THESIS

HAUNTING RHETORIC: *GHOST ADVENTURES* AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE GHOST

HUNTING GENRE

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ABSTRACT

HAUNTING RHETORIC: *GHOST ADVENTURES* AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE GHOST HUNTING GENRE

This thesis examines the rhetorical and generic conventions of the popular ghost hunting television show, *Ghost Adventures*. By first exploring the introduction of this hybrid genre in the work of 17th-century author, Joseph Glanvill, I will reveal how genre conventions are created and morph over time through a genre analysis influenced by the theory of Amy Devitt. As the genre evolves over time, so does the rhetorical purpose of *Ghost Adventures*. Initially, *Ghost Adventures* sought to prove the existence of ghosts to a skeptical audience. In more recent seasons, the show has shifted their rhetoric to achieve Glanvill's original purpose to use belief in ghosts to prove the existence of God.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Ghost Adventures* crew runs through the house toward a beeping machine which, according to Zak Bagans, the show's host, proves that there is a ghostly presence in the room. Gathering together, they analyze how the presence makes them feel: cold, emotionally drained, or electrified. They nod along, attempting to document temperature drops, electrical fields, and ghostly voices through the use of many technologically advanced tools including digital recorders to record subtle ghost voices and spirit boxes, an instrument that scans radio frequencies to pick up calls from beyond the grave. The high energy ghost hunting techniques and the use of new technology can be found in every episode of the popular, global phenomenon that is *Ghost Adventures*, a reality ghost hunting TV show that airs on the *Travel Channel*.

The rhetorical situation of the ghost hunting genre, which was birthed during the 17th-century, has certainly evolved since its inception. Through the deterioration of widespread ghost belief in the 18th-century to a resurgence of interest through the Romantic gothic, the introduction of the phantasmagoric spectacle in the 20th century then merged with the birth of the television medium, priming audiences from a shift in storytelling to "seeing" ghosts on screen. Even through shifting levels of belief and media through which these stories are shared, a set of genre conventions remains a consistent thread throughout, culminating in the premiere of *Ghost Adventures*. However, in order to remain credible in the age of television fraud, the show has had to make some adjustments to these long-held conventions, adapting them to fit their new rhetorical situation. *Ghost Adventures*' rhetoric relies on a consistent episode pattern and easily identifiable genre conventions, which has led to its widespread popularity. However, it was not the first ghost hunting television show or the first text to argue in support of ghost existence.

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My choice to focus my research on ghost folklore in this unique form came from a fascination both in the supernatural and in my insatiable drive to better understand the complex history behind pop culture phenomena. Upon watching *Ghost Adventures* for the first time, I found that this genre was very different from any form of folklore that I had encountered previously. The purpose of the show goes beyond mere entertainment or shock value. Rather, the hosts genuinely want to convince their audience that their spiritual interactions are legitimate and that ghosts do exist all around us. In order to convince their audience of the existence of ghosts, *Ghost Adventures* goes beyond traditional folkloric genre conventions and melds English 18th-century reasoning with religious fervor in a much more rhetorically driven way than other ghost hunting shows on television today. Thus, my definition and conception of genre in this thesis matches that of genre theorist, Amy Devitt, for whom genre has an evolving purpose that emerges during kairotic social and cultural moments, giving power to the audiences who utilize and define genres ("Generalizing about Genre" 576). A prime example of Devitt's theory of the evolving nature of genre can be seen in *Ghost Adventures'* incorporation of familiar genre conventions from the 17th-century and gothics, as well as the adaptation of a consistent episode formula. *Ghost Adventures* relies on their audience to understand the cultural importance of their work and to join in their discourse community.

To best explore *Ghost Adventures* as a text that is the culmination of a genre that has evolved over time, I will discuss the work of 17th-century English philosopher and theologian, Joseph Glanvill, who wrote one of the most famous ghost tales of his period. His collection on the supernatural, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (1681), utilized ghost and witch belief as evidence to support the existence of God in the face of scientific skepticism. Glanvill's use of folklore was not merely for "entertainment" purposes but served as "serious proof. For such minds as were

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either indifferent to any evidence that did not come in through the senses or too common to be impressed by subtle philosophic reasoning, he included these empirical proofs for the existence of spirit" (Prior 187). Glanvill was not attempting to subvert but rather hold onto institutional knowledge that was going out of vogue. Through Glanvill's use of first-hand accounts and stories as hard rhetorical evidence, importance is placed upon the rhetorical power wielded by the author, which contrasts the power of the audience who create and define folkloric genre conventions. Glanvill's genre first incorporated folk belief with first-hand supernatural experiences filtered through the rhetoric of privileged scientific and religious discourses. The purpose of his writing remained consistent: to prove the existence of an Anglican God questioned in the face of emerging scientific thought. Glanvill's blending of genres then morphed into *Ghost Adventures*' incorporation of religious belief, filtered through a subtle melding of privileged 21st-century scientific discourse and an anti-science perspective, in order to validate their ghost belief. For Glanvill, ghost folklore provided credibility to his religious endeavors, while the *Ghost Adventures* crew utilizes religious discourses to support their argument in favor of ghost existence.

Choosing Glanvill as my primary 17th-century author was deliberate. Not only does Glanvill share some of the same rhetorical strategies, biases, and weaknesses as *Ghost Adventures*, but his book, *Saducismus Triumphatus: or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning about Witches and Apparitions*, is one of the most famous and culturally influential works on demonology during this era and perhaps of all time (Hunter 312). His work was frequently referenced as an authority on the subject, sparked public and private written responses to his controversial argument, and extended its reach to influence the "debate over the nature of poltergeists" in the early 1900's (Hunter 313). He is often deemed the founding father of

contemporary ghost hunting techniques and is mentioned on many a ghost hunting blog. His documented investigation of "The Drummer of Tedworth" ghost is one of the earliest examples of the contemporary notion of the art and science of ghost hunting. Both texts provide book ends to this unique genre: Glanvill emphasizes newly developed scientific ideals, while *Ghost Adventures* begins to introduce religious discussions back into contemporary belief in the paranormal.

The need for my research comes from a gap in existing literature on ghost belief and folklore. The rise in the popularity of supernatural TV shows and movies has sparked much research on the influence of the 19th-century gothic on contemporary texts. Similar comparisons are made between early 20th-century phantasmagoric spectacles and frauds with ghost hunting TV shows, primarily the BBC flagship series, *Most Haunted*. However, none of these texts addresses its American counterpart, *Ghost Adventures*, through an academic lens, and none looked at these texts as carefully crafted rhetorical arguments. Thus, in my initial research on ghost folklore, I found myself making connections between early modern tales of documented ghostly visitation and *Ghost Adventures*. Both texts utilize ghostly tales to meet their rhetorical needs and both are written in a hybrid genre, or a mixing of two or more "distinct" genres, one that has morphed along with shifting cultural contexts.

My research seeks to better understand how this hybrid genre was initially formed and has changed, culminating in the contemporary text, *Ghost Adventures*, through rhetorical and genre analyses that apply Amy Devitt's contemporary genre theory. Joseph Glanvill and the *Ghost Adventures* crew claim to be prescribers of supernatural truth, deeming their work paramount in the spiritual health and growth of their audiences. Both authors hover around privileged discourses, with *Ghost Adventures* adapting them to supplement the development of

their own unique discourse. These privileged discourses are used in an attempt to add credibility to their arguments. Thus, to bridge the gap between the author-driven rhetorical analysis and the audience-empowered genre theory, I will look closely at both texts' creation of discourse communities to shift popular thought. Finally, I will argue that the future of this genre seeks to shift from one in which religious belief is used to support the less popular ghost belief back to Glanvill's original rhetorical purpose: to use evidence of ghost existence to prove the existence of a God. The research questions guiding my thesis include: How has the ghost story genre morphed since the English Renaissance? How does this hybrid genre create and make accessible new discourses? How do these texts build their discourse communities?

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

I have framed my analysis chapters around Bitzerian rhetorical theory and Devitt's genre theory. Before these theories can be used in tandem to reveal the inception and development of a rhetorical genre over time, I must first examine each separately. I will first summarize the work of Lloyd Bitzer who introduced the author-centric rhetorical situation. Secondly, I will look at the audience-driven genre theory of Amy Devitt who argues that genre develops and changes over time.

Rhetorical Theory

Lloyd Bitzer, in "The Rhetorical Situation," defines the rhetorical situation as "the nature of those contexts in which speakers or writers create rhetorical discourse" (1). The emphasis in this passage is on the power of the "writer" to manage her context. By remaining aware of the context, the rhetor is able to best insert her argument during a moment when the situation encourages discourse. The historical space which the moment inhabits plays a role in the sense of exigence, as rhetorical works like Glanvill's *Saducismus Triumphatus* and *Ghost Adventures* "obtain their character from the circumstances of the historic context in which they occur" (Bitzer 3). With much emphasis on reading the context and exigence of the situation, Bitzer is placing the power into the hands of the author to alter "reality by bringing into existence a discourse of such a character that the audience, in thought and action, is so engaged that it becomes mediator of change" (4). Bitzer mentions the use of audience appeals: in order for the author to fully alter the reality of the audience, the author must manipulate her moment of exigence to fit the needs of her audience.

To understand which appeals are most appropriate for the situation, the rhetor must understand the conventions of her rhetorical situation and the audience expectations surrounding

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the genre of rhetoric being used (Bitzer 9). The rhetor encourages her audience to become a "mediator of change" through the use of the three audience appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos convinces the audience of the credibility of the rhetor and the information presented (Longaker and Walker 45). Pathos is used to elicit emotion from audience members to encourage engagement and action (Longaker and Walker 46). Logos is the sound logic of the argument itself comprised of logical reasons and evidence (Longaker and Walker 47).

A number of specific elements must be present for a rhetorical situation to exist, including "a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance" (Bitzer 5). These elements are used to frame my rhetorical analysis chapters in order to provide a full description of the rhetorical situation in which my texts participate. By first elaborating on context, I am able to explore the exigence that incites the need for discourses (Bitzer 5). Then a close look at audience appeals allows for audience participation with the rhetorical situation and with the author's rhetoric, inciting the desire for change through action (Bitzer 6). As Bitzer believes that discourses are invited when the rhetorical situation is presented well, I will also explore how *Ghost Adventures* creates a discourse community "as a fitting response to a situation which needs and invites it" (Bitzer 6).

Bitzer complicates the essential elements for a rhetorical situation by discussing rhetorical focuses that aid in the presentation of a piece of rhetoric. Pointing to exigence once again, Bitzer highlights the sense of urgency exigence creates in the audience, driving readers to participate in discourse out of necessity (Bitzer 7). A rhetorical situation demands a rhetorical audience, one who can actively participate and is capable of being "mediators of change" (Bitzer 8). Constraints placed on writing are usually generated from the audience, as it is the "beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives" that affect the success of the

presented rhetorical argument (Bitzer 8). "Beliefs" and "attitudes" certainly play pivotal roles in the rhetoric of Glanvill and *Ghost Adventures*, as both must work within privileged discourses belonging to long-held or newly-forming belief systems and scientific attitudes. To create rhetoric that is "fitting" for their particular rhetorical situations, Glanvill and the *Ghost Adventures* crew must read the prescribed response from the situation in order to best meet the needs of their audience members (Bitzer 10). Since both texts exist in very different cultural situations, the prescribed response based on their situation will also differ, specifically in terms of the exigency of their arguments.

Interestingly, Bitzer considers only certain presentations of exigence to be appropriate readings of a rhetorical situation. In this sense, exigency cannot be forced or created from nothing, but must be "objective, publicly observable, and historic" (Bitzer 11). A situation with exigency must be read equally by audience members, easily defined as such, and appropriate for the historic moment it inhabits. I disagree that a moment of true exigence must have all of these elements, as the building of discourse communities relies on a sense of exigency shared among the group that may not be shared by other discourse communities. The sense of exigence may not be shared by all potential *Ghost Adventures* audience members, as the crew uses very specific personal experiences of paranormal activity.

Bitzer concludes his article with a discussion of the fragile nature of rhetorical situations, which may persist or decay at varying rates (13). In response to the initial publication of Bitzer's rhetorical analysis, Richard L. Larson explores the nature of rhetorical situations further in his article, "Lloyd Bitzer's 'Rhetorical Situation' and the Classification of Discourse: Problems and Implications," by arguing that there are certain rhetorical situations that are "rarely if ever *terminated*, though regularly altered, by the actions of readers of that discourse" (167). Larson's

addition of the concept of an ongoing rhetorical situation fits well with my emphasis on

contemporary genre theory, or more specifically, that of Amy Devitt, who finds that "flexibility

in the definition of genre for scholars keeps the concept fluid and dynamic, able to respond to

scholars' changing needs over time" (*Writing Genres* 8). In this sense, the rhetorical situation

and the genre within which a rhetorical act participates are both "fluid," "rarely if ever

terminated," and a space in which the audience can be turned into "mediator[s] of change." For

Devitt, genres are not simply "adopted" for use, but rather must be adapted to fit the needs of the

rhetor, and more importantly, the needs of the audience.

Glanvill and *Ghost Adventures*' rhetorical situations are complex, as the folklore genre

emphasizes the power of the audience over that of the author. Thus, rhetors may struggle to fully

meet the needs of the audience because, as Bitzer argues, exigence driven by a rhetorical

audience is much more difficult to identify (8). In the case of Glanvill's text, the audience's

deeply embedded ghost belief is exploited to meet the needs of the rhetor, allowing him to

negotiate his context to intervene in this situation. Contrastingly, our contemporary folklorists

are working with very different levels of religious and paranormal belief. They may be dealing

with audience members who are skeptical of both God and ghosts, complicating the rhetorical

situation in which the *Ghost Adventures* crew must operate. The ghost hunters cannot rely on any

form of consistent belief to support their findings but they do attempt to use one of the most

widespread pools of belief, that of contemporary Christianity. Religious beliefs are often tied to

family values and a sense of safety from the "other," which in this case is "evil" or for the *Ghost

Adventures* crew, malevolent spirits. Post-9/11 anxieties certainly encouraged this "othering," as

well as the need to align oneself with a mainstream discourse that supports current power

structures. These discourse alignments provide a sense of safety and stability within a concrete set of religious "rules."

Thus, my choice of theory and analysis place the power of discourse on the audience who creates, manipulates, and responds to it. To further complicate Bitzer's rhetorical situation, I draw from Donna Gorrell who synthesizes the many responses and adjoining theories to that of Bitzer in her article, "The Rhetorical Situation Again: Linked Components in a Venn Diagram." Gorrell also emphasizes the importance of audience "in achieving meaning through the text and determining an occasion for suitable rhetoric" (401). Gorrell highlights an issue within Bitzer's rhetorical situation that was first introduced by Scott Consigny who responds in a manner more fitting to my analysis. Consigny, instead of arguing that the rhetorical situation holds the power, believes "the topics put the rhetor in control, not to *create* exigence, audience, and constraints, but to *discover* and *manage* the particularities of novel situations, and once experiencing them, to discover and formulate a means of disclosing them" (Gorrell 398). With such importance placed on the power of audience, as well as the historic situation which provides its own constraints by placing the rhetor in an interpretive position instead of a power-wielding position, the audience maintains the power to read the situation and rhetor. The author must interpret and then work with pre-existing audience beliefs. Here Gorrell and her description of Consigny provides a closer link between the interpretive nature of the author as found in genre theory and the power of the rhetor to adapt the rhetorical situation to meet audience needs.

Much like Gorrell, I cannot simply view a rhetorical analysis solely from Bitzer's perspective, which is foundational but lacks the emphasis on audience granted in contemporary genre theory. Since genre distinctions are often made primarily by the audience, this terminology

will help me concretize my interpretation of the success or failure of the rhetorical choices of both sets of ghost folklore texts to meet the needs of their audiences.

Genre Theory

In this thesis, I will use Amy Devitt's description of genre as the releasing of "old notions of genre as form and text type and embracing new notions of genre as dynamic patterning of human experience, as one of the concepts that enable us to construct our writing world" ("Generalizing about Genre" 573). The emphasis on the "human experience" provides an important connection between the rhetor and the audience. Devitt understands the need for a critical discussion about the context in which these genres are born and developed. As she states, "understanding genre requires understanding more than just classification schemes; it requires understanding the origins of the patterns on which those classifications are based," which makes clear why I cannot simply look at the text alone, but must explore a contextually-based understanding of belief (Devitt, "Generalizing about Genre," 575). As the audience determines genre classifications, so the audience perpetuates classifications for paranormal entities.

Devitt's genre theory emphasizes the power of the audience to create, define, and alter genre conventions, which the rhetorical author must adapt to meet their needs. Contrastingly, a Bitzerian rhetorical analysis gives primary power to the author who will determine the success of her argument through her rhetorical choices. However, Devitt complicates this idea, arguing,

> "A rhetorical theory of genre, therefore, must look beyond and behind particular classifications (which are only the indicators of genres and change as our purposes change) and forms (which may trace but do not constitute genre). As recent theory has it, genre entails purposes, participants, and themes, so understanding genre entails understanding a rhetorical situation and its social context" (*Writing Genres* 12-13).

