through their decision to focus primarily on those aspects of the movement that accord with the post-WWII values of the political left. My goal is not to reject current assessments of Spiritualism’s political and ideological commitments, but rather to extend them, noting that the movement contributed, not only to feminism and socialism, but also to what we now recognize as one of the darker periods in Western scientific history: the ascendance of eugenics. I am motivated by a

desire, not to taint spiritualism's reputation as a benevolent social force, but to demonstrate the complexity of its *fin-de-siècle* leftist politics.

Spiritualism, Eugenics, and the Cult of the Future

Spiritualism and eugenics seem from the outset to be unlikely bedfellows whose respective practitioners would no doubt have disliked the comparison. Indeed, eugenicists and their sympathizers typically viewed spiritualism as evidence of exactly the type of national degeneration they were trying to cure. Thus an 1882 article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* censures the newly-formed Society for Psychical Research for encouraging an atavistic belief in ghosts that might catalyze other forms of human evolutionary decline: 'Once let the old current get the upper hand again, and ... the whole pent-up flood of supernaturalism comes down in a rush'.⁴ This link between supernaturalism and reversion also appeared in the many popular occult romances such as *Dracula* (1897) and *Trilby* (1894) whose psychically adept villains were typically characterized as degenerate racial others. Relying on a heady combination of Darwinian biology, hereditary determinism, and middle-class ideology,⁵ eugenicists hoped to provide a rational and necessary alternative to the degenerative processes depicted by journalists, statisticians, medical professionals, and romancers alike. To do so, they would work to cultivate the 'inborn qualities of the race',⁶ a group that for Victorian eugenicists was occasionally but not always or necessarily synonymous with Caucasian 'whiteness' in the contemporary sense. Those citizens who, by virtue of their race, or, more explicitly, of their class, national pedigree, or mental constitution, were equipped with the desirable qualities of 'health, energy, ability, manliness, and courteous disposition'⁷ would be encouraged to reproduce.⁸ The breeding of the so-called defective or feeble-minded population would be discouraged or suppressed. Eugenicists sought to enact the suggestion of Galton's cousin Charles Darwin at the end of his landmark *The Descent of Man* (1871): that man 'might by selection do something not only for the bodily constitution and frame of his offspring, but for their intellectual and moral qualities'.⁹

Even before eugenic theory produced its most notorious manifestation under Nazism, critics had recognized its dangerous propensity to re-accommodate the very subjectivity, emotionalism, and metaphysics that it sought to remove from discussions of social planning and national health. In his powerful anti-eugenic tract *Eugenics and Other Evils* (1922), G.K. Chesterton lampooned eugenics' submerged spiritualist desire to immortalize the best qualities of the race.

Responding to those idealistic and overconfident proponents of eugenic social reform who insisted that, due to their supervision, the movement would never become excessive or genocidal, Chesterton writes:

They are those who give us generally to understand that every modern reform will 'work' all right, because they will be there to see it. Where they will be, and for how long, they do not explain very clearly. I do not mind their looking forward to numberless lives in succession; for that is the shadow of a human or divine hope. But even a theosophist does not expect to be a vast number of people at once. And these people most certainly propose to be responsible for a whole movement after it has left their hands. Each man promises to be a thousand policemen. If you ask them how this or that will work, they will answer, 'Oh, I would certainly insist on this'; or 'I never go so far as that'; as if they could return to earth and do what no ghost has ever done quite successfully – force men to forsake their sins.¹⁰

Just as eugenics advocated the physical survival of certain beneficial hereditary traits, so too did it invoke the *spiritual* survival of its founder's ideals. In order to fulfill its socially redemptive destiny, the movement tacitly required some form of transcendental witness, unswayed by historical change and ever mindful of the movement's original aspiration, to direct its progress towards its ultimate goal: the elimination of death itself. For what is the point of eugenics if not to protect the best qualities of the species from extinction, to create an ideal society whose composition would rarely vary from generation to generation now that natural selection had been replaced with an artificial one? In the eugenic utopia, death would no longer have the ability to change and weaken the state, for its newly born citizens would retain exactly the same pure hereditary characteristics as the recently departed.

The eugenic ideal of an impending society in which sickness and suffering had been eliminated, in which handsome and fit bodies replaced old and diseased ones, and in which each race or type preserved only its best specimens, is identical with the spiritualist conception of the afterlife. Indeed, so close are their idealized representations of the future state that one might well define eugenics as spiritualism pursued through a different quarry – eugenics sought to purify the living races of the West, while spiritualism targeted the legions of the dead. Both movements share an adulation of the physically, morally, and mentally fit individual, a willingness to sacrifice the present to the future, and, above all, a religious devotion to the excelsior cry of progress. I have briefly sketched out some of the transcendental impulses of eugenic theory; in what follows, I will focus on the Social Darwinist

and eugenic ideas that infiltrated and incubated within Anglo-American spiritualist practice. Before doing so, I will quickly outline spiritualism's major historical coordinates.

Victorian Spiritualism and the Evolution of Death

The story of modern spiritualism's astonishing rise to cultural prominence on both sides of the Atlantic has been told repeatedly by its detractors and adherents alike. In the spring of 1848, Kate and Maggie Fox, two bored young sisters in Hydesville, New York invented a new game with which to while away the dreary winter days. By cracking their toe joints, they found they could produce loud rapping sounds that seemed to emanate from mid-air. These they claimed to be communications from the dead. Within weeks both their parents and their neighbours were utterly taken in, and the girls, terrified by the depth of their deception, were too scared to reveal the truth. By the time Maggie and then Kate finally confessed in 1888, it was too late. Spiritualist belief, as Ruth Brandon points out, was by then far too deep and too widespread to be extinguished by a mere confession of fraudulence.¹¹ In the forty years since Kate and Maggie's first alleged séances, home circles for communication with the dead had sprung up all over the United States, Europe, and the colonies. Séance attendees came from an astonishingly diverse set of backgrounds – Christian, secular, aristocratic, working-class, radical, conservative – and included such luminaries as Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Charles Dickens, William Crookes, Alfred Russel Wallace, Lord Lytton, and of course, Arthur Conan Doyle and Cesare Lombroso.. Its techniques evolved rapidly from the rough rudimentary table rappings to full-body materializations in which the dead – usually played by the medium or his/her confederates – would seemingly materialize out of thin air in a darkened room. While spiritualism never gained the universal respect or faith that it so earnestly sought, it retained a substantial number of loyal believers throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth whose generous faith in spirit manifestations remained intact despite the frequent exposure of mediums as frauds.

