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Spirited Pioneer: The Life of Emma Hardinge Britten

Lisa A. Howe
lhowe001@fiu.edu

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

SPIRITED PIONEER

THE LIFE OF EMMA HARDINGE BRITTEN

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by

Lisa Ann Howe

2015

To: Dean John F. Stack, Jr.
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by Lisa Ann Howe, and entitled Spirited Pioneer: The Life of Emma Hardinge Britten, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Kirsten Wood

_____
Jenna Gibbs

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Meri-Jane Rochelson

_____
Rebecca Friedman, Major Professor

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The dissertation of Lisa Ann Howe is approved.

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Dean John F. Stack, Jr.
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

_____
Dean Lakshmi N. Reddi
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2015

DEDICATION

For John Schyler Seligman

and

In memory of Grandma, Annie Inez Howe,

and Mom, Frances Elizabeth Howe.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

SPIRITED PIONEER: THE LIFE OF EMMA HARDINGE BRITTEN

by

Lisa Ann Howe

Florida International University, 2015

Miami, Florida

Professor Rebecca Friedman, Major Professor

Emma Hardinge Britten's life encompassed and reflected many of the challenges and opportunities afforded to women in the Victorian world. This dissertation explores the multi-layered Victorian landscape through the life of an individual in order not only to tell her individual story, but also to gain a more nuanced understanding of how nineteenth-century norms of gender, class, religion, science and politics combined to create opportunities and obstacles for women in Britten's generation. Britten was an actor, a musician, a writer, a theologian, a political activist, a magazine publisher, a spirit medium, a lecturer, and a Spiritualist missionary. Taking into account her multiple subjectivities, this dissertation relies on historical biography to contextualize Britten's life in a number of areas, including Modern Spiritualism and political and civic engagement in the second half of the nineteenth century in Britain, the U.S., and Australia.

The dissertation is organized thematically in a quasi-chronological manner. Time frames overlap between chapters, as Britten travels from the realm of politics to that of science and to religion. Each chapter reflects this transformation of Britten's multiple intellectual and spiritual engagements, including performance, religion, politics and science.

Emma Hardinge Britten challenged, whether consciously or not, gendered expectations by attaining a presence in a male-dominated public sphere. Even though her life and accomplishments pre-date the New Woman of the fin de siècle, Britten established a successful career and her life creates a foreshadowing of the larger movements to come. She was an extraordinarily politically active woman whose influence reached three continents in her lifetime and beyond.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Emma Hardinge Britten's story deserves to be told and understood within a variety of historical contexts, including Victorian culture, religion, and politics. Her life was extraordinary, and yet reflects broader transformations underway for women and for all Victorians. Although Britten was born English, her life trajectory made her a global citizen of the Anglo-centric world. She lived between two continents and travelled in her work as a Spiritualist propagandist/political activist as far away as Australia and New Zealand. As she herself expressed to her contemporaries in the middle of the nineteenth century, America felt like "the land of her adoption – where she was spiritually developed, and in whose broad freedom and advanced spiritual light she wishe[d] to spend most of her life."[1] Musician, actor, writer, theologian, political activist, magazine publisher, spirit medium, lecturer, Spiritualist missionary, and self-described witch: Emma Hardinge Britten encompassed all of these descriptions.

This dissertation is organized thematically in a quasi-chronological manner. The chapters overlap temporally as Britten's engagement with the ideas of her time was far from linear; she crafted her life's work within the context of the very lively and ever-changing environment of Britain and the Anglo-American world in the second half of the nineteenth century. The four themes of the project, performance, theology, politics, and science, dictate the chapters. Each chapter reflects an aspect of Britten's interests, passions and missions within her long life and, consequently, within the relevant

[1] C. Edwards Lester, "Mrs. Emma Hardinge's History of Modern Spiritualism," *Banner of Light* 25, no. 5 (1869).

scholarship and historical debates. Britten lived from 1823 until 1899 in the UK and U.S. predominantly and spent two productive years in the late 1870s in Australia and New Zealand, while on a mission to spread Modern Spiritualism.

Emma Floyd was born in a London parish called Bethnal Green St. Matthew on 2 May 1823 to parents Ann Sophia and Ebenezer Floyd, a schoolmaster.[2] Emma remembered living in Westminster as a girl.

> This district was the resort of thieves, murderers, and outcasts of both sexes, and no person of decent habits and appearance could tread its lanes, streets, and alleys without the protection of armed police, even in the glare of sunlight. At night, the vicinity was made hideous by the shrieks of altercation, and the yells of inebriety.[3]

This experience alone may have inspired her later commitment and passion for protecting children and women who were less fortunate and lived in squalor. Yet, this was not the end of personal challenges for Britten. More adversity was to follow.

The family moved westward, finally settling in Bristol. Emma's sister Mary was born in Berkshire in 1824, her brother Thomas was born in Calne in 1826, and her sister Margaret was born in Bristol in 1830.[4] Ebenezer Floyd died when Emma was eleven years old in May of 1834 in Bristol, leaving his wife with four children.[5] The responsibility to help support her family and save them from the workhouse fell to Emma

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[2] "London, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906," (London Metropolitan Archives, Bethnal Green St. Matthew, Register of Baptism, P72/MTW, Item 018).

[3] Emma Hardinge Britten, *The Chinese Labour Question; or the Problem of Capital Versus Labour* (Sydney: Hampson and Gibson, 1878), 7.

[4] "England & Wales Christening Records, 1530-1906."

[5] "Death Notices," *Bristol Mercury*, 03 May 1834.

as the oldest child. She began as a music tutor and within a year was performing publically on stage, playing music and singing. This was the beginning of Britten's public career and life.

Pierre Erard was one of Britten's earliest contacts in her public career. Erard inherited the Paris and London piano and pianoforte manufacturing and shops in Paris and London. Erard hired Emma to play in his showroom while customers shopped for pianofortes, his specialty. While Emma declared later that she had worked for Erard in Paris, it stands to reason she most likely began working in the London store and was sent to the Paris store because of her talents and the belief in her clairvoyant abilities. Britten recalled performing in the mornings and during séances at Erard's Paris showroom.[6] A group she called the Orphic Circle, which engaged in occult activities and made use of children as clairvoyants and somnambulists, harnessed what they believed to be Emma's clairvoyance as well.[7] These experiences in her teenage years foreshadowed her adult years in many ways. From a very young age, it seems apparent she felt comfortable in public and performing for audiences.

Her musical career evolved into an acting career by the time she turned nineteen years old. Her first acting jobs were with the Theatre Royal Covent-Garden and the Princess's Theatre in Oxford Street in 1842 and 1843 as Miss Floyd.[8] In 1844 she began working under the name Miss Emma Hardinge at Sadler's Wells Theatre and the Adelphi

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[6] *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten* (Manchester ; London: John Heywood, 1900), 6-9.

[7] Ibid., 4. "Occultism Defined," *The Two Worlds* 1, no. 1 (1887).

[8] "Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. ," *The Theatrical Observer*, 12 December 1842. "Advertisements. Princess's Theatre," *The Musical World*, 31 August 1843.

Theatre.[9] Historian Robert Mathiesen has attempted to explain her use of the name Hardinge and has surmised that she may have married for a short period. C. Edwards Lester, a close friend of Emma's, published a "Biographical Sketch of Mrs. Emma Hardinge" in 1869 in the *Banner of Light* to promote her new book *Modern American Spiritualism.* Lester's short biography includes an autobiographical note by Emma, wherein she stated, "Married at fifteen a gentleman far above myself in rank; endured many reverses of fortune in various ways, and at eighteen found myself left a widow."[10] Could this husband have been Hardinge? Emma also wrote in the same note that she was born in 1833, ten years after her documented birth in 1823. The veracity of any information in this note is thus questionable. Emma never again made any mention of this early marriage; at least none appears in extant sources. Another clue comes from an 1853 advertisement in the London *Times,* wherein a "Mr. Hardinge and English medium will give spiritual séances every evening."[11] Robert Mathiesen makes a compelling argument that the writings of a Dr. Hardinge and Emma Hardinge's *Six Lectures* (1860), as well as her early-published lectures show similarities.[12] This evidence is not proof regarding an early marriage. There are no marriage records, and not a lot is ever made of it. The mystery behind the surname Hardinge may never be known. We know in 1851

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[9] Robert Mathiesen, *The Unseen Worlds of Emma Hardinge Britten: Some Chapters in the History of Western Occultism*, ed. James A. Santucci, vol. IX, Theosophical History Occasional Papers (Fullerton: Theosophical History, 2001). "Summary," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, no. 48.

[10] C. Edwards Lester, "Biographical Sketch of Mrs. Emma Hardinge," *Banner of Light* 26, no. 14 (1869).

[11] "Spirit Manifestations," *Times*, 9 April 1853.

[12] Mathiesen, *The Unseen Worlds of Emma Hardinge Britten*, IX, 5-12.

she was living with her mother in London while she was acting at the Adelphi Theatre.[13] Emma's use of the name Hardinge could have been solely a stage name.

Hardinge continued acting in London with a short stint in Paris with the Wallack Company, until she was invited to perform on Broadway in New York City in 1855.[14] Hardinge and her mother travelled to the United States and did not return to England until 1865. At this point Hardinge became heavily involved in the Modern Spiritualism movement that was sweeping the nation. Her performances changed from the Broadway stage to the lecture podium and the séance table. Emma and Ann Sophia spent the entire Civil War in the United States, and that period marked the beginning of Hardinge's political involvement in causes of anti-slavery, women's rights, attempting to establish a home for outcast women, and political campaigns. Hardinge lived and worked mostly in the Northeast United States, but by 1863 she had lectured her way through the states to California. She returned to the Northeast by 1865 and continued on back to London for a lecture tour to introduce the English to American Spiritualism. Britten made quite an impression on many of the men that encountered her first appearances in England. James Robertson, who referred to Britten as one of the most brilliant women he ever met, recounted, "On her first visit to London…she stirred all hearts. Literary persons like William Howitt were amazed at the sweet grace of diction, the continual flow of lofty and

[13] "Census Returns of England and Wales, 1851," (Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1851).

[14] Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 8-9.

inspiring thought given forth without preparation or effort."[15] She was back in the United States by 1866 and continued traversing the Atlantic back and forth over the course of her lifetime.

Emma Hardinge married William Godwin Britten when she was 47 years old on 11 September 1870 in New Jersey. According to the marriage record Emma asserted she was a widow and both of their occupations were lecturers.[16] Emma Hardinge Britten continued her work with William for the rest of their lives. In the early 1870s they experimented with electricity as a method of healing in Boston, and they published *The Western Star* for six months until the Boston fire of 1872.[17] Emma and William travelled across the country on a lecture circuit to California, where they took a steamer to Australia and New Zealand proselytizing Spiritualism between 1878 and 1879. They moved to Manchester in the 1880s and semi-retired, as Emma lectured in a closer radius to home and continued writing until her death. William died in 1894 at the age of 68, and Emma left this material world in 1899 at the age of 76.

It is tricky deciding how to refer to a biographical subject in the text: first name, last name, or both? Throughout this dissertation Emma Hardinge Britten is referred to as Emma, Hardinge, or Britten. This is not intended to confuse the reader, but to distinguish her work as a child, and as a single, independent woman through the 1840s, 50s and 60s. The name Emma is used in reference to her life as a child. Since much of her career

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[15] James Robertson, *Spiritualism: The Open Door to the Unseen Universe* (London: L. N. Fowler & Co., 1908), 320.

[16] *Talking to the Dead: Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism* (San Francisco: Harpers-Collins).

[17] Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 224.

occurred prior to her marriage at the age of 47, it is important to distinguish her independence in that period by using the name Hardinge. Her career did not falter once she married, but expanded in many regards with the companionship of her husband. The name Britten is used for the rest of her life during the 1870s, 80s, and 90s.

Modern Spiritualism, the movement and religion, began with two young sisters, Maggie and Kate Fox, fourteen and eleven years old, when they reported having heard unexplained noises within their new home in Hydesville, New York in 1848. Their parents, at a loss as to the source of these knocks and raps heard throughout the house, began asking questions of their new neighbors. The house had a reputation within the town for being haunted, and news of the family hearing unexplained noises received little attention. This changed, however, when the girls discovered they could communicate with the very spirits haunting their house. They would call out letters of the alphabet and the spirits would knock at the intended letter. Excitement within the community and soon the nation followed. In short order, newspapers spread the word of this phenomenon, and whether skeptical, curious or converted, interest in the spirits and communication with deceased loved ones, especially deceased children, gained a wide following both at home and abroad. Both contemporaries and modern scholars ascribe the birth of Modern Spiritualism to the discoveries made by the young Fox sisters.

Scholarship on Anglo-centric Victorian Spiritualism in England and America began in earnest in the 1980s with historians Janet Oppenheim, Logie Barrow, Ann Braude and Alex Owen, in whose scholarship the role of women, science, class, and

social reform were predominant topics.[18] Oppenheim's study establishes that Spiritualism in England among the professional middle class and the educated working class was connected to scientific naturalism, specifically research into psychical phenomenon. She discovered that distinguished scientists were not only sympathetic to but also involved with Spiritualism. Oppenheim argues that Spiritualism supplanted Christianity within the working class. Spiritualism, in this sense, became the logical successor to eighteenth-century progressivism and, thus, was highly associated with social reform.[19] As a complement to Oppenheim's work, Logie Barrow concentrates entirely on plebeian Spiritualism and its association with health and morality movements of the nineteenth century such as temperance, vegetarianism, and anti-vaccination. Barrow substantiates the connection with secularism, the move away from religion in the working-class community. The relationship between secularism and Spiritualism was a defining distinction between working class and middle class Spiritualists: Middle-class

[18] Ibid. Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Logie Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plegeians 1850-1910*, History Workshop (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986). Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989). Alex Owen, "The Other Voice: Women, Children and Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism," in *Language, Gender, and Childhood*, ed. Carolyn Steedman, Cathy Urwin, and Valerie Walkerdine (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985). *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

[19] *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Spiritualists tended to practice an amalgamation of Christianity and Spiritualism, while the working class was abandoning Christianity altogether.[20]

Ann Braude's work finds a connection between Spiritualism and radical political activism. She likewise examines this in context with the rise of science. Braude argues that Spiritualism was important to women's rights because it offered a platform for women and a critique of traditional authority. Alex Owen's 1989 book *The Darkened Room* focuses mainly around women and their involvement with Spiritualism as mediums. She argues that women successfully subverted culturally-coded feminine norms of Victorian England through mediumship. Since a medium was not thought responsible for his or her actions while under the influence of a spirit, she was able to challenge and transgress the ideals of the domestic sphere. Either in public or private, these women took on the dominant leadership role and became the subject of entertainment and spectacle. These women, despite their subversions of Victorian culture, were often admired and praised for their gifts.

Scholarship on Spiritualism gained momentum once again in the early twenty-first century with Alfred Gabay's first full-length history of Spiritualism in Australia. Gabay links Spiritualism in Australia and New Zealand as part of an Anglo-centric dialog with England and America.[21] Robert Cox follows the scholarship of the 1980s in finding that Spiritualists were mostly liberal-minded individuals that worked towards social reforms, but he also found that after the Civil War there were factions within the Spiritualist movement that were proslavery and anti-egalitarian, and these caused division

[20] Oppenheim, *The Other World*.

[21] Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plegeians 1850-1910*.

within the movement.[22] John Benedict Buescher and Barbara Weisberg followed very similar arguments by examining autobiographical accounts. Buescher presents detailed accounts of trance lecture mediums, and Weisberg provides a historical narrative of the Fox sisters and their experiences as the famed stewards of Modern Spiritualism.[23] Molly McGarry links Modern Spiritualism as a religion to a cultural phenomenon in the nineteenth century wherein magical interests persisted within a move towards secularism.[24] While these new studies examined Spiritualism in America, Georgina Byrne returns to British Spiritualism studies. She looks at Christian doctrine beside Spiritualist theology in terms of the belief in continuation of life after the death of the material body. Byrne -- like McGarry for American culture -- finds that Spiritualism became part of English culture. Anglicans, clergy and laypersons, attended séances and collaborated with scientific study of the phenomena associated with Spiritualism.[25]

Previous scholarship on Modern Spiritualism has generally been conducted within various national contexts. This dissertation places Spiritualism in an Anglo-centric, transoceanic world because Britten, at center stage, swept from England to America to Australia and New Zealand and back. Spiritualism fell into a long line of religious fringe

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[22] Alfred J. Gabay, *Messages from Beyond: Spiritualism and Spiritualists in Melbourne's Golden Age 1870-1890* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001).

[23] Robert S. Cox, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003). John Benedict Buescher, *The Other Side of Salvation: Spiritualism and the Nineteenth-Century Religious Experience* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2004).

[24] Weisberg, *Talking to the Dead: Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism*.

[25] Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

movements that empowered alternative identities, and Britten succeeded in using it to establish herself as an independent woman.

Chapter Two examines the centrality of performance to the formation of Britten's character, her political persona, and ultimately her embrace of Spiritualism. Her ability to occupy center stage, in this way, owed much to those eighteenth-century performers who came before her and who, like Britten, moved easily into the realm of politics. Yet, it was Britten who emerged as one of the early and most important leaders of the new movement of Modern Spiritualism, which ultimately became an organized religion. And, it is worth noting, that unlike those who came before, she did not fulfill the expectation of a self-effacing woman as she worked her way into the public eye. On the contrary, she presented herself as a self-assured member of the public and political arena. Of course her success was not all attributable to changing gender expectations; the explosion of print culture, improved speed and modes of travel, and the broadening of literacy created another advantage for Britten in the second half of the nineteenth century. She capitalized on the popularity of the séance, which was a much-admired form of entertainment in the home, similar to parlor theatre, as well as lectures given at public venues to audiences sometimes in the thousands. Britten benefitted in a more general sense from the popularity and expansion of leisure and entertainment in the second half of the nineteenth century, and her style of performance fit the bill. These performances defined her career and allowed her ideas to spread faster and father. Large audiences attended her trance lectures often advertised like any other performance of the day through sensationalistic posters. Since these audiences were often comprised of mixed classes and genders, Britten's message reached many people in these public venues,

whether for the propagation of her brand of Spiritualism or gaining momentum for her political passions.

Chapter Three both probes Britten's work as a theologian and Spiritualist missionary, and examines her legacy within the Spiritualist Church. Britten was a prolific promoter of the burgeoning religion in the middle of the nineteenth century, and her theology is reminiscent, and almost identical in certain instances, to Enlightenment and Romantic philosophy, as well as anti-clerical religious theology that emerged in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, often drawing from classical thinkers. Not all Spiritualist theologians gained a sustained foothold in the permanent doctrines as did Britten, who created her 'brand' of Spiritualism through her own research and philosophy. Her insights remain foundational in current Spiritualist teachings and churches. The chapter also explores the Modern Spiritualist dialog in this period and Britten's place within it, considering her stances on Christianity and Free Love as divisive within the movement. Britten's dedication to promoting Spiritualism and expanding its purview through missionary work and lyceums helped to create the foundation in today's Spiritualist churches and national associations, which rely on Britten's Seven Principles as primary doctrine.

Chapter Four addresses Britten's devotion to social and political reforms, a devotion she shared with many Spiritualists of her time. The ethics inherent in Britten's liberal theology of Modern Spiritualism demanded social work for the betterment of one's soul, similar to the ideals of liberal Christian reformers in this period. Britten, however, worked within the male-dominated public sphere of politics, not just the women-centered public sphere of social reforms.

Examining Britten's life as a micro-history within a global arena, as used in this dissertation, exposes the interconnectedness of the flow of ideas across the English-speaking world in which Britten traveled. Britten's British heritage played a role in her political work in the United States regarding abolition. She spread her religious experiences in the United States to England, Australia and New Zealand, and her political and social experiences in the United States and England influenced her thoughts on Australian and New Zealand political issues. As is well known, the flow of transoceanic ideas became easier with the development of the telegraph and with improved and expanded means of travel. Britten's life and writings stands out as an example of the impact of these technological changes on the flow of ideas across nations and continents.

Chapter Five brings out the complex scientific theories Britten and other thinkers used to explain, prove and practice Modern Spiritualism. Britten, and her writings and speeches, challenged the conventional divide between doctrinal Christianity and the science of nature. She used science to explain Modern Spiritualism and experimented with electrical healing practices. Spiritualism became entrenched in scientific naturalism, and specifically research into psychical phenomena. Britten was a huge proponent of scientific investigation into Spiritualist phenomena, and that came to fruition with the establishment of the Societies for Psychical Research in England and the United States in 1882 and 1884 respectively. Distinguished scientists were not only sympathetic to her ideas, but they were also adherents of Spiritualism themselves. Despite the contention between Spiritualism and science often expressed in the Society for Psychical Research meetings and journals, there was also unity. Spiritualists believed that spirit-matter was a new element of the universe that demanded research. Scientists who practiced with

phrenology and mesmerism were more easily convinced that spirit-matter was a genuine topic for study.

The many lives of Emma Hardinge Britten make her biographical narrative well suited to historical methods. The main approach for this dissertation involves the gathering of primary sources in the form of letters, diaries, published works, and newspapers, exploring their discursive power and then placing them analytically within a historical context. The context is transoceanic in purview. As Daniel Rodgers argues, the transatlantic method is an abstract notion without studying individuals. America and Europe shared similar ideas. The Atlantic was a connection rather than a barrier. Rodgers regards biography as an effective tool to bring out this connection by examining the ways in which individual lives traversed boarders, both through travel and the path of their ideas.[26] This notion expands with a transoceanic purview including the Anglo-centric world of Australia and New Zealand.

Using historical biography as an approach is particularly important in this type of work because it complicates an individual's narrow chronological life story by placing it within the intricacies of the modernizing Victorian world. Emma Hardinge Britten is an ideal subject for this inquiry. Her life and actions fall in line with academic scholarship on multiple Victorian themes such as gender, religion, science, politics and the public sphere, and, therefore, this dissertation is organized based on these themes instead of the traditional chronological biography.

[26] Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2000).

The term historiographical biography can also be used to broadly describe this project. By using biography in conjunction with academic scholarship, this dissertation will answer penetrating questions in the historiography and will enable the story of Emma Hardinge Britten to gain its rightful place in the historiography of women in a transoceanic Victorian world. Criticism of historical biography, mainly by the French Annales school, reached its pinnacle between the 1950s and the 1970s as superficial, naïve, imperfect, and lacking epistemological potential.[27] Critics like Richard Holmes believed biographies were intellectually pleasing to read, but lacked the stringent scientific research and methods of real academic scholarship.[28] Scholars of the 1970s and 80s believed that evidence from written documents only recorded an extension of one's life, not the actual past life, and therefore considered historical biography an impossible mission. Historical writing of any kind was not sufficient to understand what really happened in the past or to understand the nature of human behaviors, actions or choices in a different time.[29] Other postmodernists praised the genre of biography as unconventional, and argued that its use could extend the historical project, but the historian's participation in the recreation of the past could not be ignored. Alun Munslow wrote, "every history refers to its author as much as its sources'."[30] Gordon Wood in a traditional epistemological vein strongly disagreed with this, and believes historians can

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[27] Georgina Byrne, *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England, 1850-1939* (Woodbridge and Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2010).

[28] José Miguel Sardica, "The Content and Form of 'Conventional' Historical Biography," *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 17, no. 3 (2013): 383.

[29] Ibid., 384.

[30] Ibid., 387.

recount historical events without telling about themselves, and can relate to a real past without anachronistic distortion.[31]

Since the 1990s, the revival of narrative and historical biography have made a respectable comeback. Placed back, as José Miguel Sardica argues, "by all those for whom history is not an aseptic science but rather a humanist study about mankind, about real people and their actions." An individual's life story offers discovery and recovery of facts, ideas, principles, perceptions and opinions by someone who lived it. A revelation of a "multifarious human reality" rather than seeing the past through only theoretical concepts imported from the present.[32] The re-emergence of the genre suggested that a single representative life could reveal many aspects of society, economy, politics, and culture. Biography, as one avenue of historical inquiry, offers what Gordon Wood termed "contextual relativism," which refers to the acceptance of our ability as historians to "say something true, however partial, about the past."[33] Robert Rotberg argues that "biography is history, depends on history, and strengthens and enriches history. In turn, all history is biography." Rotberg stresses that a biographer needs to be very familiar with the historiography his individual's life falls into, the period and the place, and therefore only trained historians can write a proper historical biography. The same

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[31] Alun Munslow, "History and Biography: An Editorial Comment," *Rethinking History* 7, no. 1 (2003): 1-4.

[32] Gordon Wood, *The Purpose of the Past. Reflections on the Uses of History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 11, 52-54, 226.

[33] Sardica, "The Content and Form of 'Conventional' Historical Biography," 384-85.

evidentiary rules apply to writing a biography as writing history. Avoiding conjecture and hagiography are absolutely necessary when writing good biographies.[34]

Susan Ware writes from a feminist perspective about the personal lives of women being political, and she argues that their lives are relevant to a broader intellectual agenda. Ware agrees with Rotberg that historians make wonderful biographers, but not all biographers make good historians. Historians who write biography "tend to engage and analyze a larger historical landscape…The history of a period flows through the lives of biographical subjects."[35] Rotberg writes that without biography and biographers, "the historical enterprise would be far less informed, and far less complete."[36] An historian's training encourages breadth of vision, evidence gathering, hypothesizing and making arguments. Ware focuses on the lives of women and believes these biographies have shaken up the larger genre of biography in general and have introduced a different type of person also worthy of biographical treatment, and asserts that this has played a significant role in the growth of women's history as a respected field within the historical profession.[37] The key to feminist biography is the "focus on gender as a primary influence on women's lives."[38] The traditional narratives of men in regard to success or achievement do not always apply to women. Women's public lives were complicated by

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[34] Wood, *The Purpose of the Past. Reflections on the Uses of History*, 133-34.

[35] Robert I. Rotberg, "Biography and Historiography: Mutual Evidentiary and Interdisciplinary Considerations," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 3 (Winter 2010): 305, 20.

[36] Ibid., 322.

[37] Ibid., 324.

[38] Susan Ware, "Writing Women's Lives: One Historian's Perspective," ibid.: 413.

struggles men did not have, and the hallmark of feminist biography is attention to connections between private and personal with professional lives.[39] Ware points to Ulrich's *A Midwife's Tale (1990)* as a microhistory of an unknown woman placed in the center of a larger story.[40] Feminist biographies of the 1970s revealed that women were more involved in the public sphere in politically active ways and helped historians move beyond the separate spheres paradigm.[41]

Two examples of biography that have influenced my work are Kali Israel's *Names and Stories: Emilia Dilke and Victorian Culture* (2002) and Megan Marshall's *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism* (2005). Israel uses Emilia Dilke as a complex subject for addressing important questions about gender, class, politics, social performance, the body, erotic desire, and how we make historical sense of such things. Marshall's biography of the Peabody sisters, meanwhile, is placed within nineteenth-century religious, cultural and intellectual history.

The biography of Emilia Dilke is a point of entry into a range of historical and contemporary issues of political, intellectual, social, and aesthetic histories. Israel's goal was not to offer a model of Victorian women, but to offer a Victorian woman, with her differences and contradictions, as a comparison to other Victorian women, with a constant attention to stories and texts that constituted Dilke. Israel used Dilke's own texts, the texts she wrote of others' readings of her, and other contemporary and historical

[39] Ibid., 417.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., 419.

stories. Stories construct selfhood and are enacted.[42] Israel also draws on "poststructuralist feminist and queer-theoretical analysis of gender as performance" and emphasizes the "usability of sex" in the public sphere.[43] Israel eschews personal narrative associated with traditional biography because of her suspicions about how that tends to produce the subject as exceptional and is particularly critical of the genre of biography, yet she succeeds in writing a biography with historical depth because of these concerns. Israel contends that "we can talk neither to nor with the dead but only and imperfectly about them." She quotes Caroline Walker Bynum, "Historians, like the fishes of the sea, regurgitate fragments. Only supernatural power can assemble fragments so completely that no particle of them is lost, or miraculously empower the part to be the whole." Israel refers to her work as "history in the comic mode," as coined by Bynum. It is history that enjoys its own conditional placement in the historiography with the prospect of revision and continuation.[44]

Like the biography of Emilia Dilke, Marshall's biography of the Peabody sisters places their lives within the larger context of the period. The Peabody sisters were born about a generation before my subject, Emma Hardinge Britten. Marshall focuses her study of the sisters within the pre-Victorian, Romantic, and Transcendental period. Like Israel and other historical biographers engaged in the larger historical picture, Marshall engages in the historiography of this period in America with a focus of women in the

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[42] Ibid., 421.

[43] Kali Israel, *Names and Stories: Emilia Dilke and Victorian Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8-9, 13-14.

[44] Ibid., 11-12.

post-Revolutionary and Romantic period, also known as the American Renaissance. Marshall does not plop her reader into this period, but first uses the Peabody sisters' mother, Eliza Peabody, to examine her childhood in the 1780s to offer background and comparison to the Peabody sisters' changing environment, where women moved freely in intellectual circles and their ideas were welcome. Alexis de Tocqueville's visit to America in 1830 prompted him to note the American girl's remarkable freedom: she "scarcely ceased to be a child when she already thinks for herself, speaks with freedom, and acts on her own impulse."[45] Marshall writes, the years when the sisters were starting out in life, when American Romanticism was born of a widespread yearning for spiritual and intellectual transcendence, certain women and men of Boston and Concord, the Peabody sisters among them, banded together to create what was then called "the newness": the movement that "startled our young nation into a vibrant maturity."[46] Elizabeth, Mary, and Sophia Peabody grew up loving books, art, ideas and men in this spirited time.[47] The story of these sisters reveals important aspects of this period such as women's education and professions, women-led open houses similar to the salons of Europe, marriage, and religion.

I chose Emma Hardinge Britten as a subject initially because of my interest in Victorian Spiritualism. Her lifelong involvement would help me to unlock some of the mysteries of Victorian Spiritualism. What I found through this exploration of Britten's

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[45] Ibid., 17-18.

[46] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve, vol. II (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 198.

[47] Megan Marshall, *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism* (New York: First Mariner Books, 2006), xx.

life was much more. Britten's life offers revelations of how women lived in this world, how religion and science were used together to benefit a rational and religious consciousness, and how women became politically involved. Britten was at the center of the movement of Modern Spiritualism in England and the US, and extended her missionizing into Australia and New Zealand in the 1870s. Using the scholarship pertaining to the genre of biography, I have paid close attention to the connections between Britten's personal and professional life, to show her work interwoven with the works of others.

Biography is certainly not a perfect historical approach, but neither is any historical method. As historians we attempt to corroborate or disprove current scholarship and reveal new paradigms in the field. As a genre, biography is extremely useful in bringing to light an individual's lived experiences in a different time and place as well as the environment in which these experiences took place. In this project, biography offers a lens through one woman's life into the transoceanic Victorian world on three continents, and reveals larger aspects of this world in terms of religion, culture, gender, science and politics.

Biographies in a broad sense often rely on particular private sources such as diaries and letters. In the case of Emma Hardinge Britten, the private sources are scarce. Unfortunately an archive containing Britten's personal writings and letters no longer exists. They somehow vanished or were destroyed sometime between her death in 1899 and several years ago. I ran into almost a dead-end in trying to find these personal primary sources. I searched archives of her contemporaries in England and the Northeastern United States and located some of her personal correspondence written in

her hand, which has shed light on her personal character and goals. Luckily, important clues can be gleaned from her prolific writing career, including the many speeches Britten gave and the articles and books she wrote and published.

The sources relied upon in this dissertation include the dozens of works written by Britten or her lectured texts, in the form of books, pamphlets, lectures and government petitions. These works were published in the US, Britain and/or Australia. In addition to the personal works of Britten, the multitude of periodicals devoted to Modern Spiritualism and science offer an abundance of printed material on Britten and other spiritualist women of her ilk. Other sources include correspondence, diaries and newspaper articles between Britten and other spiritualists and political friends. These sources have been accessed through research at Cambridge University Library, The Wren Library at Trinity College Cambridge, British Library, Bishopsgate Institute, The Women's Library at London Metropolitan University, The Wellcome Library, Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, Harvard University Archives, Massachusetts Historical Society, American Antiquarian Society, Cornell University Library, New York Public Library, Library of Congress, and the Societies for Psychical Research in New York and London/Cambridge.

This dissertation examines the personal, professional, and political life of Emma Hardinge Britten, a Victorian English woman, who, after losing her father at age eleven, helped to support her family through teaching music and acting but ultimately found her life's vocation in the new and spectacular religion, Modern Spiritualism, upon arriving in New York City in 1855. Her adult life ranged across the latter half of the nineteenth

century in Britain, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. This historical biography will provide an incisive glimpse into this extraordinary woman and her place in the larger schemes of Victorian culture, religion, science and politics. Britten followed in the footsteps of outspoken women before her and influenced public opinion through her writings and lectures. She was a vocal proponent of abolitionism, women's rights, housing for abused women and children, educational reform, and Abraham Lincoln's presidential campaign. Britten harnessed the popularity of Victorian entertainment and performance within and outside the home, such as séances and trance lectures, in order to reach a larger audience. Moreover, while reformers travelled between the United States and Britain regularly, as did their texts and ideas, Britten also spread her brand of Spiritualism – an amalgam of religion, science, and intellectual philosophical curiosity – not only to Britain and the United States, but also to Australia and New Zealand. Emma Hardinge Britten was an extraordinarily politically active woman whose influence reached three continents in her lifetime and beyond. Her words and actions served to push the boundaries of Victorian True Womanhood and usher in the era of the ideal independent turn-of-the-century New Woman.

CHAPTER II

SPIRITED VICTORIAN PERFORMANCES: THE EMERGENCE OF SÉANCES AND TRANCE LECTURES AS MIDDLE-CLASS LEISURE ENTERTAINMENTS

> The Sandhurst 'Energetic Circle' of Spiritualists gave an entertainment, under the name of 'An Evening at Home,' at the Masonic Hall last evening, which was of a most enjoyable nature, over 300 guests being present, who appeared to enter heartily into the spirit of the hour, and went in with a keen relish for the good things and various sources of amusement provided for them.[48]

The above quote is from a review in the *Argus* newspaper of a public gathering of Spiritualists in Australia on Wednesday, 15 September 1875. This example reveals the methods in which Spiritualists incorporated amusement themes to encourage public participation in their meetings. The title of the meeting, 'An Evening at Home,' refers to the comfort and pleasure of amusements common within the Victorian home, and consciously uses similar tactics to bring participants out into a larger, public venue. These kinds of public and domestic leisure activities, popular in England and the United States as well in Australia, expose a transoceanic cultural link.[49] Britten lived and worked on three continents, and I will present overlapping evidence in this chapter and the dissertation overall.

Trance lecturing and mediumistic pursuits were forms of performance in the Victorian period. Séances, trance lectures and other Spiritualist activities were integral to

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[48] "An Occasional Correspondent," *The Argus*, September 15, 1875; Emma Hardinge Britten, *Nineteenth Century Miracles, or, Spirits and Their Work in Every Country of the Earth : A Complete Historical Compendium of the Great Movement Known as "Modern Spiritualism"* (New York: William Britten : Lovell & Co., 1884), 259.

[49] Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).Briggs argues that Australia modern cities of Melbourne and Sydney replicated their London metropole in architecture and culture in the Victorian era.

the Victorian culture of entertainment, both within and outside the home. They were part of an entertainment culture that included parlor theaters in the home and public theater and music hall performances outside the home. The arc of Britten's life paralleled fortunately with the transition from public houses to music halls as places of Victorian entertainment, which became firmly entrenched in Victorian culture by the 1860s.[50] Britten was able to harness this transformation to her advantage.

Emma Hardinge Britten used entertainment strategically to attract people to her performances, to introduce and teach them about Modern Spiritualism and her political campaigns. Britten was acutely business-minded and used economically charged strategies to attract customers. Those who attended her lectures, and were intrigued by the subject matter, whether for intellectual, spiritual or entertainment purposes, likely purchased her published works as well. Additionally, Britten's audiences were composed of mixed genders and classes, a cultural shift within public entertainments in the second half of the nineteenth century, and this offers new evidence in the scholarly debate on whether or not middle-class homo-social public leisure activity existed in direct contrast to working-class hetero-social public leisure activity.

Britten's performances created a platform for her religious and political ideas. Women and young girls used the theatrical aspects of trance lectures and séances, as eighteenth-century actresses used the theater before them, to gain independence, social mobility, and to pursue a public and political life. While child actors did not usually continue as adult professional actors, child mediums often went on to prosperous careers

[50] Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 80-81.

as adult mediums. Hence, Modern Spiritualism offered a unique opportunity for women in the second half of the nineteenth century. It evolved from a movement to a full-fledged organized religion, and Britten gained a sustained foothold in the burgeoning religion from the beginning. Her words and philosophy remain as foundational doctrine in Spiritualist churches today.

Britten capitalized on the explosion of Victorian entertainment within and outside the home, with séances, trance lectures, choirs and variety shows, in order to reach a larger audience. Her reputation grew, and her numerous published works were also well received. Britten recognized how important a good performance was to most Victorians and learned this from a young age. She was not alone in this recognition of what a good performance meant for success. The linkages between performance and success permeated other fields. Natural philosophers, for example, used spectacular effects or demonstrations of skill to attract the audience to their scientific findings. This awareness is reflected in physicist Oliver Lodge's autobiography, wherein he admits, "that careful choreography mattered a great deal in the presentation of the scientific self."[51] Selling one's wares through an exciting performance worked no matter the market.

Britten lived her life in the limelight from a young age. After losing her father, Ebenezer Floyd, when she was eleven, Emma helped to support her family through teaching music, musical performances and acting in London and Paris.[52] The Floyd family's social status is difficult to determine. The evidence that they were a working-

[51] Iwan Rhys Morus, "Worlds of Wonder: Sensation and the Victorian Scientific Performance," *Isis* 101, no. 4 (2010): 807.

[52] "Death Notices." Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten,* 5.

class to lower middle-class family before Ebenezer Floyd's death is evidenced in his multiple occupations. Emma's baptism record lists Ebenezer Floyd as a schoolmaster in 1823.[53] However, Emma's brother Thomas's baptism record in 1826 lists Ebenezer Floyd as a boatman, and when her sister Margaret was baptized in 1830 he is listed as an apothecary.[54]

Following Ebenezer's death in 1834, the Floyd family fell on difficult times. Emma was eleven, Thomas eight, and little Margaret only four years old. Emma began teaching music in a local music school to help her mother support the family in the same year that her father died, and quickly began performing publicly by the age of 12 as a musician and vocalist in London and Paris.[55] During this time Emma's mother, Ann Sophia, took work for a short while as a housekeeper at a charity school for boys beginning in 1838.[56]

Emma's epic rise to fame in such a short time may be linked to adults exploiting what they believed to her abilities as a clairvoyant, which she claimed she was not completely aware of. Her perceived clairvoyance evidently added to her appeal, and drew more commissions. A secret society that Britten later called The Orphic Circle in London, engaged Emma during her teen years, to sit alongside other children in what she

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[53] "London, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906."

[54] "England & Wales Christening Records, 1530-1906."

[55] A.B. Child, "History of Mediums, Number V. Miss Emma Hardinge," *Banner of Light*, 31 July 1858, 7-8; Emma Hardinge, *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature* (Chicago: Scott and Company, Printers, 1860), 5-13. Lester, "Biographical Sketch of Mrs. Emma Hardinge."

[56] Announcement *Bristol Mercury*, 17 March 1838.

described as a trance state in order to send and receive messages between the spirit world and other secret societies through astral travel.[57] This occurred at least a decade before Modern Spiritualism emerged in upstate New York in 1848. Secret societies tended to attract elite members of society, and the men and women enjoyed equality within the confines of these secret meetings.[58] This and the following statements come from Britten's own words, but questions still exist as to how and why she was introduced to this elite world, herself a child of a working-class to lower middle-class home. Emma gained the admiration of generous benefactors through this avenue, and because of her self-described "phenomenal musical endowments" she was sent to Paris to continue her musical studies and discover her full potential as a musician.[59] In Paris she performed at Erard's piano forte rooms in the mornings, where they also conducted morning séances. Erard invited her under the guise of performing on his pianofortes for the benefit of his customers. This may have been her avenue to Paris. Erard maintained a London piano forte shop, where Emma most likely began working for him. She claimed her "intense susceptibility" brought her "prominently under the notice of the magnetisers, amongst whom were not a few of the highest personages in the land."[60] This evidence suggests that Britten, from a young child, developed her performance skills and carried these into her career as a lecturer in promoting Modern Spiritualism and her political collaborations.

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[57] Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 4. "Occultism Defined (by One Who Knows)," *The Two Worlds* 1, no. 1 (1887).

[58] Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*.

[59] Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 5-6.

[60] Ibid., 6-9.

This exemplifies the opportunity and social mobility that mediumship offered young girls and women. However, the possibility of exploitation existed as well.

At the age of 19, in 1842, Emma embarked on a career as an actress upon her return to London from Paris. According to her autobiographical account, she lost her voice in Paris and returned to London to begin her acting career. One biographer later in her career informed readers that her genius was improvised while "in a condition of profound somnambulism…and total unconsciousness."[61] The injuries induced by these trances and overexertion was explained as the reason for her losing her voice in Paris.[62] Emma began working as an actress at London's Adelphi Theatre and performed there continuously from 1842 through 1854 as Emma Harding.[63] Speculation abounds on her use of the name Harding by current scholarship, but no solid evidence exists other than its use as a stage name.[64] This biographical story followed Emma Hardinge Britten throughout her career, first by her own account in one of her earliest publications, *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature* (1860) to her formal autobiography published a year after her death. Newspaper advertisements would often announce her lectures with a brief biography, often including her early career as a musician and actress. *The Otago*

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[61] "Biography. Mrs. Emma Harding Britten," *Otago Witness*, 10 May 1879.

[62] Ibid.

[63] "The Adelphi Theatre Calendar: A Record of Dramatic Performances at a Leading Victorian Theatre."