While rhetorical analysis and genre theory provide different emphases, both address the rhetor's need to critically assess the rhetorical situation in order to understand audience expectations. For

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Devitt, the audience develops and expects certain genre conventions. Whereas Bitzer focuses on the ability to convince the audience of the exigence of the rhetor's message. The combination of rhetorical and genre analyses serve my purpose to understand how ghost folklore as its own genre has morphed based on the author's rhetorical choices to meet the needs of audience-based genre conventions and to repurpose those genre conventions as the rhetorical situation changes.

To look at *Ghost Adventures* not only through a rhetorical lens, but also through genre theory, I am able to examine "how genres maintain or reinforce power relationships and how they shape world views, leading easily to interpretations of generic value in terms of the community's values" (Devitt, "Integrating Rhetorical," 707). To understand the value placed on evidential support of ghosts and the afterlife in this specific context, an application of genre theory allows me to see what is most valued by this discourse community, as well as what the authors believe the general American viewing public values. Devitt will be explained in more depth in the genre analysis chapters.

The following analysis chapters are organized to underline the similarities between the rhetorical choices made by these two authors, separated by over 300 years of genre morphing. First, Glanvill's "The Drummer of Tedworth" will be examined through a genre analysis to introduce his newly-formed genre conventions. This is followed by a rhetorical analysis to more closely examine those genre conventions in light of Bitzer's rhetorical situation. The thesis will then shift to my primary text, the television show, *Ghost Adventures*. A rhetorical analysis will connect the two texts and further analyze differences in context, audience, and medium present in this new time period. Finally, my analysis chapters will end with a genre analysis of *Ghost Adventures* to show how the show uses, adapts, and ultimately changes Glanvill's genre conventions to further the growth of the genre. My final chapter will provide a hypothesis of the

future of this hybrid genre, which, I will argue, will return to the ultimate religious purpose of Glanvill's argument.

GENRE ANALYSIS OF *SADUCISMUS TRIUMPHATUS*

Joseph Glanvill's famous work, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, provides the generic roots on which *Ghost Adventures* bases many of its genre conventions. Glanvill's role as mouthpiece for supernatural belief on the eve of scientific revolution makes his work an appealing set of genre conventions for the contemporary *Ghost Adventures* crew who is faced with a similarly antagonistic context. Glanvill's most famous ghost story, "Relation I: Which is the enlarged Narrative of the Daemon of Tedworth, or of the Disturbances at Mr. Mompesson's House, caused by Witchcraft, and the villainy of the Drummer," best known as "The Drummer of Tedworth," introduces many genre conventions found in the *Ghost Adventures* episode formula. The text I quote in this thesis comes from the third edition of *Saducismus Triumphatus*.

By 1689, *Saducismus Triumphatus* was in its third edition and belief in the supernatural was undergoing a transformation from the late 17th-century. An emphasis on empirical science was blossoming and Glanvill's unwavering belief that to ignore the supernatural would lead to widespread atheism was losing traction. Known as an "apologist for the Royal Society and defender of latitudinarian Anglicanism," Glanvill was a vocal believer in witchcraft and ghostly beings and he debated heavily against the emerging radical Protestant sect (Jobe 343). The Royal Society was established in 1660 during the height of Glanvill's rhetorical popularity and consisted of a "group of scientists and academics [who] denounced eloquence or, at least, elaborate ornamentation in any language that was used for the serious purposes of philosophy and science" (Bizzell and Herzberg 555). Thus Glanvill was placed in a difficult rhetorical context, in which he needed to appease the emerging scientific elite and those deeply entrenched

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in the Catholic/Protestant religious debate. Similarly, as his writing served as a plea to place more resources into the scientific exploration of the supernatural, so was he appealing to the folk masses who played a major role in deciding the fate of Christianity.

The urgent need to create a new genre in response to the religious and scientific contexts in which Glanvill was writing was supplemented by his desire to grant "equal status to human and divine testimony in matters touching the role of spirits in nature" (Jobe 346). He utilized both Biblical and first-hand evidence to reveal how nature and the supernatural interacted, solidifying his Anglican reading of God's word. Even when empirical evidence emerged as the privileged mode of scientific inquiry, Glanvill argued, "Attestation of Thousands of Eye and Ear witnesses, and those not of the easily deceivable Vulgar only, but of wise and grave Discerners and that, when no Interest could oblidge them to agree together in a common Lye" (Glanvill qtd. in Jobe 347). Thus, Glanvill needed to incorporate popular empiricist language to appease his critics, while also applying witness testimony to confirm the truth of his interpretation of the Bible. His work was the rhetorization of common ghost tales and is one of the more famous, and one of the first, examples of working ghost stories into a rhetorical argument. I will use this genre analysis to illustrate the moment in which ghost hunting genre conventions are being developed.

"The Drummer of Tedworth" provides a strong example of the birth of genre conventions that would be later adapted by *Ghost Adventures* to meet the needs of their contemporary audience. It is important to once again emphasize that "The Drummer of Tedworth" is one of the first instances in which an empirically-based story is being used as an argument, and that perceptions about what constituted appropriate conventions for this genre were not yet established. The lack of a clear definition for this genre mirrors the unclear distinction between

what constituted an act of witchcraft and what was deemed a ghostly haunting. Glanvill's tale is

dubbed an instance of witchcraft, but more closely resembles the ghostly phenomena explored in

Ghost Adventures. Interestingly, "The Drummer of Tedworth" "is now considered the classic

account of poltergeist activity," but "was considered by contemporaries as a case of witchcraft"

(Bennett, "Ghost and Witch," 4). Today, we classify many supernatural genres based on tropes

associated with specific creatures. These creatures are considered distinct entities that the

audience can easily identify and associate with a history of similar texts. However, these genre

classifications were not clearly defined during Glanvill's era, nor were these creatures distinct, a

fact that complicates a simple comparison with *Ghost Adventures*. Much like this genre, the

supernatural creature conventions morphed over time, taking on characteristics from each other.

In many cases during the 16th and 17th centuries, it was unclear exactly what kind of creature

townspeople were encountering. Jacqueline Simpson explains this phenomenon in more depth in

her article, "Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse? Debatable Apparitions in Medieval England,"

illustrating that supernatural creatures, much like the genre itself, were not clearly defined. By

today's standards, the muddling of supernatural lore such as witches, ghosts, and demons would

be problematic because it would also confuse the genre conventions and cultural responses to

those separate branches of belief. This article examines the "strangeness" of many of the tales

out of the medieval period because "they combine incongruous elements: Christian doctrines

about sin, death, and the afterlife on the one hand, and on the other some macabre or grotesque

beliefs which appear incompatible with theology" (Simpson 389). Simpson explores one such

example that reveals the mixing of supernatural belief and the theological/macabre through the

resurrected corpse and ghost parallel. Simpson states, "some people claimed the ghost itself had

told them there would be no peace as long as it remained unburnt" (Simpson 392). Subsequently,

this led to a confusion not only with what would develop into contemporary zombie folklore, but also more archaic discussions of vampiric corpses that ate or bit the living, and to shape-shifters, all of which were often classified under the "ghost umbrella." Simpson notes the shift in the 16th and 17th centuries from simply experiencing and attempting to classify the encounters found throughout England to an emphasis on the "moral and spiritual framework[s] to supply significance to what they had experienced, and to show them what action they ought to take" (400). In Glanvill's case, he applies a very specific Anglican moral framework to his drive to understand ghostly phenomena.

In "Ghost and Witch in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," Gillian Bennett further complicates the idea of shifting supernatural creatures, which affects the genre conventions of these tales. Bennett argues that one of the strongest supernatural bonds was between ghosts and witches, which were often referred to as the same. Not only were these two entities referenced as one, "in many cases the effects of a supernatural visitation were the same whatever the class of visitor," thus complicating Simpson's notion that the folklore of the period sought to provide a framework for the action that should be taken against malevolent beings (Bennett, "Ghost and Witch," 4). Protestant scholars used evidence of "supernatural visitation" to respond to their Catholic counterparts, who countered this argument with the belief that ghost existence pointed to the existence of Purgatory (Bennett, "Ghost and Witch," 7). First, a redefinition of the concept of the ghost had to occur in a way that did not discredit the validity of the folklore, but that supplemented the supernatural being with one that was more amicable to Protestant doctrine (Bennett, "Ghost and Witch," 7). Then, Bennett explains, "If the ghost could not be a departed soul, and yet if it obviously existed, then it had to be another type of supernatural creature masquerading as the spirit of the dead" (Bennett, "Ghost and Witch," 7). Interestingly, Bennett

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does not view these creature convention complexities as a strikingly different perspective or completely disassociated from contemporary ghost belief. Instead, she finds, "it is possible, therefore, that the close connection of witch and ghost in the investigative literature of the seventeenth century, prepared for by the redefinition of the ghost in the sixteenth, in turn paved the way for the Gothic horrors of the nineteenth century and still influences our attitudes towards the supernatural today" (Bennett, "Ghost and Witch," 12). Glanvill's reaction to blended ghost/witch phenomena conventions serves as a primary example of scientific and religious rhetorical influences on supernatural belief during the 17th-century. Thus, Glanvill needed to provide concrete genre conventions to his version of "investigative literation" through which he could clarify the exigence of his work in both the supernatural and scientific realms.

The following is a breakdown of the tale's primary elements and Glanvill's generic choices. Opening in the year 1661, John Mompesson of Tedworth is frustrated by the loud banging of a "counterfeit" town drummer. As a prominent member of the Tedworth community, Mompesson participates in removing the drummer from the town. After the drummer has left, Mompesson is given the man's drum and finds that his house is haunted with "a very great knocking at his Doors, and the outsides of his House" (Glanvill 322). Much like contemporary ghost stories, the haunting begins slowly with the sounds of drumming and scratching. The haunting intensifies to physical attacks on the family with the malevolent spirit "laying Hands on them, one should feell no blows, but might perceive them to shake exceedingly" (Glanvill 323). It was Mompesson's wife and children who first witnessed the poltergeist activity, exclaiming, "they had been much affrighted in the Night by Thieves, and that the House had been like to have been broken up" (Glanvill 322). The ghost enjoyed torturing the children by following them from one room to another. Subsequently, it was important for "Mr. Mompesson himself lay there

to observe it," as the ethos of his wife and children were tainted by their heightened, unscientific

emotional state (Glanvill 323). This reveals a major identifying point for Glanvill's genre: a

telling of the history of the hauntings in the space from multiple, diverse witness accounts to

increase the credibility of the story.

Glanvill stresses that the phenomena was not only isolated to the family, but servants and

"Maids confidently affirm" the legitimacy of the circumstances of the haunting (326). For one

servant, the ghost took a liking to him and provided Glanvill an example of what *Ghost*

Adventures would label an "intelligent spirit," which is when a spirit is "aware of its

surroundings and (usually) its situation…an intelligent haunting is a spirit that maintains its

identity, memories, and personality after death" (Bagans and Crigger 55). After many months of

disturbances,

> "a servant observing two Boards in the Childrens room seeming to move, he bid it give
> him one of them. Upon which the board came (nothing moving it that he saw) within a
> yard of him. The Man added, Nay let me have it in my Hand; upon which it was shov'd
> quite home to him" (Glanvill 323).

Glanvill points to the fact that the incident could not be easily discredited, as the servant claimed

"nothing moving it that he saw." The consistent interaction over a period of months, plus the

variety of witnesses to this phenomenon plays a role in boosting the credibility of the

disturbances. When explaining the variety of paranormal experiences within the story, Glanvill

makes mention of multiple witnesses, even inserting Mompesson's attempt to find a "natural"

source of the phenomena in-time with the disturbance. Introducing multiple witnesses allows

Glanvill to adapt his ethos to meet the new empirical preference of his audience, which develops

into a genre convention where the outside evidence is presented before relaying his first-hand

experience.

A retelling of the "account from Mr. Mompesson, and other credible persons," leads to the introduction of Glanvill's testimony of "the disturbance, seen, and heard somewhat my self" (Glanvill 259). The exigence of inserting author testimony into the argument is elevated when it is situated prior to the author's arrival in the tale. He arrives and listens to the "remarkable circumstances before related, [which] were confirmed to me there, by several of the Neighbors together, who had been present at them" (Glanvill 328). This statement is especially important when Glanvill is later asked to defend the validity of the haunting. An emphasis should be placed on the words "several" and "together," which supports his claim, "We have the *attestations* of thousands of eye and ear-witnesses, and those not of the easily deceivable vulgar onely, but of wise and grave discerners, and that when no interest could oblige them to agree together in a common *Lie*" (Glanvill qtd. in Broad 497). In the case of "The Drummer of Tedworth," much emphasis is placed on the consistent retelling of events by a number of witnesses, which are filtered and translated by Glanvill. While initially inspecting the house, Glanvill does not witness any phenomena, but is called to the children's room after they are put to bed – a time of consistent nightly activity. He is accompanied on his hunt by Mr. Mompesson and "a Gentleman that came with me" into the children's room where he witnesses "a strange scratching...as one with long Nails could make upon a Bolster" (Glanvill 328). While the children are in bed at the time, he makes a point to claim, without further explanation, that "I saw their hands out of the Cloaths, and they could not contribute to the noise that was behind their heads" (Glanvill 328). He claims they were not the source of the sound, followed by his own examination of the phenomena. In this case, Glanvill does not use the children's testimony, but relies on his ethos as a man of science to support the claim that the children "could not contribute to the noise."

Glanvill witnesses the sounds and movement of the bed and applies scientific techniques

in an attempt to "debunk" the phenomena. He explains,

> "I searched under and behind the Bed, turned up the Cloaths to the Bed-cords, graspt the
> Bolster, sounded the Wall behind, and made all the search that possibly I could to find if
> there were any trick, contrivance, or common cause of it; the like did my Friend, but we
> could discover nothing. So that I was then verily perswaded, and am so still, that the
> noise was made by some *Daemon* or *Spirit*" (Glanvill 329).

It is not enough to simply claim they tested every potential hypothesis for the unexplained

sounds, but Glanvill provides detailed examinations of every object and room associated with the

witnessed phenomena. The passage continues with the many possible sources of the disturbance

such as a "Dog or Cat, or any such Creature in the Room" followed by a test of that hypothesis

(Glanvill 329). Glanvill's personal account serves to shift the genre from one that begins with

conventions found in storytelling to one based on scientific inquiry. The emphasis shifts as the

point of view shifts, from sharing experiences to testing and hypothesizing the paranormal

happenings while examining the space.

In Glanvill's conclusion, he applies common rhetorical techniques to his genre

conventions by summarizing and contextualizing his evidence in light of his overarching

argument. He explains,

> "They were not the passages of a Day or Night, nor the vanishing glances of an
> *Apparition*; but these Transactions were *near* and *late*, *publick*, *frequent*, and of *divers
> years continuance*, witnessed by multitudes of competent and unbyassed Attestors, and
> acted in a searching incredulous Age: Arguments enough one would think to convince
> any modest and capable reason" (Glanvill 338).

He again emphasizes the consistency of the haunting and the credibility of the "Attestors" to

bolster his ethos. The language demands any reader of "modest and capable reason" to come to

the same conclusion that these experiences point to the reality of the paranormal. Similarly, he

argues that his current audience, or the discourse community that he is creating, does not belong

to "an ignorant age, or among a barbarous people" and they will thus not see this tale as a

symptom of sharing in the "interest of a party" (Glanvill 338). Through the many editions of the

story, Glanvill's tone abandons any "wittiness" or light-heartedness, and instead, he placed an

"increased stress on sincerity and moral earnestness which was to become typical of

latitudinarian divines" (Hunter 337). His repeated analysis and personal reflection upon each

piece of evidence presented, as well as the use of religious argument to tie stories together,

suggests that Glanvill understands how beliefs and genre conventions are shifting during this

period. In this sense, the conventions traditionally used in rhetorically driven texts was shifting

during the end of the 17th-century from a focus on personal or textual evidence to conventions

that privilege scientific, empirical proof.

      With shifting belief systems came shifting preferences in the genre conventions of both

rhetorical argument and ghost stories, which forced Glanvill to adapt the genre to remain

relevant. Troy Boone, author of "Narrating the Apparition: Glanvill, Defoe, and the Rise of

Gothic Fiction," finds that this understanding of Glanvill's skeptical audience led to "these

apparition narratives display[ing] rhetorical anxiety about their generic status and their power to

create an oppositional discourse" (173). Glanvill's "anxiety" about the genre of his work,

Saducismus Triumphatus, can be seen in the Preface to "The Drummer of Tedworth." He does

not want the retelling of the Tedworth phenomena to be relegated to mere "storytelling." He

exclaims in the tale's opening sentence, "I know it is matter of very little Credit to be a Relator

of Stories, and I of all Men living, have least reason to be fond of the Imployment" (Glanvill

257). The use of "Stories" as a feminine contradiction to the reason of "Men" is a negative

connotation he hopes to avoid through the use of empirical evidence. He continues, "For I never

had any faculty in telling of a Story, and have always had a particular indisposition and

backwardsness to the writing of any such" (Glanvill 257). Again, Glanvill rhetorically positions himself as a rhetor that is especially poor at weaving "Stories" in an effort to add credibility to the following passages, which to the untrained eye, may closely resemble "Stories." The difference is that these are not stories, but "Relations of Fact," the kind that "there are none like to give a Man such trouble and disreputation, as those that relate to Witchcraft and Apparitions" (Glanvill 257). The purposeful language allows Glanvill to rhetorically position himself, not as a relator of stories, but a scientist sharing "Relations of Fact" that the general public does not want to discuss out of fear.