Victorian spiritualism had a far loftier goal than simply promoting a belief in ghosts; it sought to redefine death as, not the end to, but the next stage in, humanity's progressive development. Phantoms and revenants were wrested from the folkloric tradition and transformed into benign, neutered spirits eager to spout platitudes about the beauty of the other world and the need for moral purity. In order to accomplish this redefinition of death, late Victorian spiritualist writers and

advocates adopted what had become the nineteenth century's favourite (and perhaps most misunderstood) metaphor of development: Darwinian evolution. It is a mistake to assume that spiritualism's anti-materialism necessitated a hostility to contemporary theories of species development; in fact, many spiritualists saw themselves as more Darwinian than the Darwinists themselves due to their willingness to challenge the established theories of human life and to extend the study of man into previously unimagined territory. Spiritualist books and newspapers teem with allusion to evolution, biology, and species development;¹² when a memorial statue to Darwin was erected at the South Kensington Natural History Museum in 1885, the deceased scientist was the subject of considerable praise in the spiritualist journal *Light* which saw in him a fellow iconoclast and advocate of the principle of universal progress and ascent:

Charles Darwin sought truth for truth's sake, and propounded his facts with the utmost fearlessness of personal consequences ... Evolution and spiritualism in many respects closely resemble each other. They are both in direct antagonism to the common scientific and theological teachings of the age ... All that Spiritualism wants is a Darwin and a Huxley, or many Darwins and many Huxleys – the former to observe and classify the facts, the latter to engage in popular propagandism, and the triumphs of evolution would pale in comparison with the irresistible advance of Spiritualism.¹³

Needless to say, the spiritualist appropriation of Darwinian theory – like almost every other popular appropriation of Darwinian theory since – was flawed, fanciful, and overly optimistic, but it is one that Darwin's own rhetorical choices throughout his writings did little to deter. His closing remarks in *On the Origin of Species* would have filled any progressive spiritualist, or indeed, eugenicist, with glee: 'we may feel certain that the ordinary succession by generation has never once been broken ... Hence we may look with some confidence to a secure future of equally inappreciable length. And as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection'.¹⁴

'Spiritualism,' wrote poet and Egyptologist Gerald Massey in 1871, 'will accept Darwinism, and complete it and clinch it on the other side.'¹⁵ But what did this assertion mean for spiritualists, beyond a generalized sense that all things in nature were capable of advantageous transformation? In what ways might the spiritualist conception of the afterlife be a Darwinian one? It certainly abandons, or at least misreads, the principle of natural selection, which for evolutionists was a means

of checking the progress of certain species while advancing certain others. In the Darwinian world, those with useful variations lived, while those without them were destined to extinction.¹⁶ For the spiritualists, death was a means of being selected for better things. While the dead may not have uniformly changed into exalted beings at the moment of their inception into the spiritual world, they were placed on a progressive path that they would all eventually ascend, albeit at different rates. Little wonder then, as Ruth Brandon notes, that so many Calvinists angrily rejected Spiritualism because the universality of the salvation it offered violated the principle of Election.¹⁷

The other world was not red in tooth and claw; neither was it a place where successful souls might pass on their qualities to their offspring. One of the most popular forms of Victorian spiritualist writing was that which reported spirit-channeled details about the social hierarchy, customs, and physical composition of the next world – we might define it as a form of spectral ethnography. While some of these narratives asserted the possibility of marriage between disembodied spirits,¹⁸ they typically qualified this claim by noting that sexuality and reproduction were far too grossly material to have a place in the future life.¹⁹ The mediumistic production of ectoplasmic babies may have been a popular séance room phenomenon in early twentieth spiritualist circles,²⁰ but such miraculous progeny had no place in the ethereal spheres of the spiritual existence. With no death or reproduction, the spiritualist concept of the afterlife seems to have little title to the Darwinian mantle that it claimed for itself.

Yet there was a process of extinction and elimination that still operated in their modernized version of the afterlife, one that targeted, not species nor individuals, but bodily defects. The excellence of the future life was no better expressed than in the physical fitness, regularity, and beauty of its inhabitants. Death became less a flight from the body than a device for its perfection. Spirit folk, wrote the famous ‘Poughkeepsie Seer’ Andrew Jackson Davis in 1853, ‘move, and talk, and smile, and gesticulate, just as men ordinarily do; yet with far more ease and spontaneousness, as if unfettered and free alike in body and mind’.²¹ Two years later, spiritualist and University of Pennsylvania chemistry professor Robert Hare would repeat these sentiments, insisting on the stalwart physicality of those who had passed on to the other side.

Instead of being, as many of imagine, mere shadowy and unsubstantial entities, we are possessed of definite, tangible, and exquisitely symmetrical forms, with well-rounded and graceful limbs, and yet so light and elastic that we can glide through the atmosphere with almost electric speed ... We are, moreover, endowed with all the beauty, loveliness, and

vivacity of youth, and are clothed in flowing vestments of effulgent nature suited to the particular degree of refinement of our bodies.²²

Fascinatingly, clothes serve to extend, rather than conceal, the meaning of the body, their quality symbiotically linked to that of the spiritual physique they cover. Not only will our spiritual bodies be beautifully dressed in the future life, but they will also lose the disfiguring stigmata of age and unreason. 'One of the most agreeable conceptions attending our future existence in the spheres,' Hare opines, 'is that of being restored to the appearance of youth; the decrepitude and wrinkles of age, or disease, mutilation, deformity, ugliness, are all avoided in the spiritual body. The insane are restored to reason, the idiot gradually improved in mind.'²³ While some of the spirits produced in séances retained the physical defects they had borne in life for the purposes of identification,²⁴ spiritualist philosophy held that in time all of these would be gradually eradicated and replaced by a homogeneously pure, attractive, and normative spirit body.