[64] Mathiesen, *The Unseen Worlds of Emma Hardinge Britten*, IX. , *Harbinger of Light*, March 1879. In this biographical article Britten was referred to as a young widow when she visited New York for the first time. Was her husband where the name Hardinge came from? There are no records of a marriage other than to William Britten in 1870.

Witness proclaimed her "cultivation of a magnificent voice" from an early age, her accomplishments as a pianist, composer and a protégé of the most eminent musicians.[65]

[65] "Biography. Mrs. Emma Harding Britten." .

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[66] James-Warren Child, *Emma Hardinge as Queen of the Wilis in the Phantom Dancers,* 1847. Victoria & Albert Museum Collections, height: 436 mm, Width: 359 mm. S. W. Fores.

The above image is in the tradition of a calling card photograph. Hardinge is costumed as Queen of the Wilis in the ballet *The Phantom Dancers,* a spoof of the popular ballet *Giselle*.[67] The picture is set in a graveyard next to a burial site evoking a connection between the living and the dead, perhaps serendipitously foreshadowing Hardinge's next career as a Spiritualist performer, theologian and reformer.

While acting in London, Hardinge and her mother lived for a while at 11 Tufton Street amongst a mixture of working-class and lower middle-class neighbors. They included a housekeeper, the wife of a butler, a house servant, a proprietor of houses, a mason, a carpenter, a scholar, a gardener, a civil engineer, an upholsterer, and a fancy button maker.[68] Living amongst these neighbors places Hardinge in an environment of artisans, servants, merchants and professionals, an assortment of people form varying social and economic backgrounds within the strict social hierarchical schema Victorian England is known for. Hardinge left London for New York City with her mother in 1855 for the first time under contract to perform on Broadway. In New York, at the age of 32, she was formally introduced to Modern Spiritualism and her career expanded to performing in an arena of lectureship and authorship.

VICTORIAN GENDERED PERFORMANCE

The Victorian period was an age of spectacle, entertainment and leisure. Performance took on many forms and it pervaded all areas of Victorian culture, domestic and public. Britten's performances expanded beyond the bounds of Victorian gender

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[67] Katherine Newey, "Fairies and Sylphs: Femininity, Technology and Technique," in *Theatre, Performance and Analogue Technology: Historical Interfaces and Intermedialities,* ed. Kara Reilly (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 112.

[68] "Census Returns of England and Wales, 1851."

ideals, and she was described as acting differently from conventions. She showed she was unlike the status quo. Britten married rather late in life, disrupting expectations, and her career grew from her own hard work. William Britten, a fellow Spiritualist, worked in tandem with his wife after their marriage in 1870, their careers fueled by Emma Britten's established celebrity.

Numerous etiquette manuals published during this period prescribed gender performance. These etiquette manuals focused on proper gender roles, and were written as much by women as men. They tried to divide the realms of private and public based on gender. The private or domestic sphere was the ideal realm for women, as only men should have to deal with the public world of business, work, and danger. Emma Hardinge Britten defied these prescribed social expectations for women by being a central figure in the public sphere from a young age.

The Victorian periodical press was the most significant organ in disseminating gender ideologies.[69] Etiquette texts both provoked effects of the real and described the real.[70] Performance created gender as a concept or an identity because there is no

[69] Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green, and Judith Johnston, ed. *Gender and the Victorian Periodical* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[70] Gwendolyn Audry Foster, *Troping the Body: Gender, Etiquette, and Performance* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), ix.

essential biological femininity. "'Female-ness' is produced by acting 'female.'"[71] Acting creates a social reality. Therefore, performance can subvert stereotypes.[72]

Etiquette manuals were preoccupied with performance inside and outside the home. Such matters extended to the physical world to include interior decorating texts.[73] Women were responsible for furnishing the home and creating a haven away from the heartless world for their husbands to return to after work. Female authors of etiquette books aspired to hold on to the middle-class ideal of the "Angel of the House" to exert a moral influence on the family, and in turn the nation. Isabella Beeton edited a monthly publication, *Beeton's Book of Household Management*, where frugality, economy, hospitality, and cheerfulness were the professions of the ideal wives and mothers inside the home.[74] The Cult of True Womanhood encompassed four creeds: piety, purity, submission, and domesticity.[75] These were the ideals of gendered performance set by the

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[71] Amy Lehman, *Victorian Women and Theatre of Trance: Mediums, Spiritualists and Mesmerists in Performance* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2009), 7.

[72] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990). Laurence Senelick, ed. *Gender in Performance: The Presentation of Difference in the Performing Arts* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1992). Lehman, *Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance,* 7. Israel, *Names and Stories: Emilia Dilke and Victorian Culture*, 164. Israel uses Butler's argument that gender is "performative, contingent, enacted, rather than expressive of a stable essence" in her biographical monograph on Emilia Dilke.

[73] Foster, *Troping the Body*, 1.

[74] Isabella Beeton, ed. *Beeton's Book of Household Management* (London: Cox and Wyman, 1861). "Advertisement," *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* 1859.An advertisement for Beeton's book was published as a didactic story in this magazine under the same publishers.

[75] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2, Part 1 (1966). Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American*

middle class, impossible to meet by working-class women, and unnecessary to aspire to by elite women living the life of luxury while other women performed their household duties. Ideally only men inhabited and performed within the public sphere, but many Victorian women transcended the dual cultural ideal. However, women were regularly public and prominent in the eighteenth century and they established acceptable parameters for women later in the nineteenth century.

Colonial and early American women authors, actresses and reformers were actors in the public sphere along with their British counterparts. In America, the establishment of common and district schools increased education and literacy among women in the early republic. These educated women gained a sense of themselves as intellectually equal actors in civil society with men. They started with the tea table and in the early nineteenth century were involved in community associations, teaching, directing educational institutions, writing for periodicals and newspapers for good money, writing and editing books, and lecturing on the public stage. All of the leaders of the woman's rights movement in the 1840s and 1850s were products of the new education system for women, which taught the same curriculum as male universities.[76]

British women authors also participated fully in a discursive public sphere with the likes of Jane Austen and Hannah More. Female historians, travel writers, philosophes

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Domesticity (New York: W W Norton & Company, Inc., 1976). Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

[76] Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

and political writers flourished in the Romantic era.[77] In 1792, long before Victorian women were transcending culturally-coded spheres, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote, "It has long since occurred to me that advice respecting behavior, and all the various modes of preserving a good reputation, which have been so strenuously inculcated on the female world, were specious poisons."[78] Lucy Aikin wrote *Epistles on Women* (1810), demanding a social revolution to initiate a women's movement.[79] Despite Wollstonecraft's conclusion in her enduring influential tract of the previous century, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, etiquette manuals prescribing proper behavior continued to pervade Victorian culture over a hundred years later.

Actresses began paving the way for women in the public sphere, occupying center stage. Highly successful, celebrated, professional women actresses emerged in the eighteenth century. They were celebrities and role models for women. Audiences were fascinated and these women helped to shape notions of femininity, one that included natural judgment, autonomy, and an ability to make proper ethical decisions.[80] Actresses used their celebrity to influence others and this often involved political issues.

Susanna Rowson was an eighteenth-century, transatlantic actress, poet, novelist, feminist, educator and geographer. Rowson merged her acting career with her writing,

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[77] Anne K. Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

[78] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, Third Edition ed. (London: J. Johnson, 1796), 144.

[79] Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation*.

[80] Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2010).

harnessing her celebrity to sell her novels, poetry and plays. She lived and worked between England and the United States. To avoid negative connotations and accusations of sexual promiscuity that many actresses faced, Rowson claimed her husband's surname, which offered respectability. Once Rowson left the theater in 1797, she lost her theatrical notoriety and was unable to promote her novels as successfully.[81] Rowson's life reveals similarities with Emma Hardinge Britten half a century later, but also important differences exist between the two.

Britten, like Rowson, began her public career as an actress and worked within a transatlantic arena. Differences between the two expose significant cultural changes and different opportunities Britten had access to. Britten did not rely on the celebrity of her acting career. In fact, there were instances that her acting past was used to denigrate her career as a Spiritualist theologian, insinuating fraud. Britten's writings were explicitly intellectual, theological and political, whereas Rowson used novels to symbolically express cultural and political climates. Britten did not marry to establish respectability and avoided the coverture laws, which give a husband control over a wife's earnings, until she was 47 and married William Britten. Modern Spiritualism offered Britten a fresh and popular domain to capitalize on in an environment with an expanded print culture, education, literacy rate, and transportation. Still, Rowson and her contemporary actresses and women authors paved the way for women in the public sphere that grew in the nineteenth century.

[81] Melissa Homestead, and Camryn Hansen, "Susanna Rowson's Transatlantic Career," *Early American Literature* 45, no. 3 (2010).

Outside the home social reform movements and leisure activities emerged as acceptable activities for women to perform in the public sphere in the nineteenth century. White middle-class women retained the element of True Womanhood while conducting social reform activities and participating in moral benevolence societies in the public sphere.[82] Likewise, public spaces for women were created in urban environments in the second half of the nineteenth century. The culture of shopping and department stores encouraged women out of the home as an extension of domestic duties. While performing household management duties of shopping for the home, a woman would incorporate some leisure activity while she was out. Shopping meant a trip to the shop, but also to break for tea, eat lunch, or perhaps visit a club, museum or theater.[83] The popularity of the Victorian theater provided an employment opportunity for women beginning acting careers. Theater performance was a conventional avenue for women moving outside culturally-coded boundaries.

VICTORIAN THEATER AND PERFORMANCE

The words performance and theater have different linguistic and cultural meanings. Theater refers to any act relating to traditional drama, and an expectation for that tradition to be carried on by the participants. Performance encompasses any action,

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[82] E.R. Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth Century America* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1986). Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York 1789-1860* (Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

[83] Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

and as it relates to theater, an action that brings an audience together, often making a larger point or having an agenda other than mere entertainment. Actors perform in theaters, each making the performance their own through emotion, intellectual ideology, or linguistic performance through language and their presentation of language, i.e. hesitations and false starts. In the Victorian-era theater attendance flourished among all classes. One reason was the improvement in transportation, and safer streets at night. When more people began to attend the theater, more theaters opened.[84]

Britten's career can also be understood within the context of the amateur theatricals popular in eighteenth century Europe that grew in popularity in nineteenth-century Europe, England, America and the Anglo-centric world. Women could partake in play-acting in the domestic sphere and retain their respectability.[85] "Closet stages" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were an alternative theatrical site for women as a "small experimental theater."[86] The closet was an actual space in many upper-middle-class homes of the eighteenth-century. In this space women imagined, wrote and created theatricals as well as rehearsed and prepared dramas and gendered identities for public viewing or private, semiprivate dramatizations.[87] Private theatricals

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[84] Nicoll Allardyce, *The Audience: The History of Late Nineteenth Century Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949).

[85] Lehman, *Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance*, 9.

[86] Catherine B. Burroughs, *Closet Stages: Joanna Baillie and the Theater Theory of British Romantic Women Writers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 11.

[87] Ibid.

came into vogue in American parlors in the 1850s and 60s.[88] Guides to parlor theatricals poured off the American press to help Victorians transform their parlors into small theaters. Platforms were set up with curtains and special effects, while the performers wore elaborate costumes and make-up.[89] Britten's position within the "cult" of Spiritualism, as suggested by a newspaper reporter, was acceptable "as long as the spirits are invoked to give entertainment to the family circle by bringing messages form the other world, there is nothing more to be said against it than there is to be said against any other form of parlor magic."[90] This extravagance can be traced to what Hobsbawm called "The era of the triumphant bourgeois."[91] The unprecedented economic prosperity between 1848 and 1875 allowed an atmosphere of self-confidence and led to what Veblen called "conspicuous consumption" in order to display one's social standing.[92] One of a Victorian woman's major social responsibilities was to demonstrate her husband's substance by spending money lavishly, and parlor theater was one of these extravagances.[93]

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[88] Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 153.

[89] Ibid., 175-77.

[90] "Spiritualism and Free Love," *Auckland Star*, 22 April 1879.

[91] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875* (Great Britain: Weidenfeld & Nicholson Ltd, 1975).

[92] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: A Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 83.

[93] Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women*, 186-87.

Children were exempt from the rigid Victorian gender ideologies until they became adults. Emma was among thousands of child performers of this era. Children were a prominent feature in nineteenth-century theater, advertisements, and charades at home. Adults encouraged theater work that was well paid, whether as the star of the show or the small role of a supernumerary.[94] It is estimated that 10,000 children worked in theaters across England. Despite the nineteenth-century politics regulating child labor, child performers flourished, and royalty endorsed and encouraged child performances.[95] Queen Victoria remembered with fondness her childhood charades and later rehearsed plays at home with her own children.[96] Additionally, the spectacle of opulently costumed children was a large part of Queen Victoria's Jubilee scene.[97]

Victorians adored child actors because of their exceptional capacity to play and make believe. Robert Louis Stevenson assessed it as follows, "the child makes believe for its own benefit, rather than requiring an audience to suspend belief."[98] Hyppolite Clairon, an eighteenth-century French actress, remembered her transition from child actor to adult actor that happened for her at the age of twelve. She began to "derive a pleasure

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[94] Anne Varty, *Children and Theatre in Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 1.

[95] Ibid., 2.

[96] George Rowell, *Queen Victoria Goes to the Theatre* (London: Paul Elek, 1978), 71. Queen Victoria's Journal entry of 21 February 1884.

[97] Varty, *Children and Theatre in Victorian Britain*, 1.

[98] Ibid., 10.

from dissimulation."[99] The transition came when an actor recognized their performance as telling lies and not just making believe in order to require the audience to suspend belief.[100] Not all child actors recalled their days on the stage as blissful, however. Marie Wilton remembered with regret her career as a child actor: "Only work and responsibility from a very tender age."[101] Emma was twelve when she began performing in public following her father's death, and she was not necessarily considered a child actor in the 1830s. Not until the 1889 Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was twelve considered an age necessary for regulation.

Despite the prominence of children in the theater, the 1889 Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children prohibited the theatrical employment of children under seven, required regulation of those between seven and ten, and required licensing for girls under 16 and boys under 14, with Millicent Fawcett, a British suffragist, at the head of the campaign.[102] Her problem with children being exploited for the stage was based on her concern that their employment in this arena as children did not necessarily lead to a correlating adult career, and their exposure to the theater at such a young age would ruin them. Fawcett asserted in her Third Report given to the Royal Commission that

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[99] Hyppolite Clairon, *Memoirs of Hyppolite Clairon, the Celebrated French Actress: With Reflections Upon the Dramatic Art.*, vol. II (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1800), 30.

[100] Julia Stone Peters, *Theatre and the Book, 1480-1800. Print, Text and Performance in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 293.

[101] Sir Squire Bancroft and Lady Marie Bancroft, *'Marie Wilton's Narrative,' Mr and Mrs Bancroft on and Off the Stage, Written by Themselves.* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1888), 7.

[102] Varty, *Children and Theatre in Victorian Britain*, 7.

employing children in the theater meant their "utter ruin – not one in a hundred escapes." She further reported, "the children are employed by the hundreds, while those of them who can obtain engagements in theatres after they are grown up are counted by the tens."[103] Emma Hardinge Britten was counted among those tens, and when her career started on the cusp between childhood and adulthood in the 1830s, there were no government regulations in place. By the mid-nineteenth century Modern Spiritualism paved the way for more diverse employment opportunities.

Modern Spiritualism offered children in Britain and the United States another mode of employment other than acting and factory work, for example. Children gained access to autonomy and independence through work as mediums, including social mobility for working-class children, and middle-class children found avenues for disrupting Victorian social norms of marriage. Scholarship on childhood and youth has amassed findings that are relevant to young mediums. Child mediums and women mediums resembled each other in their undermining of Victorian ideals.[104] The notion of girlhood, not yet adulthood, continued until a girl married or had a baby out of wedlock. The age of marriage for girls in Western Europe tended to occur in the mid-twenties. A girl entering the public sphere of the late nineteenth century was not an uncommon occurrence with modern consumerism and leisure in the form of shops, classrooms,

[103] Millicent Fawcett, *The Times*, 8 February 1889.

[104] Owen, "The Other Voice: Women, Children and Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism."

trains, theaters, and dance halls appearing on the public streets of the new modern city.[105] A sense of a new generation asserting a new gender ideal exemplified the late nineteenth century. Mediumship offered girls an avenue to social mobility and subversion of Victorian norms by the middle of the century, decades before a changing modern city in the last decade of the nineteenth century facilitated the emergence of New Womanhood.

Girl mediums often toured and became part of the entertainment and spectacle side of Modern Spiritualism or were invited to upper-class homes to partake in private séances. Some found wealthy benefactors to support them while they worked in private home séances. Other men often exploited these young girls and women by making them entertain while these men, as sponsor or husband, charged exorbitant fees and made lots of money.[106] Despite the many stories of exploitation, some working-class girl mediums found access to social mobility through their mediumistic endeavors. They earned money, were welcomed into upper-class society as performers or celebrities, and had the opportunity of transatlantic and continental travel.[107]

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[105] Mary Jo Maynes, Birgitte Søland, and Christina Benninghaus, ed. *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills: Placing Girls in European History, 1750-1960* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

[106] Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 227-34. Britten exposed one such situation in Australia. The court testimony of a witness, a Professor Mapes from New York, was used to undermine the authenticity of Spiritualism. Britten knew the real story all too well. Professor Mapes discovered his soon-to-be wife, Miss Cora Hatch, to be a trance medium at the age of fifteen. Mapes married Hatch at 15 and exploited her gifts of mediumship by making her work to exhaustion, and took all of the money. Hatch eventually escaped by the help of William Britten, Emma Britten's husband. This is how Britten knew the story so intimately.

[107] Owen, "The Other Voice: Women, Children and Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism."

Kate and Maggie Fox epitomized the phenomenon of girl mediums acquiring upward social mobility. They were from Hydesville, New York, and their father was a blacksmith. Within a year of their celebrity, they began performing in public halls and spiritualist circles, and were invited into upper-class homes, being greatly admired and sought after by the elite. They traveled to England and Europe delivering spiritual messages as their gifts evolved from communication through raps and knocks to trance mediumship and spirit materialization.[108]

Another contemporary example was Florence Cook, born in 1856. Cook grew up most of her young life in Hackney, England. She began doing séances when she was 15, and performed in the public sphere as a private medium through the support of a wealthy benefactor, which was not an unusual practice for many young mediums. Mr. Charles Blackburn offered to support Miss Cook and her impressive gifts so she could remain a more respected private medium. Later Mr. William Crookes, respected scientist, took over her management as part of his scientific investigation of spirit communication. Miss Cook is most famous for her spirit control named Katie King and her full materialization. Katie King, the spirit, evolved over the many years Miss Cook performed, from a slight vision of a face to full-formed physical body materialization. In full form, Katie King would take liberties with the sitters in the circle. She would touch them, allow herself to be touched, and speak in language inappropriate for young girls.[109] These girls exemplify working-class girl mediums transcending the class barrier in Victorian England and

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[108] R. Laurence Moore, *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[109] Trevor H. Hall, *The Spiritualists. The Story of Florence Cook and William Crookes* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1962).

America. The venues in which they performed -- séances, lectures and other spiritualist activities, whether inside or outside the home -- consisted of men and women partaking in these together in a hetero-social environment, while a mixed-class audience enjoyed many public entertainments together. Women mediums also gained social mobility through mediumship. However, women worked within a different set of cultural standards as adults.

The ebullient acceptance of children in the theater ran counter to debates regarding the respectability of the acting profession for adult women. According to John Coleman's 1885 article, "The Social Status of the Actor," in the *National Review*, adult actors had to continually assert the decency of their profession until as late as 1885.[110] Adult actresses garnered reputations as "inhuman monstrosities" and prostitutes who were intrinsically different from other women. While actresses received praise and were allowed an authoritative voice on stage, and had independence and power in their own right, their actions and reputations were not deemed womanly, as prescribed by culturally coded ideals.[111] "The theatre was a battleground" for competing gender ideologies throughout the Victorian period.[112] Captivated by an actress's power, men expressed anxiety over the command she had over an audience.[113] Yet the stage still offered women

[110] Varty, *Children and Theatre in Victorian Britain*, 5.

[111] Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[112] Ibid., xi.

[113] Ibid., 13.

a professional career, one of the few accessible to them.[114] Florence Nightingale, pioneer of modern nursing and famed nurse during the Crimean War, spoke of the acting profession in a positive light for women: "An actress was different from other women…because she was not compelled to 'annihilate herself' by becoming merely the 'complement' to her husband and his vocation."[115] Nightingale's determination to have a career in nursing helped to open the door for women in nursing and other professional careers. Nursing became one of the fastest growing profession for women in the nineteenth century, offering them an independent chance at social mobility.[116] Likewise, mediumship through trance performances in séance rooms and lectures offered women an avenue for social mobility.

SPIRITUALISM AS PERFORMANCE

Trance performance and mediumship were part of Victorian theater, including in-home parlor entertainments.[117] These rituals of Spiritualism, rappings and séances, were themselves performances to be viewed and critiqued by an audience.[118] Britten began her

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[114] Ibid., 3.

[115] Ibid., 5.

[116] Sue Hawkins, "From Maid to Matron: Nursing as a Route to Social Advancement in Nineteenth-Century England," *Women's History Review* 19, no. 1 (2010).

[117] Lehman, *Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance*. Lehman is a theater historian and she examined women who practiced trance lecturing and mediumship with the theories and practice of acting and audience reception dynamics. Simone Natale, "The Medium on the Stage: Trance and Performance in Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 9, no. 3 (2011).

[118] David Walker, "The Humbug in American Religion: Ritual Theories of Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 23, no. 1 (2013): 30.

career as a medium leading séances, and continued to perform at séances contemporaneously with her lecture tours. A historical connection between women in a trance state and theater dates back to the ancient Greeks where the Delphic oracles were always women and impersonated Apollo in a trance state, although they were precluded from acting in the popular open-air theaters of the ancient period.[119] Further, shamanistic performance was considered primal theater, and consisted of a delusionary or hallucinatory experience.[120] The Delphic oracle was presumably possessed by spirit, yet had considerable political and religious influence.[121] Similarly, Britten along with other Victorian women found significant opportunities to be active in the public sphere through trance performance and mediumship, whether fully conscious and calculating or possessed by spirit.

Britten's work in Modern Spiritualism became wholly entrenched in the United States, as she did not return to England until after the Civil War and for relatively short trips to expose England to the sophistication of American Spiritualism. Her home for decades was in the Northeastern United States in New York and Boston. In America a variety of spiritualist entertainments could be found in abundance at anniversary celebrations of the "Rochester Knockings," which took place on March 31st, and annual Spiritual camp meetings held through the summer months of July and August. Both primary sources and secondary scholarship confirm that the origins of Modern

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[119] Lehman, *Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance*.

[120] E. T. Kirby, *Ur-Drama: The Origins of Theatre* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 12.

[121] Lehman, *Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance*, 4-5.

Spiritualism or the reemergence of ancient spiritualism began in upstate New York in 1848 when three young girls developed a communication system with the haunting spirit in their home known as the "Rochester Knockings."

At these Spiritual Camp Meetings, Britten reported,

> all sorts of amusements are provided. Large halls or tents are erected for dancing, music, and various exhibitions, but the 'auditorium' or space fitted with seats, together with speaker's stand, and accommodation for a choir, form an invariable feature of every encampment," and "sailing parties, séances, amusements, and business, all proceed in due course, until the hour for speaking arrives, when thousands assemble at the speaker's stand, to partake of the solid intellectual refreshment of the day.[122]

Britten described her own experiences when engaged as a speaker at Lake Pleasant, in Montague, Massachusetts, and at Neshiminy Falls in Pennsylvania in 1880.

> At the first of these gatherings [I] addressed an almost breathlessly attentive audience of nearly eighteen thousand persons, and at the second there were twenty thousand people on the ground, many of whom, of course, could not approach near enough to the auditorium to hear the speaker.[123]

The officers in charge of these meetings made arrangements with the railroad companies to bring passengers at reduced group rates, and on Sundays and special excursion days the visitors often swelled to twenty thousand. Refreshments were provided, and Britten reported that means of entertainment, both mental and physical, were arranged in due proportion for such large assemblies.[124] The public arena of spiritual camp meetings was

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[122] Britten, *Nineteenth Century Miracles*, 542-43.

[123] Ibid., 544.

[124] Ibid., 545.

a different public sphere from the new urban spaces opening for women, and these venues allowed Britten to enter and address unprecedentedly large crowds.

Popular interest in the supernatural as entertainment, an interest Britten exploited, can be traced back to at least the Romantic and gothic drama popular in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Examples include *The Castle Spectre* (1797), Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* on stage in 1823, the presence of vampires on stage before Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and up to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1887.[125] "La Somnambula" was a popular opera playing at the same time Britten was lecturing in Australia.[126]

Interest in the supernatural is one of the reasons séances proved a much-admired form of entertainment in the home, similar to parlor theatre. Séances, like parlor theater, demanded a stage in the form of a table, and sometimes a make shift closet with a curtain

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[125] Lehman, *Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance*, 11.

[126] "Theatrical Gossip," *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 28 June 1878. "Melbourne Gossip," *Otago Daily Times*, July 6, 1878. In 1878, while Britten was in Australia, the theatrical managers considered opening on Sunday evenings because Britten was clearing over £50 just on her Sunday night Spiritualist lectures at the Opera House, which they described as "nothing more nor less than a performance." "Passing Events," *Illustrated Australian News*, 8 July 1878. Britten's audience was overflowing. Her lectures were reviewed right alongside musical acts. "Town Talk," *The Geelong Advertiser*, 13 July 1878. Even her midweek lectures were equally well attended. People were so charmed on their first visit that they were induced to go a second or third time. "Melbourne Gossip." The Melbourne Waxworks had already opened on Sundays with anti-spiritist lectures and a brass band. "Metropolitan Gossip," *Riverine Herald*, 22 June 1878. Madame Letti Wilmott lectured on "Spiritualist Humbug." The Riverine Herald in Australia asked why should Britten bring in £50 every Sunday and Mrs. Wilmot not have a say? It foresaw that all Melbourne theaters would be open Sunday nights because the managers didn't "fancy seeing other people make more of a Sunday night out of the theatres than they can any other night in the week, for lectures have no expense." These Sunday entertainments began with sacred music and moved to operatic "because you can perform what you like on Sunday, so long as it is called sacred." Britten's Sunday lectures were such a huge success that it opened all of Melbourne's theaters on Sundays.

for the medium to sit behind. Some Victorian homes had dedicated séance rooms, and guides for putting on a proper séance poured off the presses.[127] The séance was the main entertainment of an evening, usually following dinner, or simultaneous with it in a different room, where the guests took turns at the séance table.[128] A letter from Dorothy Wyndlow Pattison to her close friend Kenyon Jones reveals how the séance was the main treat of an evening gathering, as well as a hetero-social gathering. She wrote to say that, "'the wonderful medium' will not be able to come here this evening. I am writing this not to prevent you coming, for I should be very glad to see you, but for fear you should be disappointed at finding nothing worth coming for."[129] Séances were theatre, and in the 1870s mediums began performing materializations, which became the pinnacle of mediumship.[130] Frank Podmore, founding member of the Fabian Society and psychical researcher, referred to all those present at séances as performers in his "Report on Séances" in 1873.[131] Thomas Featherstone referred to séances as performances in one of

[127] One example was written by Hardinge. Emma Hardinge, *Rules for the Formation and Conduct of Spirit Circles* (Glasgow: James M'Geachy, 1868).

[128] "John Hamilton Gray Séance Account 1866," in *Johnstone Family Papers* (Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscript and University Archives. The Buxton Papers/ 193).

[129] "Letter from Dorothy Wyndlow Pattison to Kenyon Jones 1876," (Walsall Local History Centre MS 444/5).

[130] Owen, *The Darkened Room*, 42. Séances evolved throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Phenomena began as rappings and table movements. Materializations began to occur in the 1870s, wherein a white, translucent figure of the spirit would appear. In the early twentieth century the phenomena extended to produce physical ectoplasm fluid.

[131] "Report on Séances 1873," in *Frank Podmore Collection* (Wellcome Library, Archives and Manuscripts Section MS 3925).

his notebooks. "The agents in this performance…are generally a table and a medium – the first being a means whereby the spirits questioned convey their replies in a succession of raps and a second a man or woman who acts as the interlocutor."[132] Yet Britten warned of the frivolousness associated with spirit circles.

> None should enter the circle, none should appeal to the higher and better world without a holy purpose, without high aspiration, without a lifting up of soul. If ye do, ye are rushing in where angels fear to tread, and the result will be that the darker and the more presumptuous earth-bound spirits who crowd around ye, and merely respond to the light, frivolous, and idle purpose of beguiling the leisure moment, will be present, instead of the higher and more exalted beings.[133]

Despite Britten's seriousness about Modern Spiritualism and communication with the spirit realm, she could not control the popularity of séances and spirit-circles as fun entertainments within and outside the home.

In the first decade after the emergence of what is known as Modern Spiritualism, some in Great Britain considered it pejoratively an American invention, while remaining curious nonetheless. One example is found in a letter from Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Lady Elgin in 1853 while in Florence, wherein she noted "the buzz of the spiritual world was in my ears in London too, and even here one may listen to it, particularly when the

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[132] Thomas Featherstone, "Spiritualism," in *Thomas Featherstone Notebooks* (British Library, Manuscript Collections MS81617).

[133] Emma Hardinge, *On the Spirit-Circle and the Laws of Mediumship: A Lecture Delivered by Mrs. Emma Hardinge, at Cleveland Hall, on Sunday Evening, July 2, 1871* (London: J. Burns, Progressive Library and Spiritual Institution, 1871), 10.

Americans, trailing clouds of spiritualism where they go, pays one a visit."[134] In that same year, Elizabeth Barrett Browning revealed a desire to find out the truth about Modern Spiritualism. She stated in a letter to her friend Isa that, "profane or not, I am resolved on getting as near to a solution of the spirit-question as I can."[135] She saw no more danger in what she called psychology, than in the safety of mineralogy, but it excited much more interest. Her interest lay in the fact spirits might actually be able to communicate, more than in their messages. "I certainly wouldn't set about building a system of theology out of their oracles – God forbid. They seem abundantly foolish," she wrote.[136] Thomas Featherstone's notebooks divulged antipathy for Americans and their humbuggery. He wrote,

> The spiritual notions seem to have traveled wither or thither from America – that land of Barnum Barnum and Humbug and whatever, if [there is] any truth in it, it has been presented to the public with such stupid and purposeless surrounding it that every reflective person has at once condemned it.[137]

In this latter example we see a reference to P.T. Barnum, an American who published the book *The Humbugs of the World,* and had a reputation as a cheat and swindler, but who,

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[134] "Letter from Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Lady Elgin, 7 January 1853," in *Letters to Robert Browning and other Correspondents by Elizabeth Barrett Browning with the Original Autographs* (British Library, Manuscript Collections RP 8784).

[135] "Letter from Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Miss Isa Blagden, 3 March 1853," in *Letters to Robert Browning and other Correspondents by Elizabeth Barrett Browning with the Original Autographs* (British Library, Manuscript Collections Ashley MS2522).

[136] Ibid.

[137] Featherstone, "Spiritualism," 63.

by his own admission, gave the paying customer their money's worth in entertainment and spectacle.[138]

Barnum initiated this type of performance, and exploited the public's interest in freakish material, whether real or manipulated. Travelling freak shows garnered large crowds and made profit for the producer and the freaks themselves.[139] Barnum's name thus developed into a colloquial or defamatory slang for what fraudulent mediums might produce. As *The Spiritual Magazine* countered in 1861, "If the manifestations of Spiritualism are a truth, as we know them from frequent personal observation to be, it becomes a duty to see that they are not Barnumed by mediums, or used fraudulently as money-making implements."[140] Mediums' performances triggered a huge debate regarding whether or not mediums should accept money for their gifts because many believed it created the appearance of fraud. Britten along with other devoted Spiritualists endorsed scientific investigations of spirit phenomena to prove their veracity despite the existence of frauds.

Investigations into Spiritualist phenomena attempted to prove or disprove their authenticity. Henry Sidgwick, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge University, established the Society for Psychical Research in London in 1882. The American Society for Psychical Research was founded in 1884 in Boston. Learned, and both skeptical and

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[138] Della Pollock, ed. *Performing Social Rubbish: Humbug and Romance in the American Marketplace*, Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performancy & History (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 121-22.

[139] Marlene Tromp, ed. *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008).

[140] "Dr. Martin Van Buren Bly and the Times," *The Spiritual Magazine*, January 1861.

open-minded men founded these societies. Their purpose was through experimentation and examination of Spiritualist phenomena to find the truth. Fraudulent mediums blighted those who sought real investigative evidence. Fraudulent séances were associated with magic shows. Escape acts like Harry Houdini's were performed in séance rooms by professional mediums such as the Davenport Brothers who toured in America, Britain, Europe, and Australia for many years, successfully escaping from the binds often used to keep mediums in their place. Precautions were taken to insure a true investigation and to prevent the medium from producing the spirit manifestations in the séance rooms of touching, poking, pinching or slapping sitters; playing musical instruments; or creating a feeling of bodies moving around the dark room. Mediums were bound hand and foot and placed in cabinets. Fraudulent mediums became escape artists.[141] Authentic Spiritualists deemed it imperative that the frauds were exposed so as not to tarnish their religion and work. Britten supported ousting fraudulent mediums and found entertaining ways to attract people to Modern Spiritualism.

Hardinge yielded to the spirits' calling, and when her Broadway contract expired in 1856, she remained in New York and began lecturing and developing her theology of Modern Spiritualism. Large audiences, sometimes in the thousands, attended Britten's trance lectures. She was lauded for magnificent oratorical powers, a commanding and highly presentable stage appearance with much dramatic power and feeling, and an exuberant command of language.[142] Some described her as having a masculine voice and

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[141] Lehman, *Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance*, 94.

[142] "Mrs. Britten on Miracles," *The Australian Town and Country Journal*, 2 March 1878.

said she indulged in too much dramatic display.[143] These lectures were often billed, just like many other entertainments of the day, through sensational posters. Advertisements in newspapers were often in the Amusements section or Lectures, Sermons, Soirees, &c.[144] Her ideas reached many people in diverse public venues such as Masonic Halls, Mechanic Halls, Opera Houses, music halls, athenæums, theaters, or outside amphitheaters, whether it was her own theology of Spiritualism, or her political passions, such as abolition, women's rights, education reform, or housing for abused and outcast women and children.

Public entertainment venues were rented for Spiritualist performances, such as trance lectures, choirs and variety shows, and were broadly advertised in the popular press, as well as Spiritualist periodicals. One poster publicized a Grand Amateur Complimentary Concert with Emma Hardinge as the directress of Music at Dodworth's Hall and composer of all original words and music. Admission was 50 cents. Tickets were sold at the offices of the *Spiritual Telegraph*, the *Christian Spiritualist*, music stores, and at the door.[145] The Spiritualists' Volunteer Choir performed during Sunday services similar to choirs in Christian churches and cantor-led songs in Jewish synagogues. Upon finding how much everyone enjoyed the Spiritualist choir, Britten "resolved to institute a series of entertainments consisting of vocal and instrumental

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[143] "Footprints of Angels," *The Mercury*, 22 March 1878.

[144] Examples: "Lectures, Sermons, Soirees, &C.," *The Argus* 1878. "Amusements," *The Argus*, 3 April 1878. "Amusements," *The Geelong Advertiser*, 16 July 1878.

[145] Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 69-70.

music varied with recitations and *tableaux vivants."*[146] Britten booked performances at the New York Athenæum in which she arranged the programs, taught the recruits their several parts, rehearsed the music, accompanied the singers, invented and arranged the *tableaux*, and acted as band teacher, stage manager, and frequently as principal performer as a labor of love. According to Britten's autobiography, the New York Press commended these by proclaiming, "music in the heavenly spheres did not all consist of psalm singing," and they were met with high appreciation.[147]

Britten confessed to using theatrical modes of lighting to set a mood. She burned materials in fire pans that would cast lighting onto the stage. Lighting enhanced the spiritualist extravaganza. A red glare would evoke ghastly phantoms, while white lighting created a heavenly aspect of angelic appearance. Britten warned that lighting could also go terribly wrong, a theatrical hazard. The smoke could cause the performers or actors to choke and be blinded, as well as audience or séance members.[148] Staging techniques were used in séances similar to theater.[149] If all went well, lighting enhanced a Spiritualist spectacle, just as it enhanced theatrical performances. The same concept applied.

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[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid., 57.

[148] Ibid., 59-60.

[149] Bridget Bennett, "Sacred Theatres: Shakers, Spiritualists, Theatricality, and the Indian in the 1830s," *The Drama Review* 49, no. 3 (2005). Bennett examines spiritualist séances and Shaker manifestations as highly performative phenomenon with the use of special effects.

Britten viewed plays as a way of getting the word out about Modern Spiritualism in a positive light. Dramatic and comedic plays about Spiritualism came about as early as 1853 in London. "Table Moving, A Comediette in Two Acts" by G. D. Pitt, Esquire, was performed at the Pavilion Theatre in London and was set in an apartment in New York City.[150] Britten reviewed the play "Spirit and Matter" by G. Damiani performed in Boston in 1880, "a more bright, witty, and in all respects a more entertaining work, and at the same time one that more thoroughly opens up the length and breadth of spiritualism…is well worthy the attention of Lyceums and spiritualist amateur performers, as a means alike of instructing as well as entertaining the spectators."[151] Britten's apparent life mission was to spread what she believed was the true religion of all time, Modern Spiritualism, and she endeavored to make good use of her developed talent as a performer. Britten may well also have enjoyed the limelight, and she performed for large and small audiences of mixed gender and mixed classes.

A HETEROGENEOUS AND MIXED-CLASS LEISURE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Middle-class Victorians determined the moral and ideological climate of modern leisure and its growth. Their pursuit of leisure activities legitimized them for the rest of society.[152] Britten's often-immense audiences from the 1860s through the 1890s were advertised in daily newspapers and the penny press, attracting all classes of men and women. Kathy Peiss has argued that not until the turn of the twentieth century did

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[150] G. D. Pitt, "Table Moving: A Comediette in 2 Acts," (British Library, Manuscript Collections MS 52941G 1853).

[151] Emma Hardinge Britten, ""Spirit and Matter" by G. Damiani," *The Two Worlds*, 9 November 1888.

[152] Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, 29.

working-class single girls begin to partake in hetero-social cheap amusements, while married working class wives maintained homo-social activities deemed acceptable.[153] Mary Ryan examined the cultural and social context of publicness and found that civic ceremonies were the space where public meaning was created and displayed. Civic holidays joined the citizenry and the meanings of masculinity and femininity were constructed. However, following the Civil War, the middle classes retreated into the home for their holiday celebrations and complained about paying taxes for public expenditures for holiday entertainment. The streets, squares and parks were open to women as if channeling them into selective quarters and still chartered by gender prescriptions and class distinction. So Ryan argues that public territory was divided into male and female, homosocial and heterosexual regions.[154] I contend that women and men of all classes interested in séances and trance lectures participated in a hetero-social public sphere of leisure and amusement as early as the 1850s, much earlier than the evidence Peiss looks at. However, this type of entertainment may fall within what Ryan argues is a distinctive space particularly chartered for a mixed-class and gender audience.

World Fairs are an excellent example of a high attendance mixed-class, hetero-social leisure activity. World Fairs manifested as places of leisure and entertainment for mixed-class and hetero-social attendance as early as the first World's Fair, The Great Exhibition of 1851, despite upper class resistance. The Great Exhibition in London faced opposition during the planning phase from the London elite who worried about throngs of

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[153] Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

[154] Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 16.

the working classes and artisans converging on London and causing public disorder reminiscent of the Chartist movements of the late 1840s. The elite were concerned that refugees from failed continental revolutions combined with other masses of foreigners would descend on London for the Exhibition. They feared riots, robbery, rape, whoremongering, socialists, large gatherings of the working class in one place, and foreigners bringing in disease.[155]

Once opened, however, the most prominent people in England frequented the Great Exhibition. Queen Victoria and her consort Prince Albert were there on opening day to head the festivities. The Queen visited the exhibition every other day for the first three months. The Duke of Wellington, who previously opposed it, visited the fair often.[156] London's Great Exhibition had the reputation for being accessible to rich and poor alike. This was the reason for opposition and fear by the London elite at the outset. People from all over were arriving to the Great Exhibition.[157] Ticket prices were set at shillings, and Saturday was half a crown. Free Admission was extended to schools and persons from charitable institutions. This offer was widely accepted.[158]

Stories abound about people who visited the Crystal Palace by overcoming great obstacles. An 84-year-old woman from Cornwall, one of England's poorest areas,

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[155] John E. Findling, ed. *Historical Dictionary of World's Fairs and Expositions, 1851-1988* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 8.

[156] R. L. Duffus, "When All the World Was Looking at the Crystal Palace," *New York Times*, August 15 1937.

[157] Jeffrey Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven Yale University Press, 1999), 148.

[158] Charles Benjamin Norton, *World's Fairs from London 1851 to Chicago 1893* (Chicago: Milton Weston co., 1893), 14-15.

allegedly walked to the fair.[159] The success of the Great Exhibition can be attributed to the mass attendance of the working-class visitors on the one-shilling days, and without their attendance, the Great Exhibition would have been a financial failure.[160] Travel journals reveal the diversity of the visitors. Lorenza Stevens Berbineau, a house servant from Boston, told of her visits to the Great Exhibition in her pocket diary. Berbineau, as a member of the American working class, was fortunate to accompany her wealthy employer's family on their trip to Europe at the time of the Great Exhibition in London.[161] Her journal entries on July 31 and August 4 reflect her enthusiasm. At the Exhibition she traveled vicariously around the world by viewing the exhibits of other countries.[162] The opening up of leisure activities and entertainments to all classes as early as 1851 was a boon to Britten's lecture circuits that began in the latter part of the 1850s. Britten's published works, often pamphlets of her phonographically reported or transcribed lectures, were sold cheaply enough for working-class individuals to purchase and read, and through them learn about her ideas of Modern Spiritualism and political opinions.[163]

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[159] Christopher Hobhouse, *1851 and the Crystal Palace* (New York: E.P. Dulton & Company, 1937), 139.

[160] Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 211.