Glanvill's apprehension over being labeled a storyteller could hint at a larger shift in rhetorical practices during this period on the cusp of the 18th-century. His audience of Royal Society members championed a new rhetorical preference envisioning "a world without rhetoric, a world where people would speak of things as they really were, without the colorings of style, in plain language as clear as glass" (Bizzell and Herzberg 795). The Royal Society focused on the use of "the experimental method and inductive reasoning to advance knowledge," which was placed "in contradistinction to the outmoded Scholastic philosophy of syllogistic deduction and disputation" (Bizzell and Herzberg 796). In this sense, Glanvill's fear of the "Stories" genre distinction aligns with his audience's belief in the outdated nature of "syllogistic deduction and disputation." However, the introduction of belles lettres in the following century could have been one of many reasons why Glanvill's text remained popular after his death, even as "phenomena ascribed to witchcraft gradually lost their attractiveness as empirical proofs for the existence of the spirit world" (Jobe 356). Interestingly, while Glanvill's genre becomes fully enveloped into what would be considered the romantic novel genre of the late 18th-century, the drive to share stories of the supernatural to solidify the truth behind uncanny phenomena did not recede but

flourished even after ghosts found themselves relegated back to the storytelling genre. During the 20th century, resurgence in the interest of ghosts and the desire to see them first-hand led to phantasmagoric spectacles that set the stage for the non-fiction ghost TV shows of today. While the genre morphed with changing belief systems, even leaning closer to the storytelling genre than the scientific, the fairly consistent conventions point to the stability of the genre as a desired mode of discourse for exploring the supernatural.

In creating a unique discourse through which ghost belief could be shared, "The Drummer of Tedworth" became so popular that it took root in America. As Alfred Owen Aldridge explains in his article, "Franklin and the Ghostly Drummer of Tedworth," the story of a similar specter is told through an anonymous letter to the publisher of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. The American version of the tale marks an important moment in the history of "The Drummer of Tedworth," as the genre can be seen physically traveling from England to the Americas. In the American adaptation, the genre conventions used by Glanvill remain, which reveals an emerging consistency in the genre as it travels. Aldridge shares the tale, in which the anonymous letter writer "displayed extreme fright, not from anything he had seen or heard himself, but from an account he had received from a reverend gentlemen 'of a certain House's being haunted with the D – l of a Drummer, not a whit less obstreperous, than the *Tedsworth* Tympanist'" (560-561). Skepticism and debate surrounded the American retelling of the British tale, which focused on the credibility of the original storytellers, "the two clergymen who attested to the story of the drummer" (Aldridge 562). The letter writer's "ridicule" of the clergymen's testimony was critiqued as an attack against the Church (Aldridge 562). Shared in the spirit of amusing the *Gazette* readers, America was still fraught with Protestant-Catholic tensions, as exhibited by the aggressive written response by pseudo-anonymous letter writer, Philoclerus. Instead of claiming

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the second-hand story to be falsely represented, Philoclerus argues, "the story could very well illicit belief since there was nothing absolutely impossible in the thing itself, since the affected clerics were men of probity, learning and good sense who related the facts to the former writer upon their knowledge" (Aldridge 563). Once again, the emphasis is not necessarily placed on the legitimacy of the existence of pesky spirits, but instead, on the credibility of the authors as men of "learning" who witnessed the phenomenon. This example highlights the power of ghost and witchcraft stories during this period to incite religious debate and to reveal the rhetorical power of first-hand accounts. The credibility of the clergymen in this story is intertwined within the genre conventions, as the second hand tale relies on multiple witness statements before being deemed a real haunting. It also marks a documented moment in which the genre conventions developed by Glanvill were being used in America, the site of *Ghost Adventures*' emergence over 300 years later.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF *SADUCISMUS TRIUMPHATUS*

Context

In beginning to look at the rhetorical situation of 17th-century English ghost folklore and belief, many scholars point to the ultimate purpose of these texts, especially as it was during this period that they were first written down and dispersed. The 17th-century introduced an audience preference for rhetoric that produced clear, scientific evidence. Just prior to Glanvill's time, Sir Francis Bacon had demoted "rhetoric to a technical skill that will simply help the one who knows convey knowledge to the less able. Bacon is more interested in the generation of knowledge by scientific means" (Bizzell and Herzberg 575). This idea gained momentum during the height of Glanvill's career, forcing him to supplement his rhetoric with knowledge generated by "scientific means." Jo Bath and John Newton, authors of "'Sensible Proof of Spirits': Ghost Belief during the Later Seventeenth Century," explain that while on the cusp of 18th-century emphases on rationalism, the elite and common folk alike began crafting potential experiments to prove that "experiential data might verify post-mortem existence" (4). In "The Drummer of Tedworth," Mompesson is considered a prominent and well-educated member of town who conducts experiments of the ghostly presence in his home with the common folk.

Bath and Newton found that ghosts played a vital role as evidence to support both positions in the religious war. The authors explain, "the denial of spirits endangered the whole system of the supernatural, so did the bolstering of belief in any supernatural force support other elements of the system" (5). Glanvill's reasoning closely matched that used by both religious factions: if ghosts are real, then so are witches and demons. If these entities are real and widespread, then there must be some form of afterlife in which their spirits become trapped. Finally, if these entities point to the existence of an afterlife, then God must also exist. This

argument was taken up by both Protestant and the Catholic rhetoricians during the period with each retrofitting it to serve their own needs. Catholics pointed to ghosts as a sign of Purgatory, and many examples of this can be found in stories where bodies must be properly buried in order to move the spirit past purgatory and into heaven. Glanvill would have been especially aware of this religious context, as he lived long enough to witness the Protestant/Catholic factions vying for the English crown (Bizzell and Herzberg 577).

Caroline Walker Bynum supplements this argument with additional context in her article, "Material Continuity, Personal Survival, and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion in Its Medieval and Modern Contexts," in which she explores the very physical Medieval belief that the body rose again, a Catholic phenomenon that struggles to translate into a contemporary Catholic context. This Medieval discussion led to arguments over the need to keep corpses intact and the myth of the rising corpses. Bynum highlights one striking difference between 16th and 17th-century philosophers and contemporary philosophers, in that "all medieval thinkers held a soul-body dualism, few modern thinkers do…[who] find it almost impossible to envision personal survival without material continuity" (60). The debates over missing limbs and the dangers of dead bodies rotting too quickly were used as proof of the creation of tortured souls looking to be reunited with their limbs before rising to a Catholic Heaven.

Not only was the physical body, its death, and the importance of its intactness and proper burial for its rise to Heaven a discussion in strictly material terms, but the concept of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory were also very real, physical spaces located on Earth, which made the belief in spirits much more widespread than contemporary ideas of a distant, metaphysical off-Earth spheres. Peter Dinzelbacher reviews medieval artistic representations of the afterlife to explain how this mode of thought differs from contemporary notions. In "The Way to the Other World in

Medieval Literature and Art," Dinzelbacher believes "there is much more concreteness even in philosophical and theological reflection than we today, with our minds used to a rather abstract way of speaking and thinking, are able to recognize in these texts" (70). Most importantly, he highlights the fact that these medieval souls and the families they leave behind do not expect to enter their ultimate destination overnight, but rather begin their arduous journey across the Earth on a pilgrimage to the afterlife (Dinzelbacher 71). Interestingly, these souls are never depicted alone on their journey, but instead, "this journey to the localities of future existence is not undertaken alone. Good or evil spirits are man's companions on his last way" (Dinzelbacher 74). A belief in the material nature of the afterlife could have been the basis for the muddling of supernatural spirits within 16th and 17th-century folklore, which often makes it difficult to discern whether a supernatural being is a resurrected corpse, a misguided soul lost on the road to the afterlife, or an other-worldly being with divine or damned origins. Similarly, a physical connection to the afterlife provides further exigence that ghost folklore should be discussed and studied, as ghostly entities and beings from the afterlife can physically interact with the world of the living.

As Glanvill lived during the late 17th-century, ghost-based arguments were losing popularity as the privileged form of religious argument. The article, "Joseph Glanvill, Witchcraft, and Seventeenth-Century Science" by Moody E. Prior, describes Glanvill's rhetorical situation in depth, contrasting withering supernatural belief with his aggressive drive to preserve it. Prior explains Glanvill's belief as a "militant defense of a belief which an increasing number of men were beginning to condemn as a wicked superstition" (170). In this sense, Glanvill saw the deterioration of supernatural belief as a symptom of a weakening in Christian belief.

Exigence

The argument Glanvill presents in "The Drummer of Tedworth" and the many other

essays in *Saducismus Triumphatus* were deemed rhetorical "weapons" that could be used against

a variety of potential opponents including, "Hobbesians, occultists, and materialists as well as

sectarians, enthusiasts, and skeptics" (Jobe 356). His work gained rhetorical strength from both

witness testimony and Biblical evidence, while his sense of exigence came from his anxiety of

"diabolical agency in the natural world," he believed "human testimony was sufficient to

determine the behavior of spirits on earth, but that divine testimony in the form of scripture could

be used to confirm the findings of observation" (Jobe 353). Contemporary audiences maintain

belief in a strong association between 17th-century belief in the supernatural and the emotion-

filled rhetoric of the witch hunts, but Glanvill prided himself, much like the *Ghost Adventure*

crew, on his "scholarly arguments for their beliefs in accordance with the highest standards of

scientific inquiry at the time" (Broad 495). Upon sharing the story of the "Drummer of

Tedworth," Glanvill received many negative responses with skeptics claiming that the story was

a fake. Glanvill clearly expresses anger over the disrespectful treatment of the serious scientific

work he was conducting when he states, "Most of them have declared that it was most

confidently reported, and believed in all the respective parts, that the business was a Cheat, that

Mr. Mompesson had confessed so much, and I the same: so that I was quite tired with denying

and answering Letters about it" (257). With belief in witches and spirits waning, it becomes clear

that Glanvill needs to focus on developing his ethos to convince his audience to share his sense

of exigence.

Glanvill claims that the every-man avoids the discussion of the "terrours" found in

"another World" because they are "very hard and grievous things" (258). He sees this as a

kairotic moment for his audience to accept the supernatural, as he is strongly opposed to the new belief that "the Stories of Witches and Apparitions must be exploded and run down, or all is lost" (258). Glanvill grew up in the early 1600's when witch hunts remained popular and scientists spent much time searching for definitive proof of spirits. However, his work was introduced on the cusp of the 18th-century when supernatural belief was declining, which culminates in the discrimination Bagans and his crew feels when they share their ghost beliefs with the public. To strengthen his rhetorical position, Glanvill needed to prove his personal connection to the supernatural. As belief in witches and ghosts was commonplace during the early 17th-century, Glanvill instead focuses on revealing the details of his investigation in the same "transparent" nature as the detailed preparation and ghost hunting tactics used by the *Ghost Adventures* crew. This creates a sense of inclusion by inviting the audience to participate in the analysis of the evidence he has gathered. By sharing the horrifying tales first, Glanvill encourages his audience to feel a sense of urgency to aid their fellow Englishmen who are suffering under ghostly oppression.

Glanvill's rhetorical style cannot be viewed outside of the style of argument popular during his time. This style remains popular on ghost hunting shows and within contemporary scientific communities, as an inductive style of argument which "begins with certain evidence in need of explanation, and the conclusion is then put forward as the hypothesis that best explains the evidence" (Broad 497). The "need of explanation" creates this sense of exigence and purpose to Glanvill's ghost hunting. As Jacqueline Broad, author of "Margaret Cavendish and Joseph Glanvill: science, religion, and witchcraft," so aptly puts it, "Glanvill's uncritical religious ideology is the driving force behind his scientific programme – and it is this dogma that inevitably compromises his conclusions" (502). Thus, proof of the existence of supernatural

entities contradicts Glanvill's emphasis on avoiding dogmatic statements when he jumps to conclusions that could be more fully explained in "natural or material terms alone" (Broad 502). As with *Ghost Adventures*, the ultimate purpose, initially, is to simply prove that the existence of the supernatural is a probable and realistic hypothesis to apply to certain examples of unexplained phenomena. However, when both authors slip into rhetoric that claims they have definitively proven that the recorded phenomena is caused by ghosts, they are distracted from spending more time deducing other probable causes. It is the overt emphasis on meeting the needs of their rhetorical exigence that weakens the scientific "truth" behind their evidence and makes both audiences skeptical of the results of their findings. This is not an inductive argument and thus left itself vulnerable to attack from the audience-favored inductive scientific method.

Audience

Glanvill's audience of the English learned and members of the Royal Society valued science above storytelling. Glanvill claimed that the ultimate purpose of *Saducismus Triumphatus* was aligned with that of the Royal Society, who strove to improve "the minds of Men in solid and useful notices of things, helping them to such Theories as may be serviceable to common life" (Glanvill qtd. in Broad 496). His research centered on discovering empirical evidence in support of existence of supernatural beings, an endeavor viewed as "serviceable" for the common man, an important study to better acknowledge those who were being tormented by witch or apparition. In order to bridge the gap between the Royal Society and the general public, Glanvill had to create a rhetorical balance within his apparition narratives. Much like the *Ghost Adventures* crew, Glanvill's faith in an increasingly antiquated belief system placed him at a rhetorical disadvantage with his audience, who were primarily interested in popular science experiments over folktale sharing.

In an attempt to reconcile new empiricist scientific ideals with religious belief, many

insisted that "the new scientific discoveries did not necessarily lead to atheism and irreligion,

expressing this conviction with a mixture of concern and reassurance that reveal a more than

casual fear of being misunderstood" (Prior 171). Glanvill had to tread carefully in this potentially

hostile environment. The common folk, the primary target of his texts, wavered in their

understanding of the religious turmoil of the period. With widespread Protestant/Catholic

violence from in the 16th and 17th centuries, the use of folk ancestral ghost belief as a rhetorical

tool could have been viewed as a "reassurance" during these turbulent times.

Ethos

To counteract Glanvill's unscientific desire to prove his hypothesis without conforming

to the conventions of inductive argument, he relies heavily on ethos. Even when arguing for the

preservation of what many considered to be a "decaying superstition," Glanvill gained much of

his ethos from his work as "author of clever treatise on skepticism and certainty, of several

vigorous defenses of the Royal Society and of the principles of the 'new science,' of sermons

based on the most rationalistic and latitudinarian principles" (Prior 167). He stepped onto the

supernatural stage with an education, a successful religious and philosophical writing career, and

the backing of the renowned scientific fellowship, the Royal Society. However, even with ethos

derived from his socioeconomic station, the new scientific contextual constraints caused him to

include a focus on ethos heavily in his work. Glanvill had to be perceived as credible, acting as a

bridge between the local storyteller as a man of "probity, learning and good sense" (Aldridge

563).

Once his person is deemed credible, Glanvill elaborates on the probability that the strange

happenings in Tedworth are caused by the supernatural, and not the failure of his faculties.

Hence, pathos is used sparingly in his rhetoric, and emotional reactions to the obviously startling disturbances are quickly denied in favor of what Glanvill considers the masculine ethos. One of the more common responses to this story, and to the emotion-filled *Ghost Adventures* episodes, is that the hunters "were under some Affright, and so fancied noises and sights that were not" (Glanvill 330). Glanvill's female contemporary and frequent correspondent, Margaret Cavendish, believed "the senses can be untrustworthy and deceptive. In her *Observations*, she affirms that "sense deludes more than it gives true information'" (Broad 498). Glanvill responds to this ever-present argument by claiming it to be "the Eternal Evasion," a way to avoid talking about these frightening and seemingly inexplicable events (330). In his defense, Glanvill shares his belief in the clarity of his senses, as

> "I certainly know for mine own part, that during the whole time of my being in the Room, and in the House, I was under no more affrightment that I am, while I write this Relation. And I know that I am now awake, and that I see the Objects that are before me, I know that I heard and saw the particulars I have told" (330).

This passage points again to the shifting understandings of rhetoric leading into the 18th-century, which began exploring "human nature, increasingly regarded as the basis of critical judgment, was still being defined. And as epistemology – the study of human knowledge – became an essential part of the search for truth, common ground was cleared" (Bizzell and Herzberg 798). Glanvill sees fear as a common human behavior, one that could disturb his "search for truth." By fully explaining his own personal "human nature," one in which he does not normally feel "affrightment," he provides credibility for the "truth" of his claims.

Once Glanvill has established the credibility of his person and ghostly experiences, he provides extensive details on his search for a cause of the unexplained phenomena. Through his initial walk-through of the space, he examines a haunted bed in detail, describing his inductive methods for discerning if the "strange scratching" (328) were caused by "any living thing" inside

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of the mattress (329). He breaks down each action, describing how he "looked under and every

where about, to see if there were any Dog or Cat, or any such Creature in the Room, and so we

all did, but found nothing" (Glanvill 329). Once again, Glanvill gains credibility through detailed

investigation stating, "we all did" test these hypotheses and all "found nothing." Glanvill

questioned the inclusion of the detailed scientific walk-through in this third edition of the

Tedworth story, stating, "this passage I mention not in the former Editions, because it depended

upon my single Testimony, and might be subject to more Evasions than the other I related; but

having told it to divers Learned and inquisitive Men, who thought it not altogether

inconsiderable, I have now added it here" (329-330). He emphasizes the fact that there were

multiple witnesses to the disturbances even though the whole account was taken out of its

original context and transcribed by Glanvill. He feels the need to tell the audience that even

though these stories are related to them by one author, the evidence provided was enough to

convince "Learned and inquisitive Men" and thus should be enough for the common reader.