What separates such accounts from the traditional Christian belief in the restoration of the body on Judgment Day is their incorporation of a quasi-biological development model and their increasingly etiological nature. Spiritualists argued that the dead, far from being saved instantly at the point of their departure from the earth life, become patients whose physical progress was related to their moral one. They were cured, not by God *per se*, but by the high spirits of transcendental medical professionals whose knowledge and healing capabilities resembled, in many accounts, that of their living contemporaries. An 1897 letter to the spiritualist journal *Light* entitled 'How Feeble-Minded Spirits are Improved' describes the afterlife treatment of mental disability, using the terminology, albeit misapplied, of neurology and hereditary science.

We have been informed that 'idiots' are the product of constraining pathological conditions, principally pre-natal and caused in a great variety of ways, violating consciously or unconsciously, the laws of parental transmission, through ignorance, vice, or accident. Thousands of such beings abound in the world whose cerebrum is either exceedingly coarse in texture and minus of cells, or, on the other hand, exceptionally deficient in either of the three frontal convolutions of the frontal lobes of the brain ... This class of person ... are received by ministering spirits and are magnetized and hypnotized until, by the aid of persuasiveness and suggestion combined, with other fitting methods of training, their latent energies of observation, memory and reflective self-consciousness are evolved, and the stature of intelligent manhood and womanhood attained; and this is very quick and almost incredibly easily accomplished

by the adepts and specialists in this line of mission work in the 'Transition sphere', since nothing remains of the earthly barrier of deformity of brain to impede growth of intelligence.²⁵

The implication here is truly chilling. Without a (material) body, there can be no bodily impairment. Thus the best way to help the feeble-minded might be to deprive them of the flesh prison that registers their defect and move them onto the other side where they can be most effectively cured. In such a paradigm, the elimination of the so-called 'unfit' loses all of its sting and masquerades as an act of benevolence. If there is no death, what harm can there be in forcing individuals from one sphere to the next? Might not controlled euthanasia be the most humane option for those sufferers whose conditions will never be remedied in this world? Such is the dark solution the writer hints at when s/he concludes 'It is my conviction that a grave responsibility rests upon Society with regard to the hundreds, nay thousands, in the civilized world, who are in asylums, suffering from the various obsessions and malformations that could be relieved "were men more prone to truth, and less to scorn"'.²⁶

In the spiritualist vision of the next world as a great sanatorium, we find an ultimate and perfect rationale for Final Solution, one that works in tandem with and yet subverts the movement's oft-cited egalitarianism. It may have been true, as believer Charles Maurice Davies wrote in 1875, that 'spiritualism tends to abrogate exaggerated class distinctions; to reunite those who are now too often divided ...; to encourage the cooperation of men and women in many new spheres',²⁷ but no amount of shared belief or community formation on earth could match the imagined harmony that the spiritualists insisted came through death. That some of the more thoughtful of the movement's members were aware of this predicament is evident in the curious debate about capital punishment that appeared in *Light* in the spring of 1890. The journal's editor William Stainton Moses had raised a petition in favour of the abolition of the death penalty and received an unexpectedly mixed response. Fellow spiritualist Madame de Steiger protested that the true concern of spiritualism should be to '*prevent the birth and life of future murderers*'.²⁸ 'At present,' she writes, '... with ... knowledge of the law of heredity ... we all have it in our power to *shape* the future humanity ... With an advanced knowledge of all the lovely and unendingly interesting arts and sciences, natural philosophy and nature in a thousand forms, we might all have perfectly healthy bodies, and in consequence perfectly healthy minds [original italics].'²⁹ Of note here is de Steiger's seamless move from bodily to mental perfection; despite spiritualism's supposed rejection of gross matter in favour of more ethereal con-

siderations, she presents physical fitness, not as an effect, but as a necessary *precondition* of cognitive vigour. Here we have yet another example of a spiritualist offering a eugenic solution to a social problem. Moses replied with barely concealed frustration, noting that dead criminals might be just as dangerous as live ones – their deviance not being immediately effaced by death – and declaring himself ‘somewhat impatient of that weary waiting for a future perfected life which will be able to do without hanging ... Let us abolish the hanging and let us also educate the race’.³⁰ The irony here, one that Moses’ rejoinder fails to recognize, is that it was his own beloved movement that had helped to position death, whether caused hanging or otherwise, as the *ne plus ultra* form of racial education and improvement.

Eugenics in the Spiritualist Romance

Even more alert to the eugenic implications of modern mysticism than the spiritualist press were the purveyors of popular spiritualist fiction. In Hugh Conway [pseudo. F.J. Fargus]’s ‘The Daughter of the Stars’ (1884), young recluse Philip Beauvais falls in love with Astraea, the preternaturally beautiful daughter of the mysterious sage Pedro Cardenas. Cardenas admits to Beauvais that he has deliberately engineered this meeting in order to initiate a supernatural regeneration of the British race. Astraea, he claims, is the product of his union with an exquisitely formed otherworldly spirit. Since her birth, he has sought for her an ideal mate, a man of attractive form, poetic disposition, and mystical temperament with whom she will produce a new, super variety of humans. ‘They shall be the poets, the musicians, the thinkers, the statesmen,’ claims Cardenas, ‘In time a new race shall replace the old, and the regeneration of the world be accomplished.’³¹ In explaining his ambition, Cardenas adopts the same metaphysical rhetoric of eternal supervision that Chesterton would later find in eugenicist defenses. ‘I shall see nothing of my work in the flesh,’ he admits, ‘but my spirit will see it. As the original progenitor of the Jews ... by force of his own character stamped his race with peculiarities that keep it distinct from others, so shall the far more wonderful race we give the world alter the tone of mankind, and when the present puny creatures are extinct and forgotten, my descendents shall look back and honor me as the God from whom they sprung.’³² For Cardenas, as indeed one might argue for Francis Galton, the project of human improvement is both personal and self-aggrandizing, in that many of the qualities he extols and seeks to propagate are ones which he recognizes in himself and in his own family.

