

Resonant Spirits: Spiritualism, Music, and Community in Lily Dale, NY (1848-1920)

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This project is a historical study of sound and music in a Spiritualist community, Lily Dale, a place with both intellectual and personal significance. While studies of Spiritualism have emphasized the importance of sensorial experience, none has focused on the role of sound, music, and listening. “Resonant Spirits: Spiritualism, Music, and Community in Lily Dale, NY (1840-1920)” offers a corrective to the scholarship by studying sound’s influence and reflection of Spiritualism—a religion based on belief in spirit communication—and its accompanying epistemologies.

Using archival materials, periodicals, and songbooks, I reconstruct historical Spiritualist soundscapes experienced at Lily Dale and elsewhere. materials show that Spiritualists used sound as an important tool for ritually conversing with, identifying, and authenticating spirits. I argue, further, that predominantly white Spiritualists used sonic processes of identifying spirits to cement their own identity: in listening to spirits, sitters identified with those they sensed were like themselves while disidentifying with spirits they marked as different. As a result, Spiritualists formed a clearer picture of themselves and their place in the world. Listening to spirit thus provided Spiritualists with a vocabulary for locating themselves within their spiritual, social, and political culture.

Following the introduction, Chapter Two analyzes Lily Dale’s soundscape by drawing on aural performances of popular racialized theater and its effects on spirit communication. This chapter introduces the Spiritualist settlement of Lily Dale, which serves as a reference point for

subsequent chapters. Chapter Three analyzes the songbooks held in Lily Dale's historical music collection, positioning them within contemporary debates over Spiritualism's relation to mainstream Christianity. In Chapter Four, I break down "Spiritualist acoustemologies" in the context of communal séances, a core setting for spirit communication. Chapter Five traces connections between Spiritualist mediumship and musicianship in séances and the career of one Lily Dale musician and healer, vocalist Oskenton (Mohawk). Ultimately, this dissertation traces the development of a marginalized spiritual settlement's communal modernity around listening. I demonstrate the importance of sound and music to the development of a religious and spiritual practice arising in the mid-nineteenth-century United States, one that continues into the present.

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Preface

This dissertation would have been impossible to complete without the help and guidance of many people. Special thanks to my advisor, Dr. Olivia Bloechl, are in order. Without her help, support, and encouragement, this project would have looked very different or may never have been started in the first place. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Deane Root, Dr. Michael Heller, and Dr. Sarah Eyerly. Their insightful and thoughtful feedback on this dissertation have improved its quality immeasurably.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In May of 2018 I visited Lily Dale, a small hamlet located in western New York state. It had been several years since I had been there last, but the community seemed mostly unchanged. The entrance to Lily Dale is proudly marked by a painted wooden arch claiming it as the largest Spiritualist community in the world. I was there to look through the community's collection of old and rare books before the official summer camp season, running from June to September.

After spending a particularly long day at the Marion Skidmore Library sitting in a rattan chair with floral cushions, hunched over books and hymnals, I decided to walk around the grounds to re-familiarize myself with the community space. As someone interested in music and sound, I was especially drawn to the sonic qualities of the settlement's landscape. Beginning my walk, I was drawn to the Leolyn Woods, an old growth forest where Inspiration Stump is located. A contemporary medium, Patricia Price, has described the Stump as a vortex, a sacred place where high-vibration energy is concentrated.¹ Historically the Stump has been a place for Spiritualist mediums to gather and hone their skills, and to this day daily spirit message services are held there during the summer season, in front of packed crowds seated on rows of wooden benches. Visitors can use this free service to witness different mediums in action and to determine whom they might like to schedule a private reading with.

¹ Patricia L. Price, *Lily Dale: The Major Vortexes* (Corona, CA: Trilogy Publications, 2017) 9.

Finishing my research for the day, I crossed through Melrose Park past the Auditorium, its windows still boarded up from the harsh winter months. I strolled up along First Street, passing by neat rows of homes and cottages. As I made my way to the woods, a man passing by on a golf cart stopped to ask if I needed help; I politely declined and thanked him. The community was extremely peaceful, aside from the quiet buzz of residents preparing for the coming season. Lily Dale is rather compact in size, so it was only a matter of minutes before I reached the entrance of the woods, marked by tall trunks of elm, cherry, and oak and an expansive canopy of foliage. While walking through the solitary forest towards the Stump, I stopped at the ground's pet cemetery. I slowly moved through the graves and memorials that people had lovingly taken the time to lay for their former animal companions. The most striking monument is likely the memorial to the community horse, Topsy. According to the sign posted at the site, Topsy died on February 13, 1900 while pulling blocks of ice from the nearby lake (Figure 1). These blocks were used to refrigerate perishable goods throughout the year.

Leaving the cemetery, I continued to follow the forest's long winding path. The Leolyn Woods was shaded by a tall canopy of leaves comprised of a rainbow of greens, allowing soft sunlight to peek through. As I walked, I was increasingly aware that I was the only person in the woods. My sense of hearing seemed to be heightened at the realization. Though peaceful, my loneliness drove my eyes to examine the surrounding shrubbery with extra scrutiny. The slightest rustle or sounds of squirrels scurrying across the forest floor made me jump. Eventually the path opened to a clearing where Inspiration Stump stands surrounded by rows of benches. I took a moment to sit here, to remember past moments of witnessing spirit message services and to remember how mediums had moved about the crowd. I thought of their voices as they described



Figure 1: Topsy's grave

the spirits contacting them and the audience responses they elicited—how I had responded and engaged with the service myself.

It was not until I returned to these memories two years later, while writing the chapters of this dissertation, that I thought more deeply about this moment of quiet reflection and wandering in the Leolyn Woods. It was then that the significance of the horse's name hit me. Returning to the photographs I had taken in the woods, I focused on the name Topsy. Topsy can be read simply as a nickname for "Harriet," and many might even be familiar with Topsy the elephant who was famously electrocuted at Coney Island in 1903. In fact, I had looked over the photographs and name many times without thinking much of it. However, as someone who works with nineteenth-century music of the United States, in that moment of realization my mind was drawn to Harriet

Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stowe depicts Topsy as a young Black girl who acts as a comic relief character. She was depicted countless times during the nineteenth century in stage performances of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and became a blackface minstrel stock character. Literary scholar Bridget Bennett has even found a Spiritualist legacy of Topsy in twentieth-century séances, where sitters reported being visited by the spirit of a young Black girl named Topsy.² At Lily Dale she was conjured once again with the name given to this century-old horse.

There are two crucial points to note regarding Topsy's memorial. One, the horse's naming indicates the strong impact of popular culture on Lily Dale and its Spiritualist community, including how they interacted with elements of racial identity. Furthermore, my research has shown that Lily Dale residents conversed with the spirit of a young Black girl who resembled the Topsy stock figure. This point will be explored in more depth in the second chapter. The second point is more closely related to my personal experience of realizing the significance of the naming and points to phenomena of allusion, suggestion, and insinuation that were fundamental to experiences of spirit communication that comprise this dissertation. Often, references and allusions to popular culture were so deeply embedded in Spiritualist practice and spirit communications that they went unnoticed, or their significance was not fully felt. This point is important. Though the interaction might be marked by mundanity or appear insignificant (the naming of a horse, for example), moments like these, in the aggregate, tell a deeper story of how people structured their lives, their community, and how they moved throughout the world on a day-to-day basis.

² Bridget Bennett, *Transatlantic Spiritualism and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 120.

In the case of the Lily Dale horse, a character from Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* transferred easily onto the minstrel stage. Then the character inspired the naming of a communal fixture at Lily Dale. Finally, as Bennett points out, the spirit of Topsy, who was known for "good humor, her quaint choice of phrase and her happy disposition," appeared in the séance circle.³ This sequence of events demonstrates the power of popular culture to be redeveloped and recycled. Furthermore, it reveals key elements of social and political beliefs (like an attachment to a stereotypical depiction of a young Black girl, in this case) and gives us a glimpse into why these objects might be held on to so tightly over certain periods of time. Thus, Topsy's memorial at Lily Dale not only stands in remembrance of the horse that served the community, but it also represents the cultural life of the community and how members related to society more broadly.

As the following chapters will show, spirit communication was an act that could encompass all these facets of allusion and suggestion. It could be a space extraordinarily curated and crafted so as to manipulate the senses, or it could be dreadfully mundane. The presence of spirits could be indicated sonically in a vast array of ways, from acousmatic raps to voices speaking or singing.⁴ In a parlor where a séance was held, the jingle of a tambourine suggested a spiritual presence. In a spirit voice, a sitter might hear the voice of their deceased father or husband. Sound was a powerful tool for creating a mood of allusion and illusion and for signifying the presence of a lost loved one. In a similar way, my memories and knowledge of this community were not

³ Norman Swaine, *Autobiography of Two Worlds* (London: Rider, 1937) as quoted in Bennett, 120.

⁴ Here I use "acousmatic" to mean the second definition outlined in the Oxford English Dictionary, "Of, designating, or characterized by sound produced without a visible source, or a visual component or association; audible but unseen."

straightforward. Often, they were winding, with whisps of realization coming suddenly, sometimes slowly over time, bit by bit. In many ways these understandings were spectral themselves.

1.2 The Experiential

Spiritualism, also known as Modern Spiritualism, came into being as a semi-organized set of metaphysical beliefs in the mid-nineteenth century in western New York state. In 1848 the Fox Sisters near Rochester, New York reported hearing sounds produced by spirits for the first time. The young girls motivated a phenomenon that spread across the country and eventually across the Atlantic. Spiritualism is still practiced by many today, and Lily Dale is a living community, considered to be the largest Spiritualist community in the world. Practitioners believe in the continuity of the soul after death and that it is possible for the living to communicate with spirits of the “dead.” It is important to note that Spiritualists typically do not consider spirits who have left the earthly plane to be dead. Rather, they have simply moved to a different cosmological plane. Instead of saying a person has died, for example, the term “transitioned” might be used (i.e., a person transitioned into spirit).

At Lily Dale sound and music could signify the presence of “transitioned” spirits in innumerable ways. Spiritualists there, as in other communities, routinely used music as a tool for spiritual edification, entertainment, and to activate spirit communication. This dissertation is a study of how sound and listening influenced and affected a spiritual community’s understanding of themselves and what they could expect from the afterlife. I argue that music and sound were crucial to practitioners of Spiritualism, especially those at Lily Dale. Listening practice also has much to tell us about their distinctive acoustemology, specifically how Spiritualists interpreted

audible sounds as produced by spirits and understood inaudible, clairaudient spirit communications to be important forms of knowledge production. Both sound and music operated within a Spiritualist conception of vibrational physics that explained their effectiveness in facilitating spirit communication.

Using Lily Dale as a case study, I focus on the musical and listening practices that were incorporated into religious and spiritual experience and daily life there in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My study begins in the early 1840s, when Lily Dale's predecessors, the freethinkers in nearby Laona, began to experiment with mesmerism and magnetism. Most of the dissertation focuses on the period 1879-1920, beginning with Lily Dale's founding and continuing through the first two decades of the twentieth century. Though restricted in its geographic scope, the dissertation also incorporates outside perspectives to understand how sound figured in practitioners' spiritual epistemologies within and outside of Lily Dale. My focus on this particular community allows me the opportunity to understand how practices of spirit communication unfolded over time as well as how Spiritualists in a specific western New York location influenced and were influenced by contemporary spiritual and social movements that were prevalent and extremely localized. This study of Lily Dale is one example that captures the diverse and multiple forms that Spiritualist practice, belief, and acoustemologies could take in North America.

Over time, sonic forms of spirit communication became more specific and more human. For example, the first sounds of spirits heard by the Fox Sisters in the 1840s and 50s were disembodied knocks and raps: namely, percussive sound. The sisters developed a code to interpret the series of raps into letters and words. Over the next few decades, the raps transformed into voices that could respond and carry entire conversations. These voices were more specific and séance sitters often knew or recognized the voices as belonging to individuals they had known in

life. Spiritualist acoustemologies were marked by an understanding of sound to have spiritual significance and originate in the spirit world. Additionally, Spiritualist acoustemologies considered inaudible sounds to be valuable sources of information concerning the earthly and spiritual realms. While Spiritualist acoustemologies were predicated on nontraditional understandings of sound, the spaces where these communications took place were crucial. In particular, the parlor séance was a space where Spiritualists could interact with spirits, uncover cosmological secrets, and share memories of those who had transitioned into spirit.

As I attempted to piece together narratives of the community's history based on a variety of materials and sources—especially historical instances of spirit communication that took place in Lily Dale's Leolyn Woods—I constantly returned to my memories of the community's spaces. Understanding Lily Dale's history became a personal experiment in contextualizing historic and primary evidence against the contemporary space I was familiar with. I found myself thinking often of the forest and my walk among the trees, imagining the communications and rituals that occurred there one hundred years prior.

As I indicated in the opening section, my approach to this project has been deeply entwined with my own experiences and memories of Lily Dale and the surrounding geographical area. Though I am not a Spiritualist, nor did I grow up in the Spiritualist community, I grew up just down the road from Lily Dale. The Spiritualist community was part of the communal landscape, a place that I visited often as an adolescent. Grade school friends, classmates, and teammates lived there. I typically visited the community during the regular season at least once each summer with my mother, who, though Roman Catholic, was drawn to aspects of the paranormal and spirit communication. While there we would attend outdoor spirit message services at the Stump or classes focused on various spiritual or metaphysical themes. As a teenager I had my first job at a

coffee shop on the grounds. Several years later, while finishing an undergraduate degree at nearby SUNY Fredonia, I returned to the community, this time with the beginnings of a scholar's perspective. Conducting research for a term paper, I spent a day at Lily Dale's Historical Museum where Lily Dale's historian, Ron Nagy, showed me around the museum's contents with great enthusiasm and care. After viewing rows of spirit paintings, spirit trumpets, and slates used for automatic spirit writings, I was hooked.

I have always had a deep interest in Spiritualism and spirit communication and spent a great deal of time thinking about Lily Dale as an adolescent. Although my methodology in the main part of this dissertation is not experience-based (for the most part), my experiences at Lily Dale have influenced how I have thought through this history. While writing Chapter Two on the community's soundscape, for example, my memories—both from the distant and more recent pasts—were constantly reactivated to imagine how the historical actors and spirits I study would have moved about these familiar landscapes.