To further enhance his ethos and to connect to the common reader, Glanvill utilizes

privileged Christian discourse to connect between the spirit haunting the Tedworth house and

Biblical evidence proving the existence of spirits. Glanvill relates Mompesson's tale, in which

> "the old Gentlewomans Bible was found in the Ashes, the Paper side being downwards. Mr. Mompesson took it up, and observed, that it lay open at the third Chapter of St. Mark, where there is mention of the unclean Spirits falling down before our Saviour, and of his giving power to the Twelve to cast out Devils, and of the Scribes Opinion, that he cast them out through Beelzebub. The next night they strewed Ashes over the Chamber, to see what impressions it would leave. In the morning they found in one place the resemblance of a great Claw, in another of a Lesser, some Letters in another, which they could make nothing of, besides many Circles and Scratches in the Ashes" (328).

By opening this example with the introduction of Biblical descriptions of devils, Glanvill frames

Mompesson's story within religious beliefs that were familiar and credible to his audience. This

section does not follow with any additional explanation of the importance of this Biblical

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passage, but does connect to Glanvill's sense of exigence to expose the truth that these "Devils" exist and that they can serve as evidence of the truth of Biblical Scripture. For Glanvill, to ignore these beings is to begin the destruction of Christian belief, as these spirits are part of the demonic hierarchy. Similarly, this provides exigence for his reader, as the evidence shared in this story "are strange enough to prove themselves effects of some *invisible extraordinary Agent* and so demonstrate that there are Spirits, who sometimes sensibly intermeddle in our affairs" (Glanvill 338). The agents are demonic in nature and cannot be fully understood without belief in the truth of Biblical descriptions of "invisible extraordinary Agent[s]." Glanvill argued that the use of supernatural stories provided him with the "soundest kind of empirical method, evidence of phenomena that could not be brought about by the ordinary processes of matter" (Prior 187). The ethos of his "empirical method" is tied to the ethos inherent in the use of the Bible as an evidential source. Glanvill connects the scientific with the Biblical to enhance the credibility of his specific findings and to support his ultimate thesis: that emerging empirical science and the Bible are not mutually exclusive. However, as ghost and witch belief act as the evidence through which Glanvill supports his thesis, he must add to his ethos by including a number of credible sources to support the veracity of his claims. In the case of "The Drummer of Tedworth," Mompesson and his educated peers provide this necessary ethical support.

Glanvill concludes his argument with a wrap-up of the "investigation" with significance placed on the ethos of Mompesson and the likelihood that the phenomena was not a series of coincidences, but a consistent, real haunting. He claims the disturbances to be "that not of circumstance or two, but of an hundred, nor for once or twice only, but for the space of some years" (Glanvill 335). In speaking of the credibility and sanity of Mompesson, Glanvill believes him to be "a Gentlemen, of whole truth in this account, I have not the least ground of suspicion

he being neither vain nor credulous, but a discreet, sagacious and manly person" (334). Here again the concept of masculinity is tied to scientific, credible truth, as to be anything but "manly" may be associated with the feminine "storytelling." In reviewing Mompesson's reputation through documents surrounding the Tedworth case, Michael Hunter, author of "New Light on the 'Drummer of Tedworth': conflicting narratives of witchcraft in Restoration England," found that Mompesson was "a rather shadowy figure" who "played a significant role in the affairs of the village and its neighbourhood" (318). Hunter does not elaborate further on the statement, but it is interesting that his "significant role" in the community could have been elevated through the events in his home. Whatever the cause of Mompesson's shadowy reputation, Glanvill attempts to counteract any uncertainty through whole paragraphs dedicated to proving why Mompesson's testimony is credible. Among explaining the many reasons why Mompesson's reputation is beyond reproach, Glanvill also makes a statement similar to that used by *Ghost Adventures* when sharing eye-witness testimony:

> "there will be little reason to think he could have any Interest to put a Cheat upon the World, in which He would most of all have injured and abused Himself. Or if he should have designed and managed so incredible, so unprofitable a Delusion, 'tis strange that he should have troubled himself so long in such a Business, only to deceive, and to be talkt of" (Glanvill 336).

Mompesson has no reason to lie, as he placed himself in a vulnerable social position in an effort to promote Glanvill's ghostly claims.

However, relying on the testimony of multiple sources could potentially detract from the credibility of Glanvill's story. The serving staff could be viewed as potential sources of biased information, as Mompesson himself complains of their new-found power in a letter to his mentor, in which he states, "'the unrulynesse of Servants who apprehend that if they leave me, none other will come to me, and so they are become my Masters'" (Mompesson qtd. in Hunter

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322). Indeed, some claimed that the "servants may themselves have been complicit in the disturbances" (Hunter 322). As this version of the tale is found in the third edition of *Saducismus Triumphatus*, Glanvill is aware of the negative responses to his argument and makes necessary changes to the story. After explaining his frustration over the many questions he must answer to affirm the legitimacy of the tale, he says, "to free myself from the trouble, I at last resolve to re-print the Story by it self with my Confutation of the Invention that concerned me, and a Letter I received from Mr. Mompesson (now printed in this Book) which cleared the matter to him" (Glanvill 259). Since Glanvill discusses Mompesson's credibility fully, this statement is enough to appease skeptical readers of the inclusion of the servant's stories.

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Glanvill's generic and rhetorical choices focus most heavily on convincing his audience of the exigence of his argument. Through the detailed analysis of the scene of the haunting from multiple perspectives to the equal significance given to scientific and Biblical evidence, Glanvill understands the complex context in which his rhetoric is presented. The need to sufficiently appease the scientific and religious communities primarily through ethical appeals is a rhetorical convention shared by the *Ghost Adventures* crew almost 300 years later. During the interim, Glanvill's genre conventions were adapted by the fictional genre, the gothic, which aided in the transition from Glanvill's textual medium to the *Ghost Adventures* reality television series.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF *GHOST ADVENTURES*

This chapter is organized in the same fashion as the preceding chapter, in which Bitzer's

rhetorical situation is framed with the addition of an in-depth look at the role of audience

appeals. While this section is primarily focused on *Ghost Adventures*' rhetorical choices, it

cannot be completely divorced from the creation of their genre conventions. Thus, there will be

instances in which the discussion of audience appeals incorporates brief discussions of genre, but

these will be supplemented by the following analysis chapter. The first section of this chapter is

organized chronologically to match a typical *Ghost Adventures* episode in an effort to clarify

rhetorical choices made in the show in relation to the development of their genre conventions.

Opening Credits

The *Ghost Adventures* crew utilizes the opening credits to rhetorically position

themselves as the "bad boys" of ghost hunting, newcomers with new ghost hunting tactics, as

well as credible documentarians bent on sharing their truth. The introduction has remained fairly

consistent throughout the current nine season run. The opening credits from the first season of

the show, specifically cited from the season one episode, "Houghton Mansion," begin with

screeching music and a pale, disembodied hand squirming over a faded black background. Zak

Bagans, show host and primary investigator, struts through a desert graveyard, the film jerking

and blurring as he approaches the camera. The audience point-of-view is close to the desert floor

with the dark vision of Bagans looming over them. Dressed all in black, he approaches the

camera and squats down as if to inspect the audience. Dubbed over the scene, Bagans introduces

himself and situates his rhetorical position as a former member of the "skeptics."

"My name is Zak Bagans, I never believed in ghosts until I came face-to-face with one,"

he states confidently ("Houghton Mansion"). In these early seasons, his discourse community

was not clearly defined with potential audience members not yet familiar with his rhetoric.

Instead of demanding belief or claiming to be a purveyor of truth, Bagans rhetorically and literally drops down to the audience's level. He wants to be considered "one of them" – someone who shares their inquisitive nature, but has been changed by a paranormal experience, as many of his online fans also attest. By first looming over the audience, he gives himself a physical position of authority over the graveyard and symbolically over the ghost hunting field. As he squats down to "inspect" the camera and thus the audience, he places himself on their level as a "mortal" seeking the eternal "truth."

The opening credits continue with Bagans introducing the exigency of his argument: "So I set out on a quest to capture what I once saw onto video" ("Houghton Mansion"). The need for this exploration comes from Bagans' frightening experiences, driving the purpose past mere entertainment and into a personal space. From a Bitzerian perspective, *Ghost Adventures* provides exigency to the show through these personal experiences. As Bitzer explains, "an exigence is rhetorical when it is capable of positive modification and when positive modification requires discourse or can be assisted by discourse" (7). The choice to use words like "quest" and "capture" are used in *Ghost Adventures'* discourse to modify the frightening to the exciting, from the unexplainable to an "adventure." Thus, they are "modifying" their discourse around the exigency of personal "adventure," changing a negative ghostly experience into a "positive" discourse. Similarly, this very personal exigence is tied to the needs of their audience and acts as an "organizing principle: it specifies the audience to be addressed and the change to be effected" (Bitzer 7). Through this frame, the initial audience consisted of those who had an interest and perhaps even a personal connection with the paranormal. For the *Ghost Adventures* crew, the "change to be effected" is to spread belief in ghosts as real human spirits and to prove that the

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crew's paranormal experiences are legitimate. Again, this allows Bagans to align with potential

audience members who may have also had an uncanny or unexplainable experience and are in

search of concrete answers. Flashes from first season episodes are mixed with Bagans walking

through what appears to be an ancient, deserted town. The space feels otherworldly, as if he

walks on the border between the vibrant, alive blue sky, and the crumbling history of the ruins.

The space is empty, which contrasts with the darkened scenes from that season's episodes, which

are filled with lively sounds and racing images. As discussed in more detail in the genre analysis

chapter, the scene's gothic undertones provide generic stability and trope familiarity for the

audience who may be watching the show for the first time.

While the motivation behind Bagans' exigency to "capture" evidence of ghost existence

comes from personal grounds, many audience members watch the show simply for entertainment

purposes, or in an attempt to discredit ghost hunting as a legitimate scientific field. Thus, the

Ghost Adventures crew must quickly establish parameters around their ghost hunting. These

parameters allow them to more closely control their physical and rhetorical spaces. Equally

important is the immediate connection between the created rhetorical generic parameters and

audience definitions of the "reality TV genre." In analyzing interviews by reality TV audience

members, Hill found "viewers equated reality TV with 'cameras following people around'" (50).

To separate themselves from the conventions of mere entertainment programming, the opening

credits make it clear that the crew literally takes the show into their own hands: "with no big

camera crews following us around, I am joined only by my fellow investigator, Nick Groff, and

our equipment tech, Aaron Goodwin" ("Houghton Mansion"). To explain that the ghost hunting

happens in a controlled environment was crucial at the series' inception. The genre convention of

controlling the haunted environment began first with the British flagship series, *Most Haunted*,

to avoid "the conventions of continuity television, whereby the means of graphic construction are supposedly hidden from the viewer" (Koven 188). Instead, the audience is "aware of who was present during the encounter because of this disruption of classical codes of continuity. There is no question of who is holding the camera, as the entire crew present is seen on-screen" (Koven 188). The *Most Haunted* crew, while all together, are a large group responding to sounds and sights en masse, making it difficult to discern if they are the source of the paranormal evidence themselves. Hence, *Ghost Adventures* takes this genre convention further by acting as both ghost hunters and the film crew. Similarly, this technique adds pathos to their documenting practices, as the camera physically responds with the movement of the crewmember as they document frightening phenomena. The audience members can "feel" the physical reaction to the phenomena through the shaking camera, which allows them to become more emotionally involved in the investigation.

When much of the evidence gathered by the *Most Haunted* crew falls under the "representational" evidence gathered by the show's medium or one of the crew claiming to have heard something not recorded, the audience must have a certain level of trust in the crew member in order to make the evidence rhetorically successful. When the show's medium was publically defrauded, *Most Haunted* came under heavy scrutiny, losing its ethos and many audience members with it (Koven 193). In this time of widespread skepticism due to so many false reality ghost hunting shows, as well as disbelief stemming from 18th-century ideals of empirical evidence, *Ghost Adventures* was introduced into a potentially negative rhetorical space. Hence, by opening the show with this carefully crafted exclamation, they can distance themselves from the *Most Haunted* controversy and position the show as a radically new breed of reality TV. The emphasis on the means of collection of paranormal evidence is referenced throughout the show,

reminding audience members of the promise given in the opening credits that they are the only people present during the investigation. Bagans' equipment technician and fellow investigator are given names and faces, as they search the darkness with flashlights and join Bagans on his walk through the desert ruins. Bagans supports his promise that "there are no big camera crews following us around," as the audience is introduced to all investigators during the opening credits of each episode, insinuating that there are no hidden crew members dodging the cameras. Similarly, the audience gets to know these characters personally, as their own ghostly visitation stories are also explored in-depth to supplement Bagans' personal exigence.

To distinguish themselves further from other ghost hunting shows and to provide a brief outline of the show's genre conventions, the opening credits continue with Bagans stating, "The three of us will travel to some of the most highly-active paranormal locations where we will spend an entire night being locked down from dusk until dawn. Raw. Extreme. These are our ghost adventures" ("Houghton Mansion"). They solidify their promise that they are alone and isolated within the haunted space during the investigation by being physically locked inside the building for a whole evening. The choice to name this ritual a "lockdown" serves to dramatize the event with earlier episodes featuring the property owner literally placing a padlock on the front door. As the outside world is shut out with the snap of the lock clicking into place, the pathetic appeal gives the audience a taste of the separation between the undead world inside of the haunted location and the world of the living outside of the locked door. While this 45-second introduction is brief, it attempts to attract a wide variety of audience members, to situate the ghost hunters within existing spectrums of belief, to align the crew with the audience, and to gain credibility both as hunters and as empiricists.

The opening credits also provide a brief overview of the conventions of the episode as a whole: approximately the first 15 minutes of the each episode is dedicated to introducing the space, previous hauntings as told in first-hand accounts, and personal connections made by the *Ghost Adventures* crew. In the earlier episodes, the crew makes connections between the space and their initial dive into ghost hunting, their documentary also titled *Ghost Adventures.* Later, once they have collected more documented experiences and the audience has a library of examples with which they are familiar, the crew can then make connections between previous episodes to provide familiarity and a personal connection to the new haunted space. They are then locked down inside of the space to collect evidence with a review of their most poignant moments concluding the episode. The genre conventions revealed above become a rhetorical move to provide continuity between episodes and to hint at the extended nature of the argument, which spans the entire series.

Episode Analysis

In breaking down the full episode structure in more detail, the choice to use an "episode formula" provides consistency to open up more rhetorical space through which the crew can enact their rhetoric. The introductory period at the beginning of every episode incorporates a few important rhetorical moments to sway their audience. As is true in Glanvill's texts, first-hand experience from outside sources is used to prove that the space is haunted and produces additional exigence at the beginning of each episode. Positioning the first-hand accounts at the beginning aids in audience perception that the exigence is "strong and important," which "constrains the thought and action of the perceiver who may respond rhetorically if he is in a position to do so" (Bitzer 7). Whether the perceiver finds these accounts "strong and important" or less so, the variety of audience members and the variety of paranormal witnesses interviewed

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in each episode increases the *Ghost Adventures* crew's chances of inducing action in their audience. These accounts can range from tour guide experiences, previous visitors to the space, or a local ghost hunting group. By introducing outside perspectives first, the audience members are once again encouraged to feel a sense of belonging to the show, as they too may have had a paranormal experience and can empathize with the frightened tale-tellers. Some eye witnesses claim that they did not believe in ghosts before their experience at the haunted location, which demonstrates another connection to Bagans' exigence to understand his own experiences. Eye-witnesses are interviewed on camera and walk through the haunted space with the crew to show exactly where ghostly phenomena occurred. The crew focuses on physically touching the sites where witnesses experienced paranormal events. Doors that were mysteriously slammed or walls that emitted frightening scratching sounds become very real sites when the crew can physically interact with them in the daytime. Since the use of night-vision detracts from a complete sense of reality, by first seeing and virtually touching the space in the daylight, the audience can see that it is indeed real and natural.

The walk-through and eye-witness testimony is mixed with reenactments, either by the person who had the experience or by actors. With numerous people interviewed, the stories begin to take shape into one solid, consistent piece of folklore. From a rhetorical standpoint, the reenactments are important in this very visually-based argument. While the stories are often tinged with emotional reactions by those who experienced the ghostly visitations, the reenactments serve to further explain what happened and to situate it within a historical context. For example, in the "Yost Theater & Ritz Hotel" episode in season eight, the crew learns that famous composer and performer, Ernest Ball, dropped dead in the Yost Theater dressing room in 1927. In an interview with Rob Hernandez of the Valley Investigators of the Paranormal, Bagans

learns that during Rob's previous investigation, he saw the ghost of a tall, slender man walking backstage. Hernandez described the apparition as "average height, hair parted to the side" (Ghost Adventures "Sudden Death*"*). Bagans shows him a photo of the dead performer, Ernest Ball, and asks if that is the man he saw. Hernandez reviews the photograph and replies, "without a doubt" (Ghost Adventures "Sudden Death"). The interview then cuts to a reenacted flashback of the ghost, surrounded by a haze of light, walking away from the camera. The actor's appearance matches that of the photo of Ernest Ball, which allows the audience to experience the same haunting witnessed by Hernandez.