The spiritualist breeding experiment in 'The Daughter of the Stars' proves, temporarily at least, to be a failed one. While away on business, Beauvais kills a man in self-defence and thus loses his favour with the pacifistic Cardenas. The old man whisks his daughter away from her would-be suitor and Beauvais is left alone, dreaming of Astraea every night and waiting for the day when her father's death will allow them to reunite. Far more fruitful is the eugenic enterprise in George Du Maurier's *The Martian* (1898), a supernatural romance so thematically similar to Conway's as to seem derived from it. The novel's protagonist is an artistic, physically beautiful, and hereditarily brilliant writer Barty Josselin who finds himself possessed by the disembodied spirit of a female Martian named, conveniently, Martia. She has chosen Josselin as host due to his genetic perfection, one that she seeks to propagate by steering him towards an equally fit wife. Josselin has a 'speck' in the back of his brain that represents the next progressive evolution of man and, says Martia, 'if [his children] pair well ... their children and their children's children will have that speck bigger. When that speck becomes as big as a millet seed in your remote posterity ... the earth will be a very different place, and man of earth even better than the Martian by all the greatness of his ampler, subtler, and even more complex brain'.³³ Josselin contributes to the race by having children and by producing an almost more important form of progeny – books. While their subject is never made entirely explicit, Josselin's writings seem to combine theories of eternal life with suggestions for racial improvement through breeding. 'He has robbed Death of nearly all of its terrors', notes the narrator, '... to the most skeptical he (and only he) has restored that absolute conviction of an indestructible germ of Immortality within us ... And to whom but Barty Josselin do we owe it that our race is on average already from four to six inches taller than it was thirty years ago, men and women alike; that strength and beauty are rapidly becoming the rule among us, and weakness and ugliness the exception?'³⁴ In *The Martian*, the beliefs in immortality and in racial fitness are no random characteristics of the age, but rather the foundational and mutually reinforcing catalysts of evolutionary improvement.

Given the eugenic nature of the spiritualist utopia, it is hardly surprising that so many 'rational' *fin-de-siècle* writers and thinkers whose careers had hitherto focused on the detection of criminal 'unfitness' should, in later life, embrace the cause. What better basis for a belief in the spiritualist future life, one in which defective bodies are mended to reflect the quality of their souls, than an immersion in a late century scientific culture increasingly concerned with declining national fitness, the hereditary transmission of crime, and the coercive stage

management of human improvement? Neither of the two men on whom the latter part of this article will focus, Arthur Conan Doyle and Cesare Lombroso, were avowed eugenicists; both were, however, long before their public advocacy of spiritualism, two of the late century's most important and visible interpreters of criminal deviance in their respective domains of popular fiction and science.

Lombroso, Doyle, and Spiritualist Detection

Both Cesare Lombroso and Arthur Conan Doyle began their careers as spiritualist writers relatively late in life – Doyle at age fifty-nine with the publication of *The New Revelation* (1918),³⁵ and Lombroso at seventy-five with *Ricerca sui Fenomeni Ipnologici e Spiritici* (trans. *After Death: What?* 1909), a work which, interestingly, received a much quicker English translation than his far more influential work on crime.³⁶ Their conversions may have come as a distasteful surprise to their friends and colleagues,³⁷ but not to the spiritualist press that had recognized their leanings early on. In 1888, *Light* lauds Doyle's incipient interest in spiritualism in the following notice of his breakthrough Holmes novella, *A Study in Scarlet*.

We have lately noticed so many works of fiction shocking and otherwise, which make Spiritualism the *pièce de résistance* that it is a new thing on earth to find one in which the very name does not occur, which is not occult, not ghostly, not weird, not creepy: but which is a really good, thrilling, well-written story, the interest of which is sustained from cover to cover. Why then, what do we mean by noticing this book, and what is its name? It is called 'A Study in Scarlet', it is published by Ward, Lock and Co., and it is written by 'Conan Doyle', a well-known contributor to the Boy's Own Paper, and other journals; and – here comes in our concern with it – a Spiritualist, so a little bird whispers in our ear.³⁸

Light's notice of the first Sherlock Holmes story, one which they praise simply for what it is not, i.e., a sensational occult tale, is clearly derived from the journal's precocious recognition of Conan Doyle as a fellow traveler. But its interest in Lombroso's pre-conversion work seems less immediately explicable. Why should spiritualists concern themselves with the anthropometric measurements of criminal bodies? An 1893 article in *Light* entitled 'Characteristics of Criminals' suggest a tentative answer: 'Those who get away from matter, and realize that man is only a presentiment of spirit, will find the observations of Mr Lombroso exceedingly suggestive.'³⁹

Light's praise for Lombroso's work is all the more startling in light of the significant hostility that it received elsewhere in Britain. By the

1890s, Lombroso was at the peak of his Continental fame, or perhaps, notoriety, as the father of criminal anthropology, an empirically based science of deviance which claimed that, in many though not all cases, crime was the product of evolutionary atavism. He alleged that a certain percentage of the criminal population were biological throwbacks to earlier phases of human development, driven to anti-social behaviour by the same untamed primitivism that manifested itself on their faces and bodies. Such born criminals were easily detectable by virtue of certain telling physical traits: prognathous jaws, sessile ears, tattoos, long arms, and excessive body hair.⁴⁰ With a few notable exceptions, the British criminological establishment reacted to Lombroso's anthropological determinism with complete scorn, castigating his research for its seeming denial of free will and questionable scientific rigour.⁴¹ Even though, as Neil Davie points out, British criminologists were by no means averse to the notion of crime as hereditary, they worked hard to dissociate their brand of biological determinism from Lombroso's.⁴² Late Victorian arguments about the biological basis of crime typically drew their evidence from so-called 'fact' and anecdote than from the pages of Lombroso's as yet untranslated *L'Uomo delinquente* (1876). *Light* was one of the few venues *openly* to endorse Lombroso's theories, a fact that tells us much about the affinity between spiritualism and criminal anthropology's ways of reading the body.