[161] Lorenza Stevens Berbineau, *From Beacon Hill to the Crystal Palace: 1851 Travel Diary of a Working Class Woman* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002), 1.

[162] Ibid., 66-68.

[163] Some examples include: Hardinge, *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*. Sold for 50 cents in the United States and 5 shillings in England. *The Wildfire Club* (Boston: Berry,

By contrast to these very public and large spaces of exhibition, within the home, evidence of hetero-social séances is also evidenced in the letter mentioned above by Dorothy Wyndlow Pattison to her friend Kenyon Jones, and in the home of the Theobald family. The element of a mixed-class social environment was less common in the home, but it happened. The Theobalds were an English spiritualist middle-class family, wherein the entire family, including the young boys, communicated with the deceased children of the family in the spirit world. This communication gave great comfort to the entire Theobald family. Morrell Theobald, the father, was skeptical at first, but gained a great appreciation and ultimately developed mediumistic skills, devoted much of his time to the London Society of Psychical Research, and wrote several books on Spiritualism. His sister, Florence, was the first in the family to communicate with spirits. Not long after, the two young boys discovered they had the power to communicate as well, and it was not long until the whole family became adepts. The family participated in weekly home circles and invited close neighbors to attend. The spirits were consulted more regularly if there were pressing issues. The servant girl of this family, Mary, also began professing abilities to communicate with the spirits. At first she was suspected of deception, but soon she was sitting with the family séance and offering up her clairvoyant visions and entranced messages. The other servants in the house began resenting Mary and her increasing privilege, and left their employment with the Theobalds. Mary and Morrell's

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Colby, and Company, 1861). Sold for 7s. 6d. in England. *Address Delivered at the Winter Soirees* (London: Thomas Scott, 1865). A series of eight lectures, and each sold for sixpence. Emma Hardinge Britten, *The Electric Physician, or, Self Cure through Electricity : A Plain Guide to the Use of Electricity, with Accurate Directions for the Treatment and Cure of Various Diseases, Chronic and Acute.* (Boston: Dr. William Britten, 1875). Sold for 50 cents in the United States. *The Chinese Labour Question*. Sold for threepence in Australia and England.

daughter, Nellie, took to cleaning the house together and ultimately became great friends. Mary moved into Nellie's bedroom. Morrell at first "strongly objected to [this] from social considerations."[164] Morrell, however, wrote that Mary's transition from servant to friend came about quite naturally. He noted that this did create a social difficulty and distressed many of their friends. He wrote, "Doubtless Spiritualism comes somewhat as a leveler of social distinctions, and although we are slow to learn such a lesson, I am not sure that it is not one very needful for an age which is so much fettered by the 'sickly forms' and 'social wrongs' by which classes and castes are hedged in."[165] Mary clearly crossed class lines and became a trusted member of the Theobald family. As Morrell Theobald wrote, Spiritualism was a class leveler, bringing classes together.

Various issues of Victorian performance were thus of great significance to Emma Hardinge Britten and her use of trance lectures and séances as entertainment and amusement on both sides of the Atlantic: child performance, domestic (or closet) drama, and the burgeoning middle class culture of leisure with its World Fairs and exhibitions. Emma Hardinge Britten performed in this public sphere most of her life, beginning in 1834 up until her death in 1899. Séances and trance lectures were as much a part of Victorian-era entertainment as parlor theater and music halls; young girls could attain social mobility; and a mixed-class, hetero-social environment that existed much earlier than scholars have previously proposed. Britten's experiences as a young actress, and later a public speaker and trance lecturer, coincided with the popularity and embrace of

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[164] Morrell Theobald, *Spirit Workers in the Home Circle: An Autobiographic Narrative of Psychic Phenomena in Family Daily Life Extending over a Period of Twenty Years* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1887), 93.

[165] Ibid.

entertainment and leisure during the nineteenth century among all classes, and her style of performance fit the bill. This style benefited her career immensely and spread her Spiritualist theology and political ideas further and faster than imaginable in an earlier time.

CHAPTER III

THE SPIRIT OF VICTORIAN RELIGION

> Why do you draw the line of demarcation between Christ and modern Spiritualism? Why call the one a religion, the other a simple science? The one the work of God, and the other the work of your spirit friends? Are not both performed by those who, through the power of magnetism, work the telegraph between the visible and invisible worlds? Why are some divine, and called sacred by the name of Christian, ---and others profane and merely Spirit mediums?[166]

These were some of the questions Emma Hardinge asked her audience on the occasion of her first lecture on Modern Spiritualism in England under self-proclaimed spirit influence. The date was November 6, 1865, and the place was the first of the private London Winter Soirees hosted by Mr. Benjamin Coleman, which hundreds of guests keen to hear about the relatively new phenomenon of Modern Spiritualism in England attended. Hardinge gave this lecture in her first return visit from the United States since she left London ten years earlier. She had developed a following in the United States that she wanted to expand into England, her homeland. In her first English lecture, she attempted to answer a question the audience had secretly written down before she appeared, a custom in trance lectures to prevent mediums from fraudulently designing answers ahead of time. The group query was, "In what particulars are the teachings of Christianity and the facts recorded in the gospels elucidated and confirmed by Spiritualism?"[167] As the audience's question and Hardinge's rejoinder – phrased as the questions expressed above – make clear, the lecture highlighted the relationship

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[166] Hardinge, *Address Delivered at the Winter Soirees*, 6.

[167] Ibid., 2.

between Modern Spiritualism and Christianity, an obvious concern of this audience based on their question and a reflection of a curious population.[168]

Hardinge professed in this lecture that the "miracles" of Christ and his disciples were no different from the magnetic phenomena of Modern Spiritualism.[169] Jesus Christ's life and ministry, she argued, offered an example of the powerful use of magnetic healing, clairvoyance, and prophesies that had been used throughout the ages, and was reemerging in the popular movement of Modern Spiritualism. Hardinge explained it was the exact same forces at work, then and now, but scientific terminology instead of blind religious rhetoric could be used to explain the phenomena associated with Modern Spiritualism.[170] While the word "miracles" was no longer used in the age of science, but rather chemistry, the same power of God's laws, also known as natural laws, was at work.[171] Hardinge continued in this vein by listing the "miracles" in the various Gospels and exposing their similarity and connection with Modern Spiritualist

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[168]See the following regarding the changing nature of English religious life: Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth, 1870-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). Cox argues that despite a drop in church attendance, whether Anglican or nonconformist, and agnosticism became more respectable following the Darwinian revolution, most English people adopted religious views and influenced the modern nation. The English were not secular despite standing out among modern nations as "unchurched." Byrne, *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England, 1850-1939*. Byrne argues Anglican teachings were fluid and constantly shifting. Victorian faith should be approached through the lens of adaptation rather than the idea of secularization or decline in religion.

[169] Magnetic healing and natural laws will be explained further in a subsequent chapter on the connection between Modern Spiritualism and science, and how scientific language was used to buttress the veracity of Modern Spiritualism.

[170] Hardinge, *Address Delivered at the Winter Soirees*, 3.

[171] Ibid., 4.

phenomena.[172] Hardinge emphasized that Christ encouraged his believers to exhibit the same phenomenal acts of healing, clairvoyance and prophecy as proof that they were His followers, as noted in the Bible. Approximately 500 years after Christ, however, powerful priests made it illegal for laymen to perform these phenomena. Those who did were stigmatized as witches and persecuted.[173] Hardinge's trance lecture exemplified a key element of her theology, namely that Spiritualism espoused pure truths that were often corroborated by Christ's actions and teachings, or the Gospels in the New Testament Bible followed by most Christians. She used this rhetoric, not to corroborate a connection between Spiritualism and the Christian religion, but as an introduction to anti-clerical and anti-Christian thought.

Emma Hardinge Britten's writings and lectures shed light on her theology and her role in the maturation and spread of Modern Spiritualism in the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly in the United States, England, Australia, and New Zealand. Britten was one of the most prolific promoters of the burgeoning religion, Modern Spiritualism, and her significance has not been acknowledged sufficiently. Her theology drew from ancient ideas that became part of an ongoing philosophical and religious discussion that began in the mid-eighteenth century with Enlightenment and esoteric precepts and praxis, and continued in the nineteenth century with Romantic ideas, a discussion that circulated around Europe, the United States and across the world. Modern Spiritualism evolved in different directions through a complex dialog among Spiritualist theologians. Not all of these Spiritualist theologians gained as sustained a

[172] Ibid., 3-4.

[173] Ibid., 5-6.

foothold in the permanent Spiritualist doctrines as Britten. She created her 'brand' of Spiritualism through her own research, philosophy and, according to Britten herself, spiritual influence. Her insights remain foundational in today's Spiritualist teachings and churches. Britten's dedication to promoting Spiritualism and expanding its purview through missionary work and lyceums contributed to today's Spiritualist churches and national associations, which rely on Britten's *Seven Principles of Spiritualism* as primary doctrine.

COMMON ELEMENTS OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM

Scholars have agreed on the genesis of Modern Spiritualism, also referred to as Victorian Spiritualism, with the Fox sisters in 1848 Hydesville, New York. The story began with three young girls - Leah, Kate, and Margaretta Fox - and their experiences with strange noises in their house in upstate New York near Rochester. Following their initial fears, the girls began to believe there was a consciousness behind the strange noises and developed a system of communication through a series of raps. At first they relied on yes and no answers to simple questions, followed by a more complex use of the alphabet through raps. They eventually believed the source of the rappings, through their communications, as the spirit of a murdered travelling salesman. News of the Fox sisters and their communication with the spirit world gained a quick popularity despite this being far from the first documented case of a spirit haunting. The ubiquitous media publicity announcing such phenomena far and wide immediately after the Hydesville activity created a popular sensation and made the careers of the young Fox sisters.[174] The

[174] Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 187. Godwin addresses other events similar to Hydesville that did not

growth of print-capitalism in this era allowed a growing population to be part of a larger community of knowledge.[175] The geographical region of Hydesville, located in upstate New York, was referred to as the 'Burned Over District,' a place where new religions constantly came and went. The people in this region were thus open to new, non-conformist ideas.[176] The United States, and the world, soon received Modern Spiritualism as a burgeoning new religion.[177]

In the nineteenth century Anglophone world, people were increasingly concerned with social conditions, empiricism, and shifts away from orthodoxy. Many opted to explore and accommodate different sets of beliefs rather than associate with one specific religion. A Religious Census in 1851 revealed that close to half of the worshipping

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cause the burgeoning of a new religion: "The Shaker community at Watervliet, New york, had had a rash of communications from the spirit world, beginning in 1837…In France, Alphonse Cahagnet thought he had invented a 'celestial telegraph' for communiation with the dead via his somnambulists…As for the famous rappings, 'bumps in the night' are commonplace in the chronicles of hauntings, and the Fox cottage had already suffered from them some years previously."

[175] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 36.

[176] McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*, 1; For more on the Burned-Over District see: Joshua Rothman, *Reforming America 1815-1860* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), xxvii. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1950).

[177] Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, xi. Godwin assigns the birth of two crucial events, Modern Spiritualism in 1848 and the founding of the Theosophical Society in 1875, to the United States, but their intellectual fulfillment to England.

population of England was not Anglican.[178] Non-conformity, as it related to rejecting traditional religion, first became an official term with the Act of Uniformity in England and Wales in 1662 when Protestants were dissenting from the Church of England, particularly Puritans.[179] Non-conformists, beginning in the eighteenth century, were typically Quakers, Unitarians, Shakers, Swedenborgians, and Deists, but also included moves to more radical, secular, philosophical movements like Freethought. Non-conformists rejected the traditionally accepted religion of the land, such as Anglicanism in England and the Chesapeake area of the United States, and Calvinist Christianity in New England. This rejection of Anglicanism and Calvinism began in eighteenth-century evangelicalism. This phenomenon is what American scholars call the Great Awakening and British scholars refer to as the eighteenth-century Evangelical movement. The Second Great Awakening in America during the first decades of the nineteenth century was quite distinct in many ways from its eighteenth-century incarnation. The movement became much more visible; huge camp meetings with ecstatic expressions of being saved were very public. Spiritualist camp meetings in the second half of the nineteenth century were similar to evangelical camp meetings. Common people gained powerful footholds in the religious scene through the democratization of Christianity during the Second Great Awakening. Minor religions and new theology allowed young men to build

[178] Timothy Larsen, *Contested Christianity: The Political and Social Contexts of Victorian Theology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2004), 2.

[179]Bibhash Choudhury, *English Social and Cultural History: An Introductory Guide and Glossary* (New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India, 2005), 173.

diverse churches open to all classes.[180] The environment created by the Second Great Awakening presented an ideal context for Britten and Spiritualism to flourish. Non-conformist religionists and secularists were predisposed, tolerant and drawn to Modern Spiritualism, because several of the nonconformist sects had practiced and experienced communication with the spirit realm.

Mediumship or a connection with the spirit realm was one of the main tenets of Modern Spiritualism. According to Britten and most Spiritualists, this phenomenon had occurred throughout the ages as a natural wonder. Women secured a place of importance within Modern Spiritualism through mediumship. Ordinarily women did not play a leading role in religious organizations, aside from relatively few exceptions, and their importance rested in a connection to the spiritual or esoteric. We can look at the Quakers and their acceptance of women speaking out of spirit inspiration. Going back to the English Civil War and Interregnum under Oliver Cromwell, radical Protestants attempted to move beyond traditional social and political boundaries toward an egalitarian community similar to early Christian communities. Their negations of traditional forms of authority came from God in the form of spiritual authority through God's gifts of prophecy, and this included women. English Quaker women took advantage of Cromwell's religious toleration during the Interregnum to write and preach in public. Quaker women were inspired by God's gift of prophecy, and ecstatic behavior proved more acceptable for women as "many Protestant writers depicted prophecy as a feminine

[180] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

activity, whether the actual prophet was a man or a woman."[181] Women were considered more susceptible to the divine light because convention prescribed that they possess less pride than men, and their essence was believed to be irrational, emotional and receptive to outside influences, which suited them to prophecy. Other Protestant sectarians during this time of toleration, such as the Muggletonians, did not approve of prophetic women. It is interesting to note that according to historian Phyllis Mack, many of the women accused as witches in the seventeenth century were not acting out of any personal, social or economic deprivation, nor were they self-indulgent, desperately poor or loners as historians have asserted. Many were Quaker church members, married with children, supported by Quaker family members, and they "carried on mundane activities of charity work, petitioning parliament, supervising the morals of church members, and caring for prisoners."[182] These were ordinary women who continued to live in the community, maintain farms and shops, raise families and pay taxes.[183] Quaker views did not conform to established Anglican religion in England or the Calvin-based religion of the Puritans in New England, and they were often persecuted.

Unitarians are another example of nonconformists who questioned Christian dogma. Unitarianism espoused the doctrine of anti-trinitarianism, a concept deemed heretical dating back to Arius in Alexandria in AD 323-325. Christians, like Jews, considered themselves monotheistic, believers in one God. For some, the Christian

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[181] Phyllis Mack, "Women as Prophets During the English Civil War," *Feminist Studies* 8, no. 1 (1982): 24.

[182] Ibid., 25-26.

[183] Ibid., 22-26.

doctrine of trinity, wherein God the father, Jesus the son, and the Holy Spirit were one remained an esoteric idea too complex to fully explain or comprehend. However, it was expected to be faithfully followed by the Church. Anti-trinitarian thought did not accept the doctrine of trinity as part of monotheism. Anti-trinitarianism proffered Jesus Christ was not God, because only God is God in the true sense of monotheism, and anti-trinitarians believed that Christians did not adhere to strict monotheism because of their belief in the Trinity.

Unitarianism began in Eastern Europe in the sixteenth century, and migrated to England in the seventeenth century, but gained a following in England and Colonial America during the Enlightenment period. Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), Unitarian minister, defined Unitarianism as the belief in primitive Christianity before later corruptions set in.[184] He rejected the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of Atonement. He believed in the eventual salvation of every creature and moral progress beyond the grave. Later, Modern Spiritualists used this doctrine proclaiming there were no lost souls.[185] Thomas Belsham, a Unitarian contemporary with Priestley, regarded Christ as a divinely guided teacher, and believed the gospel miracles were reliable testimony of inspired witnesses.[186]

Anti-mainstream and anti-clerical Christian thought and movements grew for two hundred years before the spark of the worldwide movement known as Modern

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[184] Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952).

[185] Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 39.

[186] Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: A Survey from Coleridge to Gore*, second edition ed. (London: Longman, 1995), 4.

Spiritualism. These notions were part of a transoceanic dialogue and set the precedent for the occurrences in Hydesville to attract serious attention. One of the ways these ideas crossed the Atlantic was through early nineteenth-century American theologians educated in German universities who became founders of American academic theological liberalism. They recycled the German thought through American universities.[187] The eighteenth-century Germanic anti-Christian influence on the United States introduced a trend that moved away from mainstream Christianity and used an amalgamation of modern science and reason, as it looked back to ancient philosophy.

A strain of Enlightenment thought was anti-clerical and its rhetoric attributed monotheism and the immortality of the soul to ancient Pagan beliefs, long before Christianity.[188] There came a virtual cessation to the persecution of witches due to the influence of rational and scientific thought by educated Europeans.[189] Enlightenment period religious thought moved towards the idea of a natural religion and this created the basic idea behind what was commonly called Deism, a belief in a Creator God who left the world to natural laws. This philosophy dated back to the first human beings' common philosophy and moral framework. Some famous Deists include John Toland and Matthew Tindal in Britain, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin in America, and Denis Diderot and Voltaire in France. Deists eschewed the work of priests of mainstream religion in favor of natural religion. Thomas Paine, raised in a Quaker home and the

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[187] Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion 1805-1900* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), xvi.

[188] Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 4.

[189] Edward Bever, "Witchcraft Prosecutions and the Decline of Magic," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 2 (Autumn 2009): 264.

author of *Age of Reason*, published in three parts in 1794, 1795, and 1807, rejected mainstream Christian dogma and projected Deistic ideas throughout his book.[190] Natural religion could be explained rationally just as Newton expounded on the laws of motion and gravity as derived from the Creator's hand.

On the other end of the spectrum some Enlightenment thought took religion seriously. A moderate stance allowed reconciliation between reason and faith.[191] Deism as a rational, dry religious idea of the head was countered by "heart religion," usually thought of as ecstatic faith practices that can be traced to seventeenth-century Quakers and eighteenth-century evangelicals. John Wesley's Methodist writings in the eighteenth century were influenced by the Moravian Brotherhood's idea of "heart religion," an inward, passive waiting on the spirit. Wesley added a radical element of action to this, to self-assert and express feeling. Adherents were encouraged to write their experiences, thus enabling them to dwell on their emotional connection to God as well as forming a sense of individuality.[192] In the early nineteenth century Romantics embraced emotion and sentimentality. Romantics placed an emphasis on sentiment. Reason was superseded by imagination, the beauty of nature, and reverence to emotions.[193] Romantic religious writers appreciated just the things the Deists despised as irrational, the beauty of

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[190] Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 51.

[191] David Allen Harvey, "Religion(S) and the Enlightenment," *Historical Reflections* 40, no. 2 (2014).

[192] Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[193] Reardon, *Religious Thought*, 7.

rituals, the glory of religious churches and temples, and the power of sacraments and prayer.[194] Romantics were often poets, artists and musicians.

Many revered thinkers aligned their philosophy within both realms of reason and emotion. Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote in 1750, "All the subtleties of metaphysics would not lead me to doubt for a moment the immortality of my soul or a spiritual providence; I feel it, I believe it, I desire it, I hope for it and will defend it to my last breath."[195] John Keats wrote, "I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of the imagination."[196] Max Müller, as a virtual Deist, relied on the German Enlightenment philosophy of Emmanuel Kant but possessed a Romantic personality. These contrasting perspectives motivated Müller and others to the study of religions using historical methods.[197]

The popularity of Modern Spiritualism in the second half of the nineteenth century can be attributed to the emergence and development of religious studies, a new method in the nineteenth century concerned with the history, science and philosophy of religion. Investigating the phenomena and continuity of religions raised questions about mainstream Christianity.[198] Freidrich Max Müller believed that applying the scientific method to religion would allow the study of common elements, patterns and principles of

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[194] Daniel L. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 8.

[195] Jean Jacques Rousseau, "Rousseau to Voltaire, 18 August 1756," in *Correspondence Complète De Jean Jackques Rousseau*, ed. J. A. Leigh (Geneva: 1967).

[196] Reardon, *Religious Thought*, 7.

[197] Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 8-9.

[198] Reardon, *Religious Thought*, 2.

religions across time and place. This could be accomplished by analyzing customs, rituals and beliefs of religions throughout the world. Many contemporary scholars and theologians across Europe discounted Müller's ideas because they believed Christian values and ideals formed the spiritual center of the highest human moral and cultural achievement. The idea of taking lessons from inferiors did not suit them.[199] White Europeans commonly perceived themselves superior in all areas of human development, not just spirituality. Müller was confident that his study would show a profound link between sages from India and China to Christian martyrs.[200] Müller's student, Edward Burnett Tylor, demonstrated that all human beings at all times resembled one another, and possessed a "fundamental uniformity of the human mind."[201] Tylor contended that all human beings were essentially the same, depending on cultural evolution and access to education.[202] Applying the historical method to Christianity and comparative religions had more than academic consequences. The effects on religion were an inability to retain faith beyond natural causation, thus creating a division between history and religion.[203] This was similar to the longstanding division between science and religion. Attempting

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[199] Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 3-4. F. Max Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion: Four Lectures Delievered at the Royal Institution with Two Essays on False Analogies, and the Philosophy of Mythology.* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1873). Müller dedicated the publication of his lectures to Ralph Waldo Emerson.

[200] Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 4. Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion.*

[201] Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 22-23.

[202] Ibid., 23-24.

[203] Reardon, *Religious Thought*, 5-6.

to change established religious customs and laws could be dangerous, and these reformers risked their freedom.

Emma Hardinge Britten spoke outwardly against Christianity in an environment relatively safe from accusations of blasphemy. Those who preceded her had worked under a regime of oppression. Those publishing anticlerical polemics in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries faced persecution for blasphemy.[204] These 'blasphemers' laid the groundwork for the emergence of Modern Spiritualism and Emma Hardinge Britten. Richard Carlile in England and Robert Owen in England and the United States faced persecution for their criticisms of Christianity. Carlile wrote in 1821, "I am not more prejudiced against Christianity than Judaism, or Paganism, or Mohametanism. I view the whole in the same light, and have a deep rooted conviction that whatever is called religion, is mischievous to mankind."[205] Owen lost favor in England because of his anti-religious doctrines, despite his successful communitarian experiment in New Lanark, and moved to the United States where he founded several Owenite communities similar to New Lanark. In 1830 Owen wrote,

> The religion of the world is the sole cause now of all disunion, hatred, uncharitableness, and crime, which pervade the population of the earth; and that, as long as this ignorant and worldly religion shall be taught to

[204] For England see: Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*. Chapter 3. Certain states in the United States had laws against blasphemy, and the last person jailed was in 1838 in Massachusetts.

[205] Richard Carlile, "To the Reformers of Great Britain," (Undated pamphlet), 12. Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 57.

> mankind, it will be utterly impracticable to train men to love one another, or to have common charity for each other.[206]

Owen became an ardent Spiritualist in his old age while in the United States, as did his son, Robert Dale Owen.

Charles Bradlaugh, taken in by Richard Carlile and his family, faced persecution in England for his personal writings against Christianity, such as *A Few Words on the Christian Creed,* written when he was only seventeen years old, and *The Bible*, which he was furious that George Jacob Holyoake refused to publish in 1858.[207] Holyoake had already spent six months in prison in 1842 for blasphemy after he condemned Christianity in a lecture in Cheltenham. Holyoake had also been the editor of *The Oracle of Reason,* whose previous editor, Charles Southwell was imprisoned for blasphemy. Holyoake later formed a journal called *The Movement,* which later became *The Reasoner,* which the more militant Charles Bradlaugh took control of in 1858. *The Reasoner* was a major mouthpiece for the secularist movement in England, which was inspired by Robert Owen.[208] Bradlaugh did not believe in Spiritualist phenomena, but Holyoake lectured numerous times on Spiritualism.[209] Annie Besant, a close associate with Charles

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[206] Robert Owen, *The New Religion; or Religion Founded on the Immutable Laws of the Universe, Contrasted with All Religions Founded on Human Testimony* (London: J. Brooks, n.d. [1830]), 9; Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment,* 61.

[207] Charles Bradlaugh, "A Few Words on the Christian Creed," in *Papers of Charles Bradlaugh* (Bishopsgate Institute). "Bradlaugh to Holyoake Correspondence," in *Papers of Charles Bradlaugh* (Bishopsgate Institute).

[208] "Administrative History," in *Papers of George Jacob Holyoake* (Bishopsgate Institute).

[209] "Engagement Diary," in *Papers of George Jacob Holyoake* (Bishopsgate Institute). Of George Holyoake's many lectures on secularism and Freethinkers, he lectures on

Bradlaugh, worked on *The Reformer* with him, and decided in 1876 to republish the American Charles Knowlton's *The Fruits of Philosophy, or the Private Companion of Young Married People,* despite a prior publisher's imprisonment for the same tract. Besant and Bradlaugh were both tried and convicted in 1877 and sentenced to fines and six months imprisonment.[210] Despite evidence of these later persecutions for blasphemy and its history of censorship, these legal actions diminished in the 1840s, just in time for Modern Spiritualism to emerge strongly and Emma Hardinge Britten to establish her theological career unfettered by legal ramifications.

EMMA HARDINGE BRITTEN'S THEOLOGY

Spiritualists relied upon lectures and writings of various spiritual leaders, such as Britten, because they had no standard text. Britten's writings and theology have unique traits among Spiritualist theologians. She incorporated ideas of the ancients that reemerged in the eighteenth century, as well as introduced Ten New Commandments, the Ten Laws of Right and the Seven Principles, which proved foundational and have been respected by Spiritualists since.

The transoceanic Spiritualist discourse to which Britten contributed existed in monthly, biweekly and weekly magazines and periodicals proliferating throughout the

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Spiritualism as well. Some examples include: "The Other Side of Mr Thomas Cooper's Second Course of Lectures on Materialism and Spiritualism," "Spiritualism," "The Public Performances of the Dead; On the Dark Davenport Seances," "The Disquieting Activity of the Dead," "Prince of Spiritualists; A Glance at Dear Julia," "Spiritualists Appraised," and "Questionableness of Spiritualism."

[210] "Administrative History," in *Papers of Charles Bradlaugh* (Bishopsgate Institute). Annie Besant and Emma Hardinge Britten worked together in the 1870s with Madame Blavatsky to form the movement known as Theosophy, which delved into more esoteric and occult studies. Britten soon distanced herself from Blavatsky and Besant.

world during the second half of the nineteenth century. Some of the popular titles were *The American Spiritual Magazine, The British Spiritual Telegraph, The Spiritual Telegraph, The Christian Spiritualist, The Spiritual Scientist, the Harbinger of Light*, and the 25-year running *Medium and Daybreak*, to name but a few. Articles were reprinted from one continent to the next, making it an international exchange. Britten's involvement in this conversation occurred specifically in England, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. She borrowed from ancient and modernist thought and linked Spiritualism to science in an attempt to bridge the divide between the two usual enemies. Her prolific career as a spirit medium, trance lecturer, author and political activist helped to disseminate her brand of Spiritualism, and her theology proved foundational to Spiritualism evolving into an institutional religion.

While Spiritualism as a religion is more ambiguous than the major revealed religions, the definitions offered by Emile Durkheim and Mercia Eliade encompass its practice. Despite ongoing debates within traditional religions as to an overall truth, they all revolve around proclaimed holy texts. Defining or discussing the term religion cannot be simplified to belief in a god or gods because certain groups like Buddhists don't worship a god. Émile Durkheim, a nineteenth-century French sociologist, social psychologist and philosopher, and Mircea Eliade, a twentieth-century Romanian historian of religions and a philosopher, preferred a broader concept like "the sacred" as the defining essence of religion. This abstract term related to beliefs religious people committed to and found important in their lives or to how these beliefs psychologically

affected individuals or a group socially. The sacred has less to do with the actual content of these beliefs.[211]

Metaphysical religion is another strain of religion apart from established churches and Modern Spiritualism fits into this category of religion.[212] Britten herself defined Modern Spiritualism as a religion of the ages more ancient than the major established religions of the world. In fact, for Britten, those religions were based on the natural laws of Spiritualism, the most recent manifestation of the spirit phenomena to occur throughout the ages.[213] She declared, "Spiritualism teaches of the God who is a spirit, of that immortality which constitutes the very gist of human existence, of that life-practice for which religious systems have been established as a guide. What more do we require to constitute the elements of a religion? If it be not a religion, it is nothing."[214] She professed in 1861 that the model for perfect religion existed in nature. God's presence in nature existed in "the starry scriptures of the skies," monumental rocks, blossoms, "and all nature with her ten thousand voices of revealment."[215] Britten also embraced being an instructor of sacred principles, and not a "wonder" to the audience.[216] She believed

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[211] Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 13.

[212] Catherine Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 6.

[213] Hardinge, *Address Delivered at the Winter Soirees*, 7.

[214] Ibid.

[215] *"America and Her Destiny:" Inspirational Discourse Given Extemporaneously at Dodworth's Hall, New York, on Sunday Evening, August 25, 1861 through Emma Hardinge, by the Spirits* (New York: Robert M. De Witt, 1861), 7-8.

[216] *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*, 5.

spirits retained sympathy with the earth after they left, with their personality and morality preserved. A spirit did not change from corporeal to incorporeal.[217] The soul's deathless nature was defined by "its aspirations, imponderable nature, boundless powers, and dim prophetic gleamings."[218] Angels, on the other hand, ministered to man, as God's spirits. They were the souls of just men and women and made perfect by God.[219]

Britten believed that throughout the ages wise men heard voices, had dreams, and received truth the same way Modern Spiritualists did in the nineteenth century. Many considered dreams prophetic. The evidence existed in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome through the philosophers who believed in spiritual beings. Britten called these messages the "footprints of angels" throughout history. "The entire Christian religion," she asserted, "was founded upon a series of manifestations – upon a series of footprints of angels."[220] The same powers were recorded in every country. India's and Egypt's old priesthood were trained, but the most revered prophets were those who rose from the ordinary people spontaneously.[221]

Nature was revealed as God dating back to the first belief system, Hinduism. The Hindu questioned what the elements of nature were, and created the concept of God, a

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[217] "New South Wales," *Otago Daily Times*, November 30, 1878.

[218] *America and Her Destiny*, 8.

[219] "Mrs. Britten's Lecture," *Bendigo Advertiser*, July 20, 1878.

[220] "Mrs. Hardinge-Britten," *Otago Daily Times*, April 21, 1879.

[221] "Prophets and Prophecy," *Bendigo Advertiser*, June 1, 1878.

soul in nature.[222] Britten believed all religions evolved from each other. The creation of successive sects resulted in a charge of heresy as the new sects gained strength through their popularity. This happened each time. It happened with Buddha and so on until modern times. Britten's examples of this phenomenon were "Abraham was an infidel to his Chaldean brethren, Jesus was an infidel to the Jew; Pythagoras, Plato, Anaxagoras, all were infidels in their time, and the followers of these, when they gained the ascendancy cried 'Infidel!" to the next reformers."[223] Those considered infidels suffered cruelties by the orthodox of their day. Examples within Christianity included the crusades, "the extermination of the Albigenses, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, Calvin's cruelty to Servelus, Knox's Iconoclast, all of which had been done in the name of the Prince of Peace."[224] Britten vociferously argued that Christians, and particularly the Pope and clergy, strayed from the core of true Christian doctrine, Jesus's teachings, all through the centuries:

> When it was found that these gifts which Jesus promised his disciples should be bestowed upon all believers, had departed from the church, Pope Innocent III had declared that their exercise was forbidden, and, then during four centuries, two millions of human beings perished in torments because they had dared to do as Jesus told them.[225]

Clearly, for Britten, the priestly caste conspired to take full control and power over the people, a belief she shared with anti-clericals and anti-Christians.

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[222] "Mrs. Hardinge-Britten."

[223] "Abstract of a Lecture on "Who Are Infidels?"," *Auckland Star*, January 23, 1879.

[224] Ibid.

[225] Ibid.

The elements of Britten's theology that coincided with other leaders of the religion include the quite standard beliefs of spirit immortality and the ability to continue communication after the death of the corporeal body between the spirit and material realms. She parted paths doctrinally with other Spiritualist leaders, however, on issues such as reincarnation, Spiritualism's relationship with Christianity, and Free Love.

Communication between the material realm and spirit realm was performed through séances, including those hosted by Britten. Séances or spirit circles gained in popularity in the United States and England soon after the phenomenon of the Fox sisters spread far and wide. Much of this can be attributed to the entertainment aspect as explored in Chapter One, but séances were a serious component to Spiritualism as a religion. In Cincinnati 1000 spirit circles existed in 1850, just two years after the Fox sisters. They spread quickly to the United Kingdom and all over the world.[226] Séances were a common occurrence at the home of one of the famous Fox sisters, Leah Fox Underhill, and her husband Daniel Underhill. On occasion Emma Hardinge would co-host these séances. On an auspicious evening in 1861, those in attendance included Emma Hardinge, Leah Fox Underhill, William Lloyd Garrison and Robert Dale Owen. According to accounts of the evening, the spirit of deceased Robert Owen announced his presence and delivered Ten Spiritual Commandments and Ten Laws of Right through the mediumship of Emma Hardinge and the transcription of his son, Robert Dale Owen.[227] Britten recounted this story in her autobiography.

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[226] "The Ministry of Angels," *Gippsland Times*, June 7, 1878.

[227] Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 107.

She later recounted these inspirational commandments and laws in public on April 30th, 1871 at Cleveland Hall, London, where Britten electrified the audience by reading the Ten Spiritual Commandments, the Ten Laws of Right, and referred to the Seven Principles of Spiritualism.[228] The magazine *Medium and Daybreak* published an account of this performance on the 5th of May 1871. Britten denounced the Ten Commandments in Exodus and Deuteronomy, and proceeded to introduce the Ten Commandments of Spiritualism. She did this without the mention of any spirit guidance from Robert Owen, to whom she attributed these new commandments in her autobiography. In fact, she did not perform this lecture in a trance state. She attributed the spirit commandments to answers from "the spirits" received at an earlier time. One by one, she recited the Commandments of the Old Testament, and one by one, she found they held no truth.[229] She continued, "When we are looking to see a rule of life that will work in an order of society made up of immense differences, let us apply that rule. If it fails, can it be God's law?...Can it be the law of Him who is all-wise, and all-good, and all-powerful?"[230] In the Ten Spiritual Commandments we see a move towards scientific reasoning to search, test and prove; very different from the Bible's Ten Commandments based solely on faith that they represented truth.

According to Britten, the Ten Laws of Right reveal elements of morality and ethics present in most religions. She urged that the Laws of Right should be obligatory to

[228] See Appendix 1, 2, and 3.

[229] Emma Hardinge, "The Creed of the Spirits, and the Influence of the Religion of Spiritualism," (London: J. Burns, 1871), 11.

[230] Ibid., 12.

all men, and that opinions concerning science and theology were subject to change, dependent on the circumstances of nationality, intellectual training, or incidents peculiar to personal experiences; but the religion of right, morality, and love would never change until man ceased to be.[231] Remarkably, Britten's *Seven Principles of Spiritualism* are still used in Spiritualist churches and institutions today and remain very influential. The governing authority of Spiritualist churches in England, the Spiritualist National Union, and the U.S. counterpart, the National Spiritualists Association retain Britten's Seven Principles as Spiritualist dogma.

Britten's oeuvre included transcription and publication of her lectures, and tomes of her scholarship on Spiritualism. *Modern American Spiritualism: A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion Between Earth and the World of the Spirits* (1870) and *Nineteenth Century Miracles, or, Spirits and Their Work in Every Country of the Earth: A Complete Historical Compendium of the Great Movement Known as 'Modern Spiritualism'* (1884) were her great histories of Spiritualism. Arthur Conan Doyle, in his comprehensive treatises *The History of Spiritualism* Volumes 1 and 2 posited that Emma Hardinge Britten was integral to any history of Spiritualism because she "threw her whole enthusiastic temperament into the young movement and left a mark upon it which is still visible." Doyle recounts that Britten was called the female St. Paul of the movement.[232] Ironically, Britten was known to have a less than favorable opinion about

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[231] Ibid., 14.

[232] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism, Volume 1*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: Cassell and Company, 1926), 140-41.

St. Paul.[233] Perhaps Doyle did not know this, and his laudatory remarks were his recognition that Britten was as important to Spiritualism as St. Paul was to Christianity.

Britten missionized throughout the United States, Great Britten, Australia, and New Zealand spreading Spiritualism. Her published lectures, their reviews, and writings continued to spread her beliefs in what Spiritualism offered as truth. On the first lecture tour of California in 1864, which included a whirlwind campaign speech circuit on behalf of Abraham Lincoln's presidential election campaign, Hardinge helped bring California Spiritualists out into the open. When she arrived in San Francisco she found no committees, no friends, no cause and no meetings. Within two weeks she lectured to three audiences and gained press exposure through published criticism, plus frowns from the clergy. Through this, many California Spiritualists came out of obscurity. Hardinge only advertised her lectures in the ordinary business notices, and did not promote herself in any other way. She claimed she should have spared herself the expense of advertising because her opponents did all of her advertising for her. She was charged with damaging Californian souls, ruining the churches, and general "devil-to-pay" performances. Hardinge's lecture schedule became fixed at two times on Sunday and one weeknight.[234]

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[233] "New South Wales."

[234] Emma Hardinge, "California Sketches: Number Four. Spiritualism in San Francisco," *The Herald of Progress* 4, no. 51 (February 6, 1864). When Britten toured Australia and New Zealand in 1878 and 1879 she gave hundreds of lectures over a two-year period. Britten lectured numerous times a week, and at least twice on Sundays. She covered a wide range of religious topics, from historical accounts of ancient forms of Spiritualism, the use of science to prove Spiritualism, and occult topics, answering random questions posed by the audiences. Some of her lecture titles included: "Ancient and Modern Spiritualism or the Ministry of Angels," "Origin, Progress and Destiny of the Human Soul," "The Great Spirit Medium of Domremy, Joan of Arc," "The Geological Formation of the Earth," "The Wonders of the Old Stone Book," "Spiritualism in India & Egypt,"

BRITTEN ON CHRISTIANITY

Scholars differ on the issue of Spiritualism's connection with Christianity. Alex Owen posits that Spiritualists did not have to either forsake or accept Christianity to be Spiritualists, and she links the connection with Christianity to social class. For Owen, roughly speaking, working class Spiritualists thought of themselves as Anti-Christian, and this could mean just a rejection of traditional dogma, while middle-class Spiritualists retained Christianity as an important part of their religious life.[235] A prime example was the Theobalds, a middle-class English family that maintained connections to Christianity while practicing Modern Spiritualism.[236] Morell Theobald, the patriarch of this family, was skeptical of spirit communication at first. He ultimately embraced the faith, one might argue, because it offered a way to communicate with his deceased sons. The Theobald family considered the spirit messages as affirmations of biblical scripture. Theobald became involved in the Society for Psychical Research, and authored the book, *Spirit Workers in the Home Circle: An Autobiography Narrative of Psychic Phenomena*

"Physiology Interpreted by Spiritualism," "Fire Worshippers," "The God of Men and the God of Spirits," "Magic, Witchcraft, and Spiritualism," " The Wonders of Magnetism and Psychology," " Modern and Ancient Freemasonry Unveiled," "Prophets and Prophecy," "The Science and Religion of Spiritualism and Specially of the Modes by which all may become Spirit Mediums," "Who and What are Rosicrucians?" "The Creed of the Spirits," "Sign of the Times," "The Second Coming of Christ," "The Sabbath: Its Origin, Use and Influence," "The Lost Art of Magic Rediscovered," "Witchcraft and Sorcery." Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 103. A compilation of her most requested lectures, particularly on the subjects of the origins of religious faiths in ancient lands was published in a book titled Faith, Facts, and Frauds (1879) at the request of scholarly men from Victoria University in Melbourne. These lectures were considered an explicit attack on Christianity.

[235] Owen, *The Darkened Room*, 23.

[236] Ibid., 91.

in Family Daily Life Extending Over a Period of Twenty Years. His work offered evidence that middle-class Spiritualists developed an amalgamation of Christianity and Spiritualism.[237]

Ideologically, Britten was against what Christianity represented in its modern incarnation and opposed to fundamentalist dogma that the Bible was the literal word of God. She was not, however, against Christ, the man and his teachings. She defined the 'miracles' of the Bible as no different than the contemporary spirit phenomena of Modern Spiritualism, whether these phenomena were communication with spirits or angels, or spirit healing.[238] Britten professed that religions more ancient than Christianity recorded miracles and ancient Messiahs finding evidence in scriptures written in India, Egypt, Persia, Chaldea, Greece, Rome, and as well as in Jewish scriptures. She gave these first lectures in September 1858 at Dodsworth's Hall in New York City and was met with astonishment and even a little indignation amongst fellow Spiritualists. Britten's friends warned she was treading on dangerous ground, and called her lectures "attacks and subversions of the foundations of Christianity."[239] The *New York Herald* suggested she should be "shut up" and not be released until she promised to "never speak in public on religious subjects again."[240] Others threatened to silence her through the laws against blasphemy. Britten felt she paved the way for more anti-Christian texts and rhetoric to be

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[237] Theobald, *Spirit Workers in the Home Circle: An Autobiographic Narrative of Psychic Phenomena in Family Daily Life Extending over a Period of Twenty Years*.

[238] Hardinge, *Address Delivered at the Winter Soirees*, 3.

[239] Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 101-02.