During the introductory background portion of the episode, the first-hand experiences are backed up by an "expert" in various forms based on what is most appropriate for each location. By bringing in outside "experts," albeit not necessarily those who are backing the crew's claim of ghost existence, they add additional credibility to their findings. In the case of the "Ancient Ram Inn" episode from season two, the crew interviews a local historian who explains the details of the demonic spirit that inhabits the inn and makes connections between the space's history to hypothesize why it may be haunted. The historian is an important aspect of this specific episode, as the entity is unique and requires a detailed definition – one that is tied both to Biblical and English lore. The English historian explains, "The succubus comes to a man, visits him in his sleep, seduces him, takes sperm and then places it in a woman. In another form it changes gender…" ("Ancient Ram Inn"). Much like Glanvill's rhetorical emphasis on the credibility of witness testimony, *Ghost Adventures* takes this rhetorical trope further by adding credibility to their personal paranormal experiences through this expert input. In this case, the expert provides support to the pattern of behavior exhibited by this specific entity later in the episode during the lockdown. Bagans claims to be physically molested by a spirit at the Ancient Ram Inn, which

coincides with the historian's discussion of the sexual nature of the succubus entity. Expert testimony also serves to provide reasoning for new ghost hunting tactics. For example, in the "La Purisma Mission" episode, the crew learns from former La Purisma park rangers that the space was the site of a major Native American massacre by Spanish forces. The brutal tactics of the Spanish forces are elaborated on in-depth with faded pictures and artifacts tied to the soldiers who murdered Native American women and children. This history is discussed as the crew walks through the space that night, calling the ghostly soldiers "murderers" in Spanish ("La Purisma"). In this case, the history provided by the expert encourages the crew to use aggressive tactics with the brutal ghostly soldiers and to yell in Spanish making it more likely to elicit a response from the Spanish speaking spirits.

After introducing the history of the hauntings reported in the lockdown location, the crew is locked inside of the space by a previously introduced, credible authority. In many cases, they are locked in the space by the owner or landlord. They remind the audience of the promise made in the opening credits – "we will be locked down from dusk until dawn" – and position a night vision camera outside of the building to reveal any potential outside contaminants. This has been an important ethical appeal in many episodes with the crew inside the house surprised by a loud bang, only to discover that the outside camera footage reveals a car backfiring. In some cases, the location is in a public or unsafe area, in which they enlist the help of local law enforcement authorities to ensure that they are not disturbed during the investigation. One important example comes from the 2013 "Halloween Special: Transylvania," in which they explore the Hoia-baciu Forest. The crew ventures into a large space making it difficult to fully control potential contaminants. Inside of the forest is a circle in which nothing will grow and strange phenomena are said to occur there. Local law enforcement scan the space to the best of their ability to make

sure no one is in the forest and patrol cars circle the forest to ensure no one enters to bother the crew on their investigation ("Halloween Special: Transylvania"). The detailed lockdown performance becomes important in the episode when they experience a glowing red orb, which is a common haunting in this location ("Halloween Special: Transylvania"). While the crew's evidence will always be open to debate, their consistent attempts to control their space provides a level of trust in the hosts and in their findings.

As the lockdown happens overnight, darkness is an important rhetorical tool to encourage the audience's emotional investment in the show. All of the lights in the space are shut off and windows are blocked to put the crew and potential spirits in complete darkness. In many episodes, the crew will turn off the camera's night-vision function to show the audience just how pitch black the space is. Even though the overall space is "locked down" and controlled to avoid potential contamination, fear builds as the audience and the crew loses some sense of control over the darkened space, as walking in the dark becomes a very vulnerable act when spirits are lurking nearby. In being unable to see the whole space clearly, the scene is ripe for the unexpected. Importance is thus placed on audience familiarity with gothic tropes in which spaces are harmless in the daylight but transform into sites of horror in the night. Just as the gothic reader expects the plot to darken as night sets in, *Ghost Adventures* audience members also come to expect a ghostly visitation in the night.

Each episode concludes with Bagans providing commentary on the lockdown, which is dubbed over the best evidence gathered during the episode. By wrapping the show with philosophical musings about the afterlife in connection with the evidence gathered, the episode is framed within the season-spanning argument. In this sense, each "adventure" acts as its own

piece of evidence to prove ghost existence and to potentially shift the purpose of the argument in future seasons.

Context

Contemporary audiences of *Ghost Adventures* have a very different set of beliefs in death and the after-life from those in Glanvill's context. The concept of the after-life went through many changes since the 17th-century, which have influenced the crew's rhetorical choices and use of audience appeals. One major influence on how they introduce paranormal phenomena to their audience is through 19th and 20th-century "phantasmagoria." In Terry Castle's "Phantasmagoria: Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie," the term, much like the genre in which it is presented, has "shifted meaning in an interesting way" and has "now come to refer to something wholly internal or subjective: the phantasmic imagery of the mind" (29). This contrasts with the very physical nature of ghosts in the 16th and 17th centuries, in which contemporary specters now allow the viewer to construct and define them based on the "imagery of the mind." Castle argues that by placing that which we physically see into the realm of the imaginary, we are effectively splitting our subconscious, confusing ghostly existence with the unconscious mind (49). This confusion has most recently favored the assumption that ghostly experiences are merely tricks of the mind, often connecting this belief with other cult-fringe belief that exists outside of the norm and outside of real scientific consideration.

Castle argues that while we may consider ghosts to exist in the "internal," as a trick of the mind, we still experience uncanny external manifestations of ghosts (51). Elizabeth Tucker sees this manifestation and the resulting psychological turmoil to be the primary source of more contemporary folklore or legends. In "Ghosts in Mirrors: Reflections of the Self," Tucker analyzes legends born and shared within the university. While much of her work focuses on a

feminist/psychoanalytic reading of these legends, she does argue, "seeing the opposite of what one expects is startling and frightening: the stimulus for telling stories makes it possible to understand perceived experience" (188). One source of this surprise could be bred from the contemporary understanding that these entities exist internally, but are suddenly manifesting externally. However, it could be the physical manifestation of internalized post-9/11 anxieties that make *Ghost Adventures* so "starting and frightening."

Ann McGuire and David Buchbinder, authors of "The Forensic Gothic: Knowledge, the Supernatural, and the Psychic Detective," explore the rejuvenation of supernatural interest in contemporary gothic TV shows. They believe that increased interest in the paranormal is tied to anxieties based on the events of 9/11, in which the paranormal

> "became the focus of cultural anxieties that had been emerging in the years leading up to 2001, anxieties that turned on, among other things, the sense (a key characteristic of the postmodern) that traditional and familiar identities, practices, borders, boundaries – at all levels and of all kinds – were becoming unfixed and unstable" (McGuire and Buchbinder 296).

While *Ghost Adventures* would not fit into the gothic genre category, it is being used in a similar cultural way through its attempt to make meaning out of the incomprehensible. *Ghost Adventures* uses a 21st-century form of 18th-century reasoning to prove the existence of ghosts, and upon making them visible and accepted as fact, can teach the public how to protect themselves from evil or aggressive spirits. McGuire and Buchbinder continue to explore the cultural need for these new Gothic texts by explaining that another source of this post-9/11 anxiety stems from the breaking of the "border separating family from not-family" one that simultaneously threatens the nation as a family unit, which produces a "sense of being haunted by a phantom that threatens the loss of structure, direction and meaning" (300). The all-male *Ghost Adventures* crew builds a ghost-hunting family, one that shares the discourse of their newly minted genre, and one that can

thus battle the unknown together. McGuire and Buchbinder conclude their article with a discussion of the need to truly prove the existence of supernatural beings, one that mirrors the scientific bent found in Glanvill's tales of ghostly visitations (McGuire and Buchbinder 303).

Even when these manifested anxieties are relegated to the internal, or questioned due to what some consider the undocumentable nature of ghostly manifestations, Gillian Bennett argues in "Alas, Poor Ghost!," an extended case study on ghost belief in England during the 1980's, that much of this belief remains but has gone "underground." For Bennett, "informal belief systems [are] created and expressed through a network of interactions," as is the case with *Ghost Adventures* through the building of new discourse communities ("Alas" 2). She continues by adding that these networked "interactions," "reinvent tradition through the folklore they offer each other in their personal experience stories, discussions, and exchanges of ideas" (Bennett, "Alas," 2). *Ghost Adventures* uses folklore and personal experience stories to set up their context, and then adds something new to the discussion with their own technologically-driven hunting experience. Through the crew's social media presence, the discussion is not merely between audience members at home, but audience members world-wide. These "safe" cyber spaces allow for "networked interactions" in seconds. Live tweeting during the shows adds a third layer of audience interaction between each other, as well as with the show's hosts who can provide additional background on the episode. Thus, these online "networked interactions" allow even the most internalized anxieties and ghostly presences to have a physical, consistent, permanent presence online. During Bennett's study, this easily accessible network while underground still remained active on an informal level. She used this as evidence to state,

> "Commentators who have claimed that supernatural belief is "obviously" much
> diminished in the Western world today have, I would suggest, been deceived by the
> official rationalist world view into not recognizing the existence of a rather different,

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unofficial one. When we know where to look and how to ask, it is easy to find plenty of evidence for the existence of a substantial supernatural folklore" (Bennett, "Alas," 2).

With the use of the internet and the visual ghost experience of *Ghost Adventures*, "unofficial" ghost belief is gaining credibility as a legitimate set of widespread beliefs. In contrast with contemporary belief that believing in the existence of the supernatural is only found in obscure counter-culture communities, Bennett believes "many people still believe in poltergeists, fetches, wraiths, and warning ghosts, more or less as they did in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" ("Alas" 2). Given a safe space within an easily accessible discourse community, the genre will evolve again, referring back to traditional 16th and 17th-century ghost belief to eventually support another belief system under attack: modern Christianity.

Rhetorical Appeals

In order to examine the consistent rhetorical tools used by the *Ghost Adventures* crew, I will emphasize two appeals that play a major role in encouraging audience participation and convincing potential skeptics: ethos and pathos. These appeals are used to counteract attacks against the crew's logos.

Pathos

In order to use pathetic appeals successfully, a rhetor must "first present *causes for emotion*" and then "the emotion functions as a reason for embracing an idea or taking action" (Longaker and Walker 46-47). In the case of *Ghost Adventures*, they first dramatize the scene of the haunting with gothic tropes to encourage the audience to feel emotion toward the deceased spirits. After introducing a "cause for emotion," the crew returns to the haunted space at night and reminds the audience of the emotional connection they forged during the earlier storytelling portion. As the crew gathers evidence, the audience is emotionally invested in the crew's evidence and can more easily embrace the veracity of their claims. Similarly, the reenactments

are used as both a "cause for emotion" and as a sense of exigence, which transports the story's

relevance from the distant past to the viewer's present. Koven believes that the use of

reenactments, another genre convention shared by *Most Haunted*, are examples of "proto-

ostentation (the telling of legends as personal experience narratives)…there is no reason to doubt

the veracity of the storytellers in the show" (190). Both shows' reenactments "feature eerie

music and sound effects and sped-up actions, not only to highlight the reconstructedness of the

sequence, but also to further mystify the location" (Koven 190). The edited scenes aid in

connecting the audience to the crew's personal accounts, as if by hearing and seeing the haunting

the audience can truly empathize and believe the stories. In a pathetic appeal, the crew may

comfort the distraught storyteller or sympathize with their fear, as they too have experienced that

fear or discomfort. As the witness is comforted by the crew, who promised to try to make

meaning of their experience through the collected evidence, so the audience is comforted after

viewing the reenactment. The audience feels the exigence behind the very personal connections

to the haunted space and becomes invested in the outcome of the investigation in the same way

as the paranormal witnesses.

Often the crew's experiences during the initial walk-through in the daylight are

dramatized for a specific rhetorical end. During the "Poveglia Island" episode, Bagans sits at the

end of a gondola, wearing all black with a long, disturbing Venetian doctor's mask blocking his

face. He speaks in a monotone, "This is probably the last scary, frightening image they saw

before they were taken to this island and burned and buried. This is a doctor's mask" (Ghost

Adventures "A Violent Spirit Possesses Zak"). Prior to the dramatic gondola ride, the crew

explains that the island once housed the dying during the plague years in an effort to quarantine

the disease. This is an important rhetorical moment to connect the audience with the departed

souls who experienced fear as they were transported to the island, which aids in humanizing the long dead. Personifying the ghosts adds a sense of exigency to their work by providing a sense of urgency for the audience to respond to the episode and to answer the call to believe in these tormented souls. In some cases, pathos is used to make a universal connection between all souls, hinting to audience members that they too may become a ghost who wants their voice heard. Similarly, the dramatization of the physicality of the space with the historical stories makes the crew's interaction with the tormented spirits feel more realistic. To connect their own sense of physical permanence to the site's history, the crew will show trinkets or sections of the space that remain the same from the time when the people initially died.

Ironically, it is the places emphasized with these calls for audience empathy that also end up being sites of major ghostly interaction. While gripping a ladder on the Island of Poveglia in Italy, Bagans exclaims,

> "Oh. My. God. Look at this. This leads up to the bell tower. This doctor that was treating the patients here went mad and…and was and butchered his patients. Shortly thereafter, this doctor, unexplainably, climbed this EXACT. SAME. LADDER. and then jumped to his death. And we ask ourselves, 'was it more of a paranormal murder?' Well, hopefully we don't get murdered tonight 'cause that's taking it just a little extreme" ("Poveglia Island").

This quote highlights the grotesque nature of the space, drawing the audience into the very real bloodshed that occurred in the spot. By being able to physically touch the "EXACT. SAME. LADDER.," Bagans is also symbolically "touching" the moment of the maddened doctor's death. The literal connection between periods is an important rhetorical tool for making the history "reality," as if the retelling and physically touching the space will also make the hauntings later in the episode more "real." When a section of the haunted space is highlighted in this way, the crew will return to it later during the lockdown to record evidence. Just like the mad doctor, during the "Poveglia Island" lockdown Bagans is overcome with intense emotion and

claims that he is possessed by a demonic entity. They also hear disembodied voices near the doctor's ladder.

To encourage spirit interaction, emotion-based techniques are used. One such example is the "trigger object," which is a "tool that can be used to elicit paranormal activity through the emotional attachment that the spirit had to the object" (Bagans and Crigger 39). Trigger objects emphasize the "humanity" of the spirit, a pathetic appeal to connect the audience to the phenomena and to emotionally invest them in the outcome of the lockdown. During the "Edinburgh Vaults" episode, the crew learns that many children died in the underground vaults. In an effort to connect with the spirit of a child, known as Jack, they place a teddy bear next to an EMF (electro-magnetic frequency) detector in an empty vault and film it with a static night vision camera. They believe that the teddy bear trigger object will incite ghostly interaction because "these are objects that, when these people died, these are what they are familiar with, what they worked with, what they played with" ("Edinburgh Vaults"). After the crew leaves the vault, the camera records the teddy bear turning on its own, just as the EMF detector suddenly spikes, indicating a surge in ghostly electro-magnetic energy, "something ghosts are said to give off" ("Edinburgh Vaults"). Ten minutes after the bear moves and the EMF detector spikes, the crew claims the audio on the static night vision camera picks up the sound of a distant child's voice ("Edinburgh Vaults"). When the audience is able to see and hear the ghost of a child, they emotionally connect to the trigger object and become more invested in the hypothesis that the phenomenon was paranormal.

Human trigger objects are also used on the show with women being the primary source of ghostly emotional connections. In some cases, living relatives of the spirits, someone who has had a previous experience in the haunted space, or someone who physically resembles the dead

person's loved one will be invited in the middle of the night-time investigation to walk through

the space with the crew. In a way, the exigency of this human trigger object tactic provides hope

for viewers who have lost a loved one. It also points to another moment of genre morphing from

the *Most Haunted* family of ghost hunting shows, in which mediums must act as a go-between

for spirit interaction. Contrastingly, the audience and the crew have the power to speak to the

dead for themselves through these trigger objects. One especially emotional episode, "The Galka

Family" episode from season six, introduces the story of Gary Galka, the inventor who designs

and builds much of the paranormal equipment used on the show. His story has a different level of

exigence, as his ghostly encounters are not with spirits from the distant past, but with the spirit of

his daughter, Melissa, who died in a car crash. Shortly after her death, Galka began feeling her

presence in the home (Ghost Adventures "Galka Family House"). Galka feels that it Melissa's

close relationship with her family that led her to consistently interact with the family through a

number of technological ghost hunting tools. The spirit-box is a frequently used tool that scans

radio frequencies at a fast rate to provide white noise, which gives ghosts both the energy and

space through which to speak (Bagans and Crigger 57). This tool has provided some of the most

personal, pathos-driven evidence with instances in which the box states the name of one of the

crew members or correctly names a person who died in the space. In this heartbreaking episode,

the spirit box captures a voice saying, "Hi Dad" (Ghost Adventures "Galka Family House"). This

special example of a consistent haunting is directly tied to the ghost's family home and to the

people she feels a deep emotional connection with.