Among the few mainstream British thinkers to come out in support of criminal anthropology was Francis Galton who, in an 1890 *Nature* article, agreed with Lombroso that there were certain anatomical features that 'predominate among all large groups of criminals [such as] cranial characteristics, physical insensibility, moral insensibility, and emotional instability'.⁴³ Like Lombroso, Galton was fascinated by the possibility of mapping the (criminal) soul on the body.⁴⁴ This quest found a fictional equivalent, or, arguably, epitome, in the exploits of Doyle's popular literary creation, Sherlock Holmes. Holmes, an early fictional advocate of Galton's fingerprinting techniques, held that the human body and the clothes that adorned it were as easily readable as train schedules, visual texts incapable of concealing vice from the astute eye of the master detective. 'By a man's fingernails,' Holmes claims in *A Study in Scarlet*, 'by his coat-sleeve, by his boots, by his trouser-knees, by the callosities of his forefinger and thumb, by his expression, by his shirt-cuffs – by each of these things a man's calling is plainly revealed.'⁴⁵

Several critics have documented the link between Holmes' deductive methods and the criminal anthropology emergent in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁶ Less discussed, however, are the similarities between the theories of the body presented in Lombroso and Doyle's early work

and those championed by the movement to which they later subscribed: spiritualism. *Light*, as we have seen, praised Lombroso initially for his scientific duplication of what had become a central tenet of their religion – the belief that the external, material constitution of man was simply ‘a presentment of spirit’. A defective physical constitution was representative of an unfit, or, to use the language so favoured by spiritualists, an ‘unevolved’ soul, one whose only chance for redemption lay in the afterlife where ministering spirits turned idiots into sages and cripples into upright paragons of physical regularity and beauty. Modern scholars would do well to heed Lombroso’s insistence on the continuity between his earlier criminological work and his later spiritualistic investigations. In the introduction to *After Death: What?* he writes, ‘I thought it my predestined end ... to crown a life passed in the struggle for great ideas by entering the lists for this desperate cause, the most hotly contested, and perhaps most persistently mocked at idea of the times. It seemed to me a duty that, up to the very last of the few days remaining to me, I should unflinchingly stand my ground in the very thick of the fight, where rise the menacing obstructions and where throng the most infuriated foes.’⁴⁷ The ‘great ideas’ he refers to are, in fact, common to both stages of his career. They stipulate the physical and spiritual body’s entrapment within an quasi-evolutionary system of development which renders value on the flesh.

Of the two men’s conceptions of the spiritualist afterlife, Doyle’s was the most clearly eugenic. He imagines the other world as a bucolic English paradise cleansed of all forms of physical and mental defect.⁴⁸ In the apocalyptic *The Vital Message* (1919), Doyle describes the urgency of the spiritualist crusade and painstakingly details the processes and conditions of post-life existence. Despite his initial claim that ‘spirits change little in essentials when leaving the body’,⁴⁹ he proceeds to offer the following consolation to the aged and infirm who fear being stuck in their disabled or imperfect flesh through eternity.

Let no woman mourn her lost beauty, and no man his lost strength or weakening brain. It all awaits them once more upon the other side. Nor is any deformity or bodily weakness there, for all is normal and at its best ... The same applies to all birthmarks, deformities, blindness and other imperfections ... a perfect body awaits us.⁵⁰

Doyle’s easy conflation of ‘normal’ and ‘best’ is one that scholars of eugenics and of disability studies would do well to interrogate; perfection, it seems, has become the mundane product of regularity.

Yet more astonishing than the physical transformations that he envisioned for the newly disembodied were the spectacular moral and

psychological ones. Doyle had built his early career on writing fiction about crime and, even in late life, it seems he could never wholly abandon doing so;⁵¹ thus he muses on the post-life fate of the still uncaught Jack the Ripper:

Could one ... image that Providence, all-wise and all-merciful ... could punish the unfortunate wretch who hatches criminal thoughts behind the slanting brows of a criminal head? A doctor has but to glance at the cranium to predicate the crime. In its worst forms all crime, from Nero to Jack the Ripper, is the product of absolute lunacy ... Surely, then, there is no very terrible inferno is needed to further punish those who have been so afflicted upon earth ... one could well imagine that the man whose organic make-up predisposed him with irresistible force in that direction should, in justice, receive condolence and sympathy.⁵²

Here Doyle invokes and solves the problem posed by Lombroso's biological determinism of crime: if criminality is anatomically and hereditarily produced, how do we cure it? We do so by transforming the born criminal into a dead criminal, where his flesh no longer enforces his deviance and a sympathetic God offers grace to those whose bodies drove them to murder. Little wonder then that the characters in his only spiritualist novel *The Land of Mist* (1926) should be so sanguine at the book's close about the prospect of a forthcoming Armageddon. 'One thing we have learned,' says new convert Edward Malone to his wife Enid, 'It is that two souls, where real love exists, go on and on without a break through all the spheres. Why then should you and I fear death, or anything which life or death can bring?'⁵³ The book concludes with her response: 'Why indeed?'⁵⁴ If spiritualism had robbed death of its sting, it had also helped to create an ambivalence about the value of life as compared to the wondrous restorative and regularizing powers of death.

Lombroso's afterlife is quite different from Doyle's. Far from being a numinous therapeutic wonderland, it is, rather remarkably, a site of degeneration, one whose often-negative aspects almost efface the cheery aspect of the spiritualist conception of death. His rather sour descriptions of the post-life state in *After Death: What?* are transparently expedient; in order to account for the poor quality of séance communications and spirit manifestations without admitting the possibility of fraud, he resorts to characterizing the afterlife itself as defective and imperfect. In other words, rather than blaming the medium for ridiculous spirit messages, he blames the spirits. Explaining the insipid sentiment and incorrect grammar of messages that mediums claimed to have channeled from great dead thinkers, he writes, 'The intelligence of these discarnate personalities, even in the case of those who were in

life of strong intellect, being now deprived of their own organism and being obliged to use the brain of the living, is but fragmentary and incoherent.’⁵⁵ For Lombroso, the loss of the body is debilitating rather than liberating; death functions as a newly inflicted form of infirmity which requires a living medium as a communicative prosthesis. Indeed, Lombroso’s most intriguing trope for describing the communication between the living and the dead is that of disability. ‘If it is difficult to express one’s self in words by means of an interpreter,’ he writes, ‘so much the more difficult it must be to get a blind man to understand colours through an interpreter. The questioner and the spirit are like two prisoners who would like to communicate through a closed door, and one of them is deaf and the other blind.’⁵⁶ Predicated on loss, the act of spiritual communion transforms the living medium and communicating spirit into parts of an incomplete whole as they seek an always-evasive plenitude.