Aside from employing experience as a personal and historical grounding method, I also consider the element of sensorial experience inherent in the history of spirit communication that lies at the center of this dissertation. Nineteenth-century spirit communication was grounded in the senses. Sight, touch, scent, and sound combined in Spiritualist rituals to create an environment conducive to conversations with the dead. In private séances, lights were dimmed, sitters clasped hands, and deep listening focused on the slightest change in sound. The people who attended séances and Spiritualist rituals did so for a variety of reasons. Some were grieving, mourning the loss of a parent, spouse, or child. Others were curious about the process of communing with spirits and the spectacular manifestations sitters sometimes reported. And still others participated in spirit

communications because they were skeptical of the manifestations and wished to understand and account for the possible material origins of sitters' experiences.

Thus, whatever séance sitters' dispositions were when they entered the séance or trance lecture, their focus was on the senses and on practitioners' experiences. Thankfully for historians, participants sometimes left written or visual accounts of their experiences and composed and contrafacted hymns that exhibit traces of the musical practice of séance. Additionally, some of these songs contain representations or even quasi-recordings of spirit sound and the experience of spiritual hearing, such as the song, "The Electric Age" that I discuss later in this chapter. My study relies on these accounts reported and accumulated by séance sitters and those interested in Spiritualism. These descriptions come in the forms of memoirs conveying experiences of spirit communication, correspondence, travelogues, and articles in newspapers and periodicals. Accounts of participants and firsthand observers became a crucial point of evidence for spirit investigations. In fact, scientists like Alfred Russel Wallace—credited for his discovery of evolutionary natural selection who became a believer in Spiritualistic communications—developed anthropologically based methods for creating credible scientific studies of spirit phenomena.⁵ Unsurprisingly, this ethnologic background also inclined Spiritualism to the language of and thinking associated with scientific racism, such as social Darwinism and phrenology.⁶

⁵ Efram Sera-Shriar, "Credible Witnessing: A. R. Wallace, Spiritualism, and a 'New Branch of Anthropology'," *Modern Intellectual History* 17, no. 2 (2020): 357-84.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 368 and 376. This line of thought can be seen in the Spiritualist travelogues of James Martin Peebles and Willy Reichel, both which are discussed in more length throughout this dissertation.

Like other historians of Spiritualism, I have been concerned with understanding Spiritualist practice and spirit communication from the perspectives of sincere believers who thought deeply about the phenomena they witnessed and experienced. For this reason, I was initially hesitant to seriously engage with accounts written by skeptics writing with the purpose of exposing mediums and the “tricks” they used. I felt that these overly critical descriptions might detract from the experiences of sincere adherents who deeply believed what they perceived through their own senses and modes of reasoning. However, as this study progressed, I realized that skeptical accounts frequently provided extremely detailed descriptions—especially in regard to the senses and the writers’ own experiences—that could provide deeply nuanced, composite representations of these moments of spirit communication. For example, the descriptions written about spirit communication at Lily Dale by the novelist Sinclair Lewis and psychical researcher Hereward Carrington (both of whom were skeptics) devoted a great deal of space to sonic descriptions. Their experiences were different from those of sincere believers, but their accounts nevertheless offer rich descriptions of sound and listening that have been crucial for my analysis.

The range of emotions that Spiritualist practice could evoke in participants is both striking and telling of the significance of sensory experience itself. Experiencing spirit communication could produce affective responses that ranged from the overwhelming to the perfectly mundane. Some sitters were overcome by what they saw or heard, causing them to faint or scream—reactions that were primarily attributed to women in written accounts. For others, the ritual of hearing or seeing the spirits of their deceased children was a weekly occurrence, akin to a weekly telephone call, where the spooky or uncanny became surprisingly domestic and comfortable. According to Ann Braude, emotion was not only audible in spirit sounds and sitters’ voice, and visible on the faces of sitters who gathered to witness spirit manifestations, but also in the bodily comportment

of the mediums who facilitated spirit communication.⁷ Entranced mediums could remain perfectly unaffected or be caused to quake, jerk, shout, or dance in a manner reminiscent of charismatic, evangelical religions. Braude describes how trance mediums were frequently divided into two different types of trance; those who gave lectures while in an unconscious trance and those who were conscious during their address. For example, in the 1850s the trance lecturer Cora L. V. Scott would enter the theater already in an unconscious trance. She reportedly would gaze upward with her eyes fixed, unaware of her surroundings.⁸ By the 1870s and for the next few decades materializing mediums became more popular. These mediums specialized in conjuring images, objects, and spirits in the form of human figures. Materializing mediums like Florence Cook entered entrancement in a room separate from séance sitters, typically lying on a couch or bed.⁹ Her materializing spirit, Katie King, would then appear to the sitters as if in flesh.

The uninitiated or inexperienced conduit risked entering dangerous territory and becoming possessed or obsessed. Though in Christian demonology the two terms were historically used to signify different states—*possession* representing control from within and *obsession* representing control from outside—many Spiritualists used the terms interchangeably to refer to unwanted or uncontrolled spirit possession.¹⁰ In James Martin Peebles' book, *The Demonism of the Ages*, both

⁷ Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-century America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 89. Test mediums might take on the actions of the spirits they embodied, and "might curse and swagger when controlled by the spirits of drunkards or sailors..."

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 1:234.

¹⁰ Lennard Davis describes the distinction as follows: "These terms were used in this sense since the third and fourth centuries, and the difference between possession and obsession seems to have been well understood at the

Peebles and his interlocutors use the terms loosely. However, Dr. G. Lester Lane of Boston clarifies a distinction between internal and external obsession, though declining to use the term “possession.”¹¹ Discussion of obsession and possession was frequently linked to instances of insanity or institutionalization. For example, J. W. Dennis of Buffalo wrote to Peebles in 1899 to describe several cases of obsession he witnessed at Lily Dale. In both cases women were placed in asylums due to insanity: in only one case was the spirit successfully expelled.¹² Oftentimes, moments of obsession affected young white women who were possessed by spirits marked by difference—whether it be difference related to socioeconomic class, moral inferiority, or race. Spiritualists like Peebles were explicitly racist in their formulation of the “undesirable” spirits that attempted to prey on the living who dabbled in spirit communication.¹³

time: the distinction was that in the case of *possession* the victim was unaware of the fact that she or he had been possessed by the devil because the devil had entered that person and had been possessed by the devil because the devil had entered that person and had complete control over the soul. In the case of *obsession* that person was aware of being besieged by the devil since the demon did not have complete control, had not entered the city of the soul, and the victim could therefore attempt to resist. The key for us in this discussion is that obsession means that the person is aware of the symptoms and possible cause of his or her behavior. This ability to know that certain behaviors are not controllable, but somehow are also not coming from within one’s own desire or will, characterizes the disease of obsession.” See Lennard J. Davis, *Obsession: A History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 31-32.

¹¹ James Martin Peebles, *The Demonism of the Ages: Spirit Obsessions so Common in Spiritism, Oriental and Occidental Occultism*, 2nd ed. (Battle Creek, MI: The Peebles Medical Institute, 1904), 144-45.

¹² According to Dennis, the other woman returned to an asylum and died there in an obsessed state. Dennis spoke of several cases of obsession witnessed at Lily Dale. See Peebles, *The Demonism of the Ages*, 138-43.

¹³ Peebles, 15-17.

Experience has been a grounding method for my approach to the study of Lily Dale and Spiritualism through sound. The study of experience has also been instrumental for examining the history of sound and listening within Spiritualism and spirit communication. Oftentimes understandings of sound and listening developed from firsthand experiences of it. Thus, it is crucial to consider the role of experience in the development of Spiritualist sonic thought. Western metaphysical religious and spiritual movements like Spiritualism can be understood as forms of knowledge thought to have been forgotten to the modernism of the western world. As Leigh Eric Schmidt explains, narratives of the Enlightenment have depicted hearing as becoming increasingly disenchanted and disconnected from the sacred as faith was placed in rationalism, epitomized by the sense of sight.¹⁴ Despite this tale of an imperial, ocular-centric modernism, Schmidt argues that spiritual sounds were not completely silenced, but continued to be heard in religious and mystical subcultures across the American Enlightenment.¹⁵

Along with this rationalist turn, ways of knowing and epistemologies developed through sound and experience have often been discredited and looked upon with suspicion because they could not provide the same empirical proof that was prized during the Enlightenment.¹⁶ In addition to a spiritual epistemology that is frequently undervalued, sound and the perception of sound is often relegated to secondary importance. It is for these reasons, in addition to the general skepticism given to Spiritualism both past and present, that I value the personal experiences of

¹⁴ Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 17-19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

¹⁶ Catherine Albanese, *Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 11.

historical witnesses, particularly when sound is involved. Historian and philosopher Thomas Schwarz Wentzer has theorized historical experience as twofold. First, our own experiences are historical in that they occur in the past and express an awareness of being historical.¹⁷ Second, we experience history through firsthand narratives in which we substitute ourselves for the one who witnessed it. In Wentzer's framing, "somebody undergoes an experience on behalf of somebody else, in his or her place, literally speaking not *re-placing*, but *pre-placing* him or her."¹⁸ In this substitution, the listener being addressed responds by "taking over the responsibility for the experiential content."¹⁹ In the case of the Spiritualist experiential accounts I study and incorporate into this dissertation, Spiritualist narratives are a way for subsequent generations to experience their historical position through their written accounts.

1.3 Background and Literature Review

1848 is most often cited as the beginning of the Spiritualist religion.²⁰ Though preexisting theologies and spiritual practices laid a framework for the new religion, the catalyst occurred

¹⁷ Thomas Schwartz Wentzer, "'I have seen Konigsberg burning': Philosophical anthropology and the responsiveness of historical experience," *Anthropological Theory* 14, no. 1 (2014): 27-28, 35.

¹⁸ Wentzer, 37.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁰ For a select number of examples that accept and critique the year 1848 as Spiritualism's starting point to various degrees, see Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-century America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 10; and Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism*, 1:61-3; Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University

outside of Rochester in Hydesville, New York. That year two young sisters, Katie and Margaret Fox, began to hear mysterious acousmatic rapping in their family's home. These sonic events came to be known as the "Rochester rappings."²¹ Eventually the Fox family concluded that the disembodied sounds were the work of a spirit.²² It was not long before the girls developed their own system for communicating with the ghostly sounds. Using this system, the family determined that the ghost was the spirit of a traveling salesman who was murdered in their home years before.²³ Later, the discovery of a peddler's chest in their basement seemed to confirm this narrative.

The events of 1848 were preceded by decades of mystical and metaphysical spiritual thought. Modern American Spiritualism, as it emerged with the Fox Sisters' listening, found theoretical backing in the writings of Andrew Jackson Davis (1826-1910), published just before the rappings were first heard.²⁴ Davis's first book, *The Principles of Nature*, was published in 1847

of California Press, 2008), 12; Mark A. Lause, *Free Spirits: Spiritualism, Republicanism, and Radicalism in the Civil War Era* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 1; and Robert S. Cox, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 5-6.

²¹ Dellon Marcus Dewey, *History of the Strange Sounds or Rappings Heard in Rochester and Western New York and Usually Called the Mysterious Noises!* (Rochester, NY: D.M. Dewey, 1850), 14; and C. G. Pomeroy and D. S. Chase, "The Rochester Rappings," *New York Observer and Chronicle* 29, no. 25 (June 19, 1851), 197; and Charles W. Elliott, *Mysteries, or, Glimpses of the Supernatural: containing accounts of the Salem witchcraft, the Cock-lane ghost, the Rochester rappings, the Stratford mysteries, oracles, astrology, dreams, demons, ghosts, spectres, etc.* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1852), 116-19.

²² Emma Hardinge Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism: A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion Between Earth and the World of Spirits* (New York: Self-published, 1870), 32-3.

²³ Britten, 34-5.

²⁴ Bret E. Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America* (Indiana University Press, 1997), 16-17.

and was written while he was in trance. Working as a farmhand in Poughkeepsie, New York, Davis witnessed a mesmerist's demonstration of magnetic healing.²⁵ Subsequently, Davis took up the practice, mixing mesmerist thought and procedure with the spiritual writings of Swedish philosopher and scientist Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772).²⁶ His mystic visions included episodes of spiritual hearing and communications with angels, whom he conceived of as the spirits of humans who were once living.²⁷

Interest in spiritual movements that were emotionally moving and affective was also prefaced in the United States by revival camp meetings and charismatic forms of Protestant evangelicalism.²⁸ Religious studies scholars like Jon Butler and Catherine Albanese have argued that Protestant evangelism and Christianity have often been given too much focus in studies of American religion. Instead, they emphasize the centrality of occultism and "metaphysical

²⁵ Ibid., 19-20.

²⁶ Richard Smoley, "The Inner Journey of Emanuel Swedenborg," in *Scribe of Heaven: Swedenborg's Life, Work, and Impact*, eds. Jonathan S. Rose, et. al. (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2005), 22-6. Swedenborg became a theologian later in life after having visions of the spirit world and visiting heaven and hell.

²⁷ Jonathan S. Rose, "Swedenborg's Garden of Theology: An Introduction to Swedenborg's Published Theological Works" in *Scribe of Heaven: Swedenborg's Life, Work, and Impact*, eds. Jonathan S. Rose, et. al. (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2005), 58-62.; Schmidt, 230.

²⁸ See Bret E. Carroll, "The Context of Cassadaga: A Historical Overview of American Spiritualism," in *Cassadaga: The South's Oldest Spiritualist Community*, eds. John J. Guthrie et. al. (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000), 2; and Nancy Gray Schoonmaker, "Mystery and Possibility: Spiritualists in the Nineteenth-Century South," (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2010), 4-7; and Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 226-29.

religions” to the history or religion in the United States.²⁹ Spiritualism is by no means the only metaphysical religion to develop within the United States. In fact, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American landscape was dotted with similar movements such as the United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing (Shakers), Millerism, Transcendentalism, Mormonism, mesmerism, and millennialist movements.

Even before Davis’s 1847 book was published, there were murmurings of the mysticism to come. Mesmerism and animal magnetism were both popular practices in the United States with demonstrations given in public forums, often by traveling healers. One such healer, Dr. Moran of Vermont, visited the village of Laona, New York in 1844.³⁰ The small group of freethinkers who lived there and participated in Moran’s magnetic healing formed the basis for the group who would establish Lily Dale several decades later in the 1870s.³¹ Freethought encompassed an extensive range of beliefs. Susan Jacoby has defined freethought as “a rationalist approach to fundamental questions of earthly existence—a conviction that the affairs of human beings should be governed not by faith in the supernatural but by a reliance on reason and evidence adduced from the natural

²⁹ By “metaphysical,” Albanese refers to religions in which practitioners privilege the mind, its ability to move beyond reason, and a correspondence between a higher and earthly realm that replicate the universe as a whole. See Albanese, 4-7.