  While eliciting audience emotions like empathy are strong pathetic appeals, the crew also

uses aggressive rhetoric to emphasize their deep emotional investment in protecting the living

from evil entities. As shown in the previous example from the episode "La Purisma Mission,"

yelling at ghosts or provoking them into action is commonplace. At the "Villisca Ax Murder House," the crew provokes the spirit of the ax murderer with his own weapon, placing it haphazardly on a table and aggressively asking the ghost to use it to harm them (Ghost Adventures "Villisca Ax Murder House"). "You want to keep killing? Push this ax on my face! Show me that you're still here and you're still hurting people. You need to leave them alone," demands Bagans (Ghost Adventures "Villisca Ax Murder House"). Since their tactics are potentially dangerous, Bagans warns less experienced hunters not to do the same. The use of aggression adds a level of danger to the show, as if by provoking spirits the crew is more likely to be physically assaulted by the beings.

Another term for this kind of paranormal assault is labeled an "emotional transference," which happens when a paranormal entity "can transfer its emotions onto a living person as it passes through or by them" (Bagans and Crigger 48). In the case of the season three episode, "Poveglia Island," Bagans experiences this emotional transference before claiming to be fully possessed. After a series of strange noises, Bagans lashes out at Groff and Goodwin, swearing and yelling aggressively (Ghost Adventures "Zak gets possessed at Poveglia"). Bagans explains what he was feeling dubbed over scenes of what appears to be an emotional breakdown, he explains, "Just then, an overwhelming feeling of extreme anger and hatred came over me. I can't explain it…this was so disturbing for me to personally watch that we are only showing part of what I believe is a demonic possession" (Ghost Adventures "Zak gets possessed at Poveglia"). This high energy encounter leaves Bagans distraught, as Groff leads him outside of the haunted building. Intense action scenes serve to keep the reader engaged with much of the aggression being translated into a sense of passion and determination, an American battling anxieties bred from an unseen, undefined threat.

Unfortunately, to be too "entertaining" can distort *Ghost Adventures*' place as part of the "reality" genre category. By being on a reality TV show, the crew immediately puts their sincerity into question, as "they have volunteered to take part in the reality TV game, [thus] they are to a significant degree performing a version of themselves, or even trying to get away with a constructed persona" (Ellis 110). Their aggressive ghost hunting tactics play into a sense of performing "constructed persona" for dramatic emphasis instead of out of a sincere emotional response. One example of this aggressive behavior comes from the crew's encounter with the bounty hunter ghost in the "Prospect Place" episode. The spirit of the evil bounty hunter is known for physically attacking visitors. Bagans locks himself in the barn where the bounty hunter was executed and yells, "Come on! Now's your time, now's your chance. You can show everybody your power. Do it!" (Ghost Adventures "Prospect Place Encounters"). Bagans clarifies the purpose behind the aggression by explaining, "Something was thrown at me and I strongly believe it was the bounty hunter. I think I pissed the bounty hunter off. Mission accomplished. He gave us some evidence" (Ghost Adventures "Prospect Place Encounters"). Outside of the lockdown, the crew may swear and joke, but they are not aggressive when interacting with eye-witnesses. Instead, they display a sense of excitement, empathy, and when appropriate, place themselves at a respectful distance from feelings or stories that are especially emotional for the witness. The drama of the screaming, yelling, and threatening evil spirits can detract from the sincerity of their emotions during the lockdown and reveals a crack in their carefully constructed façade, in which they attempt to situate themselves as the "every man." Contrastingly, this could be viewed as a rhetorical strength, as it is their aggressive and questionable antics that make them the "bad boys" of ghost hunting; characters, real or dramatized, that are worth continuous speculation and public dialogue.

Ethos

Ethical appeals are successfully employed when the "rhetor petitions the audience for their trust, which, in turn, gives the audience reason to trust the rhetor's statements" (Longaker and Walker 46). With the heavy use of ethos in *Ghost Adventures*' opening credits, the crew instantly petitions the audience for their trust, which they support through the transparent rhetoric around their investigative techniques on the show. The use of a transparent rhetoric allows the audience to trust the crew and the sincerity of their responses to paranormal phenomenon. Bagans is able to empathize with frightened viewers and later with those sharing their first-hand accounts of ghostly presences. In his semi-autobiography, *Dark World: Into the Shadows with the Lead Investigator of the Ghost Adventures Crew*, Bagans explains his fear when,

> "seven nights in a row during the summer of 2002, a female ghost would scream my name, Zachary, at the top of her lungs. At first I thought it was a dream, but then I realized it was happening and I could not control it. On the seventh night she upped the ante to get her point across. I was lying in bed, face down, when she screamed my name and then pressed down on me so hard that I couldn't get up" (Bagans and Crigger 23).

Bagans refers to this experience throughout the television series and often frames other experiences around this specific tale. Coming from this experience, Bagans decided that he needed to "document an apparition on film" and called upon filmmaking friends to aid him in traveling to "the historic haunted mining towns of the area" to film their documentary (Bagans and Crigger 26). I believe that it is their background in film, not in paranormal investigating, that has made them so successful. The audience members trust the crew's filming abilities and are consistently invited to review the evidence. When an especially promising piece of evidence is filmed, early episodes show the crew visiting a video expert to confirm that the film was not edited or tampered with. They would translate the technical jargon used by the video technician to describe what a normal video recording looks like in comparison to one that has been edited.

Armed with this new knowledge, the audience can clearly see that *Ghost Adventures*' video is not edited.

Beyond their technical filming expertise, the crew had to develop their genre and their personas in an effort to slowly earn their audience's trust. One way that they began to build this credibility was through the utilization of a contemporary folklore trope: the legend-trip. As Mikel J. Koven explains in "Most Haunted and the Convergence of Traditional Belief and Popular Television," "legend-trips involve, as is semantically obvious, travelling to a specific location attached to a legend in the hopes of witnessing some kind of phenomena *as if in the legend itself*" [emphasis by author] (186). The audience feels a sense of belonging through the legend-trip, as they experience the story and ghostly horrors seemingly in-time with the ghost hunters. As the audience and crew grow together in their level of expertise and familiarity with the genre, they increase the show's ethos and inadvertently create a discourse community. As "one of you," the crew does not claim to be spiritual mediums or to have any distinct knowledge of the paranormal that could not be shared by audience members. The "realness" of these experiences is amplified by the "realness" or relatability of the novice crew who gains an understanding of the otherworldly in-time with their audience.

The use of radical new technologies to document paranormal activity is one way the crew and audience can grow in expertise together, while also developing a shared language. By taking the time to introduce each piece of ghost hunting technology in every episode, the crew attempts to make new viewers more comfortable with their methods, and to develop new ethos-based relationships. Their ethos is further bolstered by the transparent explanation of their use of the technology and a meticulously documented ghost hunting plan. Earlier seasons involve full maps of the haunted locations, marked with large black "X"s to represent rooms or hallways where a

ghostly phenomenon was reported by their interviewees. With multiple cameras monitoring the space at all times, the crew's promise of no other crew members on site is proven to be true. Night vision cameras are set up on tri-pods throughout the space, a practical way to show how they are able to film all of the rooms simultaneously without a camera crew and to help back-up phenomena that may not be clearly heard or seen on the hand-held cameras and microphones.

Similarly, when the crew feels something like a change in temperature or the sense that "someone is in the room," they show a physical, documentable change in the space through one of their many technological gadgets. For instance, during the visit to the Hoia-Baciu Forest, "Something had the power to put me in this paralyzed stare into the woods. At the same exact time, the Mel meter hit a spike with the unexplained sub-frequency noise. This is terrifying and yet awesome at the same time" ("Halloween Special: Transylvania"). In this example, the crew stops outside of the mysterious circle with a high-pitched screeching sound suddenly erupting from the forest. Bagans stands still, face drained of color as he looks off into the woods. When the noise stops, he breaks from the trance and cries out in fear. In order to add credibility to the frightening moment, Bagans refers to the Mel meter, a piece of equipment that "measure[s] disturbances around the antenna" for a sign of electromagnetic frequencies interacting with it (Bagans and Crigger 107). Ghosts are said to emit an electromagnetic frequency (EMF) that can be detected with special equipment. Bagans explains, "the leading theory is that ghosts emit electromagnetic energy and cause spikes in electromagnetic fields (EMF). The common belief is that they gather energy in and send EMF out" (Bagans and Crigger 109). Thus, when the Mel meter's alarm sounds during the moment of Bagans' "paralyzed stare," it supports his physical reaction with something that can be scientifically measured. In addition to time spent providing

detailed descriptions of the technology to add credibility to their findings, Bagans makes sure to introduce the Mel meter in each episode used while reminding the audience that

> "the antenna is not influenced by anything within the environment unless it comes up to the antenna and has conductive properties. So it won't go off if you get a phone call or put it next to a breaker panel or a fuse box…so in a nutshell, it can't be tricked like regular EMF detectors" (Bagans and Crigger 107).

Often, arguments are made that EMF detectors only reveal electric currents in the area such as an outlet or electrical cording in the walls. In an attempt to curtail these accusations, the Mel meter is used frequently and Bagans tests these theories by placing a hand on the antenna to show that it is not based simply on touch. These repeated actions build ethos into the show's genre conventions and promotes easy inclusion into the discourse community regardless of which episode a new audience member chooses to watch.

During the investigation, the group carries handheld cameras and recorders as they walk through the pitch-black space. A digital recorder, while a simple tool, remains the most popular tool on the show in that

> "the Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP) that they capture are the backbones of paranormal investigation. EVPs are recordings of disembodied voices that are captured at a lower frequency than normal human hearing can detect, and they are a crucial element for determining whether or not spirits are present" (Bagans and Crigger 43).

In order to further emphasize the validity of the investigation, the crew will review digital recorder sessions immediately after recording. The audience hears the recording along with the crew for the first time, allowing them to share in the surprise of hearing a whisper or thump from a ghost. By sharing the recording immediately, the crew can limit potential questioning by the audience of the authenticity of the recording.

However, even with the backing of technological devices to explain the "cold feeling" of a ghostly presence with a temperature drop, there is still room for outside contamination to be the

source of the loud ghostly footsteps or the dead fingers rapping on distant walls. In order to avoid a skeptical response to the findings, the crew reviews evidence to make sure they cannot easily "debunk" the phenomena. These debunking sessions are shared in real time, usually immediately after the phenomena take place. Since glowing orbs revealed in photographs are frequently used as evidence that a ghost is present in the room, the crew has a very detailed regimen for confirming that it is an orb and not an easily explainable source. For example, the movement of orbs is described as floating in an "intelligent flight pattern," in which they exhibit "discernable, identifiable patterns of behavior" (Bagans and Crigger 51). Evidence of the orb being a dust particle or bug is explored in detail with the crew slowing the video to give the audience the chance to really look at the phenomena. The testing of other potential hypotheses is another example of 18th-century empiricist trope being used to support their argument in the same style as Glanvill.

While confident in the rhetorical power grown from the development of their ethos, they still utilize the language and values of privileged 21st-century scientific discourses. The crew seeks to align themselves with "traditional scientists" by trying to express their research in terms that are scientifically "legitimate" (Bagans and Crigger 9). The crew often reveals a sense of frustration in the labels "unfairly" placed upon their work by the general public, arguing that "many scientists and skeptics are quick to call researchers in the paranormal field shysters, cheats, and profiteers" (Bagans and Crigger 9). With widespread skepticism in the paranormal, by what is considered the contemporary "norm," the crew compares themselves to what is considered "truth" or "scientific" in an effort to legitimize their work. Bagans pleads, "we seek answers through a scientific process of observation, theory, hypothesis, experimentation and analysis" (9). Much like Glanvill, *Ghost Adventures* emphasizes the credibility of all of the

witnesses of the paranormal activity to support their ghostly "answers" from multiple perspectives.

The eye-witness testimony that opens the show works in tandem with the technological advancements used later in the show to prove that their experiences match that of the crew during the lockdown. The crew increases their ethos through the same means as Mompesson, as they do not receive social gain for sharing their paranormal experiences with the public. In some cases, those interviewed on *Ghost Adventures* speak with their faces darkened, as they do not want their identity to be revealed out of fear of negative repercussions. Even those who do share their story on camera explain that many people they shared their story with did not believe them, or they were ostracized for their paranormal experiences. In Bagans' book, he retells the harrowing story of the demonic entities found at Bobby Mackie's Music World, in which he was possessed. When the crew claims to be possessed, they realize that "people will laugh and scoff at us" (Bagans and Crigger 203). They hold onto their experience, stating, "I don't care if you're a believer or not. It happened. I know it's real" even when they understand the negative social implications of sharing their story (Bagans and Crigger 203). Those who share their experiences have nothing to gain, which adds to the crew and the witness' credibility.

Building a Discourse Community

Much like the discourse and genre created around *Ghost Adventures*, the audience has the freedom to create and internalize new "norms of conduct" that conform to these shared supernatural experiences. In a sense, *Ghost Adventures* provides "spiritual self-help," encouraging their audience members to share their experiences and to explore the afterlife together. *Ghost Adventures* strives to distance itself from reality TV "fluff" programs by highlighting "issues of identity" rather than "problems of communication and consensus" (Lunt

137). Thus, they are participating in a new conception of "civil society," in which these programs become "the site where mutual recognition of diverse identities can take place" (Lunt 137). *Ghost Adventures* must continuously encourage this "recognition of diverse identities" within the development of their discourse and in their use of rhetoric to support their claims. They do not preach a sense of exclusiveness, but rather, inclusiveness in their rhetoric in order to align themselves with the more positive perceptions of the reality television genre.

As genre is used to categorize texts, the crew forces the viewer and the entities that they encounter to place themselves on a belief scale, to name themselves within their own discourse. Labels are used to distinguish those who belong within this discourse community, lovingly referring to fans as members of the "crew," and those who do not belong to the discourse community are relegated to "skeptics." The crew demands ghosts to name or label themselves by "type" of ghostly entity. In this sense, one of the many values of their audience is to be able to label what constitutes as credible evidence, as well as having the power to place their discourse outside of what Bagans calls, "the religiously devoted and staunchly pragmatic" (Bagans and Crigger 7).

Social Media to Build a Discourse Community

Now in season nine, the crew does claim to be experts in ghost hunting, utilizing a number of high tech gadgets and previous paranormal experiences in an effort to remain current and cutting edge. Building a large social media presence allows them to remain relatable to their audience. They encourage fan participation in everything from analyzing evidence to getting to know the crew behind the scenes through online forums, chat rooms, and even a live Twitter feed that reads audience comments in time with the episode's premiere. Unlike Glanvill's text, which remains stagnant, *Ghost Adventures* can act as a live piece of writing, one that alters upon each

viewing. The live Twitter feed usually remains at the bottom of the screen during episode re-runs. In response, viewers use hashtags to continue the conversation through #GAFanLair, "a special social hangout just for the #GACfamily" through which viewers can discuss topics from the initial Twitter feed ("Ghost Adventures Fan Lair"). Even the crew becomes involved, tweeting during the episode in response to fan questions or to elaborate on their emotional responses during a particularly frightening moment on the show. For those less familiar with the Twitter platform, a hashtag connects conversations together. By searching #GAFanLair, a viewer can see all tweets that contain that hashtag. The hashtag feed updates in-time with the conversation, allowing audience members to quickly review what has been said and to easily begin participating.

The rhetoric tied to the #GAFanLair portion of the *Travel Channel* website serves to further emphasize the need to create and maintain their discourse community. Fans that use the hashtag throughout the week are rewarded with unlocked videos, which include sneak peeks of upcoming episodes or behind-the-scenes videos. The description of the hashtag, which asks audience members to interact with the #GACFamily, solidifies the sense of belonging within the discourse community, treating it like a special privilege and way to connect to both the crew and other fans. It also helps to ease 9/11 anxieties about the dissolution of the border separating family from non-family by inviting the audience into the clearly defined *Ghost Adventures* family. As with all hashtags, it is easy to join this group at any time by simply inserting the hashtag into a tweet, which adds it to the on-going conversation. Incentive to use the hashtag and to "get social!" is to unlock new content, as well as to get insider information from the crew during the lockdown ("Ghost Adventures Fan Lair"). Fans can discuss evidence on the show together, ask questions, and sometimes receive answers from the *Ghost Adventures* crew

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themselves. While not every use of #GAFanLair is positive, the group does share a sense of pride in their beliefs and are able to respond to criticism in a unified voice. These online interactions also provide a "safe space" in which fans can explore their developing beliefs without fear of negative social repercussions.

Use of Social Media to Build Ethos

As scientific discourse builds ethos, using popular informal discourses makes the crew more relatable. Their use of social media enhances the "realness" of the encounters and establishes an ongoing rapport with their audience members. The language and rhetoric at play on the show exists in that taped moment, but also continues after the show airs to construct those important "relationships." The GAFanLair hashtag and the accompanying *Travel Channel* website are used to increase their credibility as real guys who are just another participant in this expanding discourse community. By interacting with fans, the crew encourages the audience to question evidence and often chime in to provide an insider perspective to what some view as mere television entertainment. At the same time, the *Ghost Adventures* crew's online personas serve as consistent ethical and pathetic appeals, as they are given another platform through which to share their emotional responses to the phenomena and to build real relationships with their fans.