Yet in its implicit pessimism, Lombroso’s spiritualist philosophy, like Doyle’s, does manage to accommodate and reform a particularly troubling form of hereditary taint: not that of the spirit *per se*, but that of the medium. And the medium with whom Lombroso had the most experience was Eusapia Paladino, a remarkable South Italian peasant woman who became one of the most important figures in the late nineteenth century European spiritualist scene.⁵⁷ Paladino was caught cheating repeatedly throughout her career⁵⁸ and publicly admitted her deceit in 1910.⁵⁹ Fascinatingly enough, Lombroso was by no means oblivious to these deceptions; in fact, he cheerfully acknowledged her habitual deceptions in *After Death: What?* In a gently chiding tone, he admits: ‘Many are the crafty tricks she plays, both in the state of trance (unconsciously) and out of it, – for example, freeing one of her two hands held by controllers, for the sake of moving objects near to her; making touches; slowly lifting the legs of the table by means of one of her knees and one of her feet.’⁶⁰ Yet he was able to exempt Paladino from blame and retain his spiritualist faith by recognizing in her the same quality he had decades earlier diagnosed in the brigand Villela’s skull:⁶¹ biological impulsion.

If *Criminal Man* represents Lombroso’s attempt to posit the natural history of the criminal,⁶² *After Death: What?* formulates the natural history of the medium. Here in his descriptions of his extensive sessions with Paladino, he describes her physical and psychological characteristics with the same painstaking detail that he had earlier applied to his criminal subjects, noting her weight, head shape, cranial asymmetry, quality of vision, urine colour, capacity for hysteria, and dysmenorrhea. Lombroso scrutinized Paladino with the same eye he had previously

applied to his criminal subjects and, perhaps unsurprisingly, recognized in her many of the same characteristics. In 1876 he had studied a criminal with cranial and facial asymmetry and concluded that ‘the born criminal is an epileptic’;⁶³ in 1909, he described Paladino as possessing ‘asymmetry not only of the cranium but of the face ... she shows an asymmetry in arterial pressure that is common in epileptics, and, like these, exhibits marked tactual left-handedness’.⁶⁴ Paladino the medium might just as well have been Paladino the criminal were it not for the fact that her deviance manifested itself in, for Lombroso at least, a productive form: she restored the dead to their grieving relatives and seemed to offer conclusive proof of immortality.⁶⁵ Both the penchant for trickery augured by her criminal features and the mediumistic prowess she repeatedly demonstrated were alike the products of a blameless heredity.⁶⁶

Lombroso’s spiritualism did not, like Doyle’s, attempt to erase defect, to replace the slanting brows of a degenerate Jack the Ripper with the noble forehead of a pure born specimen of English manhood; instead, it found a way to make hereditary taint useful to the (still living) race. Without sly, physically asymmetrical, or hysterical mediums, the voices and bodies of our beloved dead would have no conduit and indeed, no material composition. For Lombroso had insisted that the spiritual bodies that manifested in the séance room were comprised, not of their own essence, but of the physical matter they borrowed from the medium. ‘The body of the spectral appearance,’ he wrote, ‘is formed at the expense of the psychic, and the matter is confirmed by the circumstance that in the first materializations of mediums many of the phantasms they evoke bear a certain resemblance to the face or the limbs of the medium ... something that must have fostered still further the suspicions as to trickery and deceit.’⁶⁷ While we may be amused by Lombroso’s breathtaking credulity here – he ignores the obvious solution that a spirit might look like the medium because it typically *was* the medium in disguise – we also need to recognize the importance of his implicit reorientation of spiritualism’s increasingly eugenic mandate. The séance room became for him, not a place of lipped pieties about a beautiful afterlife where variation and infirmity had given way to a bland universal perfection, but a space of grotesque miscegenation. The spectral faces or hands that Paladino’s distinguished sitters saw in the séance room may have looked like they belonged to their departed loved ones, but the material of which they were composed belonged to the sweaty, grimacing, and crude South Italian peasant woman who channeled them.⁶⁸

In championing Paladino, Lombroso seems to be attempting to solve

the dilemma posed by all utopian movements, including Spiritualism and Eugenics: how do we bring about the desired future good through the still imperfect minds and bodies of the present's visionaries? Opponents of eugenics often pointed out that any current selection of certain qualities as desirable was bound to be flawed, a product of the very infirmity of modern judgment and intellect that eugenics was designed to fix. Likewise, spiritualism's antagonists insisted that the séance-room testimony about the glorious afterlife, one in which mind, body and soul would gradually become beautiful, could not possibly be true due to the deceitful, hysterical, unintelligent, and occasionally insane nature of its mediums.⁶⁹ For Lombroso, the answer lay in not only tolerating or waiving the medium's failings, but rather in celebrating them. Without weakness, there could be no access to strength or perfection – no higher spirits without tainted psychics to lend them their bodies, no purified race without the scientific researches and the legislation of citizens whose own stock had not yet been wholly purged of hereditary taint. Should any purity movement succeed in its goal of eliminating whichever kind of deviance – spiritual, social, mental, or racial – it has targeted, it would effectively destroy its own preconditions and history, collapsing its very triumphs into a meaningless void, for without variation there can be no means of measuring history, progress, and identity. In embracing mediums whose bodies, minds, and characters marked them as low and racially unfit, spiritualists such as Lombroso partially superseded the eugenic impulses of their own movement by embracing the humane and humanizing value of defect.

Although their depictions of the afterlife differed, both Doyle and Lombroso were driven towards their imaginary mappings of the numinous world by a shared commitment to empirical readings and evaluations of the human body. In spiritualism's theatre, as in the laboratory, the human body, far from being disavowed, becomes the essential unit of meaning, its jerks, emanations, and spectral contours offering a surfeit of quantifiable delights to the scientific eye. But where the scientific study of the body often revealed the radical dissonance between exterior appearance and interior health, spiritualist theory spoke glowingly of a time when flesh, mind, and soul would evolve to achieve the same perfect synchronicity and verisimilitude that eugenics would later strive for. The movements' similar teleology, idealization of the human body, and evolutionary lexicon should lead us to reassess the supposed separation, and indeed, hostility, between the scientific totalitarianism of the early twentieth century and the supposedly radical and egalitarian spiritualism that preceded it.

(University of Alberta)

Endnotes

Research for this article was funded through a University of Alberta HFASSR Operating Grant in the summer of 2005.