³⁰ Ron Nagy with Joyce LaJudice, *The Spirits of Lily Dale* (Lakeville, MN: Galde Press, Inc., 2017), 1.

³¹ “Despite its faithful Baptist congregation, Laona had garnered a reputation as a shockingly liberal center of ‘free thinking’ religious beliefs.” Richard Waite, “Laona and Lily Dale: The Rise of Chautauqua Spiritualists,” *Western New York Heritage* 17, no. 2 (Summer 2014), 56.

world.”³² Such evidence could come in the form of firsthand experiences and, as Schmidt explains, this kind of proof was experienced by charismatic Protestants in visions and dreams that could call them to preach the Gospel or reveal cosmological truths.³³ After the Fox Sisters’ communion with spirits, the Laona freethinkers—like many others with similar mystical interests and spiritual dispositions—developed an intellectual amalgamation of the phenomena experienced by the Fox Sisters, Davis’s writings, and their own mesmerist healing practices. Davis’s descriptions of achieving a trance-like state and communicating with spirits á la Swedenborg lent itself to the Rochester spirit communications. Likewise, Swedenborg’s teachings on the continuation and development of the spirit after death were embraced and further developed by Spiritualists.

For many adherents of the religion that came to be known as Spiritualism, the “Rochester rappings” marked a turning point in sacred time. The rappings signified the moment that the veil separating life on earth from the afterlife was torn, thus opening the way for others to communicate with spirits. Throughout the period of its popularity, Spiritualism was considered a religion that fought against various forms of institutional power and oppression. While many mainstream Christian religions saw divine power as properly vested in mostly male ordained priests or reverends and lay religious elders, the leader of individual Spiritualist rituals was a medium who was not ordained. A medium was an ordinary lay person and could be any member of a family or household, but many were women, especially young women or girls like the Fox Sisters.

³² Susan Jacoby, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 4-5.

³³ Schmidt, 43-45 and 47-49.

Braude explains that mediumship was often considered to be a passive experience.³⁴ Mediums were frequently women who “were developed.” The use of this particular language signaled that they were not regarded as agents in the process, but rather as passive vessels who were shaped and molded by an outside force or intelligence. Women were considered ideally suited for mediumship and spirit communion because of qualities of passivity, innocence, irrationality, and sensitivity that nineteenth-century Americans routinely attributed to white women.³⁵ The conceptualization of women and girls as receptive strengthened Spiritualist claims of authentic spirit communication, for many adherents, because female mediums’ ability to give intellectual or academic lectures while entranced was thought to be beyond the capabilities of ordinary woman.

Though nineteenth-century Spiritualism might seem a religion of blind faith to present day observers, many Spiritualists considered themselves to be scientifically driven investigators of psychic phenomena. Investigations conducted during the last decades of the nineteenth century by well-known white men such as British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle gave a new, more rationalist public face to the religion. As the author behind Sherlock Holmes, Doyle was known for his calculating mind, as intelligent as the detective he created. Doyle’s role as a Spiritualist leader

³⁴ Braude, 83.

³⁵ For further reading about the cult of domesticity, see Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman’s Sphere in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977) ; and Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977); Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1981); Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1976); Mary Louise Roberts, “True Womanhood Revisited,” *Journal of Women’s History* 14, no. 1 (2002): 150-55.

during the early decades of the twentieth century was supported and taken up by his second wife, the trained mezzo-soprano Lady Jean Conan Doyle. Like her husband, Lady Doyle became a sincere follower of the religion. In 1921 she even acquired the ability of mediumship, first through automatic writing and eventually through spoken communications.³⁶ Automatic writing refers to the process where an individual, usually in trance, was directed by spirits to write words and sentences. This was typically done with pencil and paper or with chalk on slate. The Doyle's lives included many examples of Spiritualist music and spiritual hearing. Their archive—which I cite throughout the following chapters—includes descriptions of music present during séances, musicians who attended séances with the couple, and stories of haunted instruments.³⁷

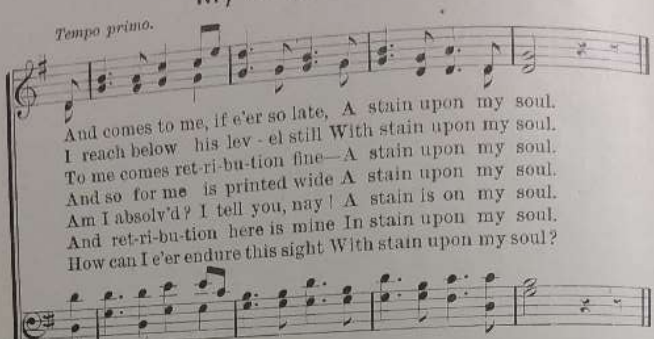
The historical connection between spirit communication and scientific investigation extended into the realm of technology and invention. In Spiritualist circles, technology functioned as both a method for spirit communication and a useful metaphor for explaining the mechanics of contacting spirits in the Summerland, the Spiritualist afterlife. For example, Benjamin Franklin was considered somewhat of a Spiritualist prophet for his work with electricity. His spirit made frequent appearances in séances during the nineteenth century. Excerpts from his writings were even included in the popular Spiritualist hymnal, *The Spiritual Harp*, edited by James Martin Peebles and Joseph Osgood Barrett. Aside from their high regard for inventors and invention, Spiritualists relied on technology as a metaphor for spirit communication. Of course, Spiritualists

³⁶ Russell Miller, *The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle: A Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008), 460.

³⁷ Their archive includes letters from Florizel von Reuter about his psychical experiments with music (discussed further in chapter four) and a man who wrote to Doyle about a haunted violin he had inherited. Add MS 88924. Arthur Conan Doyle Archives, British Library.

My Brother and I.

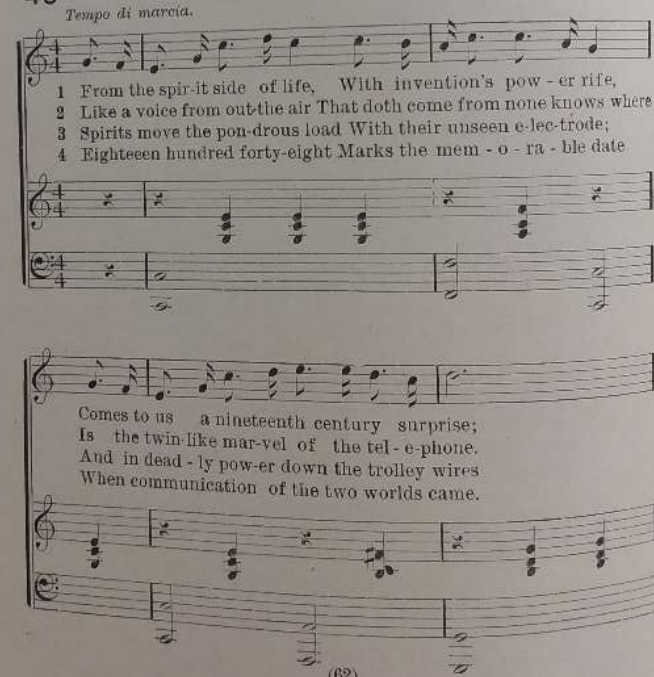
Tempo primo.



And comes to me, if e'er so late, A stain upon my soul.
 I reach below his lev-el still With stain upon my soul.
 To me comes ret-ri-bu-tion fine—A stain upon my soul.
 And so for me is printed wide A stain upon my soul.
 Am I absolv'd? I tell you, nay! A stain is on my soul.
 And ret-ri-bu-tion here is mine In stain upon my soul.
 How can I e'er endure this sight With stain upon my soul?

40 The Electric Age.

Tempo di marcia.



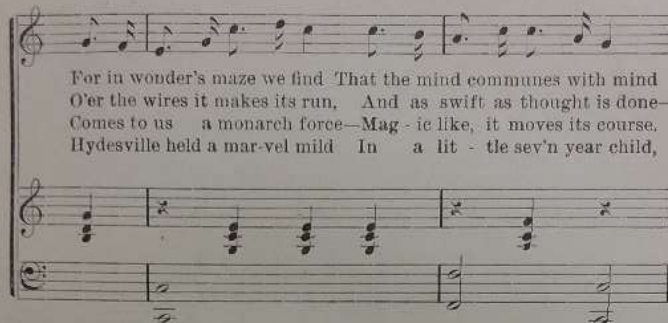
1 From the spir-it side of life, With invention's pow-er rife,
 2 Like a voice from out the air That doth come from none knows where
 3 Spirits move the pon-drous load With their unseen e-lee-trode;
 4 Eighteen hundred forty-eight Marks the mem-o-ra-ble date

Comes to us a nineteenth century surprise;
 Is the twin-like mar-vel of the tel-e-phone.
 And in dead-ly pow-er down the trolley wires
 When communication of the two worlds came.

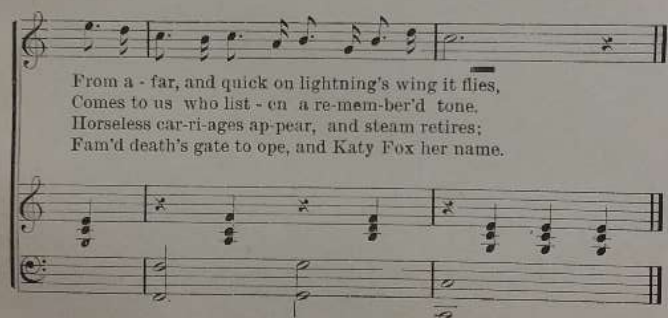
(62)

Figure 2: "The Electric Age" from Boozar's *Inspiration's Voice* (1898)

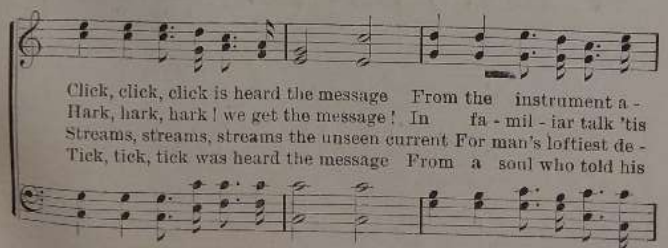
The Electric Age.



For in wonder's maze we find That the mind communes with mind
O'er the wires it makes its run, And as swift as thought is done—
Comes to us a monarch force—Mag-ic like, it moves its course.
Hydesville held a mar-vel mild In a lit-tle sev'n year child,



From a - far, and quick on lightning's wing it flies,
Comes to us who list - en a re-mem-ber'd tone,
Horseless car-ri-ages ap-pear, and steam retires;
Fam'd death's gate to ope, and Katy Fox her name.



Click, click, click is heard the message From the instrument a -
Hark, hark, hark! we get the message! In fa - mil - iar talk 'tis
Streams, streams, streams the unseen current For man's loftiest de -
Tick, tick, tick was heard the message From a soul who told his

(63)

Figure 3: "The Electric Age," page 2

The Electric Age.

rise. Man to man his greeting sends; Over space in triumph ends
 grown; And it makes us all re-joice, That, like independent voice
 sires, And the way is open'd wide For invention's aims and pride—
 pain: And the spir-its ev - er more Crowd unto the open door.

Thus the force that Franklin's kite drew from the skies.
 Of the spir - it from the air, 'tis tru - ly known.
 Great am - bi - tions that the world for aye admires.
 While to Franklin's work the honor will re - main.

41 The Independent Voice.
Andante con moto.

1 I love it, I love it, and who shall dare
 2 It comes, O it comes with its mes - sage sweet,
 3 And why, tell me why I should fail to keep

To chide me for lov - ing that voice in the air—
 In joy and in glad - ness its dear one to greet,
 In wait - ing for one whose sweet love is so deep

(64)

Figure 4: "The Electric Age," page 3

were not the only group to value new sound technologies. Their interest was predicated on the Enlightenment's fascination with mechanization, especially regarding the amplification and replication of sound and the human voice.³⁸ These instruments included the automata of the seventeenth century and later, the phonograph of the nineteenth century.³⁹

The prospect of technological invention and the possibilities it promised bolstered Spiritualist innovation. If enchanted new technologies like the telegraph, telephone, and radio were possible, practitioners reasoned, communication across the spiritual ether did not seem so ridiculous.⁴⁰ The telegraph was understood as an early metaphor for Spiritualism, exemplified in songs like "The Electric Age" printed in the Spiritualist songbook, *Inspiration's Voice* by H. W. Boozer (Figures 2, 3, and 4).⁴¹ The song is a contrafact tune based on "Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!" (1864) written by George F. Root. The original song was written during the Civil War about the experience of a prisoner of war, the "Tramp, tramp, tramp" of the chorus meant to mimic the hopeful vision of prisoners' fellow soldiers marching to their rescue. In the Spiritualist version by

³⁸ Schmidt, 101-24.

³⁹ Ibid., 109-11, 113.

⁴⁰ Several studies have examined the cultural and social impact of the telegraph in the nineteenth century. See Margery W. Davis, *Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter: Office Work and Office Workers, 1870–1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982); and Edwin Gabler, *The American Telegrapher: A Social History, 1860–1900* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988); and Thomas C. Jepsen, *My Sisters Telegraphic: Women in the Telegraph Office, 1846–1950* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000); and Jeffrey Kieve, *The Electric Telegraph: A Social and Economic History* (Newton Abbot, UK: David and Charles, 1973); and Annteresa Lubrano, *The Telegraph: How Technology Innovation Caused Social Change* (New York: Garland, 1997).

⁴¹ H. W. Boozer, *Inspiration's Voice: A Music Book, Complete for the Spiritualist's Every Use* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1898), 63-64.