The audience is fully aware of the crew's rhetorical purpose and social media platforms allow fans to participate in achieving or hindering this purpose. During their first live episode, "Ghost Adventures Live: The Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum," the crew directly asks the audience to tweet evaluations of the credibility of evidence in-time with the ghost hunt. This became an extremely important tool in creating a dialogue around a controversial moment in the show, in which an outside researcher claims that a piece of ghost hunting technology is ripped

from his hands and thrown across the room ("Ghost Adventures Live: The Trans-Allegheny

Lunatic Asylum"). While it was recorded on camera, questions quickly arose on social media

claiming that the moment was a hoax, and that the investigator merely threw the tool himself. In

order to avoid this controversial moment from contaminating all evidence found during this

lockdown, Bagans focuses audience attention on the controversial moment and asks them to

review the video objectively. When the crew encourages the audience to participate in analyzing

the evidence via social media, they feel a sense of belonging in the discourse community and that

this transparent, responsive rhetoric points to the credibility of the crew's ghost hunting tactics.

Logos

Even with the creation of a discourse community, *Ghost Adventures* struggles to meet the

logical needs of all of its potential audience members. Logos is difficult to employ when the

rhetor is faced with an audience who joins the rhetorical situation with a set of "presuppositions"

that contrast with those of the rhetor (Longaker and Walker 47). Similarly, when the evidence

collected to support the claim is based on conflicting opinions of what qualifies as "logical

relationships among claim and reasons," the rhetor may struggle to convince the audience

(Longaker and Walker 47). This point of contention led to the frustration felt by Glanvill, who

faced similar prejudices arguing,

> "But 'twas bad Logick to conclude in matters of *Fact* from a single *Negative*, and such a
> one against numerous *Affirmatives,* and so affirm, that a thing was never done, because
> not at such a particular time, and that no body ever saw what this Man nor that did not"
> (337).

The crew uses similar logic to justify the reasoning behind their claims that uncanny experiences

are due to ghostly interaction. Bagans points to American democratic ideas to support his beliefs

stating,

"I'm always astounded when people ask me to prove that ghosts exist because I think in the opposite direction. I think the disbelievers need to prove that they *don't* exist. In a courtroom the burden of proof is on the accuser, not the defender, because everyone is innocent until proven guilty. When it comes to ghosts, the world is a nonbeliever and we have to prove them wrong, which I've always thought is backwards" (Bagans and Crigger 231).

The issue that has led to this backlash is due to the crew's desire to place their rhetoric within privileged scientific discourses while also subverting those discourses. It is difficult for the crew to articulate this contradiction, so instead they place the blame on "skeptics," who seek a "backwards" justification for the crew's ghost belief. For "scientific paranormal investigator," Benjamin Radford, author of "Ghost-Hunting Mistakes: Science and Pseudoscience in Ghost Investigations," "because just about any phenomenon can be attributed to ghosts, there is no way to rule out or control for the conditions." Thus, *Ghost Adventures* may attempt to use the scientific method, but when they cannot fully "control for the conditions," their logical appeals can fail. Bagans vehemently attacks claims that his methods are less valid than those of the mainstream scientific community. He often plays the victim, revealing his anger as a symptom of being considered "fake" or less scientific than the mainstream scientific community. While he makes negative comments on the show, his book gives him much more room to express his frustrations. He explains,

"paranormal investigation has been labeled a pseudoscience and discredited as fantasy by traditional scientists for decades. Most traditional scientists believe that paranormal researchers read crystal balls, hold hands in a circle, or conjure up false spirits through cheap parlor tricks with smoke and mirrors at carnivals for profit. Can you feel the love between the two fields?" (Bagans and Crigger 214).

The disdain is palpable in this excerpt, dramatizing the view of paranormal investigation from that of the "traditional scientist." Unfortunately, Bagans' sarcastic tone does not strengthen his rhetoric. Even within the confines of what should be considered a fairly "safe" rhetorical space, his own autobiography, he feels the need to become aggressively defensive of paranormal

investigation in light of a generalized "traditional scientist's" view. While part of his argument is valid, that science is ever-changing and that even ideas once deemed outside of common knowledge can become a universal scientific truth, he fails to present evidence to support his claims. Even his attempt to level with the scientific community is cut short with the declaration, "It's not that traditional science is full of idiots, but that their conclusions are based on incomplete information" (Bagans and Crigger 214). The problem with these rants is that they contradict one of the main goals of their rhetoric, which seeks to legitimize the work of paranormal investigators and to label them as members of the credible "traditional science" community. Thus, the purpose of their rhetoric can be confusing to their audience, who feels that their findings are credible when they most closely imitate scientific practices of "traditional scientists," and yet are told to feel a sense of disdain for that scientific community.

A few paragraphs after his initial rant, Bagans explains,

"some of us do our best to follow the scientific method and seek answers the same way a traditional scientist would seek to explain natural phenomena, but there are major differences between the natural sciences and paranormal research that make our field unique" (Bagans and Crigger 216).

He follows this statement with a breakdown of the scientific method, naming various "traditional scientists" to back up his explanations, and then shows how *Ghost Adventures* follows each scientific method step to the best of their ability. Of course, one cannot find "repeatable experimentation to verify or deny data" when paranormal beings "don't always display a predictable pattern of behavior" (Bagans and Crigger 216). Thus, they rely on the excuse that ghosts are hard enough to capture without worrying about consistently supporting visual proof with the built in credibility of the scientific method. Even with the unpredictability of ghostly visitations, the crew does adhere as closely as possible to the method, albeit a method that is based on their own unique reading of its procedures.

Exigence

The show's purpose is to prove that ghosts exist, which will help explain what happens to the soul after death. With a consistently aggressive demand for ghostly specters to show themselves, the crew believes that knowing what happens after death is a "right of humanity, that if another world exists after our physical bodies die, then it's our right to know" (Bagans and Crigger 7). The *Ghost Adventures* crew states their purpose in the opening credits, which is to "set out on a quest to capture what I once saw onto video." The exigency of the show relies on this rhetorical purpose, as they are called to a haunted space based on a series of inexplicable occurrences "in need of explanation," to which they discover, after collecting evidence, that the occurrences were caused by spirits.

Both *Ghost Adventures* and Glanvill claim to be "probabilists," as they attempt to explore "further evidence might be discovered that weakens their explanation or makes another hypothesis seem more likely" (Broad 497). Both are willing to search for physical, easily explained answers to unusual phenomena before jumping to the conclusion that it is a ghostly presence. Interestingly, both share the same rhetorical weaknesses, as their reasoning is tainted by their obvious biases: Glanvill's ultimate purpose to support his claims in the existence of God, and *Ghost Adventures*' desire to prove the existence of ghosts. Perhaps these shared rhetorical weaknesses are read differently in the context of the genre's latest manifestation, as the *Ghost Adventures* audience is primed with different expectations developed through the gothic genre and the visual medium.

While *Ghost Adventures* attempts to use the same inductive argument style used by Glanvill, they share his rhetorical weakness, in which their purpose detracts from their "unbiased" scientific exploration. On *Ghost Adventures*, everything from illness, scratches, to car

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crashes is attributed to the power of evil spirits. These experiences, while explained with a number of potential hypotheses, are quickly attributed to ghostly interaction. After a unique encounter with a "succubus" or a demonic, sexual spirit at the Ancient Ram Inn, Bagans finds that the spirit has followed him home. After the investigation wraps, the crew sits on chairs in an old, abandoned room to address the audience directly. Bagans leans forward, "I had a very disturbing dream. There was this lady and all I could see was just, was eyes on her. And she had long hair and she was going like this [wiggles fingers] to my face. And she had long nails and I could almost feel it like it was hurting me. And I woke up from it" ("Ancient Ram Inn"). The scene flashes to a still photograph of three scratch marks on Bagans' back, supposedly taken the night after their stay at the haunted Ancient Ram Inn. Bagans instantly attributes the three scratch marks to the demonic entity they met the evening before, arguing that the three marks point to a demonic spirit making a mockery of the trinity ("Ancient Ram Inn"). No other possible hypotheses are explored, and this evidence is used as definitive proof that these beings are real and can cause real damage to the living. When the purpose of *Ghost Adventures'* argument taints the crew's findings, it confuses the "logical relationships among [their] claim and reasons," causing skeptics to question the objective interpretation of their evidence (Longaker and Walker 47).

GENRE ANALYSIS OF *GHOST ADVENTURES*

Ghost Adventures is considered a "hybrid" genre, one that is "created from existing

genres. Text are generic in multiple and complex ways" (Devitt, "Integrating Rhetorical and

Literary Theories of Genre," 701). They take cues from other popular ghost hunting shows in

order to reveal their shared beliefs and values. The adopted genre conventions are expanded

through the use of new technologies and ghost hunting techniques to differentiate themselves

from other mainstream shows. *Ghost Adventures* utilizes the consistency of their episode genre

conventions to serve a number of rhetorical purposes. As Devitt explains in "Integrating

Rhetorical and Literary Theories of Genre,"

> "genres can operate on readers and writers if the genres have become calcified or their
> proponents have sufficient status and power in the group that uses them. Genres 'exist,'
> then, in the sense that they are patterns from repeated actions according to which (or in
> reaction against which) readers and writers use language" (702).

Ghost Adventures has gained their "power" from the group that uses their discourse by

encouraging audience interaction with the evidence and crew experiences. By growing in

experience and authority along with their audience, the "repeated actions" of each episode

solidifies the creation of a specific shared "language." Once established, the crew is able to alter

their rhetorical choices as the audience becomes comfortable with the conventions and feels open

to changes to facilitate a deeper understanding of ghost existence.

The "calcified" *Ghost Adventures* genre conventions are also influenced by the reality TV

genre. Reality television has its own set of genre conventions that can create a sense of

falsehood. When the genre first entered the mainstream, reality television was viewed in contrast

to "valued genres of factual broadcasting such as news and documentary" and was seen to

"dilute the quality and alter the meaning of the public information project of broadcasting" (Lunt

129). Today, the sense of "reality" is often used ironically, especially with a long history of

faked or partially staged reality TV programs. Relegated to the term, "trash TV," these shows are not necessarily deemed "non-fiction" in the traditional sense. Without a clear sense of purpose for the viewing public, as found in the purpose of traditional news programs or documentaries, reality television is treated as "fluff" programming. However, many of the daily talk shows encouraging audience participation in self-help initiatives, as exemplified by programs like *Oprah!*, develop sites of personal growth in which the audience is as much a part of the construction of the "truth" as those who host the show. By viewing these programs as "serving the public," the sense of power instilled in the audience is grown through "processes of self-actualization and/or social control through the internalization of norms of conduct" shared on those programs (Lunt 135). Reality TV shows rely on being able to properly encourage the "internalization of modes of conduct" in their audience or risk cancelation.

One example of the reality TV genre as an unstable and ever-changing entity is that its conventions are dictated by the need to retain audience interest. Reality TV changes quickly, as it "often cannabilises itself, feeding off successful genres and formats in order to create new hybrid programs. Brunsdon *et all* (2001) note, it is the hybridisation of successful genres that gives reality TV such strong market value" (Hill 42). Thus, it comes as no surprise that *Ghost Adventures*' hybridization of ghost hunting shows with a nod to action-adventure legend-trips is what makes it so successful, specifically with American audiences. To claim that *Ghost Adventures* is a reality show is to place it into an extremely large genre category, one which lacks a clear definition, which could potentially lead to confusion over its ultimate purpose. Indeed, this hybridization and cannibalistic tendency makes it difficult to place strict genre conventions onto each reality TV show, while simultaneously confusing audience belief in the validity of the

reality of the program. Hill expands on this complicated categorization and its implications on audience perception stating,

> "the continuum between fact and fiction is a useful way to think of the relationship between contemporary factual programming and the various types of popular factual television that make up the reality genre. There is a fact/fiction continuum between contemporary documentaries and popular factual television. There is also a sliding scale of factuality in reality programming" (50).

The sliding scale hints at the importance of audience understandings of genre categorizations. As Devitt argues in her description of genre theory, the emphasis is not placed on the academic to label genre, but it is the general public utilizing genres in their daily lives that shape and alter understandings of genre (*Writing Genre* 3). Reality television is a perfect example of audience control over genre conventions, as they control the fact/fiction continuum and subsequently the success of the program. When a show debuts, placement on the fact/fiction scale determines the credibility given to the show's participants, as they too fall on the scale. Hill sums this issue up nicely when she states,

> "viewers of reality programming are attracted to various formats because they feature real people's stories in an entertaining manner. However, they are also distrustful of the authenticity of various reality formats *precisely because* these real people's stories are presented in an entertaining manner" (58).

The sense of "entertainment" is tied to scripted, fictional dramas, which are signs that what the audience is viewing is not completely authentic.

Often reality TV programs do not fall on a clear point on the fact/fiction scale, which in the case of *Ghost Adventures*, creates an unstable sense of the show's credibility as a true representation of "reality." Thus, *Ghost Adventures* relies on the reality TV genre's encouragement of "speculation about sincerity and the limits of permissible behavior" (Ellis 110). In applying Hill's concept of popular factual television's fact/fiction continuum, *Ghost Adventures*' "core attraction for viewers is its capacity to let viewers see for themselves" (53).

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Therefore, the viewer's perception of the sincerity of the crew's reactions is tied closely to the perception of the credibility of their findings and must play a role when the crew crafts their rhetoric. By trusting the crew, the viewer is trusting in the sincerity of the phenomenon, as they expect to see a trust-worthy or culturally-shared understanding of true representations of fear and excitement. For an ethos-driven argument which appropriates popular 18th-century empiricist understandings, being perceived as genuine is especially important when working in the reality TV genre. By incorporating stable genre conventions that emphasize the credibility of the *Ghost Adventures* crew and the evidence gathered, the audience is more willing to act as participants that place the show closer to the fact side of the fact/fiction scale.

Unfortunately, the audience understands that the show has to be at least partially staged. The crew does not simply stumble-upon haunted locations with compelling histories. It is not kept secret that there are show contributors not introduced in each episode that act behind the scenes to set up witness interviews and dig through historical documents. These stories are carefully crafted before the true "reality" of the show begins during the lockdown. Even the lockdown space is controlled and thus not completely "real." Cameras are set up throughout and the crew carries equipment with them in preparation for ghostly phenomena. The show is constrained by time, given subtitles, and put to music making it clear that the video is not the 9-hour, unedited "reality" experienced by the crew during the time of filming, but a crafted piece of "writing" that has been distilled and given specific moments of dramatic and rhetorical emphasis. Interestingly, John Ellis, author of "The Performance on Television of Sincerely Felt Emotion," states, "the programs themselves simply display behavior: they have no theme or issue," and thus "reality shows provide raw material for comments and discussions that take place around them; these discussions are where moral and ethical questions are worked through"

(111). Ellis' argument places the power in the hands of the audience to apply their own morality to the show and to interpret it in a way that meets their own needs. However, this definition is not completely appropriate for *Ghost Adventures*, who counteracts some of reality TV's negative genre constraints. While the ultimate purpose is to "display" sincere reactions to phenomena and to share them with empathetic audience members, the crew makes claims that they hope to support with evidence. It is not merely a show-and-tell of their legend-trip to be used by others as "raw materials for comments and discussions that take place around them," but it presents discussions within "reality" that spill into the discourse spaces around them. Indeed, they provide evidence and then give the audience space to interpret the data at will, but it is not without a lot of nudging and winking.

During the first few seasons of *Ghost Adventures*, the crew maintained a close connection with their generic roots, taking a note from Glanvill to keep their language formal and their episodes scientific. However, during the fourth season, the crew played with a new, more playful tone by revealing side excursions and tongue-in-cheek reenactments. The generic conventions leaned more heavily on the human interest focus of reality TV and *Ghost Adventures* began to lose the serious nature of their documentary-style genre. Initially, this was viewed as a rhetorical move to make the crew members more "real" and to reveal a more personal side of the "hardened" ghost hunters. Season four examples in which *Ghost Adventures* broke away from the traditional episode formula include unrelated side excursions, joking with eccentric locals, and in one especially sappy episode, the site of a ghostly lover is given a Valentine's Day theme. The "Valentine's Day Special," set in the Longfellow's Wayside Inn, is said to be haunted by an innkeeper's daughter who died of a broken heart. Known as a sexual and romantic spirit, the crew discusses her nightly escapades over a romantic, candlelight dinner, and Bagans exclaims,

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"if she wants love, we'll give it to her" (Ghost Adventures "Lovesick Ghost"). He brings the ghost a rose and lies down in her bed, a sappy moment heightened by Bagans' disturbing description of the ghost touching him romantically (Ghost Adventures "Lovesick Ghost"). Perhaps the symptom of a mid-series crisis, this behavior distorted the show's genre categorization from a pseudo-documentary that attempted to document phenomena as it was experienced to a legend-trip without a clear purpose. Normally, any reenactments or interviews with witnesses were met with a level of seriousness and genuine interest. However, the suddenly playful, reality TV shift to add unnecessary personal details felt like the addition of "fluff" that served no ultimate purpose in proving the show's hypothesis. Similarly, from an entertainment perspective, audience interest in the show comes from the frightening circumstances in the form of a real-life horror story. A feeling of fear and surprise come from the viewer's desire to match the crew's elevated emotion. Now in season nine, the crew's tone has retained some of the personal playfulness, but this is more carefully crafted to meet their rhetorical needs. Instead of distracting side stories, the crew adopts a tone similar to that of Glanvill, that of "the persona of injured truth-teller in his cautioned attempt to vindicate the reality of the phenomena against their fashionable detractors" (Hunter 337). Both realized the light-hearted, witty rapport they hoped to share with their audience backfired into the perception that their argument lacked "sincerity and moral earnestness" (Hunter 337). In this sense, both Glanvill and *Ghost Adventures* anticipate and respond to criticism through rhetoric that consistently points to their credibility. This genre convention remained true in the writing of Glanvill's contemporaries and beyond, morphing witness accounts into mere "stories" during the romantic period, only to be repurposed once more as credible evidence in *Ghost Adventures*.