[240] Ibid., 102.

published and accepted because not long after a Mr. Kersey Grave published "Sixteen Crucified Saviours," Lydia Maria Child published "Progress of Religious Ideas," and twenty years later the educated followers of the Victoria University in Melbourne requested these particular subversive lectures be published in a compilation.[241]

Continuing with her staunch beliefs regarding Christianity, Britten wrote an article published in Cleveland in 1860 in which she was outwardly critical of Christianity. In particular, she felt teaching children lessons from the Bible was pathetically outdated, when contemporary life stories were preferable to the stern, solemn, terrorizing stories of the Bible.[242] Britten's focus on Bibles in schools may have stemmed from an 1859 New York City Board of Education by-law requiring the Bible to be read in the schools. This law was preceded by long debates, particularly conscientious objections to different versions of the Bible, and how Jewish children should not be compelled to read the New Testament.[243]

Britten argued that the difference between the priests and prophets in Biblical texts was that priests kept the mysteries from the people to hold power over them, while prophets were truthful and forthcoming.[244] Why did the world need priests to shroud mystery? Priests, she declared, were used to keep people ignorant and subjugated:

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[241] Ibid., 103.

[242] Emma Hardinge, "A Fragment of Modern Scripture," in *The Christmas Annual*, ed. Frances Brown (Cleveland: E. Cowles & Co., 1860), 57-62.

[243] "The Bible in the New York Schools," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, no. 6 (1859).

[244] *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*, 27.

Without priests religion would be common so each would be their own priest.[245] She used Moses as an example. Moses learned from the priests in Egypt, and he used this wisdom to liberate the people from the mystery the priests used to keep them down.[246] Britten characterized Moses, along with Jesus, Osiris, Buddha and Zoroaster, as prophets and philosophers, and proclaimed that nineteenth-century Christian leaders did not follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, but rather their own rules created throughout the centuries.[247] Britten asked, would the contemporary Christian churches welcome Jesus into their "fashionable edifices erected to his name?" Jesus and "his twelve humble fishermen?"[248] The central doctrine of Jesus Christ and "all law, commandments, life and religion" narrowed down to one word – "Love."[249]

Britten's reputation as an opponent of Christianity became known worldwide, as seen from the following examples in the Australian and New Zealand press. An 1878 article on Britten's lectures in Melbourne said that whatever subject she lectured on, it would be "connected with Spiritualism and its advantages, equally of course, Christianity with its creeds and dogmas are held up to ridicule and derision."[250] The author suggested that Britten's anti-Christian stance was the most objectionable feature of her lectures, and whether Christianity was proved good or bad was ultimately no proof of Spiritualism's

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[245] *America and Her Destiny*, 8.

[246] *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*, 27.

[247] ibid., 30.

[248] "Mrs. Britten's Lecture."

[249] *America and Her Destiny*, 8.

[250] "Melbourne," *Bruce Herald*, June 28, 1878.

goodness. Britten insisted that Spiritualism would stand or fall on its on without any affiliation with Christianity. The author of the newspaper article acquiesced that the Spiritualism movement in Australia showed no signs of dying out and seemed more vigorous than ever.[251] Later that year in New Zealand, Britten's mission seemed to be the destruction of the Bible Society and to substitute the Bible with a new code of religion and morality, "dubbed the new dispensation of spiritualism."[252] Britten lectured on the subject of "The Bible in the Public Schools" at the Princess Theatre on May 15, 1879, and pleaded that schools without Bibles were not godless, as so many argued. She pointed to the numerous contradictory passages contained within the Bible, and that teachers should teach about God, immorality and Jesus's golden rule, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." She concluded at that lecture, "nature was one magnificent, vast, and truthful Bible; and immorality was written all over the universe."[253] A shorthand writer took down Britten's lectures against the Bible and particularly the Bible in schools, and 5,000 copies were circulated free of charge.[254]

Britten's theology harkened back to a mid-eighteenth century thought wherein Jesus Christ was revered as a great philosopher, stories of the Bible were ardent moral lessons, yet Christianity as a religion had strayed far beyond the original teachings and manifested itself as a corrupt entity. It reveals this move towards a new kind of

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[251] Ibid.

[252] "New South Wales."

[253] "The Lady Freethinker," *Poverty Bay Herald*, May 16, 1879.

[254] "Untitled," *Otago Daily Times*, May 6, 1879. "News of the Week," *Otago Witness*, May 10, 1879.

Christianity or a return to Christ's original teachings, antithetical to mainstream Christianity.

BRITTEN'S RELATIONSHIP TO CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHICAL CURRENTS

Spiritualists in the United States were more radical than English Spiritualists. The Free Love movement is a prime example of this difference.[255] Although Britten spent much of her life in the United States, she never espoused the Free Love movement. Free Love was an aspect of some American utopian communities, the first being the Oneida Society founded in 1848, which asserted freedom from legal marriage and divorce, and was closely linked to the women's rights movement and Spiritualism in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Britten recognized that there were different kinds of Spiritualists by the late 1850s, and she reprimanded those who called themselves Spiritualists and yet believed in Free Love. She asserted that her beliefs and doctrines were the polar opposite to those of Free Love doctrine. "Those who know the Spiritualism I teach, know also that it is the death of Free Love."[256] Britten warned of those Spiritualists who were not "the harmless and unobjectionable students of the supernatural that they pretended to be."[257] She argued that the Free Love sects of Modern Spiritualists used the new religion to relieve themselves from restraint to "indulge in licentiousness."[258]

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[255] Owen, *The Darkened Room*, 35-36.

[256] Emma Hardinge, "To the Editors of the Morning Enquirer," *Memphis Daily Enquirer*, 23 November 1859.

[257] "Spiritualism and Free Love."

[258] Ibid. The Auckland Star did not prescribe to the doctrines of Spiritualism, but described Britten's denigration of certain Spiritualists as a beacon that the movement was

Britten's body of work uncovers a direct link to eighteenth-century dissident ideas recalling ancient philosophy. As early as 1860, in her *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*, she looked back to these ideas in an attempt to expose the mysteries of religion just as Friedrich Max Müller did before her, and she found a link to the nature of seasons and astronomy as the first Gods.

> All the remains of man's history, point to the East as the cradle of civilization – point to the East as the land where systems of religion first prevailed. We dig back amongst the monumental remains; we examine the hieroglyphics which no time can sweep away, we pore over the Sacred Books of other languages; we stand upon the very threshold of time itself, and there we find that the very first, the earliest systems that ever prevailed upon earth, were the worship of the powers of nature.[259]

Britten's lecture on Prophets and Prophecy related the role of training mystics with the Chaldeans who "laboriously cultivated foresight by astronomy."[260] According to Herodotus, Chaldean and astronomer were synonymous terms.[261] Abram, a Chaldean soothsayer, was chosen to be the father of a nation, the Jews.[262] Histories revealed that the Hebrews prophesied through cups and dreams, trained by severe discipline and asceticism. The Old Testament referred to prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel being

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"in danger of degenerating into a scortatory religion like free-loveism, and the respectable members of the sect ought to take steps to get rid of the infectious element form their midst." The article suggested the licentiousness Britten spoke of was a matter of police interest in order to protect society.

[259] *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*, 18.

[260] "Prophets and Prophecy."

[261] Ibid.

[262] "The Ministry of Angels."

"in the spirit," or "moved by the spirit."[263] Egyptian hieroglyphics and Sanskrit Scriptures showed their revelations came through "dreams, visions, and trances," and their prophets lived in solitude.[264] Early Christian martyrs in the first few centuries after Christ also lived solitary and ascetic lives to be closer to the spirit of God. Britten argued that children were taught the classics of Greek philosophy, drama, poetry and architecture, but told to despise the Greek religion as heretical, as myth, the religion of Plato, Pythagoras, and Socrates. History was rich in examples of Spiritualism in the ancient world, and spiritual power had not left the world.[265]

Britten continued the conversation on the revival of ancient conceptions of nature as God that the eighteenth-century philosophes had brought back. Charles François Dupuis (1742-1809) and Richard Payne Knight (1750-1824) were among these. Dupuis in France connected the twelve signs of the zodiac with the yearly cycle of agriculture and suggested the ancient astronomical fables were a veil concealing the operations of Nature. Likewise, Knight an Englishman who dreaded Christian influence in the world, wrote "All images of copulation…signified the purer, pre-Christian era of the power of the infinite being; while the act itself, far from being shameful in any of its varieties, was a copy of the universal process, and hence as sacred and joyful as Nature itself."[266] Britten made a similar connection when she referred to ancients seeing a woman in the constellations on December 25th and honoring her. "Our Sun-God is now passing though

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[263] "Prophets and Prophecy."

[264] "The Ministry of Angels."

[265] Ibid.

[266] Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 1-32.

the sign of the Virgin. Our sun is born again."[267] She asserted there was not a single religion that has not held this date as most sacred.[268] Sixty-five years earlier Charles Dupuis referred to Jesus Christ as the sun, his life an allegory of the sun's course through the zodiac, and called the Christian religion "another distorted representative of the great, original religion of Nature."[269] These examples show a clear similarity between eighteenth-century ancient revival and Britten's nineteenth-century theology.

BRITTEN AND HER CONTEMPORARIES: SYMPATHIES AND OPPOSITIONS

A plethora of contemporary writings on liberal theological movements reaching momentum and professing similar concepts surrounding nature, morality, and science, with a distinct shift away from literal and devout Biblical authority were available to the reading public, and reveal the religious context of Britten's work. Often Spiritualists, as Britten did at her 1865 winter soiree, used the teachings of Jesus and the Bible to corroborate spirit phenomena. Robert Dale Owen, son of Robert Owen, famous social reformer, utopian socialist, and Spiritualist later in life, was himself a Spiritualist, and published *The Debatable Land Between this World and the Next* in 1871, addressing it to the Protestant clergy. He urged the clergy to recognize that Christian orthodoxy, loaded down with "extrinsic dogmas," was failing, and that the Christianity of Jesus with the elements of progress was to "become the religion of civilized men."[270]

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[267] Hardinge, *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*, 21.

[268] Ibid.

[269] Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 34.

[270] Robert Dale Owen, *The Debatable Land between This World and the Next* (New York: G. W. Carleton & Co., 1871), 109.

Owen argued the Scriptures were the foundation to a just faith, and that the spiritual inspiration of the Gospels and Epistles continued to the present day:

> Natural laws are not only invariable but are also continuous. The effects of natural laws do not show themselves for fifty or a hundred years, and then cease for tens of centuries…Thus, if the extraordinary manifestations of power ascribed in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles to Christ and to his disciples did occur under certain spiritual laws, the same laws must be in operation still.[271]

He insisted that the Protestant's current stand that the spiritual gifts of the Apostolic age were isolated phenomena was wrong, and used Biblical passages to prove his point. He quoted the Biblical passage Mark 16:17-18, "Christ, when He appeared after death to the eleven, said: -- 'These signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues…They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.'"[272] He also quoted John 16:17 to bring his point across, "Again, in the immediate prospect of death, Jesus said: -- 'He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.'"[273] Prominent Christians throughout the early centuries of Christianity professed that spiritual phenomena continued. These were Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons in 177 A.D.; Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, a contemporary of Irenaeus; Eusebius in 325 A.D.; St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in 395 A.D.; and St. Augustin, Archbishop of Canterbury in 596 A.D.[274]

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[271] Ibid., 111.

[272] Ibid., 115.

[273] Ibid., 116.

[274] Ibid., 119.

Owen concluded this line of argument that Modern Spiritualism is of God by asserting that "after a varied experience of sixteen years in different countries I am entitled to offer an opinion, it is, that if such spiritual communications be sought in an earnest, becoming spirit, the views presented will, in the vast majority of cases, be in strict accordance with the teachings of Christ."[275] We see a significant similarity between Britten's and Owen's use of the Bible and Jesus theologically distinct from contemporary Christianity.

Lurking in the midst of these modern, liberal and progressive notions were critiques of Modern Spiritualism. Some of those who opposed to Spiritualism and its teachings and phenomena, some were merely skeptics, while others rejected it so vehemently that they deemed its practitioners as mentally ill and afflicted with nervous disorders. Still others gave credence to the ghostly goings on, but ascribed them to diabolical means, reminiscent of the witch-hunts Britten referred to in her 1865 London lecture. A good many proponents of Spiritualism were intelligent and highly educated persons; such as William Crookes, chemist and physicist; Alfred Russel Wallace, naturalist, explorer, geographer, anthropologist and biologist; Henry Sidgwick, English utilitarian philosopher, economist and lecturer at Trinity College, Cambridge. As well, a good many opponents of Spiritualism were intelligent and highly educated. The dialogue was on equal footing and many of the same sources, particularly Biblical passages, were used to argue both sides.

William Alexander Hammond, physician and neurologist, wrote *Spiritualism and Allied Causes and Conditions of Nervous Derangement* in 1876, as a new edition to his

[275] Ibid., 123.

previous book *The Physics and Physiology of Spiritualism* from 1871. Hammond explained that the brain is not the only organ of the mind and its facilities, but also the spinal cord and sympathetic nerves.

> The mind may be regarded as a force the result of nervous action, and characterized by the ability to perceive sensations, to be conscious, to understand, to experience emotions, and to will in accordance therewith. Of these qualities consciousness resides exclusively in the brain, but the others, as is clearly shown by observation and experiment, cannot be restricted to this organ, but are developed with more or less intensity by other parts of the nervous system.[276]

Hammond explained that the workings of supposed Spiritualist phenomena were in reality based on the fact that "the spinal cord and sympathetic ganglia are not devoid of mental power."[277] As a result, those expressing the supernatural beliefs of spirit phenomena are likely suffering mental debilities of "epilepsy, chorea, catalepsy, ecstasy, hysteria or insanity."[278] Hammond discussed the "humbugs of trance-speaking," and the ease in discerning their deceit.

> We have only to look at these people while they are delivering their discourses, to be convinced that they are committing frauds upon their hearers. In actual trance or ecstasy the expression of the face is peculiar and well marked; it is one which no physician who has ever seen a case could fail to recognize, and the attitude and bearing of the subject are such as show unconsciousness.[279]

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[276] William Alexander Hammond, *The Physics and Physiology of Spiritualism* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1871), 13.

[277] Ibid., 14.

[278] *Spiritualism and Allied Causes and Conditions of Nervous Derangement* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1876), vi.

[279] Ibid., 139-40.

Hammond clarified the extremes that hysteria could force on a physical body. He used an example of spiritual manifestation presented in Emma Hardinge Britten's 1870 publication *Modern American Spiritualism*, wherein she cited the case of a medium whose knees and wrists were "thrown out of joint, twice in a single day. Those painful feats were always accompanied by loud laughter, hoarse and profane jokes, and expressions of exultant delight" under the claimed influence of a profane sailor. Britten continued, "Preternatural feats of agility and strength exhibited on these occasions could scarcely be credited, and the frightfully unnatural contortions of the limbs with which she became tied up into knots and coils, baffle all physiological explanation or attempts at description."[280] Hammond responded as follows, "This last statement arises from Mrs. Hardinge's ignorance of the capacities of hysteria. Can any body familiar with its vagaries doubt for an instant that this girl was suffering from it, and that her condition was aggravated by the notoriety which she gained by her performances?"[281] Hammond, as others in his field, used current scientific medical evidence to discount Spiritualist phenomena. Other opponents to Spiritualism ascribed fiendish origin.

Those opponents of a more spiritual nature charged supernatural, yet diabolical causes the Spiritualist phenomena. Austin Phelps, professor of sacred rhetoric and president for ten years of Andover Theological Seminary, believed in the connection with a spirit world, as the Spiritualists spoke of, but assigned the phenomena to demoniacal

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[280] Ibid., 253; Emma Hardinge, *Modern American Spiritualism: A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of the Spirits* (New York: Emma Hardinge, 1870), 159.

[281] Hammond, *Spiritualism and Allied Causes and Conditions of Nervous Derangement*, 253-54.

means. Phelps's father, Reverend Eliakim Phelps, became inundated with ghostly happenings in his home for seven months in 1850. Thousands were invited to visit and investigate, and hundreds witnessed the spiritual or poltergeist occurrences. Austin Phelps, along with his uncle Abner, a Boston physician, thoroughly examined Eliakim's house in the hopes of debunking the matter and restoring his father's reputation. Austin Phelps concluded that the occurrences were not of human agency, so therefore supernatural. Communications with the spirit were had through a planchette device during the seven months. "There is mind in it; there is the rub," Phelps later wrote, and concluded it was of the devil.[282] He took on a mission to instruct all ministers to preach against Modern Spiritualism and its diabolic source. Phelps found expression in classroom lectures, sermons and public lectures. He queried, "Ought the Pulpit to Ignore Spiritualism? No."[283] "The evidence of evil in the phenomena is superabundant: the evidence of good is no more than a device temptation must have. Do you suppose that Satan would aim at any thing less than this, if he should set about creating a wide-spread delusion for the capture of souls?" Biblical demonology was the answer "till science shall extend our knowledge, if it can, to something more satisfactory."[284] Phelps wrote lengthy articles on why Spiritualism was neither a religion, nor a science. Britten also faced personal attacks. One such adversary addressed Britten as part of the "innate

[282] Austin Phelps, *My Portfolio: A Collection of Essays* (New York: Scribner's, 1882), 168.

[283] Ibid., 150.

[284] Ibid., 169.

foolishness this craze of spiritualism," and she would not succeed as well as the corrupt Catholic Church because "masses pay far better than spiritual séances."[285]

Emma Hardinge Britten's Spiritualist discourse and performances developed in the larger context of Spiritualist discourse and theology in the second half of the nineteenth century. This transatlantic discourse provides a lens into the context in which the world received Britten's theological expressions of Spiritualism. Vast and varied published materials existed in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and readers and listeners all over the world were consuming texts on Modern Spiritualism. In an environment of liberal theological expression, modern connections between science and religion, especially mainstream Christianity, praise and vitriol filled the pages, transmitted faster than ever through telegraph. Modern Spiritualism was met with acceptance by those searching for a religion that fit their social mindset in an arena of emergent nonconformist religions. At the same time, fearmongerers charged superstition and the devil, of course, and legal prosecution on charges of blasphemy was a viable avenue. Britten, whose theology borrowed from ancient ideas that were revived in Enlightenment and Romantic philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was one of the most prolific promoters of Modern Spiritualism in this period, and her doctrine remains as foundational in Spiritualist churches to this day.

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[285] Veritas, "The Priest's Kitchen," *Clutha Leader*, April 18, 1879. Britten placed herself squarely in the middle of debates defending Spiritualism. Gabay, *Message from Beyond*. One case in particular she found herself defending American Spiritualists. The debates occurred in Melbourne between Rev. Mr. Green, a Church of Christ minister of the Christian Chapel in Collingwood, and Mr. Thomas Walker, an English trance medium lecturing in Australia popularly known as "the Boy Lecturer."

CHAPTER IV

TRANSOCEANIC POLITICS AND REFORM: NOT ALL PROGRESSIVES ARE SPIRITUALISTS, BUT ALL SPIRITUALISTS ARE PROGRESSIVES

> My Spirit Guides had forbidden the stage to me – my pupils in music shrank away from the weird reputation of a medium…Then came the word of power – "Emma, you must go out and speak to the world."…but this last charge, to wit, that I, a woman, and, moreover, "a lady by birth," and English, above all, that I would go out, like "strong minded women," and hector the world, on public platforms! Oh, shocking! I vowed rebellion – to give up Spirits, Spiritualism, and America; return to England, and live "a feminine existence" once again. With these magnanimous resolves strong upon me one week, the next saw me on a public platform, fairly before the world as a Trance speaker.[286]

While Emma Hardinge Britten spent a large part of her career writing and lecturing on Modern Spiritualism, she also tirelessly worked towards bettering many of the social evils of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Her work included not only the acceptable actions performed within the women-centered public sphere of social reforms and voluntary associations, but also participation in the male-dominated public sphere of formal politics. Britten's life's work in the social reform and political realm bridges liberal theological thought and social-minded reform movements. Indeed she extended British and European social and political policy ideas into her political work in the United States. Moreover, her involvement in formal governmental politics through her lecture circuit on behalf of Abraham Lincoln's incumbent presidential campaign, places her squarely within male-dominated public spaces.

Britten's actions are best understood in the context of the relationship among women, religion and reform in the nineteenth century. Scholars have explored these

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[286] Hardinge, *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*, 11.

interrelationships in terms of women's relation to class, family and/or domestic ideology, politics and region. Research has primarily focused on white, middle-class women in reform movements from temperance to abolition, political aspirations, and suffrage. Many women learned how to form clubs and work within traditional spheres of female influence while in the church setting, and then used these methods in their social work within the public sphere. Historians have linked nineteenth-century social reforms and the women who participated in these movements to the establishment of liberal religious practices and institutions on both sides of the Atlantic, especially among groups as diverse as nonconformists and dissenters to orthodox religious traditions, such as Quakers, Unitarians, Universalists, Transcendentalists, Methodists and Spiritualists. The term liberal in respect to these religious movements does not necessarily refer to a progressive or a political inclination, but to new interpretations of scripture based on Enlightenment philosophy. These linkages are highly pertinent to understanding Britten's political actions. Women, whether politically inclined or not, used their involvement in religion as an avenue for public participation in reform movements that were otherwise excluded by disenfranchisement. Even as the broadening of white male suffrage in the early American Republic highlighted the fact of women's marginalization in the formal political realm, but women continued working in the public political realm through benevolent associations, and demarcated their roles as reformers for the welfare of society, and not as political actors per se. Most benevolent associations were affiliated with religious institutions in which women were heavily involved.[287]

[287] Rosemary Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

The link between religious ideology and progressive reform gained momentum in the early nineteenth century as innovative, rational, liberal, and modern theological ideas were inspired by similar impulses in Europe. The beginnings of liberal social thought in religions began with the Church of England evangelicals, such as the Methodists, who dedicated their time to charitable causes in the early decades of the nineteenth-century.[288] By mid-century, the Christian Socialist movement did not embody an economic doctrine, but an ethical ideal.[289] These transatlantic ideas translated into Unitarianism and later Transcendentalism in the United States, which was part of the intellectual and spiritual milieu that paved the way for Britten's success. Early progressives were socially conscious and passionate reformers. There existed, however, a divide among Liberal Christians as to women's role. Some believed in women's rights, while others adhered to the "cult of true womanhood."[290] Antebellum religious reform set in motion America's reform tradition throughout the century, and it sprang from different motives: social distress and anxiety, altruism, millennialism, a desire to uplift society and to remove sources of inequality such as slavery and women's disenfranchisement.[291] Mid-nineteenth century religious culture gradually rejected harsh Calvinism for more liberal theologies such as Unitarianism and Spiritualism, in which women were central as

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[288] Reardon, *Religious Thought*, 16.

[289] Ibid., 11.

[290] Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology*.

[291] Steven Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War Reformers* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

mediums, investigators, and speakers. This "feminization of American religion" meant more humane and less rigid institutions.[292] The workings of new and dissenting religious movements and their inclusion of women can be plainly seen in three particular religious groups – The Unitarians, The Hopedale Primitive Christians, and The Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform – through which women applied their liberal theology to better societal issues.

Women played political roles in reform politics through religion in the first half of the nineteenth century, just before Britten began her theological and political career, and offered an inspirational example for other women. In the early nineteenth century English Unitarians fostered an anti-clerical form of Christianity, a belief in the Christianity of the first few centuries of Christendom before clergy perverted its true meanings, similar to the rise of Primitive Christianity during the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century in America. Britten's theology, although not specifically Christian in nature, espoused the truth in Jesus's teachings. Unitarians prided themselves on their compassionate commitment to political and social reform, and most Unitarians were involved in reform of some kind, usually social and educational.[293] However, their social reform activities were separated by gender. The 1832 and 1835 Unitarian supported Acts of Parliament explicitly excluded women from the political

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[292] Barbara Welter, "The Feminization of American Religion, 1800-1860," in *Religion in American History*, ed. Jon and Harry S. Stout Butler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[293] Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760-1860* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1998), 108.

arena.[294] Exceptions to this include the work of Jane Marcet and Harriet Martineau.[295] Despite this political exclusion, Unitarian women were involved in the political culture in myriad ways, and Unitarian men were among the first to stand up for women's rights in the 1850s. [296]

Primitive Christianity and a community founded in Hopedale, Massachusetts by minister Adin Ballou in 1839 is another prime example. A major aspect of Britten's political ambitions later in the century with regard to women, children and outcasts was similar to Ballou's intentions with Hopedale. Ballou intended Hopedale to be a community not "indifferent to the sufferings of a distressed humanity."[297] He intended a return to the teachings of Christ, a form of Primitive Christianity of the first and second centuries. Their religion was love and their Standard was not to be "inhuman, unmerciful, unjust, unkind, abusive or injurious toward any being."[298] Ballou also promoted the town as a safe place "for the orphan, the widow, and the outcast."[299] Several women were among the first to sign on, in part because of the focus on family within the new constitution being created for the new society. The Constitution of the

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[294] Ibid., 109.

[295] Ibid., 110.

[296] Ibid., 109.

[297] Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community, from Its Inception to Its Virtual Submergence in the Hopedale Parish*, ed. William S. Heywood (Lowell: Thompson & Hill -- The Vox Populi Press, 1897), 5, 8.

[298] Ibid., 4.

[299] Ibid., 20.

Fraternal Community promised women equality, the right to serve in the Community on equal ground with men and the ability to vote on all Community issues.[300] Thirty-two people signed the original Constitution in 1841. Almost half of them were women, several of whom were serving in town government, and most of whom were Sewing Circle members.[301]

The Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform, another example of liberal theology and social-mindedness just a decade before Britten began her political career, was founded in Oakland, Ohio in 1842 by a coalition of Hicksite Quakers and New England Evangelicals aligned with Garrisonian abolitionists. The men and women of the Society developed a communal arrangement as a prototype for human society that they hoped would sweep the earth. However, eight society-inspired communities were founded in 1846, but none lasted more than four years. This Society was not unique in its embrace of communitarianism. The 1840s witnessed a great outpouring of communitarians: Shakers, Mormons, Fourierists, Owenites, and the Perfectionists. The

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[300] *History of the Town of Milford, Worcester County, Massachusetts, from Its First Settlement to 1881* (Boston: Franklin Press, 1882), 260.

[301] *History of the Hopedale Community*, 21, 25, 27. *Christian Non-Resistance, in All Its Important Bearings, Illustrated and Defended* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1848), 25. Women joined together to form the Hopedale Sewing Circle and kept a record that tied the town's progressive ideas together, written by men and women, in the publication "The Practical Christian" exposing the benevolent works the community women were doing. The Hopedale Sewing Circle took a faith-based, rather than a church-based approach to their work in spreading the ideas of Practical Christianity. They were abolitionists and women's rights activists, and they espoused non-resistance. Nancy Isenberg, ""Pillars in the Same Temple and Priests of the Same Worship": Woman's Rights and the Politics of Church and State in Antebellum America," *The Journal of American History* 85, no. 1 (1998). One member of the Hopedale Sewing Circle, Abby Hills Price, spoke at the first National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester in 1850 and was known for her spiritualist ideas and writings.

Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform was made up of Universal Reformers, and they advocated the abolishment of private landholding, a cooperative economy, technology used for liberation rather than oppressing and suffering of workers, to replace sectism and priests with an uncorrupted Christianity, education, women's equality, diet and health reform.[302] We see a similarity among these three examples: The Unitarians from their inception in England, the Primitive Christians of Hopedale, and the The Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform in Ohio, all rejected Christianity in its modern incarnation and adopted their interpretation of the original teachings of Christ. Britten's theology embraced these same beliefs.

Just as in some cases women attempted social improvement through participation in liberal religions, in other instances women also participated in the public sphere within predominantly women-centered spaces of department stores, theaters, music halls, hotel lobbies, public parks, trains, and places that stemmed from their domestic roots.[303] Paula

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[302] Thomas Hamm, *God's Government Begun: The Society of Universal Inquiry and Reform, 1842-1846.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

[303] Ryan, *Women in Public*, 8. Ryan argues that women practiced politics with its agenda primarily around the needs and interests of women and children and its membership largely confined to one sex and often middle class and Protestant. Amy G. Richter, *Home on the Rails: Women, the Railroad, and the Rise of Public Domesticity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). Richter's work discusses the feminization and domestication of railroad parlor cars within the world of the masculine railroad and trains. This is just one example of the public spaces women made respectable by domesticating the space. Leonore Davidoff, and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 433. Davidoff and Hall bring out that anti-slavery was recognized as a peculiarly feminine concern because it dealth with questions of dependency, children, marriage and family life. Ladies' anti-slavery groups were some of the first to meet and organize separately from men. Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End*. Rappaport adds to the scholarship on the ambiguities of the public and private spheres and argues that public space and gender identities were formed

Baker dubbed this phenomenon the "domestication of politics."[304] The feminine virtue of morality was the cornerstone of women's authority on issues of religion and evolved into grounds for authority on political moral issues well beyond religion, ultimately to their role in the abolitionist movement.[305] Women, in this way, had a voice. Relations of power were found throughout society. Conversations circulated in complex webs of social interaction at local and personal levels. Some had more influence than others.[306] Women's voices found expression in different modes of speaking, lectures, sermons, newspapers, pamphlets, literary periodicals, and books.[307] Mary Clark and Mary S. Grove were exemplary women whose lives reveal the complexities of their powerful roles in nineteenth-century social reform and politics. These women began as Christians and later transformed themselves and their ideas to align more closely with a progressive politics; this community of engaged women lived in the Northeast of the United States. Britten arrived in the Northeast U.S. from England, lived much of her life there, and

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together. This is revealed in her work on the culture of shopping, which involved a day in town, taking a break for tea or lunch and a visit to a club, museum or theater. Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). Cohen continues with the idea of women as consumers but focuses on the changing culture of domestic furnishings.

[304] Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 3 (1984).

[305] Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977).

[306] Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 104-31.

[307] Thomas S. Bremer, *Formed from This Soil: An Introduction to the Diverse History of Religion in America* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 192.

followed this same path. Britten's theology, philosophy and actions closely resemble those of these two predecessors, Mary Clark and Mary S. Grove. Britten was a beneficiary of others' initiatives, and took their lead in her religion and politics.

Mary Clark of Concord, New Hampshire, herself a non-denominational Christian, devoted her life to anti-slavery activism. Born into a family of Congregationalists who worshiped regularly with the Quakers, Clark lived in an area of the country where multiple new religions appeared. None satisfied her notion of what true Christianity meant except for Voluntary Associations, which gave her an outlet for religious devotion through helping others, outside or across denominational lines. Clark wrote,

> I confess I do not feel quite so contented with my singular standing as respects religious Society, as I ought…Here in N. Hampshire, if a person does not profess an attachment to some particular creed, he is treated as a 'Nothingarian' – a term implying everything unstable and contemptible. This ought to have no weight with a Christian…but such things will have their influence upon us the weaker sort.[308]

In 1818 Clark joined the Concord Female Charitable Society, which provided for the poor, and in 1834 she helped found the Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society, serving as Corresponding Secretary for the rest of her life.[309] Clark's dying testimony, not published until after her death in 1841, castigated those "ministers and churches who

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[308] Beth Salerno, "Christian Commitment in an Era of Choices: Navigating Religious Options in 19th Century New England.," in *New England Historical Association* (Franklin Pierce University2014), 4. Source: Mary Clark to Francis Jackson, October 8, 1821, Francis Jackson Collection at Massachusetts Historical Society.

[309] Ibid., 5-6.

have refused to pray for the slave."[310] Clark's religious community was not denominational, but one of conscience, choice, and willingness to suffer for one's beliefs. She is a powerful example of individualization of conscience that occurred as religious options multiplied.[311]

Mary S. Gove Nichols' life shows the complexity of nineteenth-century social reform. Nichols was a national figure in the 1840s and 1850s. Thousands came to hear her scandalous anatomy lectures about the female body and its physical longings, capacities, and political relevance. Nichols questioned the civil laws of the nineteenth century wherein the woman's body was akin to property, and women were denied contractual negotiation rights or control of their own earnings, and she derived her ideas from Bible teachings. Nichols started a health reform movement endorsing universal health, and was the first woman to give public health lectures to female audiences. She wrote vehemently against de Tocqueville's perception that American wives "take pride in the free relinquishment of their will."[312] Nichols ultimately played a pivotal role in the women's rights movement though her focus was never on suffrage. She believed that without reform on marital law, suffrage was an empty demand. The political implications of Nichols's health reform and women's public outreach threw into question

[310] Ibid., 7. Source: "The Dying Testimony of Mary Clark," Liberator, May 21, 1841, v. 11, i. 21, p. 82, c. C.

[311] Ibid.

[312] Jean Silver-Isenstadt, *Shameless: The Visionary Life of Mary Grove Nichols* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 4.

the construction of distinct separate spheres and the definition of political action is expanded.[313]

Spiritualists like Britten were among those who, as religious leaders, found themselves in the public sphere of Anglo-American life participating in the social reform movements of the day. While not all progressives were Spiritualists, all nineteenth-century Spiritualists were progressives. Progressives found something in Spiritualism that resonated with their political convictions.[314] Those whose politics were progressive leaning often engaged in reform work, and were intrigued by the tenets and practices of Spiritualism. There was a connection between Spiritualism and progressive political activism in America, and it was particularly important to women's rights because it offered a platform for women and a critique of traditional authority.[315] British Spiritualist women like Britten were likewise able to successfully subvert culturally-coded feminine norms of Victorian England through mediumship, and adopted leadership roles either in public or private spaces. These women were often admired and praised for their gifts.[316]

One place where this connection between Spiritualism and Reform found common ground was the Boston Convention of Spiritualists. The character of Spiritualists and their reformist causes, which Britten embraced, were recorded by Dr. Hayden at the Boston Convention of 1854: "[I] had yet to know the first Spiritualist who

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[313] Ibid.

[314] Reardon, *Religious Thought*.

[315] Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*.

[316] Owen, *The Darkened Room*.

made use of profanity, or was not opposed to slavery, the rum traffic, capital punishment, and every other physical or mental form of human degradation."[317] Andrew Jackson Davis, a preeminent American Spiritualist and a friend to Emma Hardinge Britten, explained the linkages between Spiritualism and social and political reform in his book *Arabula: or The Divine Guest.* The book received highly favorable reviews. One reviewer of *Arabula* expressed difficulty in deciphering the meanings behind the mystical aspects of the book, but it only seemed "fair to testify to the high moral excellence, purity, nobleness, of the ideas of reform and the plans for reform incidentally touched upon in this book."[318] The reviewer continued to praise Davis's formation of "The Moral Police Fraternity" many years back. The association was formed for "all thoughtful and humane persons, of every profession or form of faith." Their platform was "the cause and cure of evil." All members were to actively bring sympathy and help to the suffering, the "vagrant children, orphans, the sick, destitute women, unfortunate women, intemperate men, criminals, and disabled and abused animals." The reviewer ended his laudatory remarks on Davis by noting, "amid the indifference and opposition of the sects that try to monopolize the name "Christian," it is a Spiritualist who cherishes this noble idea, and tries to have it put in practice."[319] Davis and Britten espoused similar ideas and worked together towards common reforms throughout their careers.

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[317] Emma Hardinge Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism : A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of Spirits*, 2nd ed. (New York: Published by the author, 1870), 200.

[318] "Arabula," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, no. 37 (1868).

[319] Ibid.

Britten's life as a Spiritualist very much involved putting these ideas into practice through reform work on issues including abolition, women's rights, rehabilitation opportunities for outcast women, and labor issues. Growing up and living in England most of her formative years, Britten was exposed to British ideas on social and political causes. Her British female contemporary, the renowned Harriet Martineau, participated in political public culture from the 1830s onward.[320] By the 1850s more and more women were becoming involved in issues such as abolition, temperance, and public health, including opposition to the Vaccination Act, which targeted working-class women for mandatory and sometimes disfiguring vaccines on their children.[321] Hardinge's exposure to these movements while in England inspired her actions in America.

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[320] Deborah Anne Logan, *The Hour and the Woman: Harriet Martineau's Somewhat Remarkable Life* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002). Britten's contemporary, Harriet Martineau, participated in political public culture as early as 1832 with her publication of Illustrations of Political Economy, and continued her critique of political and economical affairs through her writings. Harriet Martineau, *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1877). Martineau became a public figure and was invited to Queen Victoria's coronation in 1838. *Society in America* (New York: Unders and Otley, 1837). "The Martyr Age of the United States," *The London and Westminster Review* (1838). Martineau visited the United States and wrote compelling critiques of the state of women's education in Society in America, and her article "The Martye Age of the United States" published in The London and Westminster Review founded by Jeremy Bentham, revealed the struggles of American abolitionists many years after Britain had abolished slavery altogether. Diana Postlethwaite, "Mothering and Mesmerism in the Life of Harriet Martineau," *Signs* 14, no. 3 (1989). Novelist Margaret Oliphant said of Harriet Martineau: "as a born lecturer and politician she wsa less distinctively affected by her sex than perhaps any other, male or female, of her generation."

[321] Nadja Durbach, *Bodily Matters: The Anti-Vaccination Movement in England, 1853-1907*, ed. Daniel Walkowitz and Barbara Weinstein, Radical Perspectives (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). The Vaccination Acts in England beginning with the first in 1853, with subsequent Acts in 1867 and 1871, created a large political movement among women, working and middle class alike, in opposition to these governmental incursions. The imposition of the Vaccination Acts, based on the scientific elimination of

ANTI-SLAVERY FERVOR AND WOMEN

Britten thus began her life and career in England in the midst of a turbulent political world in which women were key actors. In particular, women were heavily involved in the anti-slavery movement. Slavery in England was illegal by the late eighteenth century, and the slave trade was abolished in the British Empire with the Slave Act of 1807, swayed by American revolutionary rhetoric and eighteenth-century evangelicalism. Slavery was abolished in most of the British Empire by 1834.[322]

In North America, meanwhile, many of the mostly northern states espoused anti-slavery sentiment, originating from the time of the American Revolution and into the nineteenth century. Quakers were likely slave-owners and traders until the mid-eighteenth century, and did not prohibit their members from slave owning and trading until the 1760s. After they created policies that forbid members from owning slaves,

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the Small pox virus, created a fear in women for the welfare of their babies. The procedure was invasive, disfiguring, and often times deadly and the parents had no choice anymore. Many believed it was dangerous. Fines were implemented if the parents failed to attain the vaccination. Imprisonment resulted from failure to pay fines. The working class were more vulnerable to this because of their lack of funds. In addition, the working class was targeted most fiercely because of the prejudice at the time that disease and dirt were associated with poverty.

[322] Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitions* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). English abolitionism was linked to politics surrounding the American Revolution and evangelicalism, not so much the Enlightenment thought that inspired French abolition. Politics gave the anti-slavery movement momentum because the British and Americans blamed each other, claiming moral superiority during the war. American colonists questioned their slave practices and used this idea as a way to separate themselves from England. American religious leaders such as Nathaniel Niles suggested if the people wished to experience liberty from England then it must apply to all peoples. American anti-slavery sentiment inspired British anti-slavery in the 1780s. The British couched anti-slavery in language of moral superiority. Americans were criticized for supporting slavery and that is why they were unworthy of liberty.

Quakers led the way on antislavery and were at the heart of the earliest abolition societies founded in Philadelphia in 1776 and London in 1787.[323]

In the nineteenth-century context in which Emma worked, both British and American abolitionists were focused on ending slavery in the U.S. South. The southern slave states, for implicit economic reasons, relied on their moral code of Christian paternalism to defend slavery as their civilizing mission.[324] Because of Southerners' biblical defense of slavery, Frederick Douglass criticized Christianity as it applied to the "slaveholding religion on this land." He distinguished between "the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ" and the "corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land."[325] African-American minister, Nathaniel Paul of Albany, New York spoke at the 1838 Albany Anti-Slavery Convention and confronted the mostly white delegates about their own racism and praised the abolitionists "whose principles are based on the word of God…It is self-

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[323] Brycchan Carey, *From Peace to Freedom: Quaker Rhetoric and the Birth of American Antislavery, 1657-1761* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012). Brycchan Carey, and Geoffrey Plank, ed. *Quakers and Abolition* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2014). Gary B. Nash, and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Richard Newman, and James Mueller, ed. *Antislavery and Abolition in Philadelphia: Emancipation and the Long Struggle for Racial Justice in the City of Brotherly Love*, Antislavery, Abolition, and the Atlantic World (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2011). Jenna M. Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Theater, and Popular Culture in London and Philadelphia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

[324] Brown, *Moral Capital*, 57-58.

[325] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (Massachusetts: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1845), 101.

evident that God has created all men equal."[326] While there is a wealth of scholarship on anti-slavery and abolition in England and the United States, there is still space to include Emma Hardinge Britten's contribution in this political arena.

Anti-slavery sentiment was part of the British national identity during Britten's life in England until she left for the United States at the age of 32. The 1830s are the beginning of "immediatism," in the U. S., which stood for immediate rather than gradual emancipation. "Immediatism" was epitomized and spearheaded by William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglas. In the British context, the 1830s saw the beginnings of emancipation in the West Indies with the Emancipation Act of 1833, followed by clamorous demands to end the sham of an apprenticeship system that was put in place with that Act. When the British abolitionists succeeded in overturning the apprenticeship to their former masters of the British West Indian slaves, British abolitionists then regrouped as the Foreign Antislavery Society and turned their sights to the U.S. south, Cuba, and Brazil.[327]

Harriet Martineau's assessment of the anti-slavery movement in the United States was published in England in the late 1830s, and told of the diversified group of men and women of all colors, degrees of education, and religions working towards the abolition of slavery in their country. She wrote of the immense difference between a European

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[326] Nathaniel Paul, *The Friend of Man* 2, no. 39 (1838).

[327] David Brion Davis, "The Emergence of Immediatism in British and American Antislavery Thought," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49, no. September (1962). Newman, *Antislavery and Abolition in Philadelphia*. Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty*.

abolitionist and an abolitionist living "on a soil actually trodden by slaves."[328] The article reprised the emergence of The Colonization Society in 1829 and the resulting exasperation of free blacks in their fight to remain in their homes instead of being sent into exile, the work of William Lloyd Garrison of "moral aristocracy," and the brutal terrors of "gentlemen of property and standing" against free or enslaved "people of colour."[329] While it is not certain whether Britten read this particular article in 1838, when she was but 15 years old, she came of age within an environment where Martineau and other with like minds played an influential role.