Boozer, the chorus documents the sonic experiences of spirit communication; the “click” of the spiritual telegraph; the “streams” of magnetic, mesmerist currents; and the “tick” of the rappings received by Katie Fox. Furthermore, the song lays out a narrative that explicitly links spirit communication to nineteenth-century technologies. In this framing, communication with spirit or “mind [communing] with mind” is just one more audible technology that enables new forms of communication and movement such as the telephone, trolley, and horseless carriages. As Jeffrey Sconce has explained, during the 1840s, which saw both the development of telegraphic and spirit communication, there were “few distinctions” between physics and metaphysics in Western discourse about audio media.⁴² According to Sconce, “[t]alking with the dead through raps and knocks, after all, was only slightly more miraculous than talking with the living yet absent through dots and dashes; both involved subjects reconstituted through technology as an entity as once interstitial and uncanny.”⁴³

Due to the importance of audible technologies and inventions, several studies have focused on Spiritualism and technology. Though not focused solely on Spiritualism, Sconce has written about the idea of haunting and its association with technology. Jill Galvan has examined the intersection between gender, spirit communication, and technology in the latter nineteenth century up to 1919 while other scholars, like Allen Grove and Tom Gunning, have written about imaging technologies like the photograph and X-ray and their use in depicting spirits and ghosts.⁴⁴ Sas

⁴² Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 28.

⁴³ Sconce, 28.

⁴⁴ Jill Nicole Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium: Feminine Channeling, the Occult and Communication Technologies, 1859–1919* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); and Allen W. Grove, “Röntgen’s Ghosts:

Mays and Neil Matheson have examined the role of technology and Spiritualism in nineteenth-century art.⁴⁵

As I noted earlier in discussing Arthur Conan Doyle, a masculinized strand of Spiritualism emerged in the 1870s in the form of psychical research. This can be read as a reaction to the feminized nature of early Spiritualism. As Molly McGarry has pointed out, Spiritualism was often at odds with medical professionals and science. This was represented by the classification of “mediomania” as a pathological condition primarily affecting “hysterical” women mediums and tensions between medical doctors and mediumistic healers, who were frequently women.⁴⁶ Psychical researchers, on the other hand, bridged the divide between feminized Spiritualism and the masculine authority of scientific skepticism.⁴⁷ Investigators generally approached Spiritualism with skepticism and subjected Spiritualist practices and mediums to scientific inquiries and experimentations. It was during this time, nearly two generations after the Fox Sisters, that societies like the London-based Society for Psychical Research (1882) and its American counterpart, the American Society for Psychical Research (1884) were established. Studies like Laurence R. Moore’s *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American*

Photography, X-Rays, and the Victorian Imagination,” *Literature and Medicine* 16 (1997): 141—73; and Tom Gunning, “Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations: Spirit Photograph, Magic Theater, Trick Films, and Photography’s Uncanny,” in *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video*, ed. Patrice Petro (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 17-38.

⁴⁵ Sas Mays and Neil Matheson, *The Machine and the Ghost: Technology and Spiritualism in Nineteenth- to Twenty-first-century Art and Culture* (Manchester University Press, 2013).

⁴⁶ McGarry, 110-12.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

*Culture*⁴⁸ and Janet Oppenheim's *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914*⁴⁹ deal with psychical research in Spiritualism. Doyle's archives are also rich with descriptions of similar psychical experimentations and his own writings on well-known subjects of study like the Boston-based medium Mina (Margery) Crandon.⁵⁰

Most academic studies of nineteenth-century Spiritualism have been written by scholars in cultural, gender, and religious studies. Ann Braude's *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-century America* is a fundamental study of Spiritualism. Braude's study focuses on gender in woman's progressive movements in the nineteenth century and argues that Spiritualism and woman's suffrage were symbiotic movements that should be studied in conjunction with one another. *Radical Spirits* has been especially influential on this study because of its approach as well as the documents Braude considers, such as Spiritualist periodicals and Spiritualists' archives.⁵¹ Unlike many studies of Spiritualism conducted prior, Braude avoids

⁴⁸ Laurence R. Moore, *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁴⁹ See also Martin Willis, *Mesmerists, Monsters, and Machines: Science Fiction and the Cultures of Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2006); and Arthur Wrobel, *Pseudo-Science and Society in 19th-Century America* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1987).

⁵⁰ Materials pertaining to this particular case can be found in Doyle's archive at the British Library as well as the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, Richard Lancelyn Green Bequest at the Portsmouth City Libraries' History Centre.

⁵¹ In addition to her monograph, Braude published a useful "checklist" of Spiritualist periodicals through the American Antiquarian Society. A PDF of the checklist is available through the AAS website (<https://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/44539462.pdf>). See Ann Braude, "News from the Spirit World:

placing judgement or questioning the validity of Spiritualist claims, rather seeking to understand the historic nature of Spiritualist experience. Other influential histories of Spiritualism include Ruth Brandon's *The Spiritualists*, Bret E. Carroll's *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*, Robert S. Cox's *Body and Soul*, and Howard Kerr's *Mediums, Spirit-Rappers, and Roaring Radicals*.⁵²

More recent studies have focused on the significance of gender and race to Spiritualist histories. Scholars like Claudine Massiocotte, Molly McGarry, Alex Owen, and Jill Galvan have written about the role of gender and sexuality in Spiritualism and the séance, with specific attention given to the manifestation of femininity in these settings.⁵³ Studies with a focus on race tend to explore the presence of Indigenous spirits in spirit communications. "Indian" spirit guides were extremely common in Spiritualism through the twentieth century. So-called Indian spirits appeared either as guides to mostly white Spiritualists to assist them in their spiritual journey or else as famous, historical Native American figures, sometimes to educate or enlighten, sometimes to entertain or disrupt. Studies on the presence of Indian spirits and representations of Native

A Checklist of American Spiritualist Periodicals, 1847—1900" (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1990).

⁵² See Ruth Brandon, *The Spiritualists: The Passion for the Occult in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983); and Bret E. Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*; Cox, *Body and Soul: A Sympathic History of American Spiritualism*; Howard Kerr, *Mediums, Spirit-Rappers, and Roaring Radicals: Spiritualism in American Literature, 1850—1900* (Urbana, IN: University of Illinois Press, 1972).

⁵³ See Claudine Massiocotte, *Trance Speakers: Femininity and Authorship in Spiritual Seances, 1850—1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017); and Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium: Feminine Channeling, the Occult, and communication Technologies, 1859—1919*; Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*; Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits*.

Americans include Bridget Bennett's *Transatlantic Spiritualism and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, Kathryn Troy's *The Specter of the Indian*, and Darryl Catherine's essay "The Haunted Grid."⁵⁴

It should be noted that there is also a large body of scholarly work that deals more broadly with hauntings and Indigenous spirits such as Renée Bergland's *The National Uncanny* and Colleen Boyd and Coll Thrush's *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence*.⁵⁵ Both texts deal with the figure of the Indian as a "vanished" culture resulting from colonial forces. Bergland analyzes the use of Native American ghosts in literature to represent the contested formation of American identity, especially in regard to the internalized dilemma of rejecting colonialism while simultaneously embracing it.⁵⁶ The haunting of white Americans by Native spirits signals what Bergland calls "the wish and the counterwish": the acknowledgement of colonialist guilt alongside the pleasure of being haunted.⁵⁷ This idea is especially essential to a study of Spiritualism, where

⁵⁴ See Bennett, *Transatlantic Spiritualism*; and Darryl Catherine, "The Haunted Grid: Nature, Electricity, and Indian Spirits in the American Metaphysical Tradition," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82, no. 2 (2014): 371-97; and Catherine, *Haunted Ground: Journeys through a Paranormal America* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011).

⁵⁵ See Colleen E. Boyd and Coll Thrush, *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture and History* (University of Nebraska Press, 2011); and Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850–1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Renée Bergland, *The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Subjects* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000).

⁵⁶ Bergland, 16.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

practitioners and mediums were constantly haunted by Native American ghosts and spirit guides. This will be explored in more depth in Chapter Two.

1.4 Methodology

Though there is by now a considerable literature on nineteenth-century Spiritualism, there has not been a full-length study examining the sonic aspects of Spiritualists' religious practices from the perspective of musicology or sound studies.⁵⁸ Thus, while this dissertation relies on previous historical studies concerning Spiritualism, my approach and methodology were developed from the interdisciplinary influences of historical sound studies, religious studies, and esoteric and occult studies within musicology. As mentioned earlier, my methodology is also influenced by my own experiences growing up near Lily Dale and my emphasis on practitioners' sensorial experiences of spirit communication, especially in regard to listening practices.

⁵⁸ It should be mentioned that musicologist Kendra Preston Leonard has written a book on silent film music and its connection with the supernatural and Spiritualism (Kendra Preston Leonard, *Music for the Kingdom of Shadows: Cinema Accompaniment in the Age of Spiritualism* (Humanities Commons: self-published, 2019), <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/hwvw-wg90>). Melvyn J. Willin has also published a book containing an essay on Spiritualist musicians, though his larger study is done from a parapsychology or "paramusicology" approach (Melvyn J. Willin, *Music, Witchcraft and the Paranormal* (Cambridgeshire, UK: Melrose Books, 2005)). Music scholar Matt Marble writes about esotericism in American music and has written about the Spiritualist musician Jesse Shepard (Matt Marble, "The Illusioned Ear: Disembodied Sound and the Musical Séances of Francis Grierson," *Ear/Wave/Event* 1 (2014)).

Aside from studies specifically dedicated to Spiritualism and metaphysical religions, I have drawn inspiration from historical sound studies, particularly those dealing with sound in North America and sound and listening in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While I focus on music, its role in Spiritualist ritual, and the significance it held for listeners, I also emphasize the importance of sound to Spiritualist experiences. Spiritualists' understanding of sound was often unconventional as its sources were thought to be spiritual and unearthly. To dissect this understanding, I draw upon sound studies to explain how listeners made sense of their sonic environment. In this, I have been influenced by the work of Steven Feld, Emily Thompson, Sarah Eyerly and Nina Sun Eidsheim.

A number of historical sound studies and soundscape projects, such as those of Thompson, Jonathan Sterne, and John Picker, deal with the sounds of modernization and industrialization and subsequent changes in listening.⁵⁹ Other historical sound studies projects reconstruct past soundscapes with the aid of a diverse array of primary sources. For example, in her essay, "What Mr. Jefferson Didn't Hear," Bonnie Gordon recreates the soundscape that Thomas Jefferson heard at his plantation, Monticello, using a variety of records, including Jefferson's music collection.⁶⁰ However, she also goes beyond explicit, written records to excavate the sounds that were excluded from the historical record, namely the sounds of enslaved people who lived on the grounds and the fears of slave uprisings that haunted the soundscape. Richard Cullen Rath's *How Early America Sounded* carefully projects what sound was like in early colonial America by using descriptions of

⁵⁹ Emily Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

⁶⁰ Bonnie Gordon, "What Mr. Jefferson Didn't Hear" in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, eds. Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe, and Jeffrey Kallberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 108-32.

sound in written texts of the period. Bruce R. Smith's book, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, is another useful model for considering the corporeality and phenomenology of sound and the voice of communities for whom only limited written accounts are now available. Likewise, Sarah Eyerly's *Moravian Soundscapes* reconstructs sonic communities around religious practice, song, and communal planning.⁶¹

My own interest in sound studies and soundscapes is a guiding force throughout this dissertation. Though I focus on musical practices and song literature used by Spiritualists, this study is much broader in that it considers music and sound, specifically as it was heard and experienced. As this dissertation is primarily a case study of a particular community, Lily Dale, I have found that nineteenth-century residents' understanding of spiritual sound was closely tied to their physical surroundings and the community's natural landscape. Furthermore, my consideration of sound does not stop at sounds that were only physically audible but includes forms of spiritual hearing that were largely constituted by inaudible sound.

Spiritual hearing or clairaudience were common forms of psychical experience documented by Spiritualists through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This phenomenon is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, but generally speaking clairaudience was experienced as sound received as if through auditory organs, but it was not detectable by anyone else aside from the person who heard it. Accounts of clairaudience typically note that the sound seemed no different from any other sound heard with the ear. The clairaudient heard the sound as coming from an intelligence other than their own, yet the sound was understood to occur internally within their own consciousness. This is a subjective phenomenon, to be sure, and one that can be difficult

⁶¹ Sarah Eyerly, *Moravian Soundscapes* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020).

to describe in historical contexts. My approach for engaging with these moments of cliraudience is twofold. First, I look to other studies that have discussed spiritual hearing, such as Leigh Eric Schmidt's *Hearing Things*. Schmidt surveys instances of cliraudience in non-mainstream Christian and Christian-influenced religions in the early United States republic into the nineteenth century. His main purpose in crafting this narrative is to highlight the inconsistencies present in Enlightenment-era myths that claim sight to be the dominant sense at the cost of sound and listening—what Walter Ong calls “the devocalization of the universe.”⁶² By teasing out a wide history of listening practices that often go unnoticed, Schmidt flips the myth of sight to argue for the prevalence of hearing. In a similar way, my dissertation highlights sound and listening in historical subjects where it has not been given enough attention or significance.

Second, for my theoretical approach I turn to the work of anthropologist Steven Feld and musicologist Nina Sun Eidsheim. Specifically, I use Feld's concept of acoustemology and Eidsheim's writings on vibrational materiality and modes of sensing sound. Feld's term, “acoustemology,” describes a way of knowing through sound and place, combining “acoustics” and “epistemology” “to investigate sounding and listening as a knowing-in-action: a knowing-with and knowing-through the audible.”⁶³ Feld suggests that acoustemology can support a knowledge of sound that is not restricted to relations among the living, but could be understood as creating relationality between the living and dead.⁶⁴

⁶² Schmidt, 7.

⁶³ Steven Feld, “Acoustemology,” in *Keywords in Sound*, eds. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 12.

⁶⁴ Feld, 19. Here, Feld refers to communications between living humans and birds that are understood to embody the spirits of humans who have died.

I argue that this is a major part of what I call *Spiritualist acoustemologies*. In Spiritualist rituals like the séance or trance, sound can directly connect the living to the dead and the dead to the living. In practice, these sounds could be audible, as in the case of a medium acting as a vessel that allowed spirit to speak, sing, or create music. On the other hand, the living communicated with the dead by using voice and music. Singing and musical vibrations were understood to be heightened as compared to regular speech and thus resonated with spirits residing on a higher plane. Despite many instances of audible sound, however, I suggest that another major component of Spiritualist acoustemologies were the sounds that could not be heard by the average bystander, sounds that were not audible in a traditional sense. Such inaudible sounds are not accounted for by Feld, who specifically states that acoustemological sound must be audible and thus communal or shareable.