To fully connect the audience with the content of each episode, the genre conventions utilize common horror genre tropes. *Ghost Adventures* does this by retelling a specific story, then emphasizing the gore and bloodshed through the use of romantic gothic language. Even during moments when their argument is at the forefront of discussion, there remains an element of storytelling. This is folklore come to life, transitioned from whispers outside of mainstream belief to a community of storytellers seeing their ghostly beings come to physical life. During an episode filmed in the Edinburgh Vaults, the crew visited one of the most haunted graveyards in Europe, filming the gothic tombstones covered in skulls and crying angels. Here they emphasize the romantic to prepare the audience for the upcoming lockdown:

> "This place. These things right here, these tombs, they talk. And they're telling us that this place had a lot of death, a lot of darkness, and this may be one of the most haunted places in the world. And we're gonna find that out when we get locked down" ("Edinburgh Vaults").

The audience is drawn into the romanticized hauntings – the rainy weather, dark clothing of the crew, and the mysterious Edinburgh tombs – which introduce the story about to be written: the haunting. As with many gothics, it is the building of this anticipation through the physical touching of the mysterious space, which heightens the emotional connection to the story and the belief that something can and will happen once the crew is locked down at the location. Even without what they would consider class "A" evidence, or evidence that strongly proves that a recorded phenomenon is supernatural, it is the reminders of those tombs and images of people long dead that echo in the darkness of the lockdown space.

It is clear that the audience's desire to see these spaces romanticized points to the transitional generic period between Glanvill's rhetorical storytelling and *Ghost Adventures* visual haunted experience. In between, the gothic genre translated rhetorical appeals into literary conventions to paint a more horrifying picture of a haunting. The gothic encouraged the audience

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to place themselves within the point-of-view of the horrified storyteller, one experiencing the

haunting along with the reader. In order for the *Ghost Adventures* crew to solidify their

relationship with the audience and to heighten the anticipation of the documentation of credible

paranormal evidence, they return to these gothic genre conventions that are familiar to their

audience.

Logos and Genre Conventions

The genre conventions of the "lockdowns" include dramatizing the space by turning off

all of the lights and blocking windows so the darkness remains uniform. The use of night-vision

adds a spooky feel to the findings, darkening the space for more extreme responses by the crew

and to encourage the audience to "feel" the ghostly presences. By strategically providing special

elements found in horror or ghost movies, the audience is more likely to believe evidence

gathered during the investigation, making an unconscious connection between what they see on

the show and previous haunting movies. *Skeptical Inquiry*'s Benjamin Radford questions the

scientific validity in the pitch-dark lockdown, arguing that investigating a space with the lights

off is a rhetorical move, one to dramatize the investigation to entertain the audience. Radford

criticizes the popular ghost hunting trope arguing, "unless a ghost or entity has been specifically

and repeatedly reported or photographed emitting light, there's no valid, logical reason for ghost

investigators to work in the dark." As Radford notes, the majority of first-hand accounts share

experiences with "shadows or dark entities," a theme also shared by those interviewed on *Ghost

Adventures*. Hence, from a scientific standpoint, the darkness does not aid in making the

evidence gathered at the scene of a haunting more valid, but muddles the source of the

mysterious sounds or sights. While not logos-based, the choice to hold the investigation in the

dark is a rhetorical move to dramatize the lockdown, which will incite in the audience a higher

emotional connection to the investigation. Similarly, the darkness touches upon gothic tropes familiar to the audience, in which darkness is the site of transformation from the comfortable and safe to the unknown and frightening. Darkness in the gothic sense comes with the anticipation of a supernatural experience.

Social Media Incorporated into Genre Conventions

In developing their genre, *Ghost Adventures* remains true to some of the initial strengths of the reality television genre, in the sense that "the audience is no longer configured as the recipients, the end point of communication, but as participants who have migrated from the home to the studio and form part of the process of production as well as participation" (Lunt 132). While this comment is more closely connected to initial reality/self-help programs like *Oprah!*, the same concept is true of *Ghost Adventures*, but in online spaces. In some cases, the crew runs into fans at lockdowns who want to share their experiences at the site of the haunting, but more often, the landmark sees an upsurge of visitors traveling to experience the space for themselves. At the same time, these conversations keep important evidential moments alive – never ceasing to develop the language and genre conventions during the premiere and subsequent re-runs. Much like the "self-help" reality TV shows, "the role of the expert has shifted from the authoritative provider of public information to that of therapist or coach offering advice to participants in the practical accomplishment in the transformation of the self" (Lunt 134). The show acts as a "practical" response to a desire to explore supernatural experiences that many viewers once felt ostracized for discussing. As the show "transforms" its reality TV genre label, ghost hunting tactics, and discourse throughout the nine seasons, so this "form of expertise," which grows from the crew's experiences, "constructs a relationship between the lay participants, the host of the show, and the experts, organized around the rhetoric of personal

growth and transformation" (Lunt 134). Hence, the need for a repository to imprint these fluid

conversations for future viewers is provided by the live #GAFanLair Twitter hashtag.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF THE GENRE

Ghost Adventures, much like the young reality TV genre, will continue to "cannibalize"

from other genres and thus will continue to prove Devitt's claim that genre is continuously in

flux. With viewers well versed in the various categories under the reality TV genre umbrella,

there is a widespread sense of media literacy, which is defined by the Department of Culture,

Media and Sport as,

> "The ability to analyse and respond to a range of media…and to think critically and
> reflectively about what has been 'read'; The ability to weigh up how reliable the material
> is, whether it is fact or fiction, whether it is realistically presented or not…" (Livingstone
> and Thumim qtd. in *Reality TV* 187).

As more and more reality TV audience members gain this level of media literacy, their ability

and desire to more critically engage in these texts, whether they are labelled "good or bad," will

lead to an increased emphasis placed on engaging with the "social reality that is represented, to

relate it to one's direct experience and (if appropriate) to take action in order to change it"

(Buckingham qtd. in *Reality TV* 187). The initial stages of this acceleration have already begun,

especially with an active fan base of novice ghost hunters. If one is to look at *Ghost Adventures*

as more than mere entertainment, there is a sign that the genre is pressing for this sort of

engagement, even from their skeptical viewers.

As these discussions develop into active ghost hunting communities, the conversation

naturally turns to the implications of finding consistent, reliable proof of ghostly existence.

Without the translation of these "stories" from the feminine fiction to the masculine non-fiction

"truth," Glanvill's greatest fear has come to pass: the spread of Atheism. Indeed, the separation

of religion from these texts has separated the reality TV viewer from the ultimate religious

implications of the Catholic purgatory mentioned on the show. Thus, the importance of

preserving and perpetuating ghost belief was once meant to serve "as palpable & convictive a

Testimony against Atheism as this age hath afforded" (Glanvill qtd. in Hunter 325).

In comparing the purpose of *Ghost Adventures* to the 17th-century *Saducismus Triumphatus*, it is clear that each rhetorical endeavor differs greatly. As Glanvill relied on a tradition of English ghost belief to confirm the truth of his Anglican reading of the Bible, the *Ghost Adventures* crew attempts to utilize common American Christian/Catholic discourses to support the truth of ghost existence. However, I believe that as *Ghost Adventures* gains popularity, their ultimate purpose will shift back to that of Glanvill: to support the truth of the Bible. While Bagans claims to be Catholic, I do not think that the crew's argument will be denominationally specific, at least not at first. Signs of a more open discussion of the ramifications of ghost existence in the religious realm are popping up in the latest episodes. Bagans explains how his views on religion have changed since he began hunting ghosts seriously stating,

> "as my investigations go on over the years and my encounters with spirits and demons persist, I believe in God and pray like my life depends on it, especially before entering certain establishments. It's a by-product of looking a demon in the face and having a BFO (Blinding Flash of the Obvious) that heaven and hell undoubtedly exist. It's not just faith for me, but practical application too. I've seen the forces of God at work so I believe in them completely now" (Bagans and Crigger 204).

The *Ghost Adventures* audience has been prepared over the course of the previous nine seasons to accept the religious comments made by the crew. Early in the series, the hunters would encounter demonic spirits, souls not previously belonging to human bodies and of a darker nature. These spirits would viciously attack or tap into the crew's more carnal desires, as seen in the "Ancient Ram Inn" episode with the sexual succubus. These glimpses into demonic entities then led to demonic possession. As the seasons progressed, Catholic priests were invited into haunted spaces, one episode going so far as to have a priest exorcize the haunted space, Bobby

Mackey's Music World. An archbishop is brought to the location and as he begins to cleanse the space, Groff notices that Bagans begins acting "really weird. His emotions, he was like, losing it, one moment I walked into a room and I saw him talking to himself. We were capturing these voices that were demonic and evil and it was trying to attach itself to Zak" (Ghost Adventures "Exorcist Angers"). Bagans begins feeling anger toward the Bishop, and "the EVPs that we were capturing at that time, all supported these feelings. All of the EVPs were horrible against the Exorcist" (Ghost Adventures "Exorcist Angers"). Once again, credibility is added to Bagans' feelings through the introduction of EVPs that also expressed violence and anger. As the possession becomes stronger, the Bishop tells Groff to "get the book" – a reference to the Bible, which is needed to exorcise the demon from Bagans (Ghost Adventures "Exorcist Angers"). Season eight brought a brief discussion of purgatory as the ethereal housing space of deceased souls. Once again, this contemporary genre reveals remnants of Glanvill's rhetorical purpose, in which an exploration of ghostly phenomena leads to the conclusion that God exists.

Bagans claims to avoid privileging the "truth" of one specific religion over another. However, the religious symbols on his clothing, jewelry, and in his tattoos, as well as his use of priests on the show hint at his belief that the disagreements will be resolved through a connection to the Catholic Church:

> "I envision a day when some (not all) religious disagreements are put to rest by paranormal discovery. This is one thing that many will disagree with me on, but think about this – what does the existence or denial of the undead prove or disapprove about religion? Let's say we accomplish our mission and find an undeniable piece (or group) of evidence that proves beyond a shadow of a doubt the existence of spirits that are either caught between the physical and spiritual world or who just refuse to stay quit. What does that say about religion? Some people will deny it no matter how good it is. Others will embrace it no matter how weak it is. Either way, proving that the afterlife exists can stop several religious disagreements and may easy some religious tensions. We can finally know what "moving on" really means" (Bagans and Crigger 256).

According to Bagans, once ghost belief is widespread then proof to support religion will also be widely available. In choosing the reality TV genre, the *Ghost Adventures* crew has prepared their audience for this growth, as reality TV's

> "social importance lies in the activities it produces rather than in the series itself. As TV events rather than as TV programs, reality TV enables public, informal discussions about the motives behind particular behaviors and the limits of acceptable behavior" (Ellis 111).

The "activities" include the development of an open community of ghost hunters that has grown in number since *Ghost Adventures*' inception and the popularity of their aggressive tactics becoming a contemporary ghost hunting trope. The budding social media platforms, specifically the #GAFanLair, have become a hub of supernatural discussion and religious expression. With a popular and complex dialogue concentrated on answering the "what comes after" question, the genre is poised to further complicate the religious/popular media divide that has kept serious discussions out of what is considered "entertainment reality TV."

Glanvill viewed the deterioration of ghost belief as a dangerous path to atheism. As *Ghost Adventures* gains followers and increases believers, they may tune their rhetoric to more closely match Glanvill's, which argues that "by conquering sadducism, or the denial of immaterial spirits, witches, and demons, Glanvill saw himself as conquering atheism; in his view, one was simply a slippery slope to the other" (Broad 501). Glanvill urges his audience to consider that just because they have not come into contact with a supernatural entity for themselves does not mean that they do not exist at all (337). A similar argument is used today, asking believers to not base their faith simply on what they can see, but to trust in the faith on its own merit.

In the premiere of season nine of *Ghost Adventures*, brand new opening credits were used to reflect the changes in both genre and ethos seen on the show over the course of the series.

Instead of beginning with Bagans' personal statement, "I never believed in ghosts until I came face-to-face with one," there is more confidence in their rhetorical position as a new "authority." Bagans opens with, "Some people believe in ghosts," spoken in time with wavering white letters, as a demonic girl in a white dress crawls on a dirty floor (Ghost Adventures "Sharon Tate Ghost"). In response, "some people don't" flashes across the screen, signifying a clear split in both ideology and understandings of the paranormal. Following these statements, the crew is introduced, this time without the emphasis on "No camera crews following us around," but with the title "investigator" next to the names of all three crew members, Bagans remaining "lead investigator." While Bagans role as "lead investigator" is appropriate when his celebrity status in the paranormal is the most prominent, the label change for Goodwin is especially important, as he is no longer an "equipment tech" but an "investigator." Audience members could read this as the potential for any discourse community member to take on a leadership role within the *Ghost Adventures* community through consistent participation and study. "There are things in this world that we will never fully understand. We want answers," exclaims Bagans, voiced over scenes from the upcoming season and horror images of bloody faces and floating specters (Ghost Adventures "Sharon Tate Ghost"). The purpose of the show is no longer exploratory as the language used to frame the purpose is more direct – they are "truth seekers," in league with scientists and the other credible sources they list next.

"We have worked years to build our credibility, our reputation, working alongside the most renown professionals in the field capturing groundbreaking proof of the paranormal," Bagans claims as flashes of scenes engaging with these prominent supernatural figures pop up on screen. Words overlay each scene, "Electrical Engineers," "Parapsychologists," "Inventors," and "Demonologists" are all listed (Ghost Adventures "Sharon Tate Ghost"). The genre conventions

are thus shifting from the need to build the credibility of their methods to their new position as leaders within this emerging and culturally popular discourse community. Bagans' emphasis on their "reputation" hints at the belief that their "credibility" should no longer be in question, especially by their most ardent followers. Their use of a wide range of "experts," those inside and outside of the paranormal field, highlight the shift from ostracized discourse community to one participating in discussions within multiple scientific and religious fields. Indeed, the crew is no longer in the exploratory phase of their genre, but believes that they are making serious claims in the form of "groundbreaking proof."

To align this proof with the experts they list in the flashing scenes suggests that this proof is more widely appreciated and validated than previous seasons of the show have suggested. In this sense, their evidence is doing something for groups outside of their own discourse community, as their "groundbreaking proof" opens doors for the inclusion of more religious and scientific languages to be admitted into their emerging vocabulary. Walking confidently toward the screen, Bagans' voice booms, "This is our evidence. Our ghost adventures" (Ghost Adventures "Sharon Tate Ghost"). This is no longer a traditional legend-trip in which the crew and audience participates in building their understanding together. Instead of seeking to "set out on a quest to capture what I once saw onto video," Bagans has already succeeded in "capturing" "groundbreaking proof" of the paranormal and now is merely the presenter of his truth in the form of their "evidence." The question remains of the shifting purpose, for if they no longer need to spend time building their "credibility" or to simply "capture what I once saw onto video," then how will their "evidence" serve a new purpose in introducing this crew as both scientists and religious philosophers?

As the *Ghost Adventures* crew settles into their new roles, they may begin to feel Glanvill's anxiety over audience members mislabeling their work within the fictional "story" genre. Indeed, the term "adventures" feels playful and naïve, a reflection of their early days as novice ghost hunters learning along with their audience. In a nod to the "legend-trip," the term, "adventures," does not point to the discovery of "groundbreaking proof," but rather to a series of unexplained incidents shared with their discourse community. While the *Ghost Adventures* brand is too popular to rename, their rhetoric will need to shift along with their shifting genre conventions and rhetorical purpose. They will need to focus even more heavily on their new roles as peers among "Electrical Engineers," "Parapsychologists," "Inventors," and "Demonologists." The last two specialists listed, inventors and demonologists, align them more closely with the scientific and religious discourse communities they would like to belong to. Just as Glanvill struggled to maintain his credibility within both of these privileged discourse communities, the *Ghost Adventures* crew will need to navigate the complicated American religious climate while using Christian and Catholic discourses. Season nine of *Ghost Adventures* marks another major moment of generic change that is poised to bring private, religious discourses and 21st-century scientific context back into Glanvill's public realm of the supernatural.

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