In the years leading up to the Civil War, Emma Hardinge traveled around the United States, with particular focus on the southern states in 1859 and 1860; she promoted Progressive social reforms, including anti-slavery.[330] One of Hardinge's first lectures on anti-slavery took place at a National Spiritualists' Convention in Plymouth, Massachusetts on August 5-7, 1859.[331] Hardinge soon after embarked on a lecture tour of the southern states just as tensions between the North and South were escalating. Modern Spiritualism and Progressive social reforms in the latter half of the nineteenth century formed an amalgamated front in non-clerical religious thought on women's rights and abolition of slavery. Hardinge was greeted, as one would expect, with protests for her

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[328] Martineau, "The Martyr Age of the United States," 1.

[329] Ibid., 2-6.

[330] Emma Hardinge Britten is referred to as Hardinge in this section because it is prior to her marriage to William Britten in 1870.

[331] "National Convention of Spiritualists," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, June 25, 1859.

abolitionist and religious beliefs in the South, but also found devoted followers throughout the south during this tumultuous period.

The Deep South witnessed a different kind of spiritualism, particularly because African religions filtered through Caribbean and slave culture. Modern Spiritualism was regarded as a threat to slaveholders in the South.[332] Slaves believed and understood illness in terms of spiritual forces and they practiced methods related to spirits and nature such as herbalism and conjuring, also known as hoodoo or rootwork. Their healing and health practices were integrated with their religion, and the slaveholders' inability to understand this is a key factor as to why whites distrusted or feared African Americans' healing practices and vice versa. Slaveholders understood African American spirituality as superstitious and therefore uncivilized.[333] Slaves' reliance on the spiritual realm and elements of African cosmology, labeled later as "pharmocosm," gave African Americans an avenue for resisting total control by slaveholders and the institution of slavery.[334] African American spiritualism formed a foundation for resistance, and was the root cause of Southern slaveholders' resistance and animosity to Modern Spiritualism prior to Hardinge's visits.

Hardinge's first stop on her southern lecture tour was Memphis, Tennessee, where she witnessed "the prevalence of bitterness of slaveholders towards advocates of

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[332] Robert W. Delp, "The Southern Press and the Rise of American Spiritualism, 1847-1860," *Journal of American Culture* 7 (Fall 1984).

[333] Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 45.

[334] Ibid., 39.

freedom, especially the avowed Anti-Slavery party of the Northern States."[335] During her first lecture a huge stone was thrown through a window and fell by her feet. Hardinge continued her lecture without stopping while others approached to see if she was hurt or ran out to find the assailants.[336] Hardinge picked up the stone at the close of the lecture and professed, "in the progress of all true reforms, the projection of vituperation, insults, falsehoods, and stones, might be regarded as *striking* arguments, but they were rarely convincing."[337] The stone thrower's act of cowardice rallied the audience and future audiences in Memphis to her defense and in her favor. A Mr. Chadwick, the estate agent of the city, originally hailing from New York, and his wife entertained Hardinge while she was in Memphis.[338] The Chadwicks were among the few supporters that welcomed Hardinge to the South. Colonel MacCrae of North Carolina was another friend to her causes, and on his plantation she met one of the many slaves she encountered that possessed the gift of mediumship and clairvoyance.[339]

Hardinge met with lots of negative press upon her arrival in the South, but this created her celebrity as she was recognized wherever she went.[340] The editor of the

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[335] Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 142.

[336] Ibid. *Modern American Spiritualism : A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of Spirits*, 414.

[337] *Modern American Spiritualism : A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of Spirits*, 415.

[338] *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 143.

[339] Ibid., 145.

[340] Ibid., 144.

Memphis *Inquirer* persecuted and insulted Hardinge for her religious beliefs and accused her of exacerbating the "slumbering volcano" of a favorite Southern institution into a "consuming fury."[341] A month of correspondence through the *Memphis Appeal* with the opponents of Spiritualism ensued.[342] Near the end of Hardinge's Memphis lecture circuit, she agreed to lecture on behalf of the Leath Orphan Asylum, which was in desperate need of funds. On the day the lecture was to occur, the doors were closed to her because the proprietor had been threatened by a group of "roughs" who would lynch all parties concerned if the lecture went on as planned.[343] A letter to the Editors of the *Morning Enquirer* was published on November 20, 1859 following the notice of Hardinge's lecture for the orphanage.

> As a constant reader and an old subscriber of your paper, I was no little surprised to read the above notice in your paper…I sincerely hope, for the honor of our city, that no such lecture will be attended by our community. If we cannot support the Institution without importing Infidel lecturers from the North, then let it slide. It is bad enough to hear Infidelity preached by men, but now humiliating to hear it from the lips of woman. Let this woman go home and attend to the duties assigned her by the laws of God and man; and let us have no more such importations to corrupt the morals of our youth.[344]

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[341] *Modern American Spiritualism : A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of Spirits*, 414.

[342] *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 144.

[343] *Modern American Spiritualism : A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of Spirits*, 414.

[344] "Editors of the Morning Enquirer," *Memphis Daily Enquirer*, 20 November 1859.

Hardinge's response was published on November 23, 1859:

> Being strictly required…by my religion to tender help for need's sake only, and…believing that the poor in this city were unusually well cared for, and amply provided without my aid, I should never have thought of obtruding my services had I not, on Friday morning last…heard the assembled company expressing deep regret at the fact that a Fair, which had been held for the benefit of the Asylum in question, had failed to realize the benevolent intentions of its promoters. Then it was that I deemed even my humble aid might be available, and though I felt some reluctance to obtrude myself in this way in the only town of the Union where I had been met with such bitter antagonism, I thought only of the helpless little ones, and the kind efforts that had proved fruitless to aid them…I heard from many quarters, with equal astonishment and pain, that my offer was regarded with violent indignation, that expressions which I should not soil my paper to write, were being bandied about amongst the Christian patrons of the Association concerning me, and that the poor little orphans were in actual danger of being "let slide," if I dared to exercise my intrusive charity in their behalf.

Hardinge continued by answering the assailant's advice to go home and study the laws of God by explaining that *truth* was God's word and it was her duty to spread it to her neighbors. She asked the "old subscriber" to what she was infidel. "Infidelity is a mere word, and though it has been hurled against me for the last two weeks much in the same spirit as the stone which was aimed at the window facing the stand where I lectured last Sunday morning, it is equally inefficacious in demonstrating truth." She further corrected the correspondent that she was not a Northern fanatic, but an English woman.[345] The Charleston *Courier* began a violent attack for "the incendiary practices of the abhorrent

[345] Emma Hardinge, "To the Editors of the Morning Enquirer," ibid., 23 November.

Spiritualist," and Hardinge and her cohort were threatened with lynching in Tennessee and South Carolina.[346]

Hardinge proceeded to Evansville, Iowa in November 1859 following the lectures of another medium, Miss Mattie F. Hulett, who had the stage throughout October.[347] She then arrived in New Orleans, Louisiana in December 1859 and lectured for free at the large room of Odd Fellows' Hall throughout the month, usually giving two lectures in one day.[348] New Orleans Spiritualists had been relegated to private séances in private homes because of massive opposition in the 1850s.[349] By this time Hardinge feared that her association with northern ideas was inhibiting the spread of Spiritualism in the South, but she was surprised to see Spiritualism thriving in New Orleans, a capital of slavery. This dichotomy between northern and southern Spiritualists is obvious from Robert S. Cox's statistical study of the mass media and periodical subscriptions surrounding Spiritualism by comparing northern cities to southern. New York State and Massachusetts came in at 6% Spiritualists based on total population and subscriptions to Spiritualist periodicals. Ohio came in at 4%. Louisiana and Tennessee had the highest

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[346] Caryn Cossé Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana 1718-1868* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 197.

[347] "Lectures on Spiritualism," *The Evansville Daily Journal*, 29 August 1859.

[348] "Lectures Upon Spiritualism," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, 3 December 1859. "Spiritualism," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, 10 December 1859. ibid.

[349] *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana*, 197.

number of Spiritualists per capita in the southern state,s with 1.7% and 0.9% respectively. Cox also finds that southern Spiritualism was buoyed by African-American support.[350]

The legislature of Alabama passed a bill in January 1860, right before Hardinge arrived, making public lectures on spiritual manifestations subject to a $500 fine but the Governor refused to give it sanction.[351] Upon Hardinge's arrival on a steamboat in Mobile, Alabama she noticed placards on walls announcing the State's legislature's order forbidding her or any other "*infidel lecturer"* to speak or lecture in any public places within the state of Alabama.[352] Hardinge's friends convinced her to stay in Alabama, and she proceeded to hold circles morning, noon and night due to the high demand.[353] It was in Alabama in January of 1860 that Hardinge, under self-proclaimed spirit guidance, predicted the conflict between the North and South coming to fruition and war with a loss of peace in Alabama, where the streets would be filled with "mourning and lamentation for the slain."[354] Emma Hardinge realized the full horrors of the institution of slavery when she continued her visit in the South through Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, and the Carolinas as the ministers she encountered considered slavery a "divine

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[350] Cox, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism*.

[351] Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism : A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of Spirits*, 417.

[352] *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 147.

[353] Ibid., 148.

[354] Ibid. *Modern American Spiritualism : A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of Spirits*, 418.

Institution."[355] She characterized what she witnessed as "Lust, Avarice, and Cruelty," and this tour was her last visit to the Southern states.[356]

The great attendance at her last lectures in the South surprised Hardinge despite the huge opposition and negative press by her opponents. A large and appreciative body of Spiritualists in Macon, Georgia received Hardinge. By her own account, there were but a few followers at first in Columbus, Georgia, but by her last night's lecture, the audience numbered in the hundreds, many sitting on the ground in want of seats. The most devoted followers Hardinge found in Macon, Georgia, were women who bore the brunt from the world without male relatives. The women of Macon gathered to give thanks in a letter to Hardinge for "the soul's festival as we have enjoyed in attendance upon your lectures."[357] Finally Wilmington, North Carolina gave Hardinge warm hospitality as she said her last goodbye to the South.[358] Hardinge was one of the last Spiritualist lecturers to visit the South before the Civil War began.

Hardinge's return to the North coincided with the beginning of the American Civil War, and during the entire conflict she continued lecturing in the United States. In a speech given on August 25, 1861 in New York titled "America and her Destiny," she

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[355] *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 144.

[356] Ibid., 145.

[357] L. F. W. Andrews, John P. Harvey, and F. F. Lewis, "To Mrs. Emma Hardinge," *Spiritual Telegraph*, January 24 1860. Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism : A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of Spirits*, 432.

[358] Emma Hardinge, "Editors of the Banner of Light," *Banner of Light*, February 2 1860. Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism : A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of Spirits*, 431-32.

spoke with a patriotic zeal not to be expected of a British subject. She spoke of the unionized *body* of America despite the disruption that the country was experiencing.

> Your telegraphic lines and rails, like nerves, bind up the whole; your postal stations make up one speech; your trade one interest; your ships one voice to every distant land. From farthest Maine to Louisiana swamps, your land is traversed by intersecting lines of interest, to break or rend the least of which would destroy the whole. But even if you would suicidally thus unnerve your human institutions, you must drain your lakes and dry up your rivers, pile up your hills till they touch the skies, and overflow your prairies, before you can destroy the glorious union of physical body and members which God has built up in the great continent of America. She floats one mighty body, cradled in the arms of Atlantic and Pacific oceans! The South is her burning left hand, giving produce; the North her hardy right, the manufacturer; the East is her busy brain; the West her giant feet; and when you talk of "Union," you forget SHE IS ONE ALREADY.[359]

Hardinge pointed out that Americans had triumphed "over the necks of others" and built their foundations on "two wide yawning graves, in which lie entombed the red man's rights and the black man's liberties."[360] Yet Americans claimed the triumph of civilization over barbarism despite their means. Southerners in vain argued that the framers of the Constitution meant for black slavery to continue unabated despite their claim to the world that they were the "home of the free."[361] Wrote Hardinge, "The liberty hymn can never be chanted to the burden of the crack of the slave-whip."[362] Hardinge

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[359] Hardinge, *America and Her Destiny*, 10.

[360] Ibid., 11.

[361] Ibid.

[362] Ibid., 12.

argued that slaveholders kept their slaves ignorant and thus too weak to break the bonds. Their weakness enabled their subjugation. America would never achieve its goals "so long as broken hearts and clanking chains, whether of gold or iron, drag her down."[363] By her own account, her speech scarcely touched "the surface of the deep wounds by which the country's honor has been stabbed." She exclaimed that the current crisis in America was caused by the deep corruptions that existed, but the fight was for worldwide justice and human rights.[364] In the *Ladies' Repository* Hardinge's opponents suggested that to "let the spirits alone, get married, and go to housekeeping," in response to the above-mentioned lecture.[365]

Hardinge embarked on a Western lecture circuit, which began in 1863 during the American Civil War, continued with a focus on anti-slavery. Monday, December 14, 1863, Hardinge lectured at the A. M. E. Church in California to a "refined" audience "composed of white and colored persons." The title of her lecture was "The Great Interests of the African Race of the United States, in View of the President's Proclamation." Hardinge spoke of the history of the African race, their African culture, including their own trafficking practices, giving impetus to the European slave trade. She reflected on the hopeless situation of just a few years hence. She had almost been convinced of the futility of the movement. Hardinge pointed to Frederick Douglass with pride in his work to end slavery. Her style "enraptured the audience with delight," and

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[363] Ibid., 14-15.

[364] Ibid., 13.

[365] "Literary Notices," *The Ladies' Repository: A Monthly Periodical Devoted to Literature and Religion.*, January 1862, 62.

she answered the question whether the colored race would ever become equal socially and politically with the white race by saying,

> education fitted man to assume the most important positions in life, though the colored man had been debarred from social and political privileges, and from the avenues of culture and wealth. But just so soon as under the present era of freedom, the colored man rises in the scale of intelligence with the whites, she believed that, when that time came, if he demanded them, they would not be denied.

Hardinge was met with much applause.[366]

OUTCAST WOMEN AND PROSTITUTION REFORM

In addition to her zealous anti-slavery efforts, Hardinge also worked tirelessly to better the conditions of outcast women. Working with the underprivileged and neglected populations likely stemmed from Hardinge's own childhood, and the desperation her family experienced when her father died. Growing up in England had also exposed Hardinge to the fight for women's rights, with the works of well-known writers from Mary Wollstonecraft to Harriet Martineau and Emily Faithfull. As a young eleven year-old girl, she needed to work outside the home to help her mother care for her siblings after her father died. Britten's mother, Mrs. Floyd, never re-married, but travelled alongside her daughter across the Atlantic and lived with Britten in the United States for many years.

Emma Hardinge preached for women's rights, but her life's work on behalf of women fell to uplifting the outcast woman. This issue could have likely been close to her

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[366] "Miss Emma Hardinge's Lecture at the A. M. E. Church.," *Pacific Appeal*, December 19 1863.

heart because she realized how easily she, along with her sisters and mother, could have "fallen" and become outcasts after her father's death. She became widely known as "The Outcast's Friend."[367] *The Spiritual Magazine* noted that Hardinge gained the admiration of the public not so much for her mediumship as for her support of outcast and homeless women.[368]

Hardinge's dream came closest to fruition when she worked with another woman, Caroline Healey Wells Dall, in Boston during the early 1860s to establish a home for wayward and outcast women and to incorporate training in sustainable agriculture to create pride in their work and themselves. Caroline Healey Dall was born in 1822 in Boston to a wealthy family. Dall was highly educated, published articles in religious newspapers as early as her thirteenth year, and engaged in philosophical and political debates as a young woman in the company of the Peabodys, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, and Theodore Parker, to name a few. She married a Unitarian minister, but she found Transcendentalism more in line with her own ideological thinking.[369] Scholars have predominantly told a nation-based history of helping outcast women and prostitutes, but this story of two women of very different backgrounds shows a transatlantic connection of reform ideas for women, specifically between England and the United States. The actions of Hardinge and Dall also reveal a

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[367] Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 200.

[368] "Notices of Books: America and Her Destiny; an Inspirational Discourse. By Emma Hardinge. New York.," *The Spiritual Magazine* 1862, 285.

[369] Helen Deese, ed. *Daughter of Boston: The Extraordinary Diary of a Nineteenth-Century Woman, Carolline Healey Dall* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005).

relatively new ideology of compassion for other women as women, and a rehabilitation-minded approach to prostitution.

Magdalen Asylums had been run by the Church and based on Christian ideals of morality, moral regulation, not rehabilitation.[370] These Catholic institutions used fallen women as their labor force and to keep them away from society, as they said, for society's sake. Most of these organizations focused on the protection of society with no focus on protection or rehabilitation of the outcast women. A small percentage did focus on the women's plight with a desire to protect and rehabilitate them. In the American context, Evangelicals at their pinnacle between 1812-1835 operated through moral reform organizations, wherein middle-class women with their prejudices against working-class lives fueled by images of concentrated vice imposed impossible ideals on

[370] For more on Magdalen asylums see: Frances Finnegan, *Do Penance or Perish: Magdalen Asylums in Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). In England and the U.A. the major responses to prostitution prior to 1860 were lead by the Church or religious institutions. Magdalen Institutions developed in Whitechapel, England in 1758 and led to similar institutions in Ireland by 1767. The first Magdalen Asylum in the U.S. was the Magdalen Society of Philadelphia, founded 1800. Frances Finnegan's work on the Irish Magdalen Asylums reveals that once prostitutes were detained they were often forcibly prevented from leaving for the rest of their lives. Their work was not remunerated and they were subject to harsh discipline. Finnegan argues that the Church used these women as their free labor, and when prostitutes could not be found they turned to fallen women such as unwed mothers and abused girls. Some were mentally retarded. Many were even brought in by their families and priests. Brian Titley, "Heil Mary: Magdalen Asylums and Moral Regulation in Ireland," *History of Education Review* 35, no. 2 (2006). Brian Titley found, in his study of Magdalen asylums in Ireland, that between the 1830s and all the way into the 1990s, thousands of Irish women were incarcerated without due process for sexual behavior in violation of the Catholic Church's moral code. Nuns operated these asylums in an effort to protect society from these wayward women, and to reform the women through harsh laundry work and devotional rituals. Some adapted and lived a nun-like life with the Sisters, but most lived their lives enduring the drudgery. These asylums were not regulated by law and reveal the hegemonic power of the Church in Ireland.

working-class women in the name of reform. Encounters with the everyday reality of working-class women's lives and childrearing engendered hostility between the reformers and their recipients.[371] The working-class degradation resulted from worsening conditions of waged labor, which created more responsibilities for women to ensure their children's survival, but with little to no opportunity to access the means necessary to support a family.[372] Initially female charity workers and reformers were motivated by sympathy for their working-class sisters, but this only applied to those who conformed to prescribed gender identities, which became more and more impossible to imagine as industrialization took hold of the labor market.[373]

Wealthy and respectable citizens in New York attempted to found their own Magdalen Society in 1830 with the purpose of reforming abandoned females who wished to return to a virtuous life. The public received the publication of this plan with bitter feelings and opposition. The Society ceased its operations and dissolved.[374] Rev. J. R. McDowall continued his labor alone and published "Magdalen Facts" in 1832.[375] Soon after societies were formed by ladies in his Laight-street and Spring-street congregations, and thereafter several congregations came together and formed the Female Benevolent Society, which by 1834 became the Female Moral Reform Society of the City of New

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[371] Stansell, *City of Women*, 64.

[372] Ibid., 74.

[373] Ibid., 219.

[374] Emily van der Meulen, "Moral Panic and the New York Magdalen Society: Nineteenth Century Prostitution and the Moral Reform Movement," *MP: An Online Feminist Journal* 2, no. 2 (July 2008).

[375] John Robert McDowall, *Magdalen Facts* (New York: The Author, 1832).

York. The *First Annual Report of the Female Moral Reform Society of the City of New York* was published in 1835.[376] This institution was Church-run by women. The Christian public of all denominations was called upon to aid in the erection of a building to house the charity recipients.[377] The question of women's sexuality was placed on the public agenda, and from the 1830s onward, women were open and vociferous participants in political debates about sexuality in the United States.[378] Prostitution became the subject of sustained social commentary between 1830 and 1860, with two opposing images of prostitutes within Victorian culture: one, the innocent girl driven by starvation, and two, the treacherous seducer.[379]

As women of means began to feel compassion and responsibility for less fortunate women, they developed a new sense of collective gender identity, which led ultimately to the emergence of all-female organizations. Such concerns began with the treatment of female prisoners. Quaker Elizabeth Fry was one of the first to advocate the treatment of prisoners as human beings and to improve the way female prisoners were treated. Her work began as early as 1817 at Newgate Prison in London. Josephine Butler later became famous in her leadership to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts in England that

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[376] Female Moral Reform Society of the City of New York, "First Annual Report of the Female Moral Reform Society of the City of New York," (New York: William Newell, 1835).

[377] Larry Whiteaker, *Seduction, Prostitution, and Moral Reform in New York, 1830-1860* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997).

[378] Ryan, *Women in Public*, 95. For the same findings in Boston see: Barbara Hobson, "Sex in the Marketplace: Prostitution in an American Victorian City, Boston, 1820-1880" (PhD Dissertation, Boston University, 1981).

[379] Stansell, *City of Women*, 171, 91.

were established in 1864. Butler fought for the prostitutes, for their rights against the police and doctors who were authorized to pick up any woman who might be a prostitute and have her physically examined.[380] The ideas of caring power and rehabilitation influenced and inspired Hardinge and Dall in their missions to help outcast women.

In February of 1859 Emma Hardinge lectured on "The Place and Mission of Woman" in Boston. In November of that same year Caroline Dall lectured on "Woman's Right to Labor" in Boston as well. Hardinge's lecture on "The Place and Mission of Woman" was given at the Melodeon in Boston on Sunday afternoon, February 13, 1859 at 3:30, followed by a lecture on Marriage at 7:00 that evening, both lectures attended by very large audiences. Hardinge began by addressing the different natures and missions of men and women, and the educational needs for both sexes in order to be companions to their partners, each sex having its own equal mission in life in combination with its counterpart. Girls, like boys, should be educated in anatomy, physiology and mentality. She then moved on to the exceptions within each sex. "There are those placed above the necessity of laboring, or of becoming the wives of operatives."[381] She asked why women couldn't be astronomers and navigators. These deal with the knowledge of science and not physical power. "We can see no limit to the power of woman to enter into the

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[380] Annemieke Van Drenth, and Francisca De Haan, *The Rise of Caring Power: Elizabeth Fry and Josephine Butler in Britain and the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000). For more on Late-Victorian prostitution and the Contageous Diseases Acts in England see: Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[381] Emma Hardinge Britten, "The Place and Mission of Woman," (Boston: H. W. Swett, 1859), 8.

chambers of knowledge," and urged men to open their colleges and schools to women.[382] Hardinge also engaged in questions of marital and family inequalities. She wrote about the unreasonable expectations of wives and mothers to take on the daily household labors and then appear cheerful when the husband arrived home from his day of labor, and the drudgery jobs that were only available for domestic servants, spinsters and prostitutes. Hardinge spoke to women of all classes and urged them to help themselves, not to sit on a shelf waiting for a man to purchase them. Hardinge looked forward to the day when it would be disgraceful for a woman to have no occupation, when in the evenings husbands and wives would come together on equal terms to speak about their respective days and "treasures of life."[383]

Caroline Dall's lectures in 1859 and subsequent publication of the three lectures were titled *"Woman's Right to Labor;" or, Low Wages and Hard Work: In Three Lectures, Delivered in Boston, November, 1859.* Many of the themes present in Harding's lecture in February were repeated in Dall's words plus more. These included women's right to education, the choice of vocation, the right to elective franchise, and for women to strive together as one with all women as a whole. The theme Dall raised was to act on behalf of women as women, and save their children as their own. Dall pointed to the degradation of working-class women and their working environments. Dall charged that upper-class women's love of dress and morbid disgust at labor exacerbated the ruin of women. She highlighted that the reform must begin in the upper classes, to

[382] Ibid.

[383] Ibid., 11.

open their own doors and pass their own food.[384] Following the Civil War these ideas were repeated by lecturing women such as Annie T. Wittenmyer, the first president of the National Women's Christian Temperance Union. Wittenmyer, like Hardinge and Dall before her, castigated middle-class women for their "idleness, frivolity and vanity" as sin.[385]

Dall referenced helpful journals from the United Kingdom during her lecture, such as from the *Englishwoman's Journal* and *The Edinburgh Review*, and their census findings were similar to Dall's own findings in her article on "Female Industry" in Boston. Their treatments being so similar, she followed their authority on the reforms they sanctioned.[386]

Near the end of her speech, Dall broached the subject of prostitution. Women's inability to have all vocations and job choices open to them led to her statement that "the great working body of working women is 'death or dishonor.'"[387] Dall again called on women in society to stand with working women, urging that "ten Beacon-street women, engaged in honorable work, would do more for this cause than all the female artists, all

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[384] Caroline Wells Healey Dall, *Woman's Right to Labor, or, Low Wages and Hard Work: In Three Lectures, Delivered in Boston, November, 1859* (Boston: Walker, Wise, and Co., 1860).

[385] Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford, "For God and Home and Native Land," in *Women in New Worlds: Historical Perspectives on the Wesleyan Tradition*, ed. Hilah F. Thomas and Rosemary Skinner Keller (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 313.

[386] Dall, *Woman's Right to Labor*.

[387] Ibid., 5.

the speech-making and conventions in the world." [388] Dall brought in evidence from German, French, English and Scottish articles and studies on the causes of prostitution, and specifically quoted Duchâtelet that "in all great towns, none is so active as the want of work, or inadequate remuneration…compare the price of labor with the price of dishonor, and you will cease to be surprised that women fall."[389] Dall finally referred to Dr. William Sanger of New York and his work with prostitutes. Dr. Sanger performed statistical work on prostitutes in New York City after the middle of the century.[390] According to Dr. Sanger, one prostitute argued that a whole day's worth of respectable work only brought a few pennies, but a smile would buy her dinner. Sanger's findings were that of two thousand prostitutes, eighteen hundred had been brought up to do nothing, and did not get a formal education.[391]

Emma Hardinge, just five years in the United States, contacted Caroline Dall in June 1860 to propose they merge their efforts and work together for the benefit of outcast women. Hardinge's letter to Dall expressed her gratitude for Dall's published work on *Woman's Rights to Labor* and thanked her as a woman and a reformer, and suggested that upon her return to Boston they get together to right "these terrible wrongs that our

[388] Ibid., 8.

[389] Ibid., 11-12.

[390] Elizabeth K. Helsinger, *The Woman Question Social Issues, 1837-1883* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983). Stansell, *City of Women*, 171.

[391] Dall, *Woman's Right to Labor*.

woman's hearts are already bleeding for."[392] Dall agreed to combine their work into one plan.

Emma Hardinge devised a plan, and with the help of Caroline Dall, formed committees to put the plan into action. Emma Hardinge's ideas for the Home for Outcast Women were based on rehabilitation, gaining or regaining self-respect by teaching these women a skill through learning agriculture, and there was no religious element mentioned within Hardinge's plan. This attempt occurred in 1860, decades before the Progressive period flourished between the 1890s and 1920s. Hardinge, as a successor to the Female Moral Reform Society of the early nineteenth century and its efforts to change laws and rescue women from prostitution, prescribed ideas that were progressive, a move away from strict religious control, a move towards rehabilitation and opportunity for these outcast women, and recognition of women fighting for the welfare of other women. Ultimately Hardinge's plans were unsuccessful, in part, due to the beginning of the Civil War, and people's attentions on more urgent national issues.

Hardinge continued to lecture on Modern Spiritualism and to elicit funds for the Home for Outcast Women after she and Dall formed the committee.[393] Hardinge's 1860 publication of *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature* was comprised of lectures delivered over the course of three Sundays during October and November 1860 at Kingsbury Hall in Chicago. In the Preface to the Reader, Hardinge proclaimed the funds collected in the sale of that book would go towards building "the home for the homeless, the shelter for

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[392] Emma Hardinge, June 9 1860.

[393] "Miss Hardinge's Lecture to-Night," *Cincinnati Daily Press*, January 3 1861. Lectured on behalf of outcast women far and wide. Including Cincinnati, Ohio.

the houseless, whose miserable lot has been one of the stimulants to this publication."[394] An addendum to the published lectures contained her proposed "Outline of A Plan for a Self-sustaining Institution for Homeless and Outcast Females, in which they can be employed and instructed in a Progressive System of Horticulture." The plan at this point was available for public perusal.

The Outline proposed a safe haven for the "benefit of females, who, by misfortune or loss of character, are without homes, friends, protection, or means of sustenance."[395] The goals were as follows: First, to restore or establish self-respect in these women by offering them a home, employment and a means of sustenance. Second, to remove them from the temptation to sin for their bread, although vice was not a necessary qualification for admission. Prevention from turning to a life of vice was just as important. Lastly, to instruct the women the most advanced aspects of scientific horticulture to remove competition within the market for jobs of drudgery. These vocations would in turn aid in sustaining the Institution as well. Part of this goal was to continue in the advancement of horticulture science to perfection not yet attained.[396] Each day at the Home would begin and end with music and reading in a universal spirit of sister equality. Hardinge prescribed Trustees to be appointed to care for the incoming

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[394] *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*, 7.

[395] "Appendix. Outline of a Plan for a Self-Sustaining Institution for Homeless and Outcast Females, in Which They Can Be Employed and Instructed in a Progressive Systemn of Horticulture.," in *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*, ed. Emma Hardinge (Chicago: Scott and Company, 1860), 139.

[396] Ibid., 139-40.

funds, finances and running of the Home. She offered her services as a teacher and co-worker, and continued lecturing around the country to raise funds.

On March 26, 1861, a public meeting was held at the Tremont Temple to consider Hardinge's plan for Boston's outcast and homeless women. Emma Hardinge spoke to the audience and excited much interest. On March 29, 1861, a letter was printed in *The Boston Daily Advertiser* addressed to Miss Emma Hardinge and signed by 48 persons, men and women, including Mrs. Dall, all members of the committee of local philanthropists appointed to consider Hardinge's plan. The letter publicly expressed an interest in Hardinge's plan and suggested she speak to the citizens of Boston, as she was the best person to explain her plan. Her lecture was scheduled for April 6 at 7:00 p.m.[397] This was clearly meant as an advertisement for the public to hear the plan again as explained by its author. On April 6, Hardinge repeated her lecture given on the 26th of March, as an encore performance.

Following Hardinge's second lecture explaining her plan for outcast women, circulars advertised another public meeting to be held on April 9, and it was decided at this meeting that Hardinge's plan was "eminently worthy of the attention of those who best appreciate the magnitude of the evil," and it was resolved to form a committee of eleven persons to consider the matter in deeper detail and to present a report the following Monday the 16th of April.[398] Meanwhile, a place called Brook Farm in West

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[397] "Correspondence," *The Boston Daily Advertiser*, March 29, 1861.

[398]"Handwritten Journal April 1861," in *Box Series III 48, Call No.: MC 351, Caroline Wells Healey Dall Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard.* (Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard.).

Roxbury, Massachusetts was suggested in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* on April 13, 1861 as a suitable venue for the "Home for the Penitent Magdalens" Hardinge had been laboring to establish, but the price of the estate was $18,000 and funds would need to be raised.[399]

Caroline Dall, as Secretary of this committee, recorded the minutes of the meetings and recorded the names of each member of the Standing Committee and Soliciting Committee, an act suggested by Emma Hardinge. Subsequent meetings followed the attack on Fort Sumter, April 12, 1861. These meetings were held in members' homes or, if for a larger meeting of the Standing and Soliciting Committees, they met at the Emigrant-Aid Society on Winter Street.

An official report was "finally" written, amended, and given to Dall to be put to press on April 19. According to the Report, the committee came to the decision that "however warmly the world's sympathy may be enlisted in behalf of this unhappy class, we find but little faith in the probability of any efficient reform, and, consequently, but little disposition to aid us."[400] They further stated that skepticism was their chief obstacle, but wanted to find a better, more hopeful way to deal with the problem. They argued the plan as proposed intended to substitute the past unsuccessful efforts of instituting "unwavering routine needle-work and domestic labor," to the adoption of opportunities to train for more suitable livelihoods according to particular temperaments,

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[399] "Summary."

[400] Boston Institute for Homeless and Outcast women, "Statement of the Committee Appointed to Consider the Institution Proposed by Miss Emma Hardinge for Homeless and Outcast Women," (Boston1861).

and horticulture was to be the main feature.[401] However, the committee found that the current plan was not be sufficient for the overwhelming number of fallen women seeking relief from their lives of sin. One institution would not suffice. Despite their pessimistic opinion regarding the outcome, the committee found that this plan deserved a chance, and considered $10,000 the amount needed by voluntary subscriptions in order to get things started. The Home would run on its own labor following the initial funds. Those who wished reform would have to live by established regulations and agree to work for their living and support of all. The work would consist of outside agriculture with fruits, vegetables and husbandry, and indoor preparation of the harvests by pickling, preserving, putting up for sale their produce, and making common garments. A few teachers would teach these jobs, at first, until the students became proficient enough in their field to train newcomers. The supervision of the Home would be under the guidance of Trustees and of a nondenominational Christian religious instruction. This was the only deviation from Hardinge's initial plan. Hardinge had never mentioned any religious affiliation. It was made clear in the Report that Hardinge's plan was a good one, but that her identification as a Spiritualist would have no bearing on the instruction within the Home. The Report was signed April 20, 1861.[402]

Only a dozen came to the April 22 meeting "because of the excited state of the public feeling concerning this issue."[403] This meeting was also confused and rushed because many of the members that did show up were in a hurry to attend another meeting

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[401] Ibid.

[402] Ibid.

[403] "Handwritten Journal April 1861."

regarding the supply and comfort of the Massachusetts regiments. It was agreed to suspend the Soliciting committee until September based on an overall sentiment that it was unsuitable to solicit money during the present crisis. Still, 2500 copies of the Report were to be printed, with 1,000 to be immediately circulated, and the subject was to remain active in the Committee's mind and in discreet ways assist in the maturing of the plan. There was a move to erase the words "outcast-women" anywhere within the Report, to which Hardinge and Dall strenuously objected. Hardinge acquiesced on the name of the institution to be a Female Horticultural Institute because the abandoned women she had already spoken with would recognize that name. Dall and William Copland preferred the word agricultural because it "indicated simpler and less expensive labor" and "was likely to present a truer idea."[404] At this meeting Hardinge asked, and it was granted, that she could "begin on a small scale, on her own responsibility, should she find something during the summer."[405] Hardinge was eager to get things moving and did not want to be deterred by the escalating war.

Distribution of the Report was discussed at a small meeting of the Standing Committee on 30 April. A larger meeting was held on 3 June. Dall writes that before the formal meeting opened, she read a letter Hardinge wrote to the *Boston Journal*. Hardinge had mentioned to Dall before the meeting that she felt remorse at not first consulting with the Committee before having the letter published in the newspaper. Dall pasted the published Letter to the Editor of the *Boston Journal* written by Emma Hardinge June 1,

[404] Ibid.

[405] Ibid.

1861 titled "The Home for Outcast Females" within the front cover of one of her handwritten journals.[406] This letter was written a month and a half after the American Civil War began. It is evidence of Hardinge's continued attempts to found and fund the home for outcast women despite the mounting war. Of course no one knew how long this war would last. This letter was reprinted in William Lloyd Garrison's paper *The Liberator* in June of 1861.

Hardinge's letter expressed regret at asking for space within the *Boston Journal* at a time when it was "imperatively required for a more momentous matter."[407] However, she committed herself to the citizens who had tendered pledges many months before the outbreak of war. She announced that the Committee felt it necessary to suspend further action until next Fall, or "such time as the public mind should be free to sympathize in such a movement."[408] As we now know, that moment would not come before four more long years of war.

Hardinge's Letter to the Editor continued as she announced she had intended to use the funds she had collected thus far to start a small experimental home, because she believed the livelihood of the outcast women would only get worse during a national crisis. It seemed with an awfully heavy heart that Hardinge explained why this design could not be carried out. She relayed the story of how for six months she and two friends had tried in vain to find any sort of housing available. She believed "landlords and

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[406] Ibid. Emma Hardinge, "The Home for Outcast Females, to the Editor of the Boston Journal," *The Boston Journal*, June 1 1861.

[407] "The Home for Outcast Females, to the Editor of the Boston Journal."

[408] Ibid.

proprietors seem to have entered into a league against the admission of the outcast to their dwellings."[409] She came to the conclusion that she could not do this on her own, and that it would be necessary for a company to buy the land and build the industrial home needed for the rehabilitation of outcast women. This would have to wait until the Committee reassembled. This Committee never reassembled.

Hardinge and Dall continued their relentless work throughout their lives for the welfare and betterment of others, especially women. In November of 1861 Dall lectured in a Hall in Bromfield about the atrocities of slavery in the South, but also of the horrid conditions outcast women in the North continued to live with, the injustices that prevailed right under their noses. She spoke of Emma Hardinge recently entering the "houses of sin and shame" with the guidance of the police, and how she left covering her face with her hands, exclaiming her shame. She called on women in the North not to give up on their unfortunate sisters.[410] In 1867 Dall began in earnest to form the American Social Science Association and as part of these efforts aligned herself with Francis Ellingwood Abbot, a Unitarian minister and a radical religious philosopher who founded the Free Religious Association. Dall expressed her desires for the creation of the American Social Science Association to Abbot in letters dated February 6 and 13, 1867, and these letters revealed her radical political nature. "26 years ago I stood by Theo Parkin's side, and

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[409] Ibid.

[410] "Lecture on the Times and Florence Nightingale," in *Handwritten Journal November 1861, Box 54, Call No.: MC 351, Caroline Wells Healey Dall Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard.*

with his dying breath, he thanked me for my faithfulness to radical ideas. I was more radical than he, for he was neither logically nor metaphysically consistent."[411]

Emma Hardinge continued to plead for outcast women well into the Civil War. In an August 1861 lecture she spoke of the thousands of women who skulked around at night just for bread to survive, but usually ended in death by famine or suicide. She argued that for every outcast woman in the city, there was a male counterpart at liberty in the saloons, the halls of legislature and the offices of trust and honor.[412] Equality was a myth, "when pointing with the skeleton finger of gaunt poverty, from the crowded tenant-house dens of ill-paid operatives, to the golden palaces of their aristocratic employers."[413]

Emma Hardinge spoke to a large audience on February 25, 1862 in New York's Dodworth's Hall, still fighting on behalf of the "wretched female outcasts that throng the streets of our cities by night."[414] Hardinge continued to press for her plan in establishing industrial homes for the "poor Magdalens," and to effect reform through "cheerful, pleasant and comfortable homes and kindly treatment…leading them back gradually to self-respect and usefulness."[415] Hardinge appropriated all of the proceeds from her lectures to the cause. The New York Times reported that if she did not receive support

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[411] "Letter, Caroline H. Dall to Francis Abbot February 6, 1867," in *Francis Ellingwood Abbot Collection* (Harvard University Archives). "Letter, Caroline H. Dall to Francis Abbot February 13, 1867," in *Francis Ellingwood Abbot Collection* (Harvard University Archives).

[412] *America and Her Destiny*, 12.

[413] Ibid.

[414] "The Lost Ones of the Cities," *The New York Times*, February 25 1862.

[415] Ibid.

for this plan in New York, she would return to Boston and continue her struggle there. Hardinge "implored the public to allow no sectarian or other prejudice to interfere."[416] Hardinge's plans were discussed in a meeting between the Mayor and other gentlemen on March 4, 1862.[417]

Hardinge's work on behalf of outcast women was noticed across the Atlantic. Newspapers and periodicals in England published the progression of her hard work from state to state, and the struggles Hardinge faced once the "present unhappy struggle in America" commenced, euphemistically referring to the Civil War.[418] England's Contagious Diseases Acts, beginning in 1864, created a space for women to campaign on behalf of women, and became pivotal in the development of a public and political voice for women.[419] There was a Victorian trend to control women's bodies, and medical advances in obstetrics and midwifery were tools for controlling women. Often the government's efforts to assist women resulted in their control of gender, sex and sexuality. This control of women can be linked to the imperial context and Britain maintaining racial superiority. Poor law administration in hygiene and sanitation reform controlled class, gender, and colonial populations.[420] Josephine Butler began her rescue

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[416] Ibid.

[417] "The Social Evil," *The New York Times*, March 4 1862.

[418] "Notices of Books: America and Her Destiny; an Inspirational Discourse. By Emma Hardinge. New York.," 286.

[419] Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

[420] Alison Bashford, "Medicine, Gender, and Empire," in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Phillipa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

work of fallen women in the 1850s, but worked tirelessly with other women during the 1870s and 80s to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts, and secured their victory in 1886.[421]

Margaret Wade Campbell Deland, also a Spiritualist and a Bostonian, quite possibly inspired by the work of Hardinge and Dall, was interested in the plight of unmarried mothers in the 1880s, and took them into her home until they could find proper jobs. In a letter on January 25, 1884 to a Miss Clarke, Deland wrote of her rescued women. Dalia Bagly had gone back to her home and was very happy and contented. Mary O'Neil found work in her husband's office learning "the trade," soon to be earning $6 to $8 a week. Deland also found boarding for Mary O'Neil with a nearby family and would pay for her board until she began earning enough to pay for herself. Deland reported, with an air of victory, "the objection to working by the day is overcome." At the close of the letter Deland asked if Miss Clarke had any other girls that needed help.[422] On January 29 Deland wrote that Mr. Deland taught Mary O'Neil a little in the evenings and she went into town to a writing class once a week. She began to discuss the sad story of a young mother, Minnie Dockray. Deland offered to begin making the baby clothes

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[421] Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 87-90.

[422] Margaret Wade Campbell Deland, "Letter, Margaret Deland to Miss Clark January 25, 1884," in *Deland, Margaret Wade Campbell, 1857-1945.* (Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard).

before Minnie arrived.[423] The social and political work by women for women in desperate straits continued.