Thus, my understanding of Spiritualist acoustemologies significantly diverges from Feld's formulation. The distinction I offer complicates the workings of acoustemology because it rejects the notion that sound must be audible. Acoustemologies are a person or community's epistemological understanding of themselves and the world around them through sound. For Spiritualists, the sound was often inaudible. Though the sound of an internal voice may not have been shareable with another individual, it did not lessen the listener's experience of the voice or the knowledge they gained from the voice. Furthermore, clairaudient sound's lack of physical auditory vibration did not necessarily weaken the significance of the spirit message. Clairaudience was considered a legitimate form of contacting spirits. Additional tests may have been given to the person claiming to hear inaudible sounds, but others' inability to hear the sound did not necessarily negate its impact. These modes of communicating with spirits were a fundamental element of Spiritualism and séances, a practice that could be developed over time through diligent training.

To further develop the concept of inaudible, spiritual sound I rely on Eidsheim's work on material vibrations. In her book, *Sensing Sound*, Eidsheim understands sound to be a vibrational phenomenon that can be experienced in a variety of ways, not just through the auditory mechanism. Eidsheim uses the term "thick event" to represent the Derridean act of substituting language for a complex event that resists linguistic description. In this case, sound is a thick event, a label given to an auditory event that tends to ignore the complex layers of vibration and materiality comprising the audible. The thick event might not necessarily be experienced as sound, but in other material forms like felt vibration.

Eidsheim does not discuss instances of spiritual hearing, but she does briefly mention instances of experienced sounds that are not caused by a sonic event: "Some auditory events that are not caused by a sound signal but by other actors could include auditory hallucinations, disease conditions (such as tinnitus), or sound experienced as the result of artificial stimulation of the acoustic nerve."⁶⁵ The examples she provides such as hallucination, disease, and artificial stimulation are generally viewed as unwelcome events or else hearing that occurs when something has "gone wrong" with physical or mental functions. Clairaudience, on the other hand, was frequently understood to be valuable or desirable, a facet of spirituality that was sought after and could provide insight into the Summerland and facilitate spirit communication. In Spiritualist circles, spiritual hearing was a vehicle for achieving spiritual knowledge. In this study, then, it has been necessary to account for contemporary methods of knowledge production like clairaudience that have either been forgotten in mainstream practice and narratives or else looked down upon as illegitimate, lacking evidence, or being beyond comprehension.

⁶⁵ Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 176.

1.5 Chapter Summaries

Following this introduction, the second chapter of the dissertation is a focused case study on practices of sonic spirit communication in Lily Dale from 1873-1920. Subsequent chapters build on concepts introduced in this chapter including song traditions and repertoire, Spiritualist acoustemologies and clairaudience, and mediumistic musicians. The second chapter is meant to offer a starting place by providing an example of how the metaphysical philosophies of Spiritualism functioned in daily, communal, and ritualistic life. Though the other chapters typically deal with Spiritualism more broadly as it was practiced across the northeastern United States and North American, the topic of each chapter is inspired by archival materials found at Lily Dale. For example, Chapter Three uses the song collection housed at Lily Dale's Marion Skidmore Library as a primary archival source and basis for the study.

Chapter Two, "Spiritualist Soundscapes: A Case Study," tells the story of Lily Dale and its formation—both socially and sonically—around Spiritualism. In this chapter I reconstruct the summer camp's soundscape as it was created around sonic practices of spirit communication, musical performance, and popular entertainment forms. I argue that the community's sonic environments, influenced by conceptions of the land, its history, and socio-economic class, served a crucial function in creating a modern Spiritualist identity. Not only was social organization important to Lily Dale's establishment, but the settlement's location and the imagined histories attached to the land where it stands were crucial for subsequent instances of spirit communication and the sounds visitors and residents experienced there. Historically, the land around the Cassadaga Lakes where Lily Dale was established was understood even by white settlers to have a rich history of Indigenous settlement. In the nineteenth century, the development of American archeology was rising and interest in land excavation was increasing. Local histories written during

this time and during the building of the community at Lily Dale emphasized the presence of Native American remains and artifacts. Decades later in the early twentieth century it was common for mediums there to rely on Native American spirit guides or for Spiritualists to be entranced by Indigenous spirits.

I discuss this phenomenon in the context of identity performance inside and outside the séance circle at Lily Dale. Sonic markers were used to identify spirits and determine their authenticity, such as voice, accent, and grammatical usage. Aspects of identity like gender, class, race, and nationality were commonly noted in these environments. This chapter gives special attention to the depiction of racialized spirits. I argue that racial identity in spirit communications was based on a racial vocabulary developed in popular entertainments like minstrel shows, vaudeville, and American Indian variety shows.

The third chapter, “Spiritualist Hymns and Parlor Songs for the Dead,” examines the large and varied repertoire of Spiritualist songs. This chapter relies on the songbook collection held at Lily Dale that have been collected over the years since Lily Dale’s establishment. I argue that though these songs closely resemble contemporary Christian hymns and domestic parlor songs formally and stylistically, Spiritualist hymns differed in their thematic content and function. For example, the songs were meant to aid in spirit communication. Hymns and songs were regularly sung at the beginning of séances to raise the circle’s collective vibrational frequency and thus assist in contacting spirits. Using nineteenth-century explanations of music’s ability to facilitate spirit communication, I analyze Spiritualist songs as embodying not only Spiritualist themes, but ritual purposes.

The collection of hymnals and popular songs available at Lily Dale’s Marion Skidmore Library offer a material, tactile glimpse into the musical life of the community. Many items of the

collection were used in public and private gatherings in Lily Dale, with many books containing the signatures, performance notes, and programs of their former owners. While the songs themselves depict the spiritual beliefs of the community (for example, the modes in which communication with the spirits was possible) the collection of hymnals also track the changing opinion of Spiritualists and their relationship to Christianity over the course of Lily Dale's existence. Alongside Spiritualist songbooks are a large collection of Christian hymnals that document the community's openness to or distancing from Christian ideology at various times. Christian denominations offered models of stable institutionalization that could provide respectability and certain legal protections. The use of Christian hymns accompanied Spiritualist efforts to create a national association, with a great deal of support emanating from Lily Dale.

The fourth chapter, "(In)Audible Sound and Spiritualist Acoustemologies," breaks down Spiritualist acoustemologies discussed earlier in this introduction as well as the Spiritualist soundscape set forth in Chapter Two's case study of Lily Dale by focusing on sound and listening practices within Spiritualist communities. In this chapter I analyze the acoustemologies of spirit communications from the perspective of Spiritualists' understanding of audible and inaudible sound. I argue that Spiritualism demanded a special way of listening. Thus, the study of Spiritualism requires a nuanced understanding of how Spiritualists conceptualized spiritual sound.

Spirit communication could occur in a variety of ways including audible and inaudible sounds. Mediums and séance circles sometimes reported hearing independent spirit voices, voices that were heard as distinct from any living member present. On other occasions, the spirit spoke directly through the medium, the medium's voice and vocal inflection changing to reflect the difference between their identity and the identity of the spirit. During instances of clairaudience or spiritual hearing, the spirit voice was heard by the listener as being both audible and internal, yet

no one else was able to hear the communication. These different methods of spirit communication were widely noted by Spiritualists. Both audible and inaudible communications were theorized extensively by Spiritualists who developed a physics of spiritual sound to explain their experiences.

This chapter analyzes séance reports and written accounts and explains the different sonic methods of spirit manifestation. Considering contemporary understandings of sound, I provide a look at the various forms Spiritualist acoustemologies could take and how the sonic experiences of audible and inaudible spirit sound informed Spiritualists' understandings of the spiritual and material world. I first begin by explaining traditions of listening and spiritual hearing in movements influential to Spiritualism, such as Swedenborgianism and mesmerism. Next, I analyze the instruction manual, *Clairaudience* (1911) by J. C. F. Grumbine within this context of spiritual hearing. I build upon the work of Steven Feld and Nina Eidsheim to develop more fully my conception of Spiritualist acoustemologies.

The fifth chapter, "Musical Virtuosity, the Séance, and the Musical Medium," directly addresses the intersections between mediumship and musicianship. I argue that musical mediums incorporated virtuosity into their séance performances to enhance the experience of their mediumship. On the other hand, I also see mediumship as a kind of virtuosity that could be used to enhance the musical performance. I examine reports from musical séances as well as biographical and autobiographical descriptions of mediumistic musical performance from musicians like pianist Jesse Shepard and violinist Florizel von Reuter. The chapter ends with a case study of a Mohawk baritone, Oskenton, who performed at Lily Dale as a musician and spiritual healer.

In this chapter I am interested in the ways that virtuosity fit readily into narratives of mediumistic musicianship. Drawing from scholarship of virtuosity and performance in the early Romantic period, I demonstrate that virtuosity was a useful tool in the séance because it was viewed as a means for transcending the human and complicating notions of what the human body was capable of. Like virtuosity, spirit communication pushed back against what many people thought to be rational or possible. In these settings virtuosity and spirit communication were entangled in a reciprocal relationship in which each drew power from and enhanced the other.

1.6 Conclusion

The significance of this study lies both in its subject, Spiritualism, and the methods of spiritual knowledge production that I emphasize. Specifically, this knowledge production occurred through sound and listening practices that understood the world through a sonic epistemology attuned to the spirit world, what I call Spiritualist acoustemologies. While other moments of mysticism and marginalized spirituality have received ample attention in musicological studies, Spiritualism has often been neglected.⁶⁶ One likely reason for this is that the movement did not

⁶⁶ Theosophy and esotericism, for example, have been popular subjects for musicologists. See Christopher Scheer, “Enchanted Music, Enchanted Modernity: Theosophy, Maud MacCarthy, and John Foulds,” *The Journal of Musicological Research* 37, no. 1 (2018): 5-29; and David Huckvale, *The Occult Arts of Music: An Esoteric Survey from Pythagoras to Pop Culture* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2013); Paul Eli Ivey, *Radiance from Halcyon: A Utopian Experiment in Religion and Science* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Anthony Copley, “Music in the Himalayas: Alexander Scriabin and the Spiritual,” *Studies in History* 26, no. 2 (2010): 211-26.

produce any major art music composers; in contrast, similar movements like Theosophy have been linked to composers such as Ruth Crawford Seeger, Henry Cowell, and Arthur Farwell.⁶⁷ Additionally, Spiritualism was associated with feminized spaces and figures such as the amateur musician, and for much of the nineteenth century relied on contrafacted music rather than original songs. It might appear as an aside or a footnote in a study of a more traditionally musicological subject, but Spiritualist communal music and sound practices have often gone unnoticed in favor of more mainstream Protestant religious music. As this study shows, Spiritualist musical traditions were varied and numerous enough to warrant their own self-contained study, but the nuance of Spiritualists' understandings of spiritual sound and spiritual hearing are also important for understanding the full extent of Spiritualist acoustemologies. This study is primarily about highlighting a musical and listening tradition of nineteenth-century Spiritualism and, more specifically, a particular Spiritualist community in western New York. However, it is also an example of how to approach a musicological and historical sound study of a tradition that has historically (and in the present day) been scoffed at or deemed unworthy of serious, musicological study.

Of course, there are other musicological studies of related topics such as theosophy, mesmerist practices, and other spiritualities segregated from more mainstream religions. Studies of the occult and esoteric knowledge have had to broach this matter by showing how mystical and spiritual secrets have been concealed within musical works or indirectly influenced composers of

⁶⁷ Grove Music Online, "Theosophy," by Deniz Ertan, May 25, 2016. Judith Tick discusses Seeger's involvement with Theosophy and Theosophical communities in Judith Tick, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer's Search for American Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 44-50.

music and song. For Spiritualism, there was not necessarily a secret or hidden mystery. Spirit communication was a natural occurrence that was discoverable through scientific method and investigation. By the twentieth century it was widely believed that a sensitivity to spiritual presence and intuition could be developed through practice and personal study. For many, visits to Spiritualist camps like Lily Dale were the beginning of their own spiritual journey or a way to heal from personal grief.

The following chapters will contribute to a more complete picture of how sound functioned within Spiritualist communities. Sound provided a spiritual mode for understanding the world, imagining the afterlife, and for social and communal organization. From the Fox Sisters through the twentieth century, listening was crucial to participating in and deciphering spirit communications. Audible or inaudible, from an acousmatic or visible source, sound could provide evidence for curious listeners seeking proof of life after death. This dissertation shows the historical and spiritual significance of listening practices and conceptions of sound within Spiritualism. This study provides a model for future musicological projects focusing on non-mainstream, Euro-American religious movements and understandings of listening practices that have historically been rejected as being beyond comprehension in a logical, positivist worldview.

2.0 Lily Dale: A Spiritualist Soundscape

2.1 Introduction

Go to Alden's and arrange for a camp meeting. The voice emanated from an unknown, spiritual source. At first Jeremiah Carter ignored the words that he heard clairaudiently.⁶⁸ Yet, the spirit voice was persistent and continued its imploring tone until Carter could no longer deny the request. After listening to the incessant instructions for perhaps a day—even losing sleep because of it—the man of about 63 years woke in the morning and began a steep, six-mile walk uphill from his home in Laona, New York, to Willard Alden's farm in Cassadaga. At Alden's farm, Carter found himself on the picturesque Cassadaga Lakes that the Laona Spiritualists and other locals had flocked to in previous years for picnics and religious grove meetings. Once he arrived, Carter asked Alden for permission to use the farmer's land for a Spiritualist picnic to be held that summer. The farmer agreed and, returning home, Carter and his fellow Spiritualists commenced organizing the camp that would eventually evolve into the permanent Spiritualist community, Lily Dale.

Carter's visit to Alden's farm in 1877 was a turning point for Spiritualists in western New York looking to strengthen their numbers and solidify their cause. This event, however, was not singular but was preceded by three decades of Spiritualist practice and experimentation in the region. The village of Laona was small, yet diverse in terms of the Christian-inflected religions

⁶⁸ Nagy with LaJudice, 2.

practiced there.⁶⁹ In the early 1840s a travelling mesmerist from Vermont, Dr. Moran, visited the community, demonstrating healing and trance practices. Carter, who suffered from stomach ailments, was away and unable to attend. Upon hearing of Dr. Moran's healing techniques, Carter wished to experience it for himself.⁷⁰ Gathering in a general store, the freethinkers decided to replicate Moran's healing by magnetizing and mesmerizing Carter.⁷¹ Carter proved to be a model subject and eventually entered mesmeric trance independently. While in trance he provided information that he would not have otherwise known, making it "evident that an intelligence other than his own acted upon him."⁷² He was healed and credited his recovery to the experiments.