1. Francis Galton, 'Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 10.1 (July 1904), 5-6.
2. Galton's biographer and acolyte Karl Pearson confines Galton's spiritualist investigation to 1872, but an 1853 letter written by his future sister-in-law Emily Butler suggests his interest began much earlier. Speaking of Galton, she writes, 'He has been to spirit rappings [séances] and had another conversation in Damara with a deceased chief of that tribe. Is not that wonderful, for Mr Galton is the only man in Europe who knows Damara' [qtd in Martin Brookes, *Extreme Measures: The Dark Visions and Bright Ideas of Francis Galton* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), 109]. No doubt keen to minimize the credulity of his mentor, Pearson downplays an interest and involvement with spiritualistic practice that seems to have been more extensive than hitherto represented.
3. For examples and discussions of these various views, see, respectively, Reuben Briggs Davenport's *The Death Blow to Spiritualism* (New York: G.W. Dillingham, 1888), Daniel Cottom's *Abyss of Reason: Cultural Movements, Revelations, and Betrayals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), Logie Barrow's *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians 1850-1910* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), and Alex Owen's *The Darkened Room* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986). Interestingly enough, the same aspects of spiritualism which inflamed non-believing Victorians – its rejection of common sense and rationality, its eroticism – have, for many twentieth century critics, become badges of its distinction. Writing of the often incomprehensible nature of spirit communications, Cottom writes, 'spiritualism also made public the practices of interpretation that give words the effect of presence and materiality. It suggested that words are never entirely present or self-evident by insisting that communication is always interpretation that is subject to its irreducible uncertainties (55)'. This description seems more designed to cater to the sensibilities of twentieth-century post-structuralist critics than to articulate the goals of Victorian spiritualism in any way that would have been recognizable to its adherents.
4. 'Psychical Research', *Pall Mall Gazette* (21 October 1882). Reprinted in Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (eds), *The Fin-de-Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c. 1880-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 280.
5. Donald MacKenzie, 'Eugenics in Britain', *Social Studies of Science*, 6.3/4 (Sept. 1976), 499-532.
6. Francis Galton, 'Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims', 1.
7. *Ibid.*, 2.
8. These criteria of fitness were not mutually exclusive. As readers familiar with degenerationist and imperial discourse will be well aware, race and class were often equated in the white supremacist tracts of the period which made poverty equivalent to racial 'primitivism' – i.e. to being non-white. But I think it is very important that we recognize that Victorian eugenicists did not exclusively or even primarily stage their project in the same racial terms as, for example, the Nazis. We minimize the full extent of nineteenth-century eugenic thought if we see it simply as a type of imperial conquest of blackness by whiteness. In British eugenic writing, 'race' often refers simply to the idea of national stock; the 'unfit' are not so much the empire's dark-skinned colonized peoples (in fact, many writers such as Herbert Spencer noted, albeit with some displeasure, the intense physical hardihood of the so-called

Eugenics and the Afterlife

- 'inferior' African races), but rather the pale, weak, unmanly, and intellectually impaired citizens from inside the nation's borders.
9. Charles Darwin, from *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* in Joseph Carroll, ed., *On the Origin of Species* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2003), 559.
 10. G.K. Chesterton, *Eugenics and Other Evils: An Argument Against the Scientifically Organized State* (Seattle: Inkling Books, 2000), 21-2.
 11. Ruth Brandon, *The Spiritualists: The Passion for the Occult in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), 230.
 12. See, for example, the following articles in *Light*: 'Evolution, Agnosticism, and Spiritualism' (31 May 1884), 222; 'The Origin of Life – The Struggle for Immortality' (16 August 1884), 331-2; 'Biological Researches' (25 July 1885), 356; 'The Evolution of the Sixth Sense' (5 June 1886), 257; and 'The Law of Heredity' (18 September 1886), 424.
 13. 'Evolution and Spiritualism', *Light*. (27 June 1885), 308
 14. Charles Darwin, *On? the Origin of Species*, 397.
 15. Gerald Massey, *Concerning Spiritualism* (London: James Burns, 1871), 61.
 16. Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 133.
 17. Ruth Brandon, *The Spiritualists*, 39.
 18. 'Love and Marriage in the Spirit World', *Light* (30 July 1881), 235; Robert Hare, *Experimental Investigation of the Spirit Manifestations, Demonstrating the Existence of Spirits and Their Communion with Mortals* (New York: Partridge and Brittan, 1855), 93.
 19. One spiritualist publication entitled *The Sexes: Here and Hereafter* (1869) claimed that, while individuals retained their anatomical sex in the next sphere, 'heavenly marriages were chaste, indeed chastity itself', qtd. in Ronald Pearsall, *The Table-Rappers: The Victorians and the Occult* (Thrupp, Stroud: Michael Joseph, 1972), 206.
 20. Jenny Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society Between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 156.
 21. Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Present Age and Inner Life: a Sequel to Spiritual Intercourse* (New York: Partridge and Brittan, 1853), 85.
 22. Hare, *Experimental Investigations*, 93.
 23. *Ibid.*, 149.
 24. In *There is No Death* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1891), Florence Marryat describes how she recognized the spirit of her dead infant daughter through its characteristic facial deformities. Marryat insists that the manifestation must have been authentic because the details of her daughter's condition were never widely known, yet later admits that the case had been written up in *The Lancet*. Enterprising mediums whose careers rested on their ability to research and impersonate their sitter's dead relatives would have readily grasped such information.
 25. 'How Feeble-Minded Spirits are Converted', *Light* (24 July 1897), 359.
 26. *Ibid.*, 359.
 27. Charles Maurice Davies, *Mystic London, or, Phases of Occult Life in the Metropolis* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1875), 400.
 28. Madame de Steiger, 'Capital Punishment', *Light* (10 May 1890), 225.
 29. *Ibid.*, 225.
 30. 'Notes by the Way', *Light* (17 May 1890), 234.
 31. Hugh Conway [F.J. Fargus], 'The Daughter of the Stars: A Psychological Romance', in *Bound Together: Tales* (London: Remington & Co., 1884), 120-1.
 32. *Ibid.*, 130.
 33. George Du Maurier, *The Martian* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1898), 417.
 34. *Ibid.*, 386.