Thus, two like-minded women from different continents, different religious and educational backgrounds, and from different classes came together to make a difference in the lives of unfortunate and fallen women in Boston in the early 1860s leading up to the American Civil War, and left a lasting imprint that may have influenced other women to follow their lead. Their work is remarkable because it shows a distinct change in method and strategy towards rehabilitating "fallen" women. Prostitutes were seen as women but were never given opportunities for education and diverse vocational training to be successful and self-respecting. We will never know if this project would have worked if the citizens of Boston had given it a chance, and if the Civil War had not occurred at this particular moment in time. This idea of women fighting as women for other women would eventually become a bigger part of reform movements to better the lives of women near the latter part of the nineteenth century.

LINCOLN'S 1864 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

Along with Hardinge's antislavery activities and efforts to rehabilitate prostitutes, she also became directly involved in the turbulent national politics of Civil War America. While the war raged on, Hardinge lectured throughout the States in October 1863 on her way to California, where she embarked on what turned out to be an extensive fifteen-month lecturing tour across California and Nevada, including her political campaign on behalf of the Republican Party's presidential candidate, Abraham Lincoln, in the 1864

[423] "Letter, Margaret Deland to Miss Clarke January 29, 1884," in *Margaret Wade Campbell Deland, 1857-1945* (Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard).

election. The Lincoln campaign is significant both because Hardinge campaigned for Lincoln as part of her anti-slavery agenda, and because her involvement in a male-dominated public political arena traversed the boundary beyond the established woman-centered sphere of social reform.

Hardinge wrote of her experiences in California and published them in a multi-part series for A. J. Davis's periodical *The Herald of Progress* in New York. She began her fourth installment, signed December 22, 1863, "Spiritualism in San Francisco" by explaining that Californians are a "unique picture of strangeness, largeness, fastness, and rashness, unparalleled, I should think, in any country of the world."[424]

Hardinge's fans asked for one more public lecture at the close of her Spiritualism lecture circuit in California and Nevada. The lecture was titled, "The Coming Man; or the Next President of the United States," and was given in front of thousands in San Francisco. Reports at the time confirm that two thousand were already seated an hour before the start.[425] She pointed to the "feverish anxiety which throbbed in the national pulse in those days" regarding the people's mood on the upcoming presidential election during a war period, when the life and death of the nation rested, and perhaps its very existence. [426] Hardinge claimed no merit in her pleadings for Abraham Lincoln, because

[424] Hardinge, "California Sketches: Number Four. Spiritualism in San Francisco."

[425] "Miss Emma Hardinge's Political Campaign, in Favour of the Union Party of America, on the Occasion of the Last Presidential Election of 1864," (London: Thomas Scott, 1865), 3-4.

[426] Ibid., 4.

his honest life spoke for itself, but said her true mission lay in stripping away the political prejudices and party bigotry that divided the country.

The next morning the Union State Central Committee urged Hardinge to "stump the state for Lincoln" unofficially, because, as Hardinge later wrote, the Committee's "orators were clergymen, congressmen, men of the highest place and wealth and talent, but always men, [and] could not for a moment condescend to the indignity of employing a professional speaker, and that speaker a woman too."[427] Yet they still urged her to campaign for Lincoln and win the State of California in the election. Hardinge claimed she hesitated because the work she had previously done for the war effort, lecturing for the benefit of soldiers' funds and speaking for charitable institutions, was a necessity to bring money to those desperate institutions, "but to invade the sphere of politics" seemed too daring to contemplate based on what she had witnessed, as the "Press" attacked gentlemen of worth and standing who spoke for their respective political parties and politicians.[428] Hardinge resolved not to accept the offer and to leave California.

Six days following the lecture on "The Coming Man," the Treasurer of the Union State Central Committee of California paid Hardinge a visit and formally invited her to work for the Union cause and Lincoln's reelection campaign, and he did this by convincing her to weigh her fears on one scale and her conscience on the other. They parted that day with Hardinge pledging to speak for the Union party right up to the election. The Committee paid all of her expenses, arranged all of her lectures, and

[427] Ibid., 7.

[428] Ibid., 7-8.

provided transportation. Hardinge began her political lectures 38 days before the election and delivered 32 varying and different lectures lasting two and a half hours each. She lectured in halls, on the road by assembled multitudes, mining camps, and "extemporized mass meetings…in the natural halls" of "California's wild mountains and giant forests."[429] The Union Committee assured Hardinge that her audiences in the thousands from both parties brought the voters out in California to win the state for Lincoln on November 8th, 1864.[430]

Women were routinely criticized for speaking in front of heterogeneous audiences, an action that was gaining momentum during the Civil War in America. One Geneva, New York journalist editorialized on "gynaekokracy…a disease which manifests itself in absurd endeavors of women to usurp the places and execute the functions of the male sex," and the journalist included in this group "lecturers, whom he described as 'free thinkers…radicals…women of doubtful morals…bold, unblushing, flippant, unfeminine…and bad imitators of men."[431]

Stories of Hardinge's political campaign for Lincoln were published in London and allowed English readers to follow her career in the United States. Hardinge left London an actress, and that is how the English remembered her. In the United States she evolved into a performer of a different sort, professing provocative and intellectual ideas of religion and politics. Following the 1864 election *Miss Hardinge's Political*

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[429] Ibid., 8-9.

[430] Ibid., 10.

[431] Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Women in the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebaska Press, 1994), 153-54.

Campaign, in Favour of the Union Party of America, On the Occasion of the Last Presidential Election of 1864 appeared as a London pamphlet in 1865 that sold for sixpence. A public advertisement of Hardinge's scheduled lecture for January 13, 1866 at St. James's Hall in London covered the pamphlet's back page announcing the subject as "America: Its social, religious, and political condition." A second and third address would be delivered on the 20th and 27th of January that year.[432]

The pamphlet was, in part, published to explain the political situation in the United States and endear Hardinge to those in England who sympathized with the Union cause in preparation for her upcoming lecture tour in England. It would be her first trip back to England since she left for New York in 1855 to work in a Broadway theater. The pamphlet introduced Hardinge as an eloquent advocate of the Spiritual philosophy and identified her for her widely known philanthropic efforts to ameliorate the conditions of the fallen woman, which had earned her the designation of "the outcast's friend," her lectures in jails and penitentiaries, and the devotion of a large part of her time and service in the aid of soldiers' families and in hospitals. Her prominent place as a political speaker in the Union cause during the American War was included to complete her introduction.[433] Much of the pamphlet's content relied on Hardinge's own writings *Sketches of California,* as she refers to it in her autobiography, but titled "California Sketches" in A. J. Davis's *The Herald of Progress,* covering her 15-month lecture circuit

[432] "Miss Hardinge's Political Campaign."

[433] Ibid., 3.

across the country in California and Nevada, and her lecture, "The Coming Man, or the next President of the United States."

President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated on April 14, 1865. The news arrived to New York on Saturday morning, April 15, that the President was dead and immediately Emma Hardinge received an invitation from several influential citizens to deliver an oration on Lincoln's behalf. Hardinge spoke the next day, Sunday, April 16th at 3:00 at Cooper Institute in front of over 3,000 audience members. She was the first woman known to have given a eulogy in honor of Lincoln, and her words were widely disseminated.[434] The lecture was phonographically recorded and later published as a 28-page pamphlet.[435] Hardinge's opening invocation spoke of Lincoln's assassination as akin to the crucifixion of Jesus: "Teach us, as we mourn the day of Cruxifixion, to turn with brightening memory to the hopes of Easter…so has the martyr whom we mourn this hour gone from our mortal eyes."[436] Hardinge's speech was powerful, and she meant to quell a new war by asserting the act was by one man, not a "coil of conspirators doing the deeds of demons."[437] She remembered all the words she had spoken about Lincoln over the past many months, and named him the "true preserver of his country."[438]

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[434] Harold K. Bush, ed. *Lincoln in His Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of His Life Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates.* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011), 139.

[435] Emma Hardinge, *The Great Funeral Oration on Abraham Lincoln* (New York: American News Company, 1865), preface.

[436] Ibid., invocation.

[437] Ibid., 9.

[438] Ibid.

Hardinge quoted Lincoln from his nomination speech for Senator of Illinois in 1858 referring to his strong passion against the institution of slavery. Lincoln said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand; I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved; I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other."[439] Hardinge proclaimed that the Proclamation of Emancipation in 1863 was the deed "beyond all others of his life, crowns him with eternal honor, and will hand his name down to an immortal glory through all posterity."[440]

Lincoln's martyrdom and legacy of ending slavery evoked fear among discerning Southerners, because they realized he was the only hope they had for a mild restoration program following the Civil War.[441] Hardinge realized this as well. "There are men now who sit beneath the southern orange and magnolia and weep for him as we weep; hearts in the unhappy South as sorrowful as ours; heads bowed with shame."[442] She did not lay blame on the South, but on its spirit, its institutions, and exclaimed "the blood of Lincoln lies at the door of Slavery!"[443]

Prior to Lincoln's assassination Hardinge had been approached and requested to speak on the subject of the South's reconstruction, and she spoke about it on April 7,

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[439] Ibid., 16.

[440] Ibid.

[441] Massey, *Women in the Civil War*, 162.

[442] Hardinge, *The Great Funeral Oration on Abraham Lincoln*, 22.

[443] Ibid., 23.

1865 at the Cooper Institute, the same place she would later give Lincoln's funeral oration.[444] Much of her previous speech on reconstruction, just a week before, was incorporated into the Lincoln funeral oration. She emphasized that the time and conditions for reconstruction needed to be chosen carefully. Peace needed to be restored completely and the Government intact before restoration could begin.[445]

> If the legislative wisdom of the people cannot in solemn council agree to accuse and condemn the monster Slavery as cause enough – if some lingering remnants of the suicidal folly which cherished the serpent, in whose foul embrace the land has well-nigh died, should still, in blind infatuation, refuse its sanction to an amended charter, killing the nation's cause of death to save its life, what then? Why, reconstruction will come from the same source that made construction – THE PEOPLE![446]

Hardinge urged the audience and all Americans to prove their love for "Father Abraham" by swearing not to dishonor his grandest deed and take the scalpel to any charter that did not sanction liberty or nullified Lincoln's brightest act.[447] Hardinge did not speak of Spiritualism in the Lincoln oration, but did make Biblical references. Although it was not mentioned in the oration, Mary Todd Lincoln was known to conduct séances to seek comfort from her dead son, Willie, and Abraham Lincoln attended as least one of these sessions.[448]

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[444] "Miss Hardinge's Lecture," *New York Times*, April 8, 1865.

[445] *The Great Funeral Oration on Abraham Lincoln*, 25-26.

[446] Ibid., 25.

[447] Ibid., 26.

[448] Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 27. Bush, *Lincoln in His Own Time*, 139.

Hardinge's first public lecture in England on the January 13, 1866 was met with an immediate, lengthy, and nasty response from the London press. *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* immediately began by castigating Hardinge for being an oratress and stumping a State, two things that were of limited interest. The author compared her career to a female fiddler: "the wonder is, not how she does it, but that she does it at all."[449] The author pointed out that Hardinge's advertisement brochure spoke of her political campaign in California in favor of the Unionists because of her zeal for the North, but failed to mention that

> she has gifts which it would be profane to criticize; her utterances are from the unseen world; her voice is the voice of intelligences before which we have only to bow, and which it is ours at once reverently and silently to accept. Over and above her political aspect, she is the chosen depositary of the secrets of the unseen world; and, rightly to understand her prophecies, we have only to hear what she is according to the *Spiritual Magazine* – which we observe she does not quote, and does not appeal to, at St. James's Hall.[450]

The author continued his mocking by referring to his source, the *Spiritual Magazine*, as a "funny journal," which assigned Hardinge as one of the most powerful speakers on spiritual philosophy.[451] Hardinge's abilities, if true, took her out of the category of oratress and into another.

In an apparent attempt to tarnish Hardinge's reputation, the author dug out the history of Hardinge as an actress in England eleven years prior, and her failed attempt as

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[449] "Miss Emma Hardinge," *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, January 20 1866, 76.

[450] Ibid.

[451] Ibid.

an actress in New York during her engagement at a Broadway theater. The author went on about Hardinge's role as a medium. "But if Miss Hardinge declines to be true to herself, she ought to be true to her inspiration and 'the sperrits.' Queer people these sperrits are, and they have a queer way of going on… far be it from the profane to question their method of revelation."[452] The author questioned why Hardinge did not ascribe her speech to "her faithful and beloved masters" that spoke through her.[453] He wanted to know how she distinguished her sacred and profane utterances from the spirits and her own ideas.

> For ourselves, we are completely puzzled. The oration of Saturday might be dictated by the spirits, or it might be only the gifted oratress's own gabble. No doubt it was, as the *New York Times* expresses it, characterized by 'a rhetorical finish, a perfection of logic, and a keen analytical perspicuity,' according to the Transatlantic sense or nonsense of these terms; but then it might be either mundane or supermundane. It was bunkum enough for either.[454]

He continued by comparing Hardinge to another spirit medium, Miss Codgers, who "floundered about famously."[455]

> There was just that bloated and flabby mock eloquence in Miss Hardinge's 'oration,' that sonorous absence of all argument, that substitute of platitude for depth, that affectation of high and holy thought which would be so edifying were it in the slightest degree intelligible, that we would willingly attribute it to the spirits rather than to any rational creature. But, on the other hand, there was so

[452] Ibid.

[453] Ibid., 77.

[454] Ibid.

[455] Ibid.

> much that smacked of material and mundane experiences, such old familiar tricks of a second-rate professional, such palpable familiarity with stage business, and such unmistakable reminiscences of the 2,080 previous performances, that we are, on the whole, convinced that the spirits had little or nothing to do with it.[456]

The reviewer followed this battering by sarcastically suggesting that it was worth the visit to witness Miss Hardinge in action and hear her speak of the divine providence of America.

Hardinge returned to America without her mother in the Fall of 1869 to finish and publish her book *Modern American Spiritualism*, published in 1870, and to continue her career spreading Modern Spiritualism and social reforms.[457] In October 1869 Harding spoke with Lucretia Mott for the Peace Society in Philadelphia. Hardinge discussed the death penalty and presented forcible and concise arguments against the practice of capital punishment.[458] Soon, she would take her political reformism and Spiritualism to the far ends of the earth: Australia and New Zealand.

THE CHINESE LABOR QUESTION IN AUSTRALIA

Emma Harding married William Britten in 1870. The couple embarked on an Australia and New Zealand lecture tour in January 1878. They stayed through December of 1879, proselytizing their doctrine of Modern Spiritualism and promoting political and social reform. During this time Emma Hardinge Britten lectured about the Chinese Labor

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[456] Ibid.

[457] Mathiesen, *The Unseen Worlds of Emma Hardinge Britten*, IX, 74.

[458] "Our Philadelphia Correspondence," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, no. 53 (1869).

Question in Sydney, Australia in December 1878, and this lecture was published as a tract.[459]

Emma and William's arrival on February 19th in the Port of Sydney on a 3000-ton steamer from San Francisco was announced in the *Australian Town and Country Journal.*[460] The notice added that the Brittens travelled in steerage, which referred to a ship's lower deck, specially designed to accommodate the lowest cost and lowest class of travel. Conditions in steerage were unpleasant and unhealthy. Sleeping conditions were simply rough wooden berths where the passenger had to supply their own bedding, along

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[459] Modern Spiritualism came to Australia mainly through the gold rush migration of the 1850s, and a community of Spiritualists existed prior to the Brittens' arrival in the late 1870s. Gabay, *Message from Beyond,* 7. "First Edition," *The Harbinger of Light,* September 1, 1870. Britten, *Nineteenth Century Miracles,* 230. William Henry Terry, a freethinking Unitarian from London took up Spiritualism in the 1850s and moved to Melbourne, Australia in 1853 with his family. Terry began publishing The Harbinger of Light, a monthly journal devoted to Zoistic science, free thought, Spiritualism and the Harmonial Philosophy in September of 1870 in Melbourne. Gabay, *Message from Beyond.* Terry worked his whole life to promote his vision of Spiritualism "as the sole hope for the salvation of humankind and the regeneration of society," and he is considered the head of the Spiritualist movement in Australia. Terry's work was published in American and English Spiritualist publications. The Victorian Association of Progressive Spiritualists was formed in 1870 out of freethinking members of the Eclectic Society, which was founded in 1867 by atheist H. K. Rusden. The new intelligentsia of Melbourne that came into prominence during the 1850s and '60s created a transplanted English city within two generations. Just as in England, Melbourne's Spiritualist community was predominantly made up of well-educated upper classes. The submarine cable completed in 1871 enabled Britain and Australia to communicate within mere hours, thus allowing a transoceanic conversation on myriad topics, including new religious and social ideas. The Association promoted weekly public lectures, and in their first decade many American Spiritualists lectured, including Dr. J. M. Peebles, the Davenport brothers, and Harry Keller. Emma Hardinge Britten followed in these footsteps as a visiting lecturer for the Victorian Association of Progressive Spiritualists in 1878.

[460] "Shipping Arrivals," *Australian Town and Country Journal*, February 23, 1878.

with eating and drinking utensils.[461] The Brittens left San Francisco on January 5, and arrived in Sydney on February 19; a month and a half of steerage travel. It is reasonable to conclude from the fact she traveled in steerage, the extreme lengths Britten took to continue her work, spreading her theology of Modern Spiritualism and her opinions regarding social and political issues.[462]

Britten lectured on what she believed could help ease the question of Chinese labor in Australia. The Chinese Labor Question was not solely an Australian issue, but a Pacific issue, and a Pacific dialog ensued during the years Britten was in Australia and New Zealand. *The Singleton Argus and Upper Hunter General Advocate* of New South Wales, Australia, reported on the influx of 90,000 Chinese labourers in San Francisco

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[461] Frederick Whymper, *The See: Its Stirring Story of Adventury, Peril & Heroism* (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1877), This novel address the conditions of transatlantic and transpacific steerage travel.

[462] Numerous advertisements and articles on Emma Hardinge Britten, her life and work history appeared in several newspapers and journals while the Brittens were in Australia. Her lectures were advertised almost on a daily basis in certain newspapers like *The Argus* published in Melbourne. "Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten," *Geelong Advertiser*, July 23, 1878. On July 23, 1878 the Geelong Advertiser republished her autobiography verbatim right out of her 1860 preface to Theology and Nature. "Melbourne. From Our Own Correspondent," *Camperdown Chronicle*, March 19, 1878. Not all the press presented itself in a positive light, but being in the press, whether good or bad, got one's name in the paper. One announcement of Britten's upcoming lecture went like this, "We are to have the famous female-spiritist-inspirational-medium Mrs. Emma Harding Britten here next Sunday, vociferating and gesticulating at the Opera House. Bah! These advanced Yankee notions correspondent – Mormonism included – won't do for an English community. And then the pretext of inspiration is just a little too preposterous at this time of day." Hardinge, "California Sketches: Number Four. Spiritualism in San Francisco." Britten once said during her California lecture tours that bad press saved her money because her opponents did all the advertising for her. She said it often supplied her with two or three hours of reading a week. Britten was often noted to be from America instead of her homeland England.

causing agitation among the workingmen there.[463] *The Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* of New South Wales, Australia reported in February 1880 on the California Senate issuing "a prohibition against corporate bodies employing Chinese labour," which was causing great excitement in San Francisco.[464] The mass migrations of Chinese immigrants to Australia were similar to the Chinese migrations to California during the gold rushes.[465] Australia experienced similar gold rushes in New South Wales and Victoria beginning in the 1850s.[466] The great influx of Chinese immigrants upon the discovery of gold in Australia created violent competition between Australians of European decent and the Chinese.[467] There were "anti-Chinese influx" groups that held meetings on the subject of the Mongolian invasion.[468] White Australians feared that the Chinese would eventually overwhelm Australia's British civilization.[469]

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[463] "America," *The Singleton Argus and Upper Hunter General Advocate*, January 1, 1878.

[464] "The Chinese Labour Question," *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, February 17, 1880.

[465] Laurence J. C. Ma, and Carolyn Cartier, ed. *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility, and Identity* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 381.

[466] Sen-dou Chang, "The Distribution and Occupations of Overseas Chinese," in *The Chinese Overseas*, ed. Hong Liu, Routledge Library of Modern China (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 183.

[467] Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 200.

[468] "Country News," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 7, 1878.

[469] *Chinese among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*, 201. For more on this issue and the development of the White Australian Policy see: Myra Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1923).

One Sydney newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph* published a series of articles entitled "The Mongolian Invasion," and spoke about the importation of Chinese women and how they looked down upon European concubines when they were no better. "It comes to a pretty state of affairs when a female Chinese, who is bought for a price, can contemptuously pass by a European woman who has been ruined by the villainy of her countrymen." The author almost sympathetically compared these women to prize cattle brought in by wealthy Mongolians referred to as Canton gamblers, because women in China have no will of their own, are at the mercy of her father and sold to the highest bidder. Their bound feet were called "Lilies of Delight."[470]

There is no evidence of Britten speaking about this issue in California, but she may have become familiar with it during her time there. However, she weighed in and contributed to the discourse in Sydney, and her lecture was subsequently published as a book titled *The Chinese Labour Question; or the Great Problem of Capital and Labour* and sold for threepence. It was available for purchase by December 12, 1878.[471] Britten devoted the hour that was to be spent on religious instruction instead on the "great conflict that is now agitating the public mind on the relations of Labour and Capital."[472] She applied a central principle of impartial justice based on good morals and true religion to arbitrate between the conflicting interests. Britten opined that the dispute between

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[470] "Celestial Domesticity," *The Brisbane Courier*, May 4, 1881.

[471] "Books, Publications, &C.," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 12, 1878.

[472] Britten, *The Chinese Labour Question*, 3.

employers and employees was a worldwide issue and the "throes and pangs" were beginning to stir society throughout the civilized world.[473]

Britten began her examination of the issue by establishing an understanding of the employers' concerns or what she called Capital. She asserted that the employers' claim that "the employment of Asiatic labour has been forced upon them by competition from without, and that is moreover deemed expedient to employ such labour in tropical waters. But they deem the employees' demands dictatorial and unwarrantable."[474] The side of the employees or what she called Labour was examined next. The employees did not complain of lack of work or insufficient compensation. They asked for the wrongs done to the workers to be righted. They represented the class, not individuals. They demanded "neither more nor less than a protest against the employment of persons of a certain nation, and this, totally irrespective of the capacity of those whom they denounce, or the value of their services."[475] Britten argued that the employees had stepped out beyond the range of their own interests to represent those of a class and thus placed themselves in a temporary martyrdom.[476]

Britten pointed to the history of China's isolation policy that resulted in overpopulation. This in turn created a need for mass emigration or risk famine. Chinese emigrants brought with them "extreme habits of endurance and economy of living with

[473] Ibid., 4.

[474] Ibid.

[475] Ibid.

[476] Ibid.

which no other nation can compete."[477] Two sources of injury followed the mass influx of Chinese workers. One, their labor was cheap and that reduced the "value of labour to a standard, unendurable to other races." Two, "numerical strength of the alien masses, whose vast proportions threaten to absorb and supplant the industry of the countries upon which they make their descent."[478] Britten asked the audience to listen without bias and prejudice as she recounted with impartial detail the case of each party.

The positive benefits of Chinese labour were recounted. The Chinese offered superior industry, sobriety, and fidelity. In California they represented the best domestic service, and Chinese gardeners kept California gardens flourishing during their long seasons of drought. They maintained green oases and fresh fruits and vegetables. The longest and finest railroads in the world, the "Central and Union Pacific," were built chiefly by the Chinese, and would have taken twice the time with less sober and faithful laborers. She pointed that the Chinese possessed the three requisites of "capacity, sobriety, and industry."[479] Britten addressed this as follows, allowing for the prejudices of her white audience,

> in respect to the first requirement, there can be no dispute, the intelligence and skill of the Anglo-Saxon, being eminently in advance of all other races in the special departments of such labour, as contributes to the advancement of high civilization. On the other hand, I grieve to be obliged to admit, the balance in favour of Chinese sobriety and automatic industry, is so far in advance of that of

[477] Ibid., 5.

[478] Ibid.

[479] Ibid., 6.

> white labourers in general, that these very points become the most salient grounds of attack, to which white labour subjects itself.[480]

Britten followed this by pointing out the atrocious actions of the British Government, representing the Christian faith, by poisoning the Chinese in the infamous opium war.

Britten then moved on to the outcry against the Chinese "immorality" and uncleanness." She blamed these on the conditions they were drawn to live in as emigrants. She recounted the unclean and unsafe streets of London where she grew up in the Collegiate district of Westminster. She brought out the works of John Mayhew's "London Labour and the London Poor" published twenty years prior, citing the existence of 50,000 homeless and outcast in London, the accounts of "Mr. James Greenwood" exposing the disgraceful English workhouses, and the "Dorsetshire Parson" concerning the rural districts of England "lovely to the eye, but revolting to every sense of humanity in some of their features of uncleanness and immorality." No human manners were to be found in the area of Black County between Birmingham and Wolverhampton, and ironworkers crowded the streets in the thousands looking for vice on a Saturday night in Glasgow. These examples made the worst accusations against the Chinese community appear civilized.[481] If the positions were reversed, and the upper classes of China were exposed to the lowest classes of Great Britain and Europe, the wretchedness would be as glaringly hideous to the Chinese. The connection of immorality and uncleanness arose

[480] Ibid.

[481] Ibid., 7.

from the condition rather than the nation. Cheap labor created degraded labor. This was everywhere in every nation.[482]

Britten submitted the only moral way around this issue was if a nation was against the employment of Asiatic labor, this principle must be extended against employment of all aliens from any other nation. Restriction of emigration from one land needed to apply to all. She proffered the example of America, and while they were "buying and selling of flesh and blood of the black man, for the sake of obtaining cheap labour, large masses of the nation screamed and hooted against the influx of the Irish," and on a smaller scale a war against Dutch, Scotch, English, German, and Swedish labor.[483]

Moving to the side of the Capitalist, Britten reiterated their arguments. An employer had the right to do as they pleased with their own capital. Their capital was their own, and if they chose to invest in cheap labor, who would stop them? On the other hand, the laborers had their own capital in their mechanical skill and they had the right to exchange it for as much or as little as can be commanded. Britten asserted that the Capitalist was in possession of wealth and could live without investment in labor, but the laborer could not live without the investment of his labor into capital. The introduction of cheap labor would certainly end in a degraded value of labor with a loss of dignity and worth.[484]

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[482] Ibid., 8.

[483] Ibid., 9.

[484] Ibid., 10-12. This part of Britten's speech reflected similarities to the British Industrial Revolution when artisans from outside the city flooded the city. This resulted in an overabundance of workers in the city and a degradation of their skills working on

Britten's solution to the Chinese Labor Question was twofold: One, Capital had its rights, but they were bound by a moral code of ethics and the rights of others. An employer had a right to select his own employee, but not at the expense of the market price of labor. When the employer trampled on the rights of employees, his rights ended. Based on religious principles, of which justice was the cornerstone, the actions of a company or individual should not be permitted to inflict a wrong on a whole nation. Therefore, a company or individuals did not have the right to make investments that would "lower the market price of the poor man's capital, cheapen his flesh and blood, degrade the worth of his industry, and put the welfare of his dependent ones to auction."[485] A more humane and religiously just recognition of human rights was demanded. Law could intervene by regulating the market value of labor and by protecting the capital of employers by regulating the worth of labor with a scale of wages and graduated scale of laborers. A noble axiom was a fair day's wages for a fair day's work. Wages should not sink below fair, as all the labor should stand in the same category. Such reform took away the unjust sphere of national competition to a standard of true merit.[486] Britten ended as follows:

> In such a contest as this, may I not say, without exaggeration or boastful egotism, that the Anglo-Saxon race has nothing to fear. Nature, climate, soil, history, and national power, has placed this favoured race on the apex of a civilization which

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assembly lines. This further resulted in poverty and unhealthy living conditions for the working classes.

[485] Ibid., 12.

[486] Ibid., 13.

> can defy any competition from without; which has nothing to fear from any source, save its own internal corruption.[487]

Britten's diplomatic attempt to assuage fears on behalf of the white Australians did not work. Australians formed the White Australian Policy that lasted into the twentieth century. Although the Australians did not heed Britten's words, this attempt to mitigate the foreseeable and continuing problems with Chinese laborers is important as part of Britten's career in politics.

This chapter revealed a woman's life immersed in political pursuits across the Anglo English-speaking world. Britten participated in lengthy travelling lecture circuits and wrote on religion and politics most of her career. Britten married late, but her husband, William Britten espoused her same beliefs and goals, and supported Emma throughout her life instead of hindering her missions for wifely duties. Britten in these regards represents what historians have called "The New Woman." These women performed new professional and managerial work, living self-supporting and independent lives, while upsetting the convention of separate spheres. However, historians place the New Woman's emergence in the 1890s. Britten's lifelong career, as with many educated and activist women of her generation, began decades earlier.

[487] Ibid., 14.

CHAPTER V

SCIENCE:
A NATURAL COMPONENT OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM

> We observe that your psychologists and your astronomers are now ranked with your physiologists in tracing up the history of the manifestation of spirit. We find, since science and religion have united in that great wedding, that the product of each is the spiritual life which we now possess…Spiritualism is a science by itself, and its facts are facts by themselves, and as such the doctrine should be studied and weighed in the balance of reason.[488]

Emma Hardinge Britten lectured on Modern Spiritualism for over four decades, and the language she used was grounded in the sciences. Her first book-length publication was titled *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature* (1860). Natural science was a very prominent and important study during the nineteenth century with renowned scientists such as Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, well known among the reading public. Britten claimed no formal education in the sciences except for "a little dabbling in astrology, pursued under the auspices of merry gipsying parties, I never heard of, much less studied, any "ology" in my life."[489] Despite her humble self-deprecation, she elegantly spoke about scientific topics throughout her career.

Britten's Spiritualist beliefs and practices were intertwined with scientific discourses from the start. She explained Modern Spiritualism as natural science from the beginning of her career as a trance lecturer in the 1850s, and, along with her husband and sister, she also practiced electric healing procedures, a medical offshoot of mesmerism that some Spiritualists pursued. Additionally, Britten encouraged scientific research into

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[488] Hardinge, *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*, 80, 151.

[489] Ibid., 8.

Spiritualist phenomena. The Societies for Psychical Research established in the early 1880s were made up of intellectuals in the humanist disciplines as well as traditional sciences, working together, creating a complex investigative arena, using the strengths of each discipline. Thus, Britten's syncretism of science and Spiritualism was akin to her blending of Enlightenment and Romantic theological thought. The work of Britten and her colleagues highlights the intermingled nature of religious and scientific practice.

Britten first brought religion and science together through the astronomy, geology, physiology and natural history, and pointed to geological evidence supporting that the earth was millions, not thousands of years old.[490] Charles Lyell's geological proofs of the antiquity of the earth from the 1830s contradicted the creation stories of the Bible, thus elevating the status of science to understand the world.[491] Britten pointed out through the study of astrology, it was evident that religion of the ancients differed little from modern religion. Gods and evil were grounded in astronomy and presided in constellations. One example she gave was the ancients rejoicing in their Sun-God "passing through the sign of the Virgin," rebirthing their sun on or about the 25th day of December. This time of year began as pagan winter festivals and became a holy time for many emergent religions. Ancient religions also recognized healing as magic. The priests or magicians, being magnetizers, were seen as healers.[492]

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[490] Ibid., 18.

[491] Gabay, *Message from Beyond*, 8.

[492] Hardinge, *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*, 18-22.

Britten used the science of evolution, to prove most of her points. Immortality belonged to everything. A grain of matter could not be put out of existence. It evolved from one thing to another, but always existed. She used the example of the fern leaf. Through evolutionary changes the fern leaf turned to solid mineral, and ultimately useful coal. Everything returned. The sinking sun, springtime, flowers of summer, they all return.[493] Britten argued that one could "take the naturalism and supernaturalism of [the] day, and reduce it to the simple laws of electricity," and what would be found is that "supernaturalism is nothing more than the naturalism which grows out of the earth, as the soul grows out of the body."[494]

Britten wrote and lectured on many scientific topics throughout her career.[495] In 1864, while in California, she wrote about "the immense charge of magnetism that is liberated in mining operations, together with the rarity of the atmosphere that prevails in the huge mountain ranges and metallic hills." This effect caused strong spiritual

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[493] Ibid., 35-43.

[494] Ibid., 51.

[495] Lectures and writings in addition to ones mentioned in this chapter: Emma Hardinge Britten, "The Scientific Investigation of Spiritualism," *The Spiritual Magazine* (1871). "What Relation Does Spiritualism Bear to Science?," *The Spiritual Magazine* (1871). "Liverpool Psychological Society Farewell Oration by Mrs. Emma Hardinge, in Hope Hall, Friday, May 12, at Eight P.M.," *Liverpool Mercury*, May 11, 1871. "Lectures: The Physiology of Common Life - Mrs. Emma Harding Britten," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 10, 1873. "Mrs. Dr. Emma Hardinge-Britten, with Lecture on "the Physiological Wonders of the Human Structure."," *Boston Daily Globe*, December 6, 1873. "The Great French Electrical Cure," *Boston Journal*, January 6, 1874. "About Town: Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten Gives a Free Lecture on "Medical Electricity," in the Parker Memorial Hall Tonight," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, October 29, 1874. "The Science and Religion of Spiritualism," *Gippsland Times*, June 12, 1878. "Popular Science Lectures," *Otago Witness*, May 10, 1879. "Mrs. Britten's Course Upon Popular Science. The Third Lecture: "Physiology of the House of Life."," *Otago Witness*, May 24, 1879.

manifestations.[496] Britten's lectures published in *The Spiritual Magazine* in 1866 were titled "Psychology, Or The Science of Soul."[497] Hardinge professed that through the study of science, evolving from botanist and herbalist to natural philosopher, man developed his intellect and knowledge of the visible universe. Then researches gradually tended towards the invisible world and the penetration of chemistry, geology and astronomy, ultimately discovering the real force of creation was the unseen world. "One mystery that remains is the clue to the whole, the master-key that unlocks the entire arcana of creation, for that unsolved problem is the nature and law of spiritual existence." Nineteenth-century ministers and scientists explicitly pitted science against religion with the emergence of new fields of geology and anthropology, wherein geologists' and anthropologists' discoveries were antithetical to Biblical scriptures.[498] Hardinge expressed frustration at religion, in general, and its insistence on the separation between religion and science.

> Proudly separating herself from science, religion draws an impassable line of demarcation with her in the words 'sacred and profane.'…She commands our belief in a spiritual eternity, while she denies all possibility of our comprehending a spiritual existence; bids us acknowledge a spiritual cause for all life's wondrous issues, yet closes against our spiritual eyes the realm of investigation.[499]

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[496] Hardinge, "California Sketches: Number Four. Spiritualism in San Francisco."

[497] "Psychology, or the Science of Soul: Lecture 1," *The Spiritual Magazine* (1866). "Psychology, or the Science of Soul: Lecture 2," *The Spiritual Magazine* (1866).

[498] Ronald L. Numbers, "Aggressors, Victims, and Peacemakers: Historical Actors in the Drama of Science and Religion," in *The Religion and Science Debate: Why Does It Continue?*, ed. Harold W. Attridge (Hartford: Yale University Press, 2009).

[499] Hardinge, "Psychology, or the Science of Soul: Lecture 1."

She referred derogatorily to religion, having its own agency, as closing itself off from science, and yet used feminine pronouns for 'religion' in this lecture. She continued that there was no scientific basis as yet for Modern Spiritualism, but further study into psychology, "the great temple of the science of mind," would render knowledge of the relationship between the mind and matter achievable.[500] She deemed psychology the science of soul.[501]

Spiritualism offered a connection between religion, immortality and science. Spiritualism came about in part because of the rise of science and reason, which caused a rethinking of biblical narratives. Victorians became insecure about losing faith and religion with the emergence of science. Loss of blind faith caused Spiritualism's popularity because of its connection with scientific testing. Spiritualists, as modern Victorians, desired scientific proof of spirits to affirm their faith.

At the same time, Spiritualists feared a science closed to esoteric inclusion in part due to its sole reliance on the material and a dismissive attitude towards things of a spiritual nature. An awareness of science's social impact and its destructive force remained. Science was known to tear at traditional religious beliefs while leaving no room for spiritual needs. Victorians needed a religious outlet other than Christian dogma and traditional convention, which contrasted with science and reason. If science could affirm spiritual phenomena, science could become the defender of Spiritualism and

[500] Ibid.

[501] Ibid.

religion.[502] Britten used varied approaches to explain universal truths about the nature of the unseen world. Logical thinkers appreciated religious explanations through science as opposed to literal reliance on Biblical scripture.

SCIENTIFIC AND RELIGIOUS ANTECEDENTS TO SPIRITUALISM

Long before the rise of Modern Spiritualism, scientists had been connected with supernatural, natural, occult, or metaphysical modes of exploration. Examples of this can be seen in early modern court patronage of occult science and philosophy. Elizabeth I of England and Rudolf II of Bohemia patronized the growth of these ideas and philosophies, which many referred to as magic and occult. The words "occult" and "magic" were used because of an inability to define these discoveries in scientific elemental terms known to the period.[503] Yet early modern scholarship was the precursor to the modern scientific revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Natural magic became absorbed in the new sciences as people like Sir Isaac Newton used it to explain natural philosophy.[504] This humanist, religious, and scientific association corresponds well with what Emma Hardinge Britten explained later: that the phenomenon of Modern Spiritualism is a natural law and has therefore always been present in the world.

During the early modern period magic was increasingly visible in books classified under astrology, witchcraft and natural magic. Magic was classified in two basic kinds:

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[502] Oppenheim, *The Other World*.

[503] Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979).

[504] Penelope Gouk, "Natural Philosophy and Natural Magic," in *Rudolf Ii and Prague: The Court and the City*, ed. Eliska Fuciková, James M. Bradburne, Beket Bukovinská, Jaroslava Housenblasová, Lumonír Konecny, Ivan Muchka, and Michal Sronek (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1997).

demonic magic, which relied on supernatural intervention, and natural magic, the magic that gained respectability in the latter sixteenth century. Natural magic followed the original theology of Adam's knowledge of creation, which was transmitted through the magi such as Abraham, Moses, Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, and Pythagoras, who possessed the secret language expressed through symbols, myths, and allegories. Natural magic was used to manipulate occult forces, which was anything that could not be explained in elemental terms. Occult philosophy of this period was simplified through its hierarchy of worlds that God created from a void. The worlds encompassed three realms: empyrean, ethereal, and elemental. The connection between these worlds was possible through a fluid medium of world spirit that permeated the universe. Symbols, numbers, geometrical figures and letters were powerful mediators between mind and body realms.[505] Magic of the Renaissance period must be thought of in terms of a resuscitation of the ancient ideas of hermeticism and Neoplatonism.[506] Emma Hardinge Britten, mesmerists, and Modern Spiritualists continued many of these philosophical trends and terminologies in the second half of the nineteenth century in connection with new modes of research to prove scientific hypotheses.

Scientific modalities of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were practiced and later used to explain and corroborate Spiritualist phenomena.[507]

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[505] Ibid.

[506] György E. Szönyi, *John Dee's Occultism: Magical Exaltation through Powerful Signs* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

[507] Miriam Wallraven, "'A Mere Instrument' or 'Proud as Lucifer'? Self-Presentations in the Occult Autobiographies of Emma Hardinge Britten (1900) and Annie Besant (1893)." *Women's Writing; The Elizabethan to Victorian Period* 15, no. 3 (2008): 398.

Mesmerism, magnetism, and phrenology became popular at the end of the eighteenth century before the development of a cohesive medical profession. These methods were used in healthcare and were highly suspect, but often proved useful and beneficial.[508] Many trained medical professionals practiced these methods as scientifically proven effective and were involved in experimentation to prove their reliability.

Franz Mesmer, a German doctor of the late eighteenth century described the invisible natural force exerted by animals as animal magnetism. He believed this force could be used to heal and for other physical effects. These techniques eventually took on the name of Mesmer and were called mesmerism. Mesmerism was a safe means of alleviating pain, and played a key role in the adoption of more scientific modes of anesthesia. Still skeptical physicians continued to use the less safe procedure of ether inhalation. Mesmerism became widely practiced and played a role in transforming medical and scientific authority.[509] Britten claimed mesmerism opened up the clue to the occult power of the magician of olden times. Mesmerism held the secret of ancient magic, and it offered a scientific basis for the mystery of magic. When a subject was

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[508] Alison Winter, *Mesmerized* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998). Winter places mesmerism central in Victorian culture and links it to the explanation for spiritualistic enterprise. See also, Dan Burton, and David Grandy, "Spirits, Science, and Pseudo-Science in the Nineteenth Century," in *Magic, Mystery and Science: The Occult in Western Civilization* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). Burton and Grandy examine the links between mesmerism, phrenology, Spiritualism, the scientific revolution, and reason with specific case studies of prominent trance mediums Eusapia Palladino, the Fox sisters, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Harry Houdini, Margery Crandon, and Leonora Piper.

[509] Winter, *Mesmerized*.

saturated with magnetism their will was subdued; sometimes a total unconsciousness ensued, a state known as "magnetic sleep."[510]

Dr. John Elliotson established the London Phrenological Society in 1832, and along with other medical professionals began to combine phrenology with mesmerism, known as phreno-mesmerism.[511] Dr. William Collins Engledue celebrated the convergence of the new science and called it "the magnetic excitement of cerebration."[512] It involved pressing on the phrenological organs and exciting them by blowing on them. This was done when the patient was in a mesmeric state and could, if requested, persist

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[510] Hardinge, "Psychology, or the Science of Soul: Lecture 1."