⁶⁹ See Wendy Straight, ed. "History of Laona and Shumla" reprinted by the *Dunkirk Observer* http://app.chautauquacounty.com/hist_struct/Pomfret/HistoryOfLaonaAndShumla.html In a town of roughly 400 people by 1855, mainstream Christians like Baptists existed alongside small groups of Mormons and Spiritualists. A nondenominational Christian church (sometimes referred to as a Universalist church) was built in 1839 but later abandoned; a congregation of Spiritualist and freethinkers resurrected the building in 1870. For such a small community, a surprising amount of marginal religious practice took place there. Accounts vary slightly as to the year this society purchased their church. The history of Lily Dale as it was published in the Lily Dale newspaper, *The Sunflower*, in 1899 states that the freethinkers purchased an abandoned church in 1875 which had previously been used by Universalists. A later history written in the 1940s claimed the Spiritualists purchased a building previously used by a nondenominational Christian church in 1879. See Nagy, 1.

⁷⁰ Nagy, 1

⁷¹ "'History of Lily Dale" A History of Cassadaga Camp. Compiled by W.H. Bach, Lily Dale, NY and presented as a premium to the patrons of *The Sunflower*," (Lily Dale, NY: *The Sunflower Print*, July 1899).

⁷² Nagy, 1.

Following the initial interest in these first mesmeric experiments, the Religious Society of Free Thinkers was formed in 1850.⁷³ In the 1860s the Spiritualists began holding grove meetings, picnics and other gatherings in nearby farms and fields. The first of what would be years of regular June picnics began in 1873. In 1878, Willard Alden passed away and there was a disagreement between the Spiritualists and the inheritors of Alden's land. As a result, the Spiritualists decided to hold their camp meeting elsewhere. The committee for the Laona Spiritualists, now renamed the Cassadaga Lake Free Association (CLFA), began surveying the surrounding area for land that would be suitable for larger, more permanent camp meetings. A variety of nearby locations were surveyed, but a lakefront piece of land close to Alden's picnic grove was chosen. With a permanent location on the Cassadaga Lakes, the community became a thriving summer resort catering to the middle and upper classes by the beginning of the twentieth century.

Lily Dale's transformation from farmland to Spiritualist summer resort was accompanied by a soundtrack that reflected shifts in residents' understandings of the community and sound's important role in spirit communication. The name was likely chosen because of the abundance of lily pads growing in the nearby lake. Other allusions to the name, however, can also be found. For example, "Lily Dale" or "Lilly Dale" was an 1852 song written by H. S. Thompson that describes a deathbed scene.⁷⁴ Additionally, in the nineteenth century flowers were associated with certain personalities and characteristics. According to Kate Greenaway's *Language of Flowers* (1884), white lilies were associated with purity and sweetness while water lilies represented "purity of

⁷³ Bach.

⁷⁴ H. S. Thompson, "Lilly Dale" (1852) Historic Sheet Music Collection, Digital Commons at Connecticut College. <https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/sheetmusic/838/>.

heart.”⁷⁵ By 1900 the community’s soundscape included a diverse collection of sonic spirit communications, camp entertainments, and “high” and “low” musical performances. Visitors could experience musical séances, hear spirits speak directly to them during private sittings, and listen to vaudeville and classical chamber performances all in the same weekend. The community’s soundscape was representative of a vernacular modernism that was distinctly middlebrow in nature. The joining of high and low forms of entertainment provided context for the sounds, particularly spirit sounds, that were heard there. Importantly, visitors and residents relied on these diverse sound events as a basis for describing and framing spirit communication.

In this chapter, I argue that experience of spiritual sounds at Lily Dale and the language used locally to discuss them were shaped by what I will theorize as a vernacular modernism stemming from their understanding of the land they occupied and forms of popular entertainment they were attuned to, such as vaudeville and minstrelsy.⁷⁶ Though modernism at Lily Dale was in many regards aligned with conceptions of Western modernity as capitalist and Eurocentric, this perspective does not give an accurate view of the community. Lily Dale and the Spiritualists who comprised the community may have exemplified many aspects of modernity, such as a preference for consumer culture and investment in technological innovations, but at the same time they were markedly outside of the societal mainstream. Spiritualists were frequently aligned with liberal political movements such as woman’s rights, socialist frameworks of communal land ownership, and lifestyles like vegetarianism.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Kate Greenaway, *Language of Flowers* (London: Warne, 1884), 27 and 43.

⁷⁶ Mirim Bartu Hansen, “The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism,” *Modernism/modernity* 6, no. 2 (April 1999), 59-72.

⁷⁷ Braude, *Radical Spirits*, especially 76-79, 151.

To better understand how modernity unfolded within Lily Dale, I analyze sonic communal activities as a vernacular modernism. Miriam Bartu Hansen first proposed the term as a way of understanding Hollywood film as a universal media format, and since then this model of modernism has been applied to a variety of cultural practices, from literary studies to radio.⁷⁸ Hansen describes vernacular modernism as an alternative modernism that combined the aesthetics, form, and reproductive processes of modernism with vernacular, quotidian content. Essentially, “lowbrow” and “highbrow” culture and practices were combined to mass-produce something that was particularly American.⁷⁹

Regarding Spiritualism at Lily Dale, I understand vernacular modernism to have been present in several ways, particularly in instances of spirit communication. Séances relied on aspects of vernacular culture such as vaudeville and theatre to provide a sonic vocabulary for spirit communications. In turn, sitters used these performances and everyday technologies as references when describing what they heard and experienced at Lily Dale. Popular cultures of the stage were combined with spiritually elevated practices of mediumship and ethereal communications to create a distinctly American tradition, the Spiritualist camp meeting.

Lily Dale’s vernacular modernism was created in opposition to a settler imaginary: namely, the supposed primitivism of Native American nations and the trope of the “vanishing Indian.”⁸⁰

⁷⁸ See Kate Lacey, “Radio’s Vernacular Modernism: The Schedule as Modernist Text,” *Media History* 24, no. 2 (2018): 166-79; and Brooks E. Hefner, *The Word of the Streets: The American Language of Vernacular Modernism* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2017).

⁷⁹ American in this context refers to a culture centered on life in the United States.

⁸⁰ I refer to Native American populations as Native American when referring to their relationship to the United States as a nation. I use the term “Indigenous” when referencing a relationship to and/or settlement of land.

The “vanishing Indian” trope and a related one framing Native Americans as primitive and unsuitable for modernity were both common in settler discourse during the nineteenth century. As I show, the modernist identity that mostly Euro-American Spiritualists developed for themselves was closely linked to their understanding of the land they inhabited, land that they understood to be haunted by the spirits of Indigenous peoples whose removal had been necessary to facilitate the Spiritualists’ settlement. These “Indian spirits” were frequent visitors at Lily Dale séances.

My understanding of the Indigenous hauntings that followed Spiritualists at Lily Dale is framed primarily by two texts: Philip Deloria’s *Playing Indian* and Renée Bergland’s *The National Uncanny*. In *Playing Indian*, Deloria is concerned with understanding the formation of a specifically American settler identity in relation to Native Americans. Beginning with the American Revolutionary period and extending to the New Age movement of the late twentieth century, Deloria argues that non-Indigenous Americans, primarily white men, have used the disguise of “Indianness” to create a new identity that expressed their position as both separate from Great Britain and apart from North American indigeneity. Put another way, performing an imagined version of “Indianness” allowed settler Americans to navigate their liminal position as both of and apart from the national boundaries of the United States. The act of playing Indian worked by aligning non-Indigenous Americans with notions of “Indianness” while simultaneously

When speaking of a specific Indigenous person or culture, I use the nation or tribal naming. I occasionally use the term “Indian” in alignment with Spiritualist discourses, specifically in reference to “Indian spirits.” I do this to acknowledge that these “Indian spirits” were constructions of the Euro-American imagination rather than being representative of Indigenous peoples or culture. Alternatively, I use “Indianist” to refer to non-Native settler constructions and representations of Native Americans, such as the term is applied to Indianist composition (i.e., Native American themes arranged using European art music harmonies and conventions).

reaffirming their distance from it.⁸¹ At the same time, the act of donning an Indian disguise was complicated by actual Indigenous Americans who performed the role of a stereotypical Native identity for a variety of reasons, as was the case at Lily Dale in the twentieth century.

Like Deloria, Bergland analyzes the ways the imagery associated with Native Americans was used in creation of an American nationalism. More specifically, Bergland relies on instances of Native American ghosts and hauntings in literature. Bergland argues that modern American nationalism is dependent upon the repression of Native Americans, either through genocide or assimilation.⁸² Attempts to repress Native Americans in these ways correlated to hauntings and the appearance of “Indian” ghosts, specters who “cannot be buried or evaded.”⁸³ Furthermore, the ghosts that plague American nationalism are directly tied to haunted grounds, because the land was stolen away from its former Native residents.⁸⁴ According to Bergland, these “ghosts are sometimes as much desired as they are feared.”⁸⁵ This thinking is reflected in a variety of historical, literary, and popular cultures. For example, Tiya Miles writes of historical ghost tours or “dark tourism” in the American South and how guides often focus specifically on the ghosts of enslaved African Americans who haunt plantations and slave quarters.⁸⁶ The Southern gothic literary

⁸¹ Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 7.

⁸² Bergland, *The National Uncanny*, 4.

⁸³ Bergland, 5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁶ Tiya Miles, *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015). For an analysis of Black absence and representation in

tradition and the hauntings it contains have also been analyzed as a response to legacies of chattel slavery in the South.⁸⁷

Settlers' desires to interact with Native American ghosts was certainly present at Lily Dale and in Spiritualism broadly. In fact, so-called Indian spirits frequently appeared in séances and during spirit communications. As with Bergland's claim that settler experiences of haunting were based on the stolen status of the land, I find that a similar rhetoric of Indigenous hauntings, in response to Euro-settler occupation of Native lands, surrounded Lily Dale and its Spiritualist activities. This manifested, for example, in instances of mediums being spontaneously possessed by the spirits of Native Americans who had been killed on the land.

In this chapter, the arguments outlined by Deloria and Bergland are useful for understanding how Lily Dale Spiritualists used "Indianist" spirits to construct a modern identity. In terms of an alternative, vernacular modernism, Spiritualists incorporated popular representations of Native Americans into séance performances and spirit communications. Indianist spirits were used in the construction of modern identity. They offered an example of "primitiveness" that stood as a foil to Spiritualists' familiar world of mass consumption, entertainment, and technology. Indianist spirits appeared at séances, trance lectures, mediumship classes, and spontaneously in the form of dance possession. Importantly, Native Americans also appeared in the flesh as performers, healers, and spiritual guides.

historic tours of plantations, see B. Y. Calvente and Guadalupe García, "A Haunting Presence: Archiving Black Absence and Racialized Mappings in Louisiana Plantation Sites," *Cultural Studies* (2020), 1-20.

⁸⁷ See Susan Castillo Street and Charles L. Crow, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of the Southern Gothic* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); and Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

Additionally, Indianist spirits were sonically represented by performances borrowed from Indianist music culture, particularly those performed in vaudeville and Wild West shows.⁸⁸ Indianist spirits were discussed in similar terms, with audiences hearing these spirit sounds in a context of popular entertainment. Indianist music was composed by non-Native American and European composers who arranged Native themes and melodies using western art music conventions. Indianist music and song production were especially prevalent from 1890 to 1920.⁸⁹ As Tara Browner (Choctaw) explains, the process of transitioning a song from communal or tribal ownership to the stage took place over several steps.⁹⁰ It usually began when an ethnographer, along with a Native collaborator, recorded the songs of a Native singer. The song would then be adapted to the piano and Western harmonization, although the song's tuning and scale system usually did not fit readily into the Western system. As Browner concludes, "...by the time a song setting was performed publicly, it often bore relatively little resemblance to its original incarnation other than the general shape of the melody, and had often picked up a series of generic 'Indian'-

⁸⁸ See Michael Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), especially 243-92; and Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004). Pisani gives a detailed account of the performance settings in which Indianist themes were used and specific compositional devices used when writing Indianist music. Deloria's book analyzes cultural representations of "Indianness" as portrayed by Native Americans. This book includes an essay focused on Native Americans' portrayals of Indianness in Wild West shows and Hollywood film.

⁸⁹ Tara Browner, "Transposing Cultures: The Appropriation of Native North American Musics, 1890-1990" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1995), 8.

⁹⁰ Browner, "Native Songs, Indianist Styles, and the Processes of Music Idealization," in *Opera Indigene: Re/presenting First Nations and Indigenous Cultures*, eds. Pamela Karantonis and Dylan Robinson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 173.

sounding musical traits along the journey.”⁹¹ As John Troutman has pointed out, while Indianist music was being performed for primarily white audiences, the Dawes Act discouraged Native musicians from performing Native music.⁹²

Moments of spirit communication took place in a culture deeply attuned to the performance and staging of minstrelsy and blackface. Minstrelsy made its presence known at Lily Dale in the expected ways—such as the performance of vaudeville and minstrel shows—and in some unexpected ways, like the blackface minstrel George Christy (1827-1868) returning from the grave to become a spirit guide. The language and performance of minstrelsy and popular staged performances were also present in the mediums’ performance of spirit communication and in the séance. Here, I am interested in the ways that mediums performed difference (be it ethnic, racial, gendered) in their communication as well as how visitors compared their séance experiences to popular stage performances and technologies. Importantly, how listeners heard these sounds and the subsequent assumptions of spirit identity they made tell us more about the listeners than the voice itself. To understand the spirit identifications made by listeners based on sound, I incorporate Nina Eidsheim’s listener-centered framework for hearing race in vocal timbre.

At Lily Dale visitors and residents heard sounds that stood in stark contrast to each other, creating sonic tension and pointing to the major political issues of the period. The sounds of an increasing presence of industrialization and modernization were offset by sounds of the land, preserved by an old-growth forest reserve and settler mythologies of an Indigenous past. The

⁹¹ Browner, “Native Songs, Indianist Styles, and the Process of Music Idealization,” 173.

⁹² John Troutman, *Indian Blues: American Indians and the Politics of Music 1879-1834* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 7-8. Troutman explains that Native children were sent to residential schools where they were taught Euro-American music.