35. See Arthur Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation* (Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918). Doyle had publicly announced his conversion in *Light* two years earlier, see Julian Symons, *Portrait of An Artist: Conan Doyle* (London: Whizzard Press, 1979), 129.
36. Published in Italy in 1876, Lombroso's famous *L'Uomo Delinquente* (trans. *Criminal Man*) had only been partially translated into English by 1911, while the English version of *After Death: What?* appeared almost simultaneously to its Italian original.
37. Both Doyle and Lombroso's conversions had devastating results on their reputations. Lombroso's insistence that his spiritual belief was just as accurate as his criminal anthropology was probably true, but not in the way that he would have intended. It severely damaged the status of his scientific work (see Marvin Wolfgang, 'Pioneers in Criminology: Cesare Lombroso', *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, 52.4 (Nov.-Dec. 1961), 376), just as Doyle's spiritualist campaigning cost him popularity and friends. See Hesketh Pearson, *Conan Doyle: His Life and Art* (London: MacDonald and Jane's, 1977), 184; Diana Barsham, *Arthur Conan Doyle and the Meaning of Masculinity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 245. Literary critics have traditionally maintained an embarrassed, or perhaps respectful, silence on the subject of Doyle's spiritual writings even though they outnumber his Sherlock Holmes publications (Doyle published nine Holmes novellas and short story collections between 1888 and 1927, and ten spiritualist works between 1918 and 1930). Fortunately, this trend now shows signs of reversal thanks to the efforts of scholars such as Diana Barsham and Philip Shreffler to award Doyle's spiritualist work the critical attention (if not the credence) it truly deserves.
38. 'Jottings', *Light* (14 July 1888), 339.
39. 'Characteristics of Criminals', *Light* (27 May 1893), 242.
40. Gina Lombroso-Ferraro, *Criminal Man According to the Classification of Cesare Lombroso* (Montclair, N.J.: Patterson Smith, 1972), 7-24.
41. Leon Radzinowicz and Roger Hood, *The Emergence of Penal Policy in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), ch. 1; Neil Davie, 'Criminal Man Revisited? Continuity and Change in British Criminology c. 1865-1918', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 8.1 (Spring 2003), 1-32, 5.
42. Davie, 23.
43. Francis Galton, 'Criminal Anthropology', *Nature* 42 (22 May 1890), 75-6, 76.
44. Galton's 1892 monograph *Fingerprints* attempted to establish a conclusive test for fingerprint identification; see Nicholas Wright. Gillham, *A Life of Sir Francis Galton: From African Exploration to the Birth of Eugenics* (Oxford University Press, 2001) for a fuller description of Galton's forensic work.
45. Arthur Conan Doyle, 'A Study in Scarlet', in *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*, Volume One (New York: Bantam Classics, 2003), 76.
46. See Nils Claussen, 'Degeneration, *Fin-de-Siècle* Gothic, and the Science of Detection: Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and the Emergence of the Modern Detective Story', *Journal of Narrative Theory* 35.1 (Winter 2005), 60-87; Ronald Thomas, 'The Fingerprint of the Foreigner: Colonizing the Criminal Body in 1890s Detective Fiction and Anthropology', *ELH* 61.3 (1994), 655-83; Jinny Huh, 'Whispers of Norbury: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Modernist Crisis of Racial (Un)Detection', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 49.3 (Fall 2003), 550-80; Rosemary Jann, 'Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body', *ELH* 57.3 (1990): 685-708.
47. Cesare Lombroso, *After Death: What?* Trans. William Sloane Kennedy, (Boston: Small, Maynard, & Co., 1909), v.
48. Ruth Brandon describes Doyle's vision of the afterlife as 'England's green and pleasant land ... transmuted to a higher sphere' (219). She concludes, 'Conan

Eugenics and the Afterlife

- Doyle's Heaven was rather like Sussex, slightly watered down' (222).
49. Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Vital Message* (Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), 35.
 50. *Ibid.*, 81-2.
 51. Doyle's resentment of the character with whom he would be permanently and primarily associated is well documented. 'Throughout his career,' writes Diana Barsham, 'Doyle had insisted that the popularity of Holmes had been damaging to his reputation as a serious writer, bifurcating and weakening his literary identity' (99). Barsham also notes, however, that there are far more continuities between the Holmes stories and the later spiritualist works than most critics have been willing to concede, particularly in their shared concern with masculinity, interiority, and the problems of representation (6).
 52. Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Vital Message*, 87-8.
 53. Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Land of Mist*, in Doyle, *The Lost World and Other Stories* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 413-14.
 54. *Ibid.*, 414.
 55. Cesare Lombroso, *After Death: What?*, 347.
 56. *Ibid.*, 350-1.
 57. See Brandon, *The Spiritualists*, 128. By the end of the century, Paladino had sat with some of Europe's most prominent spiritualist investigators – Charles Richet, Camille Flammarion, Oliver Lodge, F.W.H. Myers – and produced an extraordinary variety of séance phenomena, such as levitation, telekinesis, and materialization (*After Death* 42; 48).
 58. Brandon, *The Spiritualists*, 133.
 59. Pearsall, *The Table-Rappers: The Victorians and the Occult*, 224.
 60. Cesare Lombroso, *After Death: What?*, 102.
 61. Gina Lombroso-Ferraro, *Criminal Man*, 6.
 62. *Ibid.*, 5.
 63. *Ibid.*, 69.
 64. Cesare Lombroso, *After Death: What?*, 106.
 65. Lombroso's attachment to Paladino was personal as well as (or perhaps, rather than) scientific; he sat with her in order to make contact with his dead mother who, according to his account, appeared regularly during his sittings (*After Death* 122).
 66. Lombroso held that most forms of mediumistic ability were innate and passed on through biological inheritance. Thus he notes significantly that 'the grandmother, mother, and one of the brothers of the famous medium Elena Smith were subject to hypnotic and mediumistic phenomena' (*After Death* 116).
 67. Cesare Lombroso, *After Death: What?*, 120.
 68. For more on Paladino's facial expressions and secretions during trance, see *After Death: What?* (112-13). Of her temperament, Lombroso says, 'Her culture is that of the villager of the lowest order. She frequently fails in good sense and in common sense, but has a subtlety and intuition of the intellect in sharp contrast with her lack of cultivation, and which make her, in spite of that, judge and appreciate at their true worth the men of genius whom she meets, without being influenced in her judgments by prestige or the false stamp that wealth and authority set upon people' (111).
 69. See Pearsall (57-66) for an account of the common charges against the intellect and sanity of mediums.