[511] Winter, *Mesmerized*. Phrenology, literally meaning the study of the mind, became the science of character reading. Phrenologists analyzed the physical shape of the brain by the skull, which determined character and personality. Franz Joseph Gall, a Viennese physician who developed the theory of phrenology, namely - that the brain was made up of multiple organs; the size of these organs related to their power; - and the skull took its shape from the brain. Analyzing the skull was in essence studying the shape and size of the brain's organs, which were responsible for intellectual aptitudes and character traits. Phrenology, as one of the scientific forms used to describe humans, had its heyday between 1820 through 1850. Eugenicists involved in racial anthropological physiognomy later used it by categorizing jaw structures and head shapes. The protruding jaw became a sign of lower development and a closer relationship to primitive men. It became a basis for racial and class stereotyping. For social reform purposes, phrenology was used in the study of executed criminal skulls in order to prove that the size of certain phrenological organs related and were responsible for antisocial behavior. Criminals could be viewed as victims of their own bodies through this process. It was believed that in order to make a difference in society, children should be assigned occupations according to their phrenological profile, and this would improve society and following generations. Thus the idea suggested society should be organized by physiological traits rather than class to determine the kind and level of education one should be given. However, most phrenologists' charts usually reinforced the subject's social background. John Beddoe, *The Races of Britain: A Contribution to the Anthropology of Western Europe* (London: Trübmer amd Co., 1862). John Beddoe's 1862 publication *The Races of Britain* argued for the superiority of the British based on their less prominent jaw.

[512] Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plegeians 1850-1910*, 84-85.

afterwards. The result would be permanent alteration of character. This was seen as a breakthrough in the treatment of insanity and as a hope to remodel society.[513] Dr. John Elliotson agreed phreno-mesmerism could reform society and explored ways of using it to improve education, the justice system and care for the poor.[514] Britten later used a form of phreno-mesmerism in the 1870s as medical treatments called electro-magnetic healing on paying clients.

Phreno-mesmerism made for wonderful theater. Mesmerism, like Spiritualism later, would often be viewed as theatrical and dramatic spectacle by skeptics. Experiments were carried out in public venues throughout the city. Audiences paid to attend mesmeric experiments and through time these successful experiments began to resemble drama and theatre, which created skepticism within the scientific and medical community. Medical doctors were trying to create a well-defined distinction between scientific medical professionals and practical lecturers. They believed healthcare in any form should only be performed by trained professionals. Drs. Elliotson and Engledue disdained non-trained phrenologists and their theatrical lectures. Mesmerism later evolved into psychic research, physiology and psychoanalysis.[515] Mesmerism along with phrenology were proven to be effective in test trials but continued to receive harassment and skepticism from medical professionals who viewed them as quackery. Britten used

[513] Ibid.

[514] Winter, *Mesmerized*, 132.

[515] Ibid.

elements of mesmerism, its framework of fluids and forces, to explain and defend Spiritualism later in the nineteenth century.[516]

Spiritualists not only used scientific terminology to explain Modern Spiritualism, but engaged in medical healing practices often deemed heterodox. These often comprised an eclectic blend of mesmerism and magnetism, including a phenomenon known as magnetic massage.[517] Britten ventured into the practice of electrical medicine in Boston in the 1870s with her husband and sister to develop a business of electrical cures. They studied medical electricity to practice on themselves and so Emma Britten could avoid having to leave home for extensive lecturing engagements. Their practice became successful, and Britten continued to lecture on Spiritualism more locally at the New Era Hall in Boston every Sunday evening. After a few years Britten's sister returned to England and William and Emma began planning their Australian and New Zealand missionary trip.[518]

During the time of their electrical healing business roughly from 1873-1875, they used electricity as a healing modality, one of the many new enterprises to improve one's health, such as vegetarianism and the water cure. Britten spoke about this subject as early as 1866 when she introduced "electro-biology" as a healing technique that required the subject to be mesmerized first.[519] Through magnetism the minds of the subject and

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[516] Ibid.

[517] Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plegeians 1850-1910*, 213, 25.

[518] Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 224-25.

[519] Hardinge, "Psychology, or the Science of Soul: Lecture 1."

operator were directly linked.[520] Britten wrote *The Electric Physician,* or *Self Cure Through Electricity* in 1875. The guide offered directions to use the "Electro-Magnetic Battery" to treat any disease with high success. These were based on the "French and Viennese Systems of Medical Electricity." It claimed anyone could cure themselves without the aid of drugs or doctors. The guide sold for 50 cents.[521] Britten sent flyers and advertisements out marketing their new endeavor. One of these recipients was Francis Ellingwood Abbot.

In America Francis Ellingwood Abbot, a Unitarian minister turned radical religious philosopher, founded the Free Religious Association in 1867. Abbot studied at Harvard University where he earned his Ph.D. in 1881. He taught philosophy briefly in 1887 at Harvard. Abbot wrote a sermon titled "The Relation of Spiritualism to Free Religion," which he delivered before the Society and Progressive Lyceum of Spiritualists and Liberalists on 4 September 1870 at Lyceum Hall, Toledo. Abbot wanted to address this issue because of the increasing number of persons interested in examining the two movements together. He explained his understanding of Spiritualism as the "belief in immortality based on the alleged fact of spirit-intercourse."[522] Spirit-intercourse was the essence of Spiritualism. Free Religion's essence was "humanity's practical endeavor to

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[520] "Psychology, or the Science of Soul: Lecture 2."

[521] "Advertisement: The Electric Physician, or Self Cure by Electricity," *The Spiritual Scientist,* March 1874.

[522] "Sermon "the Relation of Spiritualism to Free Religion" 4 September 1870, Lyceum Hall, Toledo before the Society and Progressive Lyceum of Spiritualists and Liberalists," in *Papers of Francis Ellingwood Abbot* (Harvard University Archives, Pusey Library HUG 1101 Box 89, No. 196).

attain its own highest development in perfect freedom from all enslaving influences."[523] He concluded after a lengthy examination of what Free Religion entailed that liberal Spiritualism was one form of Free Religion. Despite that Abbot was not convinced by supposed communication with the spirits of the dead, he believed that Free Religion and Spiritualists shared the agenda that "the true object of this life is to become as free, noble, useful men and women as we can, to devote ourselves to everything that shall benefit society."[524] He went on to argue that in order to believe in immortality and spirit communication one needed to see it as based in reality, in facts investigated according to principles of science.[525]

Emma Hardinge Britten approached Abbot through correspondence about her venture in electrical healing practices. Britten and Abbot had never been introduced, but her dear friend Caroline Dall, with whom she worked in Boston on the foundation of the Home for Outcast Women, knew Francis Abbot. Britten wrote and invited Abbot to call at her residence the next evening to witness a "new phase of Electrical Science" which she proposed to "demonstrate to a few friends."[526] Britten professed that aside from her career as a lecturer on metaphysical subjects she had been a "life long student of

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[523] Ibid.

[524] Ibid.

[525] Ibid.

[526] "Letter from Emma Hardinge Britten to Francis Ellingwood Abbot, 22 September 1871," in *Papers of Francis Ellingwood Abbot* (Harvard University Archives, Pusey Library. HUG 1101 Box 20).

Anatomy, Physiology, and Electrical study."[527] This statement shows either Britten's use of hyperbole or her strategic use of a falsehood to garner intellectual respect and/or another client, because in 1860 she proclaimed she had never studied any "ology" in her life.[528] Britten added in her letter to Abbot that she endeavored to claim "the attention of every scientific mind in the country."[529] She claimed to have the ability to treat "varied conditions of health and disease."[530] She expressed her frustration that the endless possibilities of achieving such cures were received with tremendous disrespect and basically unnoticed by everyone in the medical field in America, while the government of her own country, England, had a high regard and pride for scientists in their attempt to arrive at such cures as she was proposing.[531] Enclosed in Britten's letter was her advertisement for Medical Electricity.

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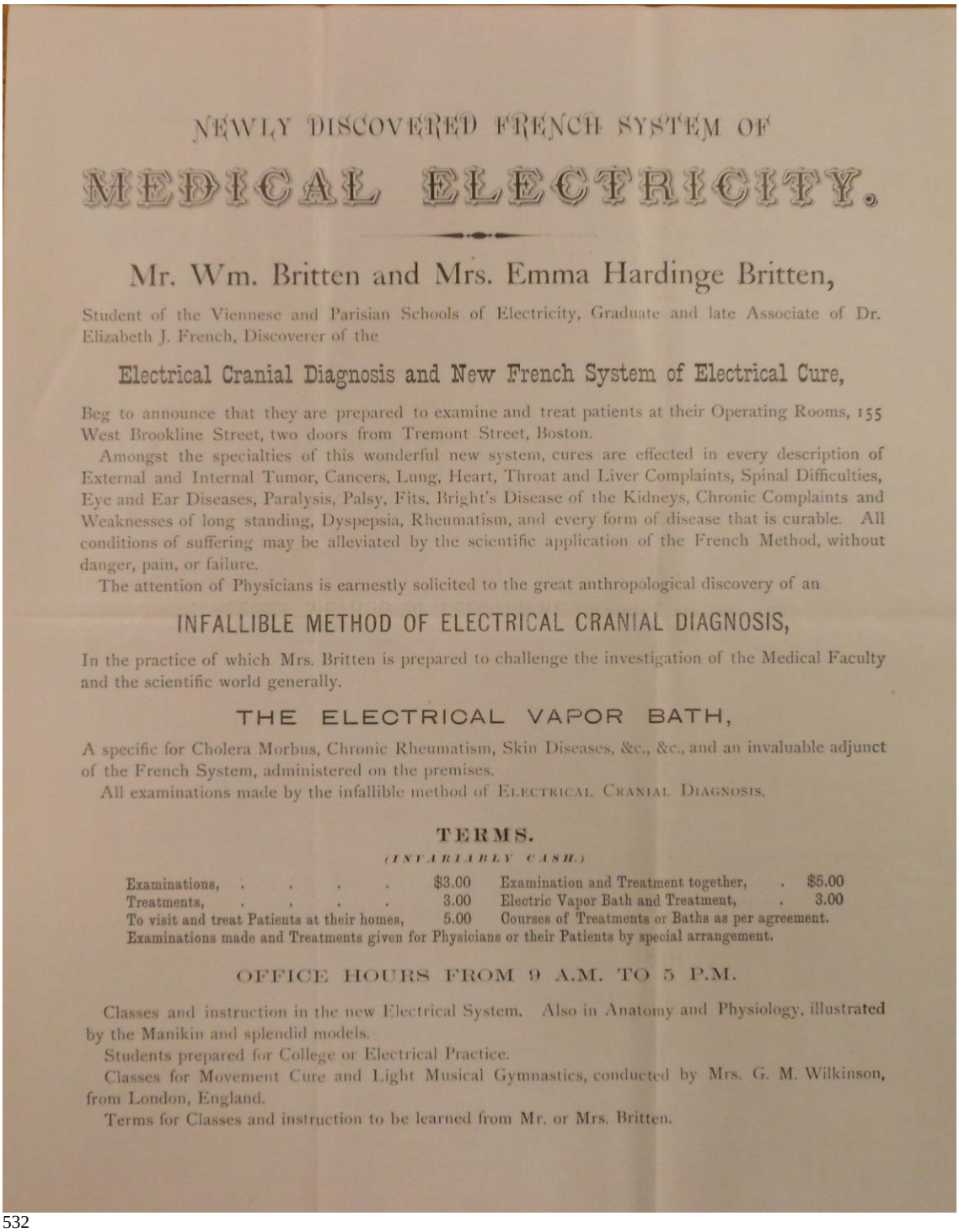
[527] Ibid.

[528] *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*.

[529] "Letter from Emma Hardinge Britten to Francis Ellingwood Abbot, 22 September 1871."

[530] Ibid.

[531] Ibid.



NEWLY DISCOVERED FRENCH SYSTEM OF

MEDICAL ELECTRICITY.

Mr. Wm. Britten and Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten,

Student of the Viennese and Parisian Schools of Electricity, Graduate and late Associate of Dr. Elizabeth J. French, Discoverer of the

Electrical Cranial Diagnosis and New French System of Electrical Cure,

Beg to announce that they are prepared to examine and treat patients at their Operating Rooms, 155 West Brookline Street, two doors from Tremont Street, Boston.

Amongst the specialties of this wonderful new system, cures are effected in every description of External and Internal Tumor, Cancers, Lung, Heart, Throat and Liver Complaints, Spinal Difficulties, Eye and Ear Diseases, Paralysis, Palsy, Fits, Bright's Disease of the Kidneys, Chronic Complaints and Weaknesses of long standing, Dyspepsia, Rheumatism, and every form of disease that is curable. All conditions of suffering may be alleviated by the scientific application of the French Method, without danger, pain, or failure.

The attention of Physicians is earnestly solicited to the great anthropological discovery of an

INFALLIBLE METHOD OF ELECTRICAL CRANIAL DIAGNOSIS,

In the practice of which Mrs. Britten is prepared to challenge the investigation of the Medical Faculty and the scientific world generally.

THE ELECTRICAL VAPOR BATH,

A specific for Cholera Morbus, Chronic Rheumatism, Skin Diseases, &c., &c., and an invaluable adjunct of the French System, administered on the premises.

All examinations made by the infallible method of ELECTRICAL CRANIAL DIAGNOSIS.

TERMS.

(INVARIABLY CASH.)

Examinations, ...	$3.00	Examination and Treatment together, .	$5.00
Treatments, ...	3.00	Electric Vapor Bath and Treatment, .	3.00
To visit and treat Patients at their homes,	5.00	Courses of Treatments or Baths as per agreement.	

Examinations made and Treatments given for Physicians or their Patients by special arrangement.

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Classes and instruction in the new Electrical System. Also in Anatomy and Physiology, illustrated by the Manikin and splendid models.

Students prepared for College or Electrical Practice.

Classes for Movement Cure and Light Musical Gymnastics, conducted by Mrs. G. M. Wilkinson, from London, England.

Terms for Classes and instruction to be learned from Mr. or Mrs. Britten.

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There is no evidence to suggest that Abbot took Britten up on her invitation.

[532] Ibid.

Robert Dale Owen, a Spiritualist closely associated with Emma Hardinge Britten throughout their careers, wrote a response concerning an article titled, "Is it a Science or Superstition?" to Francis Abbot as the editor of *The Index* in January 1875. The article Owen was responding to was written by a Canadian correspondent who accused *The Index* of including "too much Spiritualism."[533] The Canadian correspondent brought up an accusation against Spiritualists for dragging the word science into their teachings. Owen's retort was, "Some of the ablest scientific men of the day have done the same thing; Alfred Wallace and William Crookes and the electrician Varley, all fellows of the Royal Society."[534] Owen expounded on the published works of Wallace and Crookes on Spiritualism.

Alongside the early, evolving scientific breakthroughs of mesmerism and magnetism, the religion of Swedenborgianism rallied. Swedenborgianism was the most closely related antecedent to Modern Spiritualism. It relied on scientific explanation and many of its tenets were extremely similar. Emmanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish scientist, developed mediumistic capabilities and received messages from the spirit world.[535] Swedenborg was one of the leading scientists of his time and became increasingly concerned about religion in the 1740s. He has been compared to St. Paul, both recipients

[533] "Letter from Robert Dale Owen to Francis Ellingwood Abbot, 27 January 1875," in *Papers of Francis Ellingwood Abbot* (Harvard University Arhcives, Pusey Library HUG 1101 Box 20).

[534] Ibid.

[535] Leslie Price, "The Problem of Swedenborg," *The Psypioneer* 2, no. 5 (2006): 102.

of transcendent revelations, but neither was a Spiritualist in the modern sense.[536] Swedenborg claimed his spirit guide was Jesus Christ, thus giving birth to a new religion, Swedenborgianism, a mixture of Christianity and Spiritualism.

Arthur Findlay was a Spiritualist whose name is currently on the Spiritualist school created in Britten's name immediately following her death in 1899. Findlay said that fortunately for Swedenborg he lived in a time when burning wizards and witches was coming to an end. According to Findlay, Swedenborg ranked as the first outstanding medium allowed to live during the Christian era.[537] One article in the *British Spiritual Telegraph* argued that Spiritualists are not Swedenborgians, "but Swedenborg was a Spiritualist" as was abundantly shown in his various works.[538] There were many points of similarity between Spiritualist teaching and that of Emmanual Swedenborg. He possessed the ability to view the unseen world.[539] He asserted that every angel had originally been in human form.[540] Andrew Jackson Davis, renowned Spiritualist philosopher and Britten's contemporary, derived his conceptions from Swedenborgian theology.[541] Britten praised the surging of spiritual forces in the preaching epidemic in

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[536] Ibid., 104.

[537] Arthur Findlay, "The Curse of Ignorance," *The Psychic Press* 2 (1947): 440.

[538] A Truth Seeker, "Spiritualism, - Testimonies, Ancient and Modern," *British Spiritual Telegraph* IV, no. 1 (1859).

[539] S. E. B., "Spiritualism and Church Parties," *The Spiritual Magazine* 2, no. 2 (1861): 84.

[540] "Spirit Knowledge of the Ancients," ibid., no. 6: 246.

[541] Stephanie LeMenager, "Not Human, Again," *The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 1, no. 2 (2013).

Sweden, and the gift of tongues amongst the Irvingites in Ireland. Britten also named Mormons and Shakers as precursors of Spiritualism.[542]

ESOTERIC LEANING SCIENTISTS

Science emerged as a profession in the nineteenth century, a move away from gentleman amateurs. The scientists who studied Spiritualism wrote of feeling as outsiders in their profession and complete outcasts. Despite these assumptions, no scientist who was an open Spiritualist experienced falling to the rank of outcast.[543] Many Spiritualist scientists rose to prominence. Those scientists who practiced phrenology and mesmerism were more easily convinced that spirit matter was a genuine topic for study.[544] Some scientists were not only sympathetic but involved with Spiritualism despite continued stigmatization by the scientific community that Spiritualism was outside the natural physical law and therefore unable to be scientifically proven. Psychical researchers were in essence pushing the boundaries of science, changing the paradigms of scientific research, as had been done numerous times before within science's progression. Dismissed science of the past became, over time, accepted truths of later generations. The impulse in the mid-nineteenth century was towards reason and

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[542] Britten, *Nineteenth Century Miracles*, 91.

[543] Oppenheim, *The Other World*, 393-95. Oppenheim argued that despite these feelings the scientists that studied Spiritualism felt, she found that they were not outcasts in the scientific community because none were driven to early retirement, expelled from a professional society or denied due recognition.

[544] Owen, *The Darkened Room*.

rational religion.[545] In a world where people were disillusioned by faith-based religion, they turned toward fact and reason that could only be answered by scientific experimentation. Scientific discoveries, however, often contradicted mainstream religion.[546]

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Francis Barrett, English chemist, metaphysicist, and natural occult philosopher, explored natural and spiritual magic, and Britten's later work reflects a philosophical connection to Barrett. Barrett wrote about the use of crystals to invoke spirits, and the operations to be observed when performing magical rites or ceremonies when using the crystal or circle. The first rule was to only invoke spirits with Godly and good intentions, not to accrue money or worldly treasures. Barrett wrote, "mere Christianity is deficient as it is practiced – but philosophy enforces us to follow the precepts of Christ."[547] This statement resembles the doctrinal issues Emma Hardinge Britten espoused later in the nineteenth century, a desire to follow Christ's teachings, but to have nothing to do with what Christianity had become, a corruption by priests and the church. Barrett warned that the devil could infuse himself into the souls of men.

> Therefore desire not to be any spirits whatever but desire to see and converse with a good spirit either by Chrystal and dream, or by inspiration and desire that you

[545] Moore, *In Search of White Crows*.

[546] Weisberg, *Talking to the Dead: Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism*, 91.

[547] "Francis Barrett's Handwritten Notebook," in *Francis Barrett Collection* (Wellcome Library, Archives and Manuscripts Section Western MSS 1073, 1802).

> may be informed by the spirit what is best for thee to pursue whether physic (or healing) or teaching others or metallurgy – or herbs, or prophecy.[548]

This statement closely resembles what Emma Hardinge Britten wrote later in the century when Modern Spiritualism emerged. The spirits told her what profession to engage in, and that was trance lecturing.[549] Barrett likewise continued in the footsteps of the magicians of the Elizabethan period, particularly John Dee, and studied Rosicrucianism, a theological doctrine based on esoteric truths from ancient philosophers believed to be the essential truth of the physical and spiritual realms.[550]

Scientists' desires to explore and define the metaphysical and spiritual realm intensified once Modern Spiritualism gained momentum, and the work of Alfred Russel Wallace is exemplary. Alfred Russel Wallace, scientific explorer who worked closely with Charles Darwin, author of numerous scientific books, and president of the Biology Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science was a staunch supporter and believer in mesmerism, phreno-mesmerism and Modern Spiritualism.[551] Britten and Wallace were Spiritualist colleagues. Emma Harding Britten requested Alfred Russel Wallace to read one of her last manuscripts before publication. Britten thanked Wallace for his "memoranda," and spoke of how busy she was in the twilight of her life. At almost 90 years old she had lectures to prepare, a magazine to edit each

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[548] Ibid.

[549] Britten, *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*.

[550] "Francis Barrett's Handwritten Notebook."

[551] Michael Shermer, *In Darwin's Shadow: The Life and Science of Alfred Russel Wallace: A Biographical Study on the Psychology of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Shermer's book offers a more in depth biography of Alfred Russel Wallace, his science, and his devotion to Spiritualism.

month, and her own autobiography to write. She ended her letter to Mr. Wallace by requesting a portrait of his "honoured face" to be included in the publication.[552]

Wallace was drawn to phrenology and mesmerism while many other scientists rejected them as quackery or feared the association with these heretical sciences in a growing world of orthodox and professional science. The emergence of Spiritualism in the mid-nineteenth century intrigued Wallace and he soon converted and publicly endorsed its veracity and naturalism. As a scientist, he sought a natural explanation for Spiritualism, not a theological or religious explanation. His view was scientific.

Wallace worked on a committee established by the London Dialectical Society in 1869 "to investigate the phenomena alleged to be Spiritual Manifestations, and to report thereon."[553] The Committee received evidence from 33 people along with 31 written statements, including scientific men expressing both favorable and adverse opinions on Spiritualism. Most of the committee members admitted to being actual witnesses to Spiritualist phenomena, and yet still retained a skeptical spirit throughout their investigations.[554] Emma Hardinge made a statement in front of this committee on 16 March 1869. She was confident that their investigation, if conducted properly, would prove the "reality and spirituality of the phenomena in question."[555] She feared that the

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[552] "Emma Hardinge Britten to Alfred Russel Wallace, 15 December 1892," in *Alfred Russel Wallace Papers* (British Library, Manuscript Collections 46440/136).

[553] London Dialectical Society, *Report on Spiritualism of the Committee of the London Dialectical Society* (London: Longmans, Green, reader and Dyer, 1871), vi.

[554] Ibid., 1-2.

[555] Ibid., 109.

difficulties would be the scarceness of developed mediums in England. Hardinge explained Modern Spiritualism to the committee, and said that spirits communicated to people on earth through "vital magnetism."[556] Three conditions were necessary to establish communication with the spirit realm, and they were based on the principle of a galvanic battery: a medium present, a magnetic rapport between the spirit and the medium, and certain atmospheric conditions were requisite. The medium's vital fluid needed to be negative in order to receive the positive vital fluid of the spirit, and thus vital magnetism related the medium and spirit to each other as negative and positive. This explanation was based on the relation of copper and zinc in a galvanic battery. Additionally, extreme heat or cold weather along with snow and lightning afforded favorable atmospheric conditions for communication.[557] Hardinge considered strong emotion a detriment. She gave an example of a Mr. Conklin invited to attend a séance in Washington with President Lincoln present. Before Conklin realized Lincoln was present, the manifestations were "marked and decisive," but his anxiety and surprise were so great when he realized he was in the presence of Lincoln, that the manifestations stopped.[558]

Others in Britten's circle of Spiritualist and scientific friends included scientist William Crookes and Spiritualist Robert Dale Owen, son of famed social reformer Robert Owen. Alfred Russel Wallace worked together with William Crookes, who was a

[556] Ibid., 110.

[557] Ibid., 111.

[558] Ibid., 112.

chemist and physicist. Wallace wrote a ten-page review of Robert Dale Owen's *The Debatable Land*, published in the April 1872 *London Quarterly Journal of Science.* In this review he speaks of Spiritualism as "a subject not out of place in a scientific journal; for in whatever light we view it, it is really a scientific question."[559] William Crookes as editor admitted this review under the heading "Notices of Scientific Works," and endorsed Wallace's view on the subject. Crookes argued in 1874 that the facts of Spiritualism were undeniable, and it only remained for science to furnish an explanation.[560] William Crookes' most famous achievement as a scientist was the discovery of metal thallium.[561] Crookes, highly respected within the scientific world, invested in three very prominent spirit mediums, Florence Cook, Kate Fox, and Daniel Dunglas Home, and worked closely with the Society for Psychical Research.

Wallace's most profound publication relating to the science of Spiritualism was *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism* (1875). Wallace worked for nearly 50 years on tying science, natural law, evolution, and Spiritualism together. Darwinian theory supported up his conviction that explained human spiritual nature. Wallace asserted that

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[559] Alfred Russel Wallace, "Notices of Scientific Works," *London Quarterly Journal of Science* (1872): 246.

[560] William Crookes, F. R. S., *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism* (London: Jo Burns, 1874).

[561] Marlene Tromp, *Altered States: Sex, Nation, Drugs, and Self-Transformation in Victorian Spiritualism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006). Tromp explores Crookes close connection to Spiritualism more broadly by expounding on his work with spirit medium, Florence Cook, and the rumors of sexual relations. Tromp offers evidence to support the connection between Spiritualism and science, but her work focuses more heavily on the role of women and full-form materialization in the venue of Spiritualism and society in general.

the scientific explanation for mesmerism explained Spiritualism as well. Despite continued resistance from many in the scientific community, he optimistically responded in his book, *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*,

> The simpler phenomena of what are usually termed 'Hypnotism,' and 'Electro-Biology,' are now universally admitted to be real; though it must never be forgotten, that they too had to fight their way through the same denials, accusations, and imputations, that are now made against clairvoyance, and phreno-mesmerism. The same men who advocated, tested, and established the truth of the more simple facts, claim that they have done the same for the higher phenomena; the same class of scientific and medical men who once denied the former, now deny the latter. Let us see then if the evidence for the one is as good as it was for the other.[562]

Wallace later revealed in his book that scientists were struggling to find a correlation between science and Spiritualism. He recounted the attempts by a Dr. Joseph Haddock, a physician in Bolton who published a work titled *Somnolism and Psycheism* in which he endeavored to classify the facts of mesmerism and clairvoyance, and account for them in physiological and psychical principles.[563] Britten's scientific colleagues undoubtedly influenced her ability to use scientific language to explain the natural forces behind Modern Spiritualist phenomenon.

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY

Wallace's reliance on Darwin's theory of evolution as presented in his *Descent of Man* (1871) influenced his explanations to those that criticized spirit photography by

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[562] Alfred Russel Wallace, *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism: Three Essays* (London: James Burns, 1875), 60.

[563] Ibid., 63.

citing that the ghosts appeared too modern and conventional to be genuine. Spiritualists held that spirits evolved in the afterlife as they had on earth. William Crookes and Alfred Russel Wallace asserted the genuine character of spirit photography coincided with science. Crookes was the founder and editor of the *Photographic New* periodical. Crookes connected his interest in Spiritualism with his interest in the fourth dimension into what became one of his most important inventions, the cathode-ray tube, used in X-ray research.[564]

Spirit photography is another arena in which Spiritualism and science coexisted and fortified one another. Photography, developed in the 1830s, enabled the invisible to be visible; i.e. bacteria, lightning, planets, and spirits. Photographs acted as scientific data and were seen as objective. The new scientific instruments on the scientific scene were the camera, microscope and telescope.[565] Britten wrote promisingly of the new photographic achievements in capturing the spirit in a material format. If the photographer possessed the mediumship abilities, spirit photography was possible, and thus proved existence of spirits through the scientific field of photography.[566] Britten specifically praised William Henry Mumler and the hundreds of his photographs containing "clearly defined portraits of their departed friends" as testified to by "the most

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[564] Jennifer Tucker, *Nature Exposed: Photography as Eyewitness in Victorian Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 107.

[565] Ibid. Tucker's work explores the phenomenon of spirit photography and its relationship to Victorian photographic, Spiritualist and scientific circles. She looks specifically at spirit photography in the 1870s and 80s along with the public's scrutiny.

[566] Britten, *Nineteenth Century Miracles*, 255, 533.

respectable and veracious persons in America." These photographs were of deceased persons unknown to Mumler in life.[567]

Victorian spirit photography became integrated into Victorian scientific photography. American William Henry Mumler was the first spirit photographer after unintentionally stumbling upon his first spirit photograph in 1861. Mumler came across this phenomenon while he was repairing a camera and photographing himself. When he developed the plate, another person appeared next to him in the photograph, a faint image of a young girl sitting on a chair, fading away beneath her waist. The chair was visible through her body.[568] Mumler recognized the girl as his deceased cousin. A friend told him that the plate must have been unclean or previously exposed, and Mumler accepted this explanation. A scientist from Cambridge, however, later confirmed Mumler's suspicions by revealing that "the latent-image theory" was valid for daguerreotypes, but not for the collodion wet-plate method that Mumler was using.[569]

Mumler became very popular and sought after for his spirit photography. Accusations of fraud persisted, just as with spirit mediums. Public debate over the authenticity of spirit photography pervaded Victorian society among both the general public and respected scientists. In 1869 Mumler was tried and acquitted on fraud charges. His acquittal came at the hands of distinguished witnesses testifying to their recognition of dead relatives in their photographs. Britten devoted several pages in her

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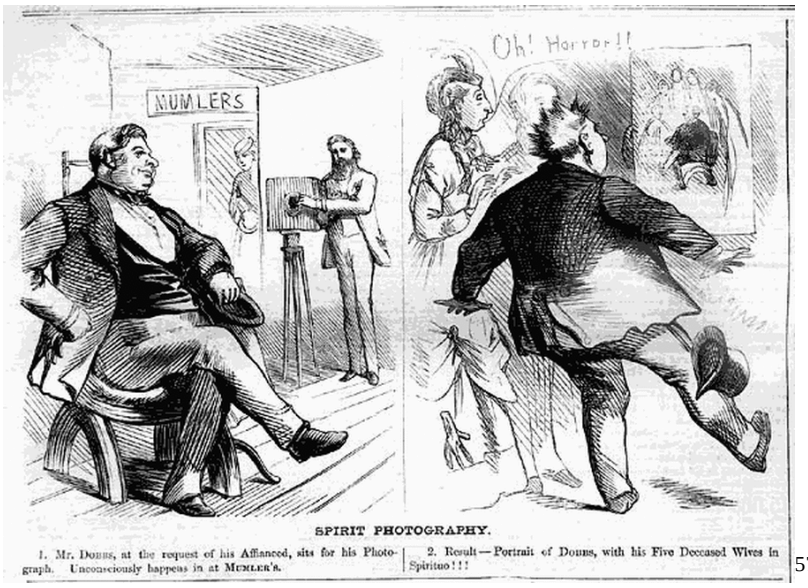
[567] Ibid., 433.

[568] Tucker, *Nature Exposed*, 73.

[569] Ibid., 75.

Nineteenth Century Miracles book to Mumler's trial and the detailed witness testimony on his behalf.[570] Spiritualism and spirit photography involved invisible natural forces that scientists found difficult to prove or explain.[571] Mumler invited an American physician and photographic chemist, Dr. Child, to examine his methods. Dr. Child found Mumler's techniques and spirit photographs genuine.



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[570] Britten, *Nineteenth Century Miracles*, 474-78.

[571] Tucker, *Nature Exposed*, 78.

[572] "Mr. Dobbs with His Five Deceased Wives in Spirituo!!!," *Harper's Weekly* (1869). Satirical cartoons of Mumler and his photography were another part of the theater associated with Spiritualist related phenomena.

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Frederick A. Hudson, another spirit photographer, worked exclusively with the spirit medium Georgina Houghton. Houghton praised Hudson's photography and professed a theory of spirit photography mediumship similar to that of scientific concepts of energy conservation and the physics of fluids. Houghton argued that spirit energy gathered as a reserve force, and naturally exuded from the medium and sitter. This meant the photographer or the sitter had to possess mediumistic qualities. Reserve force

[573] William Henry Mumler, "Photograph of Mary Todd Lincoln with Her Dead Husband Standing Behind Her," in *Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection, Allen County Public Library* (1869). Mary Todd Lincoln was a Spiritualist and one of Mumler's most famous sitters. Mary Todd Lincoln first became involved in Spiritualism after the death of her young son Edward who died at the age of 4 in 1850. She lost two more sons, William at the age of 12 and Thomas at the age of 18. These deaths, along with her husband, cemented her lifelong desire to communicate with them to ease her sadness.

explained why a full figure did not always manifest itself.[574] Spirit photography remained an element of scientific research into Spiritualist phenomena, but by the early 1880s the Societies for Psychical Research were founded by philosophers and scientists who were determined to finally prove that Spiritualism was a religion based on scientific fact and reason, or that it was a fraud.

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

Scientific research and explanation became prominent amidst the transformative arena of culture, religion, and politics in the latter nineteenth century. The transatlantic and transpacific worlds were brought together by scientific achievements in communication making a transoceanic world. The telegraph, invented by Samuel Morse in 1844, was a scientific instrument capable of sending messages across vast distances in seconds. This allowed for faster communication around the world and created a revolution in communication, playing a role in industrialization along with religious awakenings and revivals. Enhanced communication spread religious and moral ideas far and wide, bringing like-minded people together to politically urge change and reform.[575] At the same time that the great religions like Christianity began to decline in their impact on populations, nationalism and modern science gained influence.[576] Spiritualism among the English speaking peoples of England, America, Australia, and New Zealand benefited from enhanced communication and travel, and ignited a religion based on progressive ideas and scientific research.

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[574] Tucker, *Nature Exposed*, 88.

[575] Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*.

[576] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

Many nineteenth-century people were drawn to esoteric or occult religious movements like Modern Spiritualism because of their scientific or quasi-scientific terminology, bridging the traditional split between religion and science. Instead of repudiating science, Modern Spiritualism and occult movements claimed to use scientific analytical methods to provide empirical evidence instead of asking potential believers to believe and accept on grounds of faith, as did traditional orthodox religions.[577] Nineteenth-century Spiritualists believed Spiritualism was a modern incarnation of natural law always extant, and endeavored to offer proof through scientific experiment and explanation. Periodicals devoted to scientific study of Spiritualism emerged as early as the 1850s.[578] Societies for Physical Research were founded in London and New York in the 1880s with the agenda to investigate and ultimately prove or disprove Spiritualist phenomena. The Societies for Psychical Research were made up of eminent humanist and scientific scholars who endeavored to use scientific methods with respect to Spiritualism when they established these societies. Psychical researchers, scientists, philosophers, and Spiritualists worked in tandem for the benefit of religion and science as one.

Humanist culture of the early modern period was linked to exploring esoteric and occult phenomena just as it was in the nineteenth century in the Societies for Psychical Research. Emma Hardinge Britten endorsed scientific experimentation to offer proof and

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[577] Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos, "The History of the Occult Movement," in *Literary Modernism and the Occult Tradition*, ed. Leon Surette, and Demestres Tryphonopoulos (Orono: National Poetry Foundation, 1996), 21.

[578] Examples include: Joel Tiffany, ed., Tiffany's Monthly: Devoted to the Investigation of Spiritual Science. Samuel Byron Brittan, ed., Brittan's Journal: Spiritual Science, Literature, Art and Inspiration.

urged the formation of organizations devoted to this endeavor.[579] Britten called for scientists to scrutinize and investigate Modern Spiritualist phenomena properly in an 1870 lecture. Spiritualists had been reproached for not presenting a scientific method for investigating their phenomena. Britten stressed that most involved in Spiritualism were not educated in science or of the proper position. Such work required scientists.[580]

The idea of scientifically proving Modern Spiritualism emerged as early as the first incidents associated with its beginning in 1848. Eliab W. Capron and Henry D. Barron published a pamphlet titled *Singular Revelations. Explanation and History of the Mysterious Communion with Spirits, Comprehending the Rise and Progress of the Mysterious Noises in Western New-York, Generally Received as Spiritual Communications* in 1848, exalting spirit communication as a natural phenomenon, not supernatural. Their goal was to "remove the spirits from the shadowy realm of superstition and place them squarely within the sunny domain of scientific reason."[581]

Harriet Martineau wrote in December 1867 to her cousin about Mr. William Lecky, an Irish philosopher who published two volumes on *A History of the Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe* in 1865.[582] Martineau expressed exceeding interest in

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[579] Britten, *Nineteenth Century Miracles,* 349-50.

[580] "The Scientific Investigation of Spiritualism."

[581] Eliab W. Capron, and Henry D. Barron, *Singular Revelations. Explanation and History of the Mysterious Communion with Spirits, Comprehending the Rise and Progress of the Mysterious Noises in Western New-York, Generally Received as Spiritual Communications.* (New York: Fowlers & Wells, 1848).

[582] "Harriet Martineau to Her Cousin Henry Reeve, 15 December 1867," in *Papers of Harriet Martineau* (London Metropolitan University, The Women's Library 7HRM/2/119).

his rationalism and viewed him as open-minded to evidence. She indicated a desire to know his thoughts on American Spiritualists, the power of hypnotism and mesmerism and how they affected the nervous system. Martineau wanted to know more about the process and the mental phenomena. She pointed out the proven curative effects of mesmerism, since they were past question. Martineau linked the indisputable power of thought to get insight into bodily conditions, of distant things, and the future. She reminded her cousin of the histories of witch stories across countries and ages, and the long sought after descriptions of "facts of sorcery, second-sight and which nobody denies and nobody pretends to understand."[583] She was excited that they would be explained at long last. Martineau proffered, "it is the proper, but neglected business of philosophers and scientific men to separate whatever cannot be imposture from what may probably be that or imagination. There are such men among us; and to such there is no more doubt about the reality of clairvoyance than about any other brain-power or action."[584] Martineau admitted to having two "mysterious" stories of her own. She went on to share in her letter to her cousin a correspondence with a Mr. Holland, whom she referred to as the best man on the subject she has yet known, who argued "there is no doubt in my mind that mesmerism, and some allied matters, not mesmerism properly are indications of some great law of human nature which are on 'the verge of discovering.'"[585] He also

[583] Ibid.

[584] Ibid.

[585] Ibid.

considered the contemporary phenomena in close connection with the passages of history known as witchcraft.[586]

The Society for Psychical Research in London, founded in 1882, and the American Society for Psychical Research in New York, founded in 1885, coexisted with Modern Spiritualism as a counterbalance and the two worked in tandem.[587] The Society members believed in the possibility of spirit communication, and Spiritualists believed in the reality of a spiritual or mental world beyond. They shared a reliance on science to prove it. Investigators of Spiritualism suggested the erratic phenomena of the séance and trance state could be explained by natural laws, and by providing scientific proof, they believed that the phenomena would gain scientific credibility.[588] The Societies for Psychical Research performed tests at séances and public demonstrations to keep fraudulent mediums from denigrating the true science/religion of Modern Spiritualism. One form of testing mediums and to prevent fraud was to place the medium, bound to a

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[586] Ibid.

[587] Moore, *In Search of White Crows*. For scholarship on the British counterpart, see also, Oppenheim, *The Other World*. Oppenheim examines Spiritualism in England among the professional middle class and the educated working class and its connection to scientific rationalism, specifically research into psychical phenomenon. Owen, *The Darkened Room*. Owen's examination of the archives at the Society for Psychical Research along with Spiritualist newspapers reveals the contention between Spiritualism and science despite the many Spiritualists and scientists that tried to unite the two. She found an unceasing rivalry between Spiritualism and science based on the established natural law, which did not include spiritual matter. Owen follows in Oppenheim's footsteps by noting that Spiritualists believed that spirit matter was indeed a new element of the universe that demanded research. Many scientists could not budge from the established natural law. Science, to them, was about materiality.

[588] Richard Noakes, "Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in Mid-Victorian Britain," in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. Nicola Brown, Carolyn Burdett, and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 24.

chair with leather straps, chains, and padlocks, in a dark cabinet.[589] The Society members' observations and recordings were part of their scientific method in establishing whether communication with the spirit realm was fact.

Humanist scholars using scientific methods, thus creating collaboration between philosophy, science and religion, formally founded the Psychical Research Societies. This collaboration was important in keeping an emotional or esoteric element present throughout the experiments. Henry Sidgwick, philosopher and Professor of moral science at Trinity College, Cambridge, was the first president of the Society for Psychical Research. Early in his studies at Trinity College, Sidgwick resigned a tutorship and fellowship because he felt he could no longer conform to the Church of England. He went through a period of moral and theological uncertainty, questioning his previously-held religious beliefs and the orthodoxy of the Church. Sidgwick was a true scholar and endeavored to know the truth. He studied Hebrew and Arabic to understand Christianity as a historical religion. He studied philosophy and theology. In the end, Sidgwick did not break ties with Trinity College because of his religious uncertainty, and he remained there his entire life. Sidgwick embraced a liberal and reform-minded consciousness at Trinity College through campaigns to reform the teachings of the classical and moral science examinations, to remove the oath to the Church of England in the fellow's oath, and to promote the education of women. He was involved in the project that resulted in the first Examination for Women at the University in 1869, which led to the opening of

[589] Tromp, *Altered States*, 46.

Newnham College in October 1875.[590] Sidgwick's liberal mindset along with his questioning of traditional religious beliefs made him a prime candidate for inquiry into Modern Spiritualism.

Sidgwick began inquiring into supernatural phenomena during his undergraduate career at Trinity College, Cambridge, with his membership in the Ghost Society and the Metaphysical Society. Sidgwick's wife Eleanor, often referred to as Nora, shared his interest in women's education and Spiritualism. Séances were regularly held at her brother's house, and Eleanor and Henry regularly attended.[591] Sidgwick applied himself to the project he called the "Case for Spiritualism." William Hepworth Thompson, a Trinity College colleague, English classical scholar, and in 1866 appointed Master of Trinity College, informed Sidgwick that he would not hinder or introduce any obstacles to his enquiries into Spiritualism, and predicted that if he could prove there was a scientific truth at the bottom of the phenomena, it would be "a highly interesting discovery."[592] Sidgwick observed numerous mediums all over England and worked in tandem with fellow members of the future Society for Psychical Research, Frederic Myers, Edmund Gurney and William Crookes.

Sidgwick strategized on methods to prevent fraud years before the founding of the Society for Psychical Research. Early on in his experimentation Sidgwick expressed

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[590] "Biographical Information," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Library, Cambridge University GBR/0016/SIDGWICK).