Spiritualists' presence on the land and their ability to hear their natural surroundings mingled with an awareness of the Indigenous peoples who had previously inhabited that specific tract of land—who still lived communally and individually in western New York—and the Indianist spirits who remained.⁹³ As this chapter will demonstrate, this awareness haunted their listening, spirit communications, and spiritual practices.

2.2 Vernacular Modernism at Lily Dale

Lily Dale was designed as a spiritual retreat for Spiritualists and non-Spiritualists alike to gather and explore spirit communications. The camp's schedule of events and attention to visitors' needs meant that even the most discerning attendees would likely be satisfied with what they experienced there. Variety was a strong element of season programs. Attendees visited Lily Dale to hear lectures given by well-known Spiritualists, sometimes as trance lectures in which the medium relayed a speech given by a spirit. They also came to witness evidence of spiritual presence and mediumship. Mediums of all styles and expertise could be found at Lily Dale, including slate-writing mediums, trance mediums, musical mediums, manifesting mediums, spirit trumpet mediums, and portrait mediums. The activities offered, however, were not strictly of a

⁹³ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 83. For example, Euro Americans like Lewis Henry Morgan in western New York during the mid-nineteenth century were grounded in the myth of the vanished Indian and a belief that Native Americans no longer lived in a European, modernist present. Believing Native Americans to be completely removed from his geographical and temporal space, Morgan's worldview was thrown into question when he met a "real" living Native American, Ely S. Parker (Seneca).

spiritual nature. The camp space teemed with popular culture and attractions such as vaudeville performances, evening social dances, and even a Ferris wheel.

The people who chose to visit Lily Dale were typically at least middle class with disposable income, able to provide payment for entrance to the community, their stay, travel, and for the mediums' services. According to Lewis, in the 1910s a sitting with a medium could cost between one and three dollars. A description provided by the novelist Sinclair Lewis from his 1919 visit provides a glimpse of Lily Dale attendees. He points to their moral, upright characters and evidence of hardworking nature, traits tied up with middle-class whiteness and capitalist industry:

Scores of men and women I saw reminded me of the "pillars" of churches in the small towns I know. I can see them at Wednesday prayer-meetings, W.C.T.U. 's, at chicken suppers, or donation parties for the pastor. The older women—"Mothers in Zion" they used to be called—large, dignified, wrinkled: wearing muslin or, on Sunday, the "best silk dress," with a big brown and white cameo at the throat, and a tiny frill. A few are like the small-town club-woman—alert, intensely respectable, wearing on the bosoms of their white blouses that eye-glass-hook which is a badge of Chautauqua culture. The older men are often bearded, the backs of their hands brown as strong cigars from sixty years of work in the fields; Civil War veterans, many of them, wearing G.A.R. button and in one case, the blue coat with brass buttons.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Sinclair Lewis, "Spiritualist Vaudeville," *The Washington Post* (Washington, DC), Oct. 12, 1919, 64.

Lewis provides an incredible amount of detail in this paragraph. He immediately relies on the imagery of white Protestantism. The women are moral citizens who, it is implied, do not work and thus have the time to dedicate themselves to religious organizations like the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Lewis also points to Chautauqua culture, the practice of education and entertainment that typically emphasized natural settings. I will discuss this in more detail shortly. Though dressed well with frills and stately jewelry pieces, the women Lewis describes are serious and even somewhat dour. His reference to clubwomen points to an association between Spiritualists and the middle- and upper-class women who were associated with reform movements and social and civic uplift. The men, on the other hand, are imbued with a touch of American masculinity, their hands bronzed during long hours of labor outdoors, wearing the uniforms that designated their participation in the Civil War.

By the beginning of the twentieth century Lily Dale was known as the most "aristocratic" Spiritualist camp in the United States.⁹⁵ The camp catered to the well-to-do classes who fled cities and urban areas during the hot summer months for reprieve in the country. In their attempts to incorporate the latest technologies and conveniences to attract middle-class clientele, Lily Dale was inextricably tied to modernity. Modernity at Lily Dale was linked to a notion of a progressive ethics that would improve the workings of capitalism. There was a general belief, especially among the liberal-minded, that the world's ills could be corrected through the spiritual enlightenment obtained through Spiritualism as well as the social-uplift programs and movements supported by

⁹⁵ Hereward Carrington, "Ingenious Frauds at Lily Dale Séances: Psychical Research Society Investigates Reported Marvels at Famous Spiritist Stronghold and Exposes Fraudulent Methods of Mediums," *New York Times* (New York), Mar. 5, 1908.

many Lily Dale Spiritualists, like temperance and woman's suffrage. Progressive agendas like these, often implemented by middle- and upper-class women, imagined that a white maternal presence could guide the nation to a more civilized (white and Protestant) future.

Lily Dale's programming featured events that catered to these clubwomen. A Woman's Day and suffrage convention became annual events at the summer camp, attracting well-known suffragists like Susan B. Anthony and Reverend Anna Shaw as lecturers. Temperance, the movement to stop the consumption of alcohol and domestic violence associated with it, was a popular topic of discussion. Here, calls for social reform mixed freely with temperance song.⁹⁶ On Thursday evenings Lily Dale's Ladies' Auxiliary hosted a bazaar in the auditorium where items "both fancy and useful" were bought and sold.⁹⁷ As visitors bartered with the women's auxiliary for new trinkets, mediums gave brief readings from the stage and sat at tables for interested patrons.

The musical culture at the camp was varied and plentiful, with a variety of European classical forms and popular staged performances. The season program for 1913 advertised a school of folk and social dances, and musical entertainment to be provided by the Lily Dale band. A school of vocal music, taught by a Professor W. J. Sheehan, was also available to visitors. Dances were held several times a week, and open-air band concerts could be heard throughout the day. In the way of staged entertainment, evening performances included minstrel shows, vaudeville-style stage shows, and chamber recitals. A small instrumental ensemble or band was kept in residence

⁹⁶ Many temperance songs and lyrics can be found throughout the Marion Skidmore Library, which features a strong collection of songbooks and hymnals donated by Lily Dale residents. A core collection of temperance songs can also be found at the Frances Willard House Museum and Archives in Evanston, IL.

⁹⁷ "Lily Dale Assembly Official Program, July 7th to August 27th, 1922," (Lily Dale, NY), 9.

throughout the season, starting from 1881 onward.⁹⁸ Despite its rural landscape, Lily Dale was sure to provide her visitors with current entertainment and musical instruction.

While Lily Dale catered to the white middle and upper classes, Spiritualism was still located on the peripheries of religious and spiritual life in the United States when compared to the mainstream Protestant denominations (Baptist and Methodist, for example) to which the class of people who attended Lily Dale might otherwise belong. Many non-Spiritualists thought mediumship was a device used by tricksters and regarded those who sought spirit communications as fools. The novelist Sinclair Lewis described the people he came across in a similar light during his 1919 visit to Lily Dale, although he was surprised that the camp was “not a movement of the long haired, of the cranks and sensationalists.”⁹⁹ Instead, Lewis depicted the people as sensible, respectable—the “solid people of the small towns and farms and suburbs and city uptown streets, who do the world’s work.”

As mentioned earlier, Hansen’s vernacular modernism can be useful for understanding how aspects of popular culture were combined with the religious and spiritual ideas espoused by Spiritualists. Hansen argues that vernacular modernism was constituted by mass-produced and consumed cultural practices that mediated the experience of modernity.¹⁰⁰ According to Hansen, vernacular modernism can describe media’s “ability to provide...an at once aesthetic and public horizon for the experience of capitalist-industrial modernity and modernization.”¹⁰¹ Hansen uses

⁹⁸ Nagy, 131.

⁹⁹ Lewis.

¹⁰⁰ Hansen, 60.

¹⁰¹ Hansen, “Vernacular Modernism: Tracking Cinema on a Global Scale,” in *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, eds. Nataša Ďurovičová and Kathleen Newman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 294.

the term “vernacular” because it refers to quotidian practice and was used throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a way to “reclaim ‘the popular’ as a socially and politically progressive force as much against ‘elitist’ intellectuals as against capitalist universalization.”¹⁰² The reason the vernacular culture of American cinema was successful, Hansen argues, was because it created an alternative public space and opened viewers to new sensory cultures.¹⁰³ An essential aspect of the modern vernacularism is that cultural practices can make experiences of and responses to modernity “sensually graspable.”¹⁰⁴

The primary way I see vernacular modernism unfolding in Lily Dale is through the process of spirit communication, where the act of speaking with spirits was combined with forms of popular entertainment. Communing with spirit was one way to experience modernity in a sensually affective way. As the song “The Electric Age” demonstrates in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, understandings of Spiritualism and spirit communication unfolded concurrently with new technologies like the telegraph, steam engine, and telephone. Speaking with spirits in much the same way someone might communicate with another person over telegraph wire or telephone line provided an alternative setting for experiencing new innovative forms. In the case of Lily Dale, it was in the parlor rather than the telegraph office. The séance gave practitioners a space to interact with technologies of modernity, to experiment with them, and to respond. Not only was spirit communication vernacular in Hansen’s first sense of the word—an everyday, mundane

¹⁰² Hansen, “The Mass Production of the Senses,” 62; and Hansen, “Vernacular Modernism,” 296.

¹⁰³ Hansen, “The Mass Production of the Senses,” 70-71.

¹⁰⁴ Hansen, “Vernacular Modernism,” 294.

experience for many practitioners—but it also employed vernacular forms of music and culture to make communications and descriptions of communications legible.

Contacting spirits and entering trance were certainly not new, but nineteenth-century Spiritualism repackaged these communications into something that was more accessible to women who were not able to participate in the public sphere and individuals who were accustomed to evangelical spirituality. Spiritualism was socially flexible, at home in domestic spaces among women or on stage in front of public audiences. Despite the seriousness of devoted practitioners, the practice also often lent itself to productions of staged entertainment, such as public, on-stage séance performances. At Lily Dale, an old and elevated notion of spiritual communication was channeled through techniques borrowed from mass consumption: namely, the sonic landscape of cultural practices such as vaudeville, the popular stage, and radio. By this, I mean that both mediums and sitters heard spirit communications in a cultural context marked by these popular entertainments and in turn framed their experiences against these practices. Referencing familiar forms of technology and entertainment made the sounds they heard in séance settings legible to a society accustomed to these practices.

A prime example of how spirit communications were framed in terms of popular entertainment and technology can be found in a séance Lewis attended at Lily Dale. During his visit, Lewis scheduled several sessions with mediums Pierre Keeler and John Slater. Lewis described Slater in theatrical terms as the “Billy Sunday, the Charlie Chaplin, the William J. Bryan of Lily Dale.”¹⁰⁵ According to Lewis, at one time Keeler had been the most popular medium at Lily Dale but had been replaced by Slater because “spiritualistic fashions are changing. The pure

¹⁰⁵ Lewis.

and high-minded mediumship of the purely verbal sort seems to be more in favor than Mr. Keeler's slate-writing and bell-ringing entertainments."¹⁰⁶ Keeler's séances featured spirit music and floating musical instruments and, in a match made in heaven, Keeler's performative style of mediumship was supported by his spirit guide, George Christy. Christy was the spirit of the blackface minstrel and former member of Christy's Minstrels.

During the séance Lewis attended, bells were heard from behind the curtain where the medium sat, followed by the sounds of a guitar, tambourine, and drum. Séance attendees were invited to peer over the curtain to see the musician-less, animated guitar for themselves. According to Lewis, "It was darkish in the corner, yet light enough to see that the guitar was indeed playing by spirit hands—or by a music box or electricity."¹⁰⁷ The audience heard a guitar being played but did not see a performer. Though Lewis did not testify to where the sound was coming from in relation to the guitar, he points to the possibility of technology, implying the use of a sound recording.

This episode of disembodied sound is reminiscent of Enlightenment traditions of ventriloquism. Leigh Schmidt explains that while disembodied sounds had been attributed to oracular religious experiences, during the Enlightenment stage performances of ventriloquism offered audiences a "form of rational entertainment" that unveiled the audible illusions that made oracular voices possible.¹⁰⁸ Ventriloquists demonstrated that disembodied voices were not the work of witchcraft or the devil but could be understood in terms of vocal manipulation and

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Schmidt, *Hearing Things*, 136.

deception.¹⁰⁹ In the case of Keeler's musical séance and others like it, we have a reversal of Enlightenment-era rational entertainment. Rather than illuminating how disembodied sound could be rationally explained through vocal or mechanical technologies, Keeler relies on attendees' desire to accept the enchanted sounds at face value without further question.¹¹⁰

Following the guitar demonstration, the lights were lowered by a spirit hand that emerged from the ceiling. From behind the curtain the sound of a pencil on paper was heard, presumably made by spirit hands. The writings were messages written to some members of the séance. Lewis explicitly described the scene as a vaudeville, likely due to the theatrics he witnessed. Sitters cried out at the sight of glowing spirit hands, a woman fainted, and voices were heard much to the astonishment of many sitters:

The voices came now; people were called for, by name. Timorously approaching the curtain, in the low light they heard what they declared to be the actual voices of the dead, though all the voices sounded metallic, ventriloquistic, like one of the early phonographs.

As he does when describing the sound of the guitar played by spirit hands, Lewis once again references recording technology. In this case Lewis compares the spirit voices to the sounds of a phonograph because they sounded "metallic" and "ventriloquistic." Consider the supposed

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Steven Connor discusses the correlation between "the disembodied and the re-embodied, the phantasmal and the mechanical" within Victorian cultures of the supernatural and scientific technology. Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 362-63.

“metallic” and ventriloquist-like qualities these voices might have had. Rather than conjuring technology, other sitters in the room that evening may have imagined the distorted quality of the voices to be representative of the distance the spirit voices had to cross between the spiritual and earthly planes. This would not be an unusual description or conclusion and was in fact a common assumption made by Spiritualists at this time. While independent spirit voices—voices that were produced independently of the medium’s vocal mechanism—could sound extremely clear as if emanating from a material body, audible spirit voices were often described as being muffled, weak, or distant.¹¹¹

Lewis’s allusion to sound reproduction again connects the sensorial experience of the séance to modern technology. It also points to the fascination contemporaries had with recording technology’s ability to preserve the voices of the dead. As Jonathan Sterne has explained, recorded technology emerged during the late nineteenth century, when Americans were already familiar with processes of preservation whether it be food or human corpses.¹¹² The advent of such technology and the new avenues it opened made the possibility of conversing with the dead seem scientifically and technologically sound. It reasoned that “if sound reproduction simply stratifies vibration in new ways, if we learn to ‘hear’ other areas of the vibrating world, then it would only make sense that we might pick up the voices of the dead.”¹¹³ Thus, Lewis’s association with hearing the supposed voices of the dead and hearing an early phonograph recording had a basis in

¹¹¹ A similar phenomena was described at Lily Dale by May Wright Sewall, *Neither Dead Nor Sleeping* (Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1920), 109.

¹¹² Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 290-1.

¹¹³ Sterne, 289.

a widely held cultural conception, even if his comparison was meant to bring the spirit voices under scrutiny.

Lewis' comparison of Keeler's séance to a vaudeville was supported by the variety of entertainments that sitters witnessed. Music was produced through several instruments associated with domestic and popular settings, like the guitar and tambourine. It was surely not by accident that Keeler's spirit guide should be the blackface minstrel George Christy. Aside from solidifying the medium's indebtedness to the stage and an actor's stagecraft, Christy the spirit also directly connected the séance and Lily Dale visitors to the repertoire and vocabulary of racial pantomime. Christy's attachment to Lily Dale may have also had to do with his connection to nearby Buffalo and Palmyra, New York as well as his fame as the most well-known "interlocutor" of the minstrel stage, the middleman who communicated with the endmen at both sides of the line.¹¹⁴

As I mentioned above, popular forms of entertainment like vaudeville and minstrelsy were commonly seen at Lily Dale during the summer months. Camp programs show that traveling vaudeville acts visited the camp. In 1926, for example, Melville and Stetson Juniors, a vaudeville team who performed on the Keith-Albee circuit, gave an evening of entertainment.¹¹⁵ It is not clear what their performance entailed, but the managers working on the Keith-Albee circuit were extremely conscientious of maintaining respectability in their acts, requiring women performers

¹¹⁴ Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 144.

¹¹⁵ "Keith-Albee Circuit," *The Vaudeville News and New York Star* 13, no. 15 (New York), Oct. 8, 1926, 9.

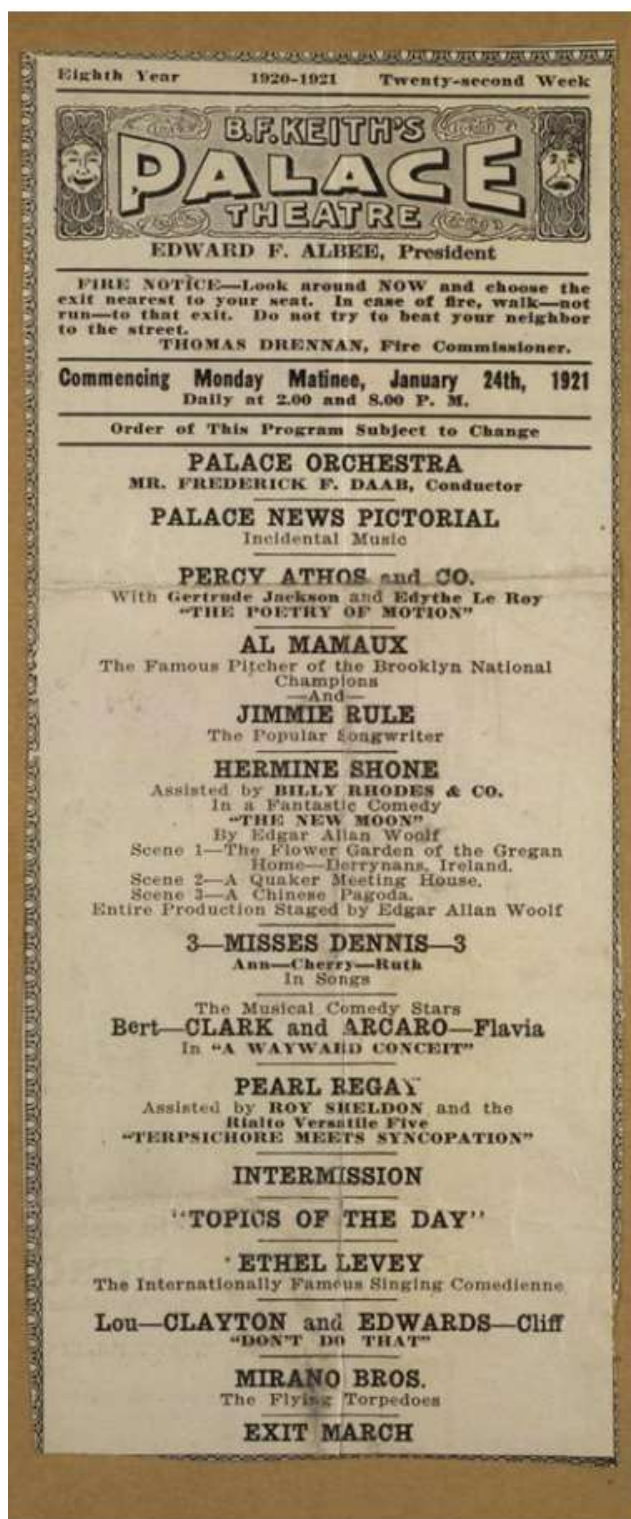


Figure 5: Program from the Palace Theatre, New York, January 24, 1921. Reproduction. Oscar Hammerstein

II Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress.

EVENING ENTERTAINMENTS	
JULY	
Fri. 5 'Treasure' Reception to Residents and Visitors	Sat. 17 Assembly Dance
Sat. 5 Assembly Dance	Sun. 18 Seance by John Slater
Fri. 6 Seance by John Slater	Mon. 19 Entertainment by John Hughes
Mon. 8 Ladies' Auxiliary Bazaar and Card Party	Tues. 20 Contest by Old Time Fiddlers
Tues. 9 A Demonstration in Neurology By John W. Amerys	Wed. 21 Assembly Dance
Wed. 7 Assembly Dance	Thurs. 22 Medicine Night
Thurs. 8 Entertainment By John Slater and Chas. Slater	Fri. 23 Entertainment by Barney O'Connor's Band
Fri. 9 James Whitcomb Riley Recital By Will J. Howard	Sat. 24 Assembly Dance
Sat. 10 Assembly Dance	Sun. 25 Seance by John Van Buren
Sun. 11 Seance by John Slater	Mon. 26 Ladies' Auxiliary Bazaar and Card Party
Mon. 12 Ladies' Auxiliary Bazaar and Card Party	Tues. 27 Entertainment By Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Melton Tyndall
Tues. 13 Special Entertainment	Wed. 28 Assembly Dance
Wed. 14 Assembly Dance	Thurs. 29 Entertainment By Melville and Marion Jones
Thurs. 15 Entertainment—Lycium Fiddlers	Fri. 30 Indian Entertainment
Fri. 16 Entertainment by Mrs. Margaret Wamsley	Sat. 31 Assembly Dance

Thought Exchange Every Wednesday and Saturday Evenings at 8 in Assembly Hall

Figure 6: Lily Dale Assembly Official Program, season of 1926, July schedule of events

EVENING ENTERTAINMENTS	
AUGUST	
Sun. 1 Seance by John Slater	Mon. 14 Ladies' Auxiliary Bazaar and Card Party
Mon. 2 Ladies' Auxiliary Bazaar and Card Party	Tues. 15 Entertainment Chiquilla, Our Indian Princess
Tues. 3 Raggy Wain's Minstrels	Wed. 16 Assembly Dance
Wed. 4 Assembly Dance	Thurs. 17 A Story—By Mrs. Ida Berney Judd "Gedilla De Noe"—Lange Falcoer "Love Never Felleth"—1 act, 12 chap.
Thurs. 5 Entertainment By Dr. C. A. Burgess and His Class	Fri. 18 Masquerade Ball
Fri. 6 Entertainment By Lorraine Stegner and Children	Sat. 19 Assembly Dance
Sat. 7 Assembly Dance	Sun. 20 Seance by John Slater
Sun. 8 Seance by Alfred E. Terry	Mon. 21 Seance by Elizabeth R. Courtney
Mon. 9 Ladies' Auxiliary Bazaar and Card Party	Tues. 22 Style Show of 1900 Years Ago By Ninette B. Paul
Tues. 10 Benefit Dance for Library	Wed. 23 Assembly Dance
Wed. 11 Assembly Dance	Thurs. 24 Benefit Dance for Fire Department
Thurs. 12 Entertainment By Melville and Marion Jones	Fri. 25 Special Entertainment
Fri. 13 Children's Fancy Dress Ball	Sat. 26 Assembly Dance
Sat. 14 Assembly Dance	Sun. 27 Seance
Sun. 15 Seance by John Slater	

Figure 7: Lily Dale Assembly Official Program, season of 1926, August schedule of events

to wear relatively modest clothing and cutting inappropriate language from dialogues.¹¹⁶ The founder of the Keith-Albee circuit, Benjamin Franklin Keith, aimed to create a form of entertainment that would be affordable to working-class people but also redolent of a “high-class” environment.¹¹⁷ A program for a vaudeville show in 1921 at Keith’s Palace Theatre in New York City gives an example of what these performances entailed (Figure 5). The program features a variety of acts, from theatrical performances to acrobatics and especially vocal and instrumental musical numbers.

In addition to the performances given by professional vaudeville acts, Lily Dale residents and mediums hosted their own vaudeville and minstrel performances. One such performance was given by medium Maggie Waite and her “Minstrels” on August 3rd, 1926 (Figures 6 and 7). Other types of entertainment listed for that year included séances, a contest by “Old Time Fiddlers,” “Indian Entertainment,” and performances given by the children at Lily Dale. “Indian Entertainment” may have referred to medium C. A. Burgess’s “Indian show” or performances given by baritone Oskenton (Mohawk) and lecturer Princess Chinquilla (Cheyenne). Like Maggie Waite’s minstrel show was likely a blackface-inflected portrayal of Blackness, a stereotypical depiction of Native Americanness was performed at Lily Dale by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous performers.

¹¹⁶ M. Alison Kibler, “The Keith/Albee Collection: The Vaudeville Industry, 1894—1935,” *Books at Iowa* no 56 (1992), 13. See also M. Alison Kibler, *Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

¹¹⁷ Michael Slowik, “Documents of Performance: Keith-Albee Managers’ Reports,” *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 39, no 2 (Winter 2012), 93.

Oskenton and Princess Chinquilla (Mary Newell) gave performances at Lily Dale for a number of years in the first few decades of the twentieth century. As Philip Deloria points out, “playing Indian” was not an act reserved for non-Native Americans but was sometimes employed by Native Americans for a variety of reasons, including financial gain and empowerment.¹¹⁸ The personas that Oskenton and Chinquilla developed and performed at Lily Dale seem to fit Deloria’s framework, and they resembled those performed on vaudeville and Chautauqua circuits.¹¹⁹ Oskenton’s career was based on his performance of traditional Native American songs and Europeanized arrangements of Indigenous melodies. He usually sang in a stereotypical “Indian” costume and frequently pitched a teepee onstage when space allowed. Chinquilla toured with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show as a young woman and eventually formed her own vaudeville team with her business partner and second husband, Abraham Bliss Newell.¹²⁰

The circuit Chautauquas, inspired by the Chautauqua Institution near Lily Dale (known as the “Mother Chautauqua”), were travelling “carnivals of culture” that included educational

¹¹⁸ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 8 and 144-47.

¹¹⁹ Tara Browner describes the use of Native and Indianist themes in Wild West shows and traveling medicine shows, specifically those that inspired Antonin Dvořák during his visit to the United States. See Browner, ““Breathing the Indian Spirit: Thoughts on Musical Borrowing and the “Indianist” Movement in American Music,” *American Music* 15, no. 3 (Autumn, 1997): 271-73; and Browner, *Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

¹²⁰ Douglas K. Miller, “Reservation Limits: American Indian Urbanization and Uplift in the Twentieth Century” (PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, 2014), 57.

lectures and a variety of entertainment such as music.¹²¹ These travelling shows typically featured Native American performers, white performers who played Indian, or performers whose identities were deliberately obscured or put into question. For example, the Onondaga Indian Concert Band, known as “the only real professional Indian band in the world,” performed classical western music, music on American and Native American themes, and art music transcriptions.¹²² In addition to their program, the band members dressed in “traditional Native American clothing,” which may or may not have been costumes meant to evoke Indianness rather than being clothing specific to the group’s Onondaga identity.¹²³

Lily Dale musician Oskenton regularly gave recitals featuring Indianist idealizations of song, classical European concert staples, and Native songs from numerous tribes across North America. Many of the compositions Oskenton performed were idealizations arranged by composers associated with the Indianist movement such as Charles Wakefield Cadman, Arthur Farwell, and Carlos Troyer.¹²⁴ Princess Chinquilla promoted herself as an “Indian princess,” a common persona for women singers and speakers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries to

¹²¹ Paige Lush, “The All American Other: Native American Music and Musicians on the Circuit Chautauqua,” *Americana* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2008); and Lush, *Music in the Chautauqua Movement: From 1874 to the 1930s* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2013).

¹²² Lush, “The All American Other.”

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ These programs began with a number of idealizations of Indian songs including Cadman’s “Far Off I Hear a Lover’s Flute,” Farwell’s “Song of the Deathless Voice,” and Thurlow Lieurance’s “By the Water’s of Minnetonka.” These compositions are parlor songs with lyrics that allude to Indian themes and musical devices meant to evoke Indianness musically, such as an ascending octave vocalise.

perform.¹²⁵ Chinquilla performed with Oskenton at Lily Dale on July 20th, 1917.¹²⁶ The program alternated between works of poetry spoken by Chinquilla and songs performed by Oskenton. Chinquilla also sang at least two songs in the second half of the program and the recital ended with both singing a duet titled “Indian Wife’s Appeal.” Chinquilla recited several poems by the First Nation writer, Emily Pauline Johnson, including “Ojistoh” and “Pilot of the Plains” (Yakonwita). She performed a parody of Longfellow’s *The Song of Hiawatha*, “Modern Hiawatha,” and a speech written by the Seneca orator Red Jacket. Oskenton’s songs are listed by song title and accompanying translation. The songs are not attributed to any composers or arrangers, so it is likely that he performed Indigenous folk songs, though the songs’ tribal origins were not listed. This culture of “