[591] Ibid.

[592] "Letter from William Hepworth Thompson to Henry Sidgwick, 1 June 1875," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Llibrary, Cambridge. Trinity/Add.Ms.c/95/154).

frustration that conditions never satisfied him. In a letter to his mother, Mary Sidgwick, in 1867, he wrote, "I can get to see and hear very astounding things in the dark with people I do not know: but I can never get conditions to satisfy me."[593] He heard the most extraordinary stories, but failed to find proof itself.[594] Sidgwick's inability to solve the mystery of Spiritualism in a short period frustrated him. He wrote, "I certainly thought that I should have got further towards explaining Spiritualism, one way or the other; however, it gives life an additional interest having a problem of such magnitude still to solve."[595] Henry Sidgwick often wrote to his mother about his progress and frustration investigating Spiritualist phenomena, and she seemed eager to learn more.

Kegan Paul offered to introduce Henry Sidgwick to Dr. John Ashburner in August 1867.[596] Dr. Ashburner, physician and pioneer in mesmerism, investigated Spiritualism, and found the phenomenon to be true. At first he hypothesized the answer lay in phrenology, but said he had since found that magnetism was the key to explaining the natural source. Ashburner's first experience that resulted in the proof he required was explained in a letter to George Holyoake in May of 1853. Spirits of two of his childhood

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[593] "Letter from Henry Sidgwick to Mary Sidgwick, 10 July 1867," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Library, Cambridge. Trinity/Add/Ms.c/99/84).

[594] "Letter from Henry Sidgwick to Mary Sidgwick, 20 September 1867," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Library, Cambridge. Trinity/Add/Ms.c/99/87).

[595] "Letter from Henry Sidgwick to Mary Sidgwick, 1 October 1867," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Library, Cambridge. Trinity/Add/Ms.c/99/88).

[596] "Letter from Kegan Paul to Henry Sidgwick, 31 August 1867," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Library, Cambridge. Trinity/Add.Ms.c/95/4).

friends and his father visited him during a séance and they communicated via raps.[597] Ashburner devoted his career to the study of animal magnetism and its relationship to Spiritualism, as well as finding cures for numerous diseases.

Sidgwick was sensitive to the mediums he included in his project. If the mediums were disagreeable to him, as a medium from Newcastle or Mrs. Jenckens, who happened to be none other than one of the original Fox sisters of upstate New York, he dropped them from the study. He wrote to Frederic Myers in 1874 "they have never been other than disagreeable as far as paid mediums are concerned."[598] At that point he expected to continue with more séances. Paid mediums were part of a contentious debate regarding fraud. It was argued by some that requiring payment induced a medium to produce phenomena at all costs, whether real or not.

Sidgwick reported to Myers that their next round of séances should be held at Dr. Barkes' dentistry. He could not see that they would gain anything by having them in their own rooms and "the strangeness of the scene might interfere with the phenomena."[599] Their principal test would be tying, and he suggested Dr. Barkes could assist based on his paper in the *Spiritual Magazine*. They would reserve the weighing test until London "as they are more likely to hear of our preparations at Newcastle and to

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[597] John Ashburner, *Notes and Studies in the Philosophy of Animal Magnetism and Spiritualism* (London: H. Baillière, 1867).

[598] "Letter from Henry Sidgwick to Frederic Myers 1874," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Library, Cambridge. Trinity/Add.Ms.c/100/256).

[599] "Letter from Henry Sidgwick to Frederic Myers," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Library, Cambridge. Trinity/Add.Ms.c/100/263).

be on their guard."[600] The tying test usually involved tying the medium to a chair. Sometimes the ankles were tied to the legs of a chair, or tape was used to tie the wrists and neck, allowing free movement of about ten inches.[601] The weighing test involved weighing the medium before and after the séance. The results varied, but the mediums usually weighed 100 to 400 grams less after the séance because of magnetic fluid loss.[602]

Another weighing test was called "The Paraffine Mould Test," and involved a pail with four or five pounds of melted paraffin and hot water poured inside. Hereward Carrington noted in his description of this test, "It must not be forgotten…that this careful weighing has been resorted to in 'test séances' only, when scientific men were present, testing the phenomena."[603] The pail, paraffin, and water are weighed separately and together before the séance. The pail would then be placed inside the cabinet while the sitters and the medium sat outside the cabinet, encircling it. Once this configuration was accomplished, the lights were lowered. If a spirit presented itself, a paraffin mold of a human hand or foot would be left outside the pail. The mold could take on varying characteristics, such as a child's size. To those present at the séance, no one had placed

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[600] Ibid.

[601] Rev. Edward Macomb Duff, and Thomas Gilchrist Allen, M.D., *Psychic Research and Gospel Miracles* (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1902), 117.

[602] William Henry Harrison, "Weighing a Medium During the Production of Manifestations," *Spiritualist* 11 (1878). "Weighing Mediums During Séances," *Spiritualist* 11 (1878). Walter Franklin Prince, "Section Two. I. Psycometrical Experiments with Señora Maria Reyes De Z.," *Proceedings of the American Society for Psychical Research, Inc* XV (1921): 299.

[603] Hereward Carrington, *The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism: Being a Brief Account of the Most Important Historical Phenomena, with a Criticism of Their Evidential Value* (New York: American Universities Publishing Company, 1920), 228.

their hands in the melted paraffin to create the mold. The pail and its contents were alone in the cabinet. The pail with its contents would be weighed at the end of the séance and reveal a very slight difference, indicating the mold was made from the initial contents. This weighing test convinced many skeptics that the mold was not previously manufactured and brought to the séance. The molds were taken home by the believers as productions of the spirit world, and framed.[604]

Sidgwick spent an enormous time on his examination of Spiritualism. In the summer of 1874 he wrote to his mother, who was keen to learn of his findings, that he would have to take a break from the subject for a while as he was behind on his work. He desired to get back to it as soon as he could. He wrote,

> There is so much crass imposture, and foolish credulity, mixed up with it, that I am not at all surprised at men of science declining to have anything to do with it. On the other hand no one who has not read Crookes' articles in the *Quarterly Journal of Science*…has any idea of the weight of the evidence in favour of the phenomena.[605]

William Crookes proved to be one of the most renowned scientists to base his entire scientific career on the case of Spiritualism.

Sidgwick was back in the thick of his investigations by September of that same year, 1874.[606] In October 1874 he reported that the thoughtful lot of young men at

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[604] Ibid., 224-29.

[605] "Letter from Henry Sidgwick to Mary Sidgwick, 11 July 1874," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Library, Cambridge. Trinity/Add.Ms.c/99/177).

[606] "Letter from Henry Sidgwick to Mary Sidgwick, 9 September 1874," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Library, Cambridge. Trinity/Add.Ms.c/99/178).

Cambridge were beginning to be very much interested in the subject.[607] In March of 1875 he updated his mother about the extraordinary phenomena he had witnessed, and said the tests they applied "failed to indicate any imposture on the part of the mediums," but their tests were going to be much stricter once they arrived in London a few days hence.[608] Sidgwick fervently continued in his investigations, not imagining an end to the investigations nor an abatement of his interest.[609]

The Society's reputation for detecting and exposing fraudulent mediums was well established by the 1890s. Sidgwick wrote to his friend, James Bryce, in August of 1894, that he and his wife were travelling to a small island in the Mediterranean as the Society's affairs were in what he called "crisis."[610] Three of their chief investigators: Frederic Myers, a classicist, poet and philologist; Oliver Lodge, physicist; and Professor Charles Richet, a French physiologist, had "convinced themselves of the truth of the physical phenomena of Spiritualism!"[611] They had been experimenting with an Italian medium, Eusapia Paladino, on Richet's private island, with no one else present except for the servants and themselves. They sent notes of the day-to-day experiments and Sidgwick

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[607] "Letter from Henry Sidgwick to Mary Sidgwick, 24 October 1874," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Library, Cambridge. Trinity/Add/Ms.c/99/179).

[608] "Letter from Henry Sidgwick to Mary Sidgwick, 23 March 1875," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Library, Cambridge. Trinity/Add/Ms.c/99/181).

[609] "Letter from Henry Sidgwick to Mary Sidgwick, 13 April 1875," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Library, Cambridge. Trinity/Add/Ms.c/99/182).

[610] "Letter from Henry Sidgwick to James Bryce, 8 August 1894," in *Papers of Henry Sidgwick* (Trinity College Library, Cambridge. Trinity/Add.Ms.c/105/37).

[611] Ibid.

admitted it was "certainly difficult to see how the results recorded can have been produced by ordinary physical means."[612] Sidgwick expressed concern because Paladino's phenomena were similar to the frauds that the Society had exposed, and he professed it would be a sharp turn in their public career if the most representative men came forward as believers. Sidgwick was unable to say how long they would be abroad due to "mediums being capricious and unaccountable organisms, whose behavior cannot be predicted."[613] This letter illustrates the kind of work Sidgwick and the Society for Psychical Research practiced as well as the combined efforts of scientists and philosophers in search of the truth.

Frank Podmore first became interested in Modern Spiritualism while studying at Oxford and joined the Society for Psychical Research. He co-authored his first book with colleagues Edmund Gurney and Frederic Myers, *Phantasms of the Living*, in 1886 when he was 30 years old. Podmore was highly respected by the scientific community for his rational explanations of the psychical research he performed, and his books were favorably reviewed in scientific journals.[614] Podmore surmised that the popular interest in Mesmerism was related to the introduction of the electric telegraph, and that helped to open minds to belief in other heretofore-unexplained phenomena. He concluded, "it was

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[612] Ibid.

[613] Ibid.

[614] "Studies in Psychical Research by Frank Podmore," *British Medical Journal* 1, no. 1931 (1898). "Modern Spiritualism. A History and a Criticism by Frank Podmore," *American Journal of Psychology* 14, no. 1 (1903). "The Naturalization of the Supernatural by Frank Podmore," *American Journal of Psychology* 20, no. 2 (1909).

in electricity that Spiritualists sought the physical basis of their phenomena."[615] Podmore devoted much of his research to exposing fraudulent mediums in order that authenticity prevailed in Modern Spiritualism. He meticulously took notes at the many séances he attended from as young as age 17.[616] Podmore went on to write many well-respected works on Modern Spiritualism.[617]

Josephine Butler once commented on the Society for Psychical Research. She wrote to her friend Miss Priestman that she believed the "Ghost Society" was the cause of her cousin's death.[618] Her cousin was Edmund Gurney, one of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research in London in 1882. Gurney, who worked with Henry Sidgwick and Frank Podmore, practiced Psychology and psychical research throughout his life until an overdose of narcotics to help him sleep killed him.[619]

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[615] Frank Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism: A History and a Criticism* (London: Methuen & Co., 1902), 287.

[616] "Report on Séances 1873."

[617] Edmund Gurney, Frederic W. H. Myers, and Frank Podmore, *Phantasms of the Living* (London: Rooms for the Society for Psychical Research, 1886). Frank Podmore, *Apparitions and Thought-Transference: An Examination of the Evidence for Telepathy* (London: Walter Scott, LTD., 1892). *Studies in Psychical Research* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897). *Modern Spiritualism*. *The Naturalisation of the Supernatural* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908). *Mesmerism and Christian Science: A Short History of Mental Healing* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Company, 1909). *Telepathic Hallucinations: The New View of Ghosts* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1909). *The New Spiritualism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1910).

[618] "Josephine Butler to Miss Priestman, 21 December 1891," in *Josephine Butler Letters Collection* (London Metropolitan University, The Women's Library 3JBL/30/44).

[619] "Josephine Butler Administrative History," in *Josephine Butler Letters Collection* (London Metropolitan University, The Women's Library 3JBL/30/44).

THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SCIENCE ON SPIRITUALIST WOMEN

For centuries female mystics and prophets of radical sects proclaiming new and innovative interpretations of scriptures and introducing unorthodox religious rituals were denounced as a "lunatic fringe," and it continued into the late nineteenth century. These often outspoken women have been dismissed and persecuted.[620] The science of mental illness developed into a proper field called psychiatry in the nineteenth century. Psychiatrists perpetrated disastrous prognoses on Spiritualists, particularly women, by assigning the cause to a diseased mind.[621] The Lunacy Act was passed in England and Wales in 1845. New medical specialists that studied the mind and insanity categorized belief in Spiritualism as a symptom of a diseased mind. These experts were troubled by what they saw in trance mediumship and likened it to hysteria, which often had sexual connotations. There were similarities between epileptic seizures and mediumistic convulsion.[622] Neurophysiologists and psychiatrists commonly diagnosed Spiritualists as crazy, delusional maniacs, and hysterical, particularly women. The doctors feared the outbreak of Spiritualism particularly after two of their own lent their names and reputation to Spiritualism: Sir William Crookes and Alfred Russel Wallace.[623] Spiritualist women risked stigma and even hospitalization with the increased

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[620] Wallraven, "'A Mere Instrument' or 'Proud as Lucifer'?," 393.

[621] Owen, *The Darkened Room*. Owen explored the lunacy laws used against women with unusual religious views.

[622] See the arguments of Dr. William alexander Hammond, physician and neurologist, expressed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. He corroborates this argument on a neurological basis.

[623] Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 171-73.

medicalization of female deviance.[624] Dr. Henry Maudsley, a medical psychologist, believed the incipiently insane were attracted to spiritualism and it caused derangement. William Holt Yates, physician and member of the Royal College of Physicians of London, upon a friend's inquiry about a woman who was said to communicate with spirits, urged him that "mesmerism, clairvoyance, and communication with the spirits of departed friends do not find credence with the philosophers of the present day. To believe in either would, with some parties, be considered insanity."[625] Men exploited the lunacy laws to quiet or put away wives in general.[626] Diagnoses of mental illness arose out of an individual's actions that were outside of the prescribed gender roles of masculinity or femininity. However, those labeled mentally ill were predominantly women, and this reflected a double standard within psychiatry and mental illness.[627] Twenty-first century debates continue to surround the complex relationship between women and psychiatry.[628] Three very vocal women in the nineteenth century on this subject were Louisa Lowe, Georgina Weldon, and Harriet Martineau.

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[624] Tucker, *Nature Exposed*, 109.

[625] "Letter from William Holt Yates to Walter Hawkins, Esq. 16 February 1853," in *William Holt Yates Collection* (Wellcome Library, Archives and Manuscripts Section MS. 5100).

[626] Owen, *The Darkened Room*.

[627] Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972).

[628] Katherine Angel, "Contested Psychiatric Ontology and Feminist Critique: 'Female Sexual Dysfunction' and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual," *History of the Human Sciences* 25, no. 4 (2012). For more on the history of women and psychiatry in the United States and England see: Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Penguin Books, 1987). Jane M. Ussher, *Women's Madness: Mysogyny or Mental Illness?* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press,

The case of Mrs. Louisa Lowe, a Spiritualist, offers an example to understand the power men exerted over women through incarceration in asylums substantiated by the lunacy laws. Mrs. Louisa Lowe charged before a Select Committee that her belligerent husband had wrongfully incarcerated her in an asylum and used her Spiritualistic beliefs as grounds. Women were highly susceptible to incarceration for lunacy, especially the unmarried. However, those married with property were often the victim, as was Louisa Lowe. Her husband constantly threatened to have her committed. Incarceration of women with property or wealth financially benefited the incarcerator. The Married Women's Property Act was passed in Britain in 1882, giving women the right to proceed in civil law courts regarding their property. Louisa Lowe worked for years after her experience with the Lunacy Law Reform Association and helped spread the word that women, Spiritualist women in particular, were at risk.[629]

Georgina Weldon faced a similar situation. Her husband conspired with a doctor to have her institutionalized in an insane asylum because she was a Spiritualist. Weldon fought back. Weldon was known for her "woman in the city" stories published in half-penny newspapers celebrating the possibilities of city life for middle-class women of the 1880s, and her story was played out in the newspapers, exposing women's fears of madness and wrongful confinement.[630]

1992). Jeffrey L. Geller, and Maxine Harris, *Women of the Asylum: The Unheard Voices of America's Madwomen* (New York: The Doubleday Religious Publishing Group, 1994).

[629] Owen, *The Darkened Room*.

[630] Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 171-89.

Mrs. Weldon's estranged husband, Henry Weldon, availed himself of the controversy arising between Spiritualists and doctors to incarcerate his wife after he came into a healthy inheritance. Mr. Weldon approached Dr. L. Forbes Winslow, known for his publication *Spiritualist Madness* (1877), to interview and incarcerate his wife in an asylum. Winslow schemed to trick Mrs. Weldon by visiting her under the guise of philanthropists interested in her orphanage. Mrs. Weldon had turned her home into an orphanage and progressive lyceum after her husband left her, and she embraced eccentric causes such as vegetarianism, mesmerism, the occult, and Spiritualism. Mrs. Weldon suspected the two strange visitors after a second set came later in the day. She immediately wrote letters to several friends warning them of her suspicions that her husband might be trying to get rid of her. One of the letters was to W. H. Harrison, editor of the *Spiritualist,* who had published Louisa Lowe's letters. Lowe visited her the next afternoon, and fetched the police as soon as three more strangers appeared at Mrs. Weldon's door. The three strangers produced a lunacy order signed by Henry Weldon and a family friend, and then left for reinforcements. Mrs. Weldon escaped to Louisa Lowe's home, and then went underground for seven days while the lunacy order was in effect. Weldon could not sue her husband or Dr. Winslow because she was a married woman, but she exposed the case in the public arena by publishing her story in the Spiritualist press, gave interviews to the newspapers, lectured, and with Louisa Lowe, worked towards lunacy reform.[631]

[631] Ibid., 174-80.

After the experiences faced by Lowe and Weldon, these women along with many others spoke out publicly by making their cases known while talking about women's rights and the reformation of the laws on lunacy.[632] Harriet Martineau spoke of the eminent importance of the book Rev. Charles Upham of Salem had just published about the history of Salem witchcraft.[633] She charged the book came out "when literally thousands of persons are in the lunatic asylums of the U.S.," and others are trying to cause a similar outcome for Spiritualists in England.[634] Martineau informed her cousin that the Anthropological Society was appointing a committee to study the subject. Upham's book, *Salem Witchcraft with an Account of Salem Village and A History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Spirits* was based on solid historical scholarship made possible through the "remarkable character" of the "local records of the New England townships."[635] Upham spent 35 years, studying line by line the accounts of the residents. Martineau stressed the vital importance of this history, "there is something almost as fearful as 'witchcraft in Salem' in the practices of the 'Spiritualists.'"[636] Martineau meant for the ignorant populace to be informed about the dangers of

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[632] Wallraven, "'A Mere Instrument' or 'Proud as Lucifer'?," footnote 16.

[633] Charles W. Upham, *Salem Witchcraft with an Account of Salem Village and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, Co., 1867).

[634] "Letter from Harriet Martineau to Her Cousin Henry Reeve, 3 December 1867," in *Papers of Harriet Martineau* (London Metropolitan University, The Women's Library 7HRM/2/118a).

[635] Ibid.

[636] Ibid.

prejudging such phenomena of Spiritualism as either of the devil or insanity, as the Salem witchcraft history exposed.

Spiritualism and other occult orders slowly lost their designation as "lunatic fringe" in the late Victorian age because of their scientific discourse, but individual women still faced marginalization, and fought to be heard and respected.[637] Emma Hardinge Britten evaded this situation by remaining unmarried until she was forty-seven years old, and then she married a man just as involved in the Spiritualist movement as she. Britten's path was more unusual than common, and only because she established a career early in her life that sustained her. Britten's fears as an eleven-year-old child of destitution after her father's death motivated her to survive, and later she worked towards helping other young women survive through her efforts in developing a sustainable living facility for outcast women and their children.

A clear connection between Modern Spiritualism and science is evident based on the evidence shown in this chapter. Spiritualists embraced science. Mesmerism, phrenology, the combination of phreno-mesmerism, and Swedenborgianism paved the way for a new religion to amalgamate these spiritual and scientific precursors. A need for something more than faith-based religion was happening in the nineteenth century. The scientific breakthroughs opened people's minds. New sciences were developing in this period: anthropology, history, psychology, geology, astronomy, photography, and so much more. The study of Spiritualism gained the attention of not only scientists, but also humanist philosophers. They worked together to establish the Societies for Psychical Research. This corroboration of humanist with scientist is reminiscent of the way

[637] Wallraven, "'A Mere Instrument' or 'Proud as Lucifer'?," 405.

Enlightenment philosophy worked in tandem with Romantic ideology in Britten's theology. Sort of the rational mind meets the hopeful idealist. One negative consequence of the impact of science on Spiritualism has been shown through men's ability to institutionalize Spiritualist women as the "lunatic fringe." The examples shown in this chapter were a few of the women who had the strength and audacity to fight back. The numerous women who did not, suffered their whole lives. Many, however, were not Spiritualists. In fact, Spiritualists as well as others felt the wider "scientific" oppression of women who did not conform to gender norms.

The discourse on Spiritualism and science together is immense, and Emma Hardinge Britten played a large role in that dissemination. Britten's career as a Spiritualist lecturer and writer spanned over four decades and from the very beginning she endeavored to explain her theology through natural laws, or science. For several years she actually ventured into the practice of electrical healing. It is almost impossible to separate Britten's theology from her scientific explanations. They are one and the same.

CHAPTER VI

EPILOGUE

Two years after Britten's death James Robertson of Glasgow published *Noble Pioneer: The Life Story of Emma Hardinge Britten*, a tribute to Britten's extraordinary life and her impact on Spiritualism.[638] Robertson described the "power…purity…and beauty of her speech," which offered consolation to the masses. "Religion and reason were joined together in such fashion as had never been heard before."[639] James Robertson was a Glasgow manufacturer and President of the Glasgow Association of Spiritualists who interviewed Britten several times throughout her life. Robertson also included a lengthy account of Britten in his 1908 publication of *Spiritualism: The Open Door to the Unseen Universe.*[640] Robertson and journalists such as William Howitt and scientists like Alfred Russel Wallace praised Britten. Robertson claimed she was the most brilliant woman he ever met.[641] He likened her to great people in history responsible for changing the currents of human life who were difficult to identify during their lifetimes, and compared her influence to that of a certain carpenter's son two thousand years before.[642]

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[638] James Robertson, *Noble Pioneer: The Life Story of Emma Hardinge Britten* (Manchester: Worlds' Publishing Co., 1901).

[639] Ibid., 8.

[640] *Spiritualism: The Open Door to the Unseen Universe*.

[641] Ibid.

[642] *Noble Pioneer: The Life Story of Emma Hardinge Britten*, 1.

Emma Hardinge Britten lived to be 76 years old and up until the end of her life she continued to write about issues important to her such as Spiritualism, education, reform, and esotericism, which impacted the world around her. Britten's autobiography was a work still in progress at her death, which her sole surviving relative, her sister Margaret Wilkinson, published in 1900, less than a year following Britten's death. Another of Britten's lifelong goals came to fruition a year after her death, and that was the establishment of a "school for prophets." She believed that mediums needed formal training, and the Britten Memorial Institute and Library was founded in 1900 in Manchester, England for this purpose. It exists today as the Arthur Findlay College of Spiritualism and psychic sciences in Stansted Mountfitchet, England, roughly 35 miles north of London.

Britten's life as exposed through the thematic structure of this dissertation was one of public performance, intellectual expression, philanthropy, political activity, scientific experimentation, and magic. The Victorian world that Britten lived in is also revealed in these pages, as it surrounded, influenced, and was influenced by her. The time period is an exciting one, full of new, revolutionary ideas that encompassed the spirituality of religion, political reason, and scientific experimentation, and Britten dove in with abandon. She travelled with her mother and/or husband across the globe promoting her ideas and passions. She succeeded despite haranguing opponents. Hers is a story that is pertinent to scholarship on the Victorian world.

Britten maneuvered herself within a world of entertainment and spectacle, as explored in Chapter Two. Britten trained as an entertainer from the early age of eleven, when her family was left desperate by her father's untimely death. Singing and playing

music helped support her family, and she spent her young adult years acting on the London stage. She in turn exchanged her talent on the theater stage for the séance room, lecture podium, and written word. The performances in these arenas took place in spaces of entertainment and spectacle in a similar vein as theater and parlor theater. A hetero-social and mixed gender audience inhabited these same spaces. This particular finding fits in an unfolding discourse between scholars regarding leisure activity, class and gender.[643] Additionally, Modern Spiritualism, like the entertainment industry for child actors, created an opportunity for other young girls to make a living on their talents as mediums, and often afforded them social mobility. Modern Spiritualism offered an occasion for entertainment and spectacle within a multi-class and gendered audience. It also offered the possibility of social mobility for women, even as it embraced religious teachings. Britten strategically manipulated the popularity of Spiritualism as amusement, but devoted her life to developing a solid Spiritualist theology.

Chapter Three contains theological discourse surrounding the debates on Modern Spiritualism and Britten's theological reflections on its significance. Britten lectured and published her writings on the subject of Modern Spiritualism for over four decades. A compilation of her work reveals Britten's role in the maturation and spread of Modern Spiritualism. Britten's oeuvre covered her theological expressions as well as the historical aspects of Spiritualism's growth throughout the world. The religion as told through Britten was nothing new in this world. It was a resurgence of ancient truths that had gone dormant under the threat of an overbearing and corrupt Christianity, and was revealed in the modern format of Spiritualism. The Seven Principles of Spiritualism, part

[643] See chapter One for historiography on this topic.

of the Spiritualist Church's main doctrine, is attributed to Britten. Britten's theology stressed social reform consciousness and progressive reform was one of the main characteristics of Spiritualists in general.

Britten's lifelong commitment to social reforms is thoroughly examined in the fourth chapter. Modern Spiritualism echoed a long history of liberal theology that went hand in hand with reforming societal injustices. Britten's role in the political realm brought together transatlantic and transpacific ideas among England, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Her work was transoceanic and global. Her political commitments were all of one piece and built on one another over time. She gained valuable experience throughout her life and applied these influences to her political drive for reform. The influence of British ideas on slavery played a role on Britten's siding with and campaigning for Abraham Lincoln in his second run for President in the United States during the American Civil War. The influence of the circumstances surrounding Chinese immigration in California, while Britten toured the state, influenced her position on the immigration problems in Australia and New Zealand, which she shared through a lengthy lecture. Her experience as a fatherless child in England charged her determination in saving herself and her family from the destitution of the workhouses, which later informed her passions for the formation of the Home for Outcast Women in Boston. Her political work with the Lincoln campaign further placed Britten in a male-dominated public sphere, considered unacceptable for women who were delegated to the sphere of voluntary associations and social reform movements. Britten followed in the footsteps of radical women from as early as the eighteenth century. Her aversion to Christianity as the mantle of authority characterized her as distinctive among other

radical women in politics during this period. Britten also desired to propel a new religion based on scientific truth into the mainstream.

Britten and Modern Spiritualist doctrine incorporated scientific language and practice, and this connection to science is investigated in the fifth and final substantive chapter of this dissertation. Spiritualism appealed to a population exposed to a scientific explosion of new findings. Spiritualism relied on scientific language and experimentation to prove its validity, a move away from the blind faith relied upon by traditional religions. Scientific or quasi-scientific practices and the religion of Swedenborgianism were precursors to the emergence of Modern Spiritualism. Natural laws explained the occurrences in Modern Spiritualism, and Britten employed scientific language in her theological written pieces and urged scientific investigation. Societies for Psychical Research were founded in the 1880s in England and the United States, wherein humanist philosophers and scientists worked in tandem in their mission to prove or effectively disprove the phenomena associated with Modern Spiritualism. Britten physically experimented with medical electricity, an electrical healing practice developed in France, with her husband and sister in the 1870s in Boston. They used an amalgam of mesmeric animal magnetism, electrical cranial diagnoses, and mediumistic skills to offer an alternative to traditional medicine. Britten's main goal throughout her life was replacing what she considered destructive Christianity with a new religion based on a scientific faith.

The importance of Britten's life as expressed through these thematic chapters lies within several fields of scholarship. The history of the Victorian world in this dissertation intersects with the study of religion, politics, science, gender and women's

studies, and adds to the scholarship in these fields. Britten as a woman stood within the realm of radical political women, but was not shielded by traditional Christianity. Britten pursued her political and religious passions through Modern Spiritualism. Britten's life has been glimpsed in previous scholarship on Modern Spiritualism as a religion or movement, but never through her works exclusively. Her impact was tremendous for the religion and for women.

Britten's papers mysteriously disappeared in the move of the Britten Memorial Institute and Library from Manchester to the present-day Arthur Findlay College just north of London. The sources relied on in this dissertation are a compilation of extant correspondence and writings from multiple archives on three continents explored in person and in digitized form. Diligent investigation of various and diverse archives in England and the Northeastern United States of Britten's contemporaries' archives, along with digitized newspapers in England, The United States, Australia and New Zealand enabled complete and complex iteration of Britten's life, more so than sole reliance on her autobiographies.

One aspect of Britten's life has not been discussed in detail in this dissertation, and that is Britten's interest in occult magic and esoteric thought. Some of Britten's writings from the mid-1870s on, which were more explicitly occult in nature, in conjunction with her brief acquaintance with Madame Blavatsky and the formation of the Theosophical Society exhibited her foray into this more controversial field.

As a Spiritualist for almost twenty years, Britten explicitly ventured into the study of occult material with the publications of her periodical *The Western Star* in Boston in 1872. This venture lasted only six months due to the Great Boston Fire of 1872.

Additionally, Britten edited manuscripts from an anonymous friend titled *Ghost Land; or, Researches into the Mysteries of Occultism*, a collection of six previously published installments in the *Western Star*, and a full treatise titled *Art Magic; Mundane, Sub-Mundane and Super-Mundane Spiritism*, both published in 1876. Later in her life, as her career was fully established and she spent much of her time in the Manchester area of England, she published *The Two Worlds* journal, "dedicated to Spiritualist, Occult Science, Ethics, Religion and Reform," between 1887 and 1892 in London, and *The Unseen Universe* journal, "devoted to Spiritism, Occultism, Ancient Magic, Modern Mediumship, and every subject that pertains to the Whence, What, and Whitherward of Humanity," between 1892 and 1893 in Manchester.[644]

The author of *Art Magic* and *Ghostland* remains anonymous, but scholars have attempted to figure out the author's identity, even suggesting Britten herself. It is a possibility that Britten authored these texts to test the waters of acceptance by her fellow Spiritualists. As an anonymous author she could slowly offer her occult ideas and still be associated with them only as the translator and editor. It is clearly stated in both texts that Britten had to work from an incomplete manuscript with raw materials still partly in

[644] *The Western Star. A Magazine Devoted to a Record of the Facts, Philosophy, and History of the Communion between Spirits and Mortals* (Boston: By the Proprietors, 1872). *The Two Worlds. A Journal Devoted to Spiritualist, Occult Science, Ethics, Religion and Reform* (Manchester: The Two Worlds Publishing Co., 1887-1892). Emma Hardinge Britten, ed. *The Unseen Universe: A Monthly Magazine Devoted to Spiritism, Occultism, Ancient Magic, Modern Mediumship, and Every Subject That Pertains to the Whence, What, and Whitherward of Humanity.* (Manchester: John Heywood, Deansgate and Ridgfield, 1892-1893).

German and French.[645] She had to compile the texts. Based solely on the autobiographical accounts of the anonymous author and of Britten, there exist curious similarities, such as both were discovered to be natural mediums as children and were used in experiments by a circle of researchers.[646] Whether or not Britten was the author or the trusted translator and editor of these texts, they reveal her extensive move into occult and esoteric studies.

Another aspect of Britten's move towards occult and esoteric material involves her acquaintance with Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. Blavatsky, originally from Russia, travelled the world and had a long history of familiarity with Western esotericism. Blavatsky moved to New York in 1873 and befriended Col. Henry Steel Olcott. Olcott, an American military officer, journalist and lawyer, worked with Blavatsky in the formation of the Theosophical Society in 1875. Britten became acquainted with Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott as founding members of the Theosophical Society in 1875 and 1876. The Preamble and Bylaws of the Theosophical

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[645] *Art Magic; or, Mundane, Sub-Mundane and Super-Mundane Spiritism. A Treatise in Three Parts and Twenty-Three Sections: Descriptive of Art Magic, Spiritism, the Different Orders of Spirits in the Universe Known to Be Related to, or in Communication with Man; Together with Directions for Invoking, Controlling, and Discharging Spirits, and the Uses and Abuses, Dangers and Possibilities of Magical Art* (New York,: The author, 1876), 7-11. *Ghost Land, or, Researches into the Mysteries of Occultism : Illustrated in a Series of Autobiographical Sketches* (Boston, America: Published for the editor, 1876), 5-14. *Nineteenth Century Miracles*, 436-43.

[646] Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 207.

Society were adopted and officers elected at meetings held at Britten's home in New York in October 1875.[647]

This relationship lasted for a little over one year. Blavatsky's first major publication *Isis Unveiled* denigrated Spiritualism and claimed that spirit mediums were frauds, and explained that they believed they were communicating with dead human spirits, but in reality were under the control of submundane spirits. *Isis Unveiled* was published in 1877, only months after Britten's explicitly occult editions of *Art Magic* and *Ghostland.* Modern Spiritualist cosmography at that point did not acknowledge submundane spirits, and Blavatsky's personality and her Theosophical Society did not appeal to most Spiritualists, particularly her derogatory remarks against Spiritualist mediums. Exceptionally, Spiritualist Paschal Beverly Randolph identified with the belief in non-human spirits alongside human spirits. These consisted of angels, demons, elementals or even living humans using paranormal powers. Communication could be achieved through magic mirrors, sexual magic and drugs.[648] *Art Magic* similarly acknowledged the existence of supermundane and submundane spirits or beings. Blavatsky and Britten's relationship cooled considerably following Blavatsky's disturbing opinion regarding Spiritualists and Spiritualists low opinion of Blavatsky.

The deep wedge driven between Modern Spiritualism and Blavatsky and Theosophy caused Britten to lay low on occult matters until the late 1880s. Britten likely believed she could bridge this gap between Modern Spiritualism and an occult

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[647] "Blavatsky and the First Generation of Theosophy," in *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, ed. Olav Hammer, and Mikael Rothstein (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 19.

[648] Ibid., 18.

cosmography where different levels of spirits existed, and dead human spirits were but one incarnation, but through Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society was not the way.

Victorian occult revivalists looked to the ancient past, and to the re-emergence of the ancient occult and magic in the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, as Britten did in her Spiritualist theology. Magic and religion became acceptable analytic categories of intellectual inquiry in the developing fields of anthropology and comparative religion in the second half of the nineteenth century. *Art Magic* drew from ancient Eastern philosophy of the "Hindoo Vedas," and argued against Herodotus's affirmation that Egyptians were the first who taught about the soul's immortality. The original religious system came from India before the great Egyptian dynasties. The basic tenet was the soul fell from its original state of purity to a material body and through successive stages of re-purification to ultimately a return to the original alliance with the Deity. This became the central doctrine of Western thinkers such as Plato, Pythgoras, and Plutarch.[649] This is referred to today as Western Esotericism. Blavatsky likewise looked to India for her inspiration, as the Truth relayed to her by those she called the "Mahatmas." It is obvious why Britten was attracted to Blavatsky and her philosophy initially. She likely considered Blavatsky a kindred spirit, someone who shared her ideas on the truths of the universe.

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[649] Britten, *Art Magic; or, Mundane, Sub-Mundane and Super-Mundane Spiritism. A Treatise in Three Parts and Twenty-Three Sections: Descriptive of Art Magic, Spiritism, the Different Orders of Spirits in the Universe Known to Be Related to, or in Communication with Man; Together with Directions for Invoking, Controlling, and Discharging Spirits, and the Uses and Abuses, Dangers and Possibilities of Magical Art*, 23.

Britten continued to write and publish esoteric and occult texts in the 1890s and this scholarship fits within the historical context of the Victorian Occult Revival. Britten and her contemporary Spiritualists carved the way for occult sciences and magic to evolve in the next century to New Age Philosophies. Britten likely resolved to study and publish what continued to interest her in her later years. In the 1880s and 1890s she would have been in her 60s and 70s, with a fully established name for herself, a successful career, and in her twilight years may have felt no need to cater to any one group or community but her own intellectual desires.

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APPENDIX A

Ten Spiritual Commandments

I. "Thou shalt search for truth in every department of being – test, prove, and try it what thou deemest is truth, and then accept it as the Word of God.

II. Thou shalt continue the search for truth all thy life, and never cease to test, prove, and try all that thou deemest to be truth.

III. Thou shalt search by every attainable means for the laws that underlie all life and being; thou shalt strive to comprehend these laws, live in harmony with them, and make them the laws of thine own life, thy rule and guide in all thine actions.

IV. Thou shalt not follow the example of any man or set of men, nor obey any teaching or accept of any theory as thy rule of life that is not in strict accordance with thy highest sense of right.

V. Thou shalt remember that a wrong done to the least of thy fellow-creatures is a wrong done to all; and thou shalt never commit a wrong willfully and consciously to any of thy fellow-men, nor connive at wrong done by others without striving to prevent or protesting against it.

VI. Thou shalt acknowledge all men's rights to do, think, or speak, to be exactly equal to thine own; and all rights whatsoever that thou dost demand, thou shalt ever accord to others.

VII. Thou shalt not hold thyself bound to love, or associate with those that are distasteful or repulsive to thee; but thou shalt be held bound to treat such objects of dislike with gentleness, courtesy, and justice, and never suffer thy antipathies to make thee ungentle or unjust to any living creature.

VIII. Thou shalt ever regard the rights, interests, and welfare of the many as superior to those of the one or the few; and in cases where thy welfare or that of thy friend is to be balanced against that of society, thou shalt sacrifice thyself or friend to the welfare of the many.

IX. Thou shalt be obedient to thelaws of the land in which thou dost reside, in all things which do not conflict with thy highest sense of right.

X. Thy first and last duty upon earth, and all through thy life, shall be to seek for the principles of right, and to live them out to the utmost of thy power; and whatever creed, precept, or example conflicts with those principles, thou shalt shun and reject, ever remembering that the laws of right are – in morals, JUSTICE; in science, HARMONY; in religion, THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD, THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN, the immortality of the human soul, and compensation and retribution for the good or evil done on earth."[650]

[650] Hardinge, "The Creed of the Spirits."

APPENDIX B

The Ten Laws of Right

I. "TEMPERANCE in all things, whether physical, mental, moral, affectional, or religious.

II. JUSTICE to all creatures that be – justice being the exercise of precisely the same rules of life, conduct, thought, or speech that we would desire to receive from others.

III. GENTLENESS in speech and act – never needlessly wounding the feelings of others by harsh words or deeds; never hurting or destroying aught that breathes, save for the purposes of sustenance or self-defence.

IV. TRUTH in every work or thought spoken or acted; but reservation of harsh or unpleasing truths where they would needlessly wound the feelings of others.

V. CHARITY – charity in thought, striving to excuse the failings of others; charity in speech, veiling the failings of others; charity in deeds, wherever, whenever, and to whomsoever the opportunity offers.

VI. ALMSGIVING – visiting the sick and comforting the afflicted in every shape that our means admit of and the necessities of our fellow-creatures demand.

VII. SELF-SACRIFICE, wherever the interests of others are to be benefited by our endurance.

VIII. TEMPERATE yet firm defence of our views of right, and protest against wrong, whether for ourselves or others.

IX. INDUSTRY in following any calling we may be engaged in, or in devoting some portion of our time, when otherwise not obliged to do so, to the service and benefit of others.

X. LOVE – above and beyond all, seeking to cultivate in our own families, kindred, friends, and amongst all mankind generally, the spirit of that true and tender love which can think, speak, and act no wrong to any creature living; remembering always that where love is, all the other principles of right are fulfilled beneath its influence and embodied in its monitions."[651]

[651] Ibid.

APPENDIX C

Seven Principles of Spiritualism

1. Fatherhood of God.
2. Brotherhood of Man.
3. Communion of spirits as ministering angels.
4. Continuous existence of the human soul.
5. Personal responsibility.
6. Compensation and retribution hereafter for all the good and evil deeds done on earth.
7. Eternal progress is open to every soul.[652]

[652] Ibid.

VITA

LISA ANN HOWE

Born, Hialeah, Florida

2007	B.A., History with minors in Religious Studies and Asian Studies, Magna Cum Laude Florida International University Miami, Florida
2011-2015	Doctoral Candidate Florida International University Miami, Florida
2012	Dissertation Evidence Acquisition Fellowship Florida International University Miami, Florida
2015	Dissertation Year Fellowship Florida International University Miami, Florida

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

“”Outline of a Plan for a Self-sustaining Institution for Homeless and Outcast Females:” Emma Hardinge and Caroline Dall’s Transatlantic Mission to Rescue the Lives of Outcast Women in 1860s Boston,” Florida Conference of Historians, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, Florida, February 13-15, 2015.

“Complicating a Victorian Woman’s Life Story: Interdisciplinary Historical Scholarship Using Biography and Religious Studies Theory,” New England Historical Association’s Conference, Franklin Pierce University, Rindge, New Hampshire, October 18, 2014.

“Spirited Victorian Performances: Emma Hardinge Britten’s use of Séances and Trance Lectures in Promulgating Modern Spiritualism,” Florida Conference of Historians, St. Augustine, FL, January 31-February 1, 2014.

"Spiritualism Discourse: Dialog Surrounding Emma Hardinge Britten's Modern Spiritualist Theology,” British and the World Conference, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK, June 21-23, 2012

“Conversations on Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism: Emma Hardinge Britten’s Brand of Spiritualism,” Nineteenth-Century Scholars Association Conference, Asheville, NC, March 22-24, 2012.

Chair on the Victorians and the Pacific Panel at the Pacific Coast Conference on British Studies, Huntington Library, Pasadena, CA, March 9-11.

"Spirited Girls: Girl Mediums of the Modern Spiritualist Movement in Victorian Britain and America," FIU Department of History Graduate Student Association Conference, Miami, FL March 2009

"Servants to Masters: The Minorcans' Rise to Prosperity in Florida's Second Spanish Period," *The Atlantic Millenium* 9, (Summer 2009): 28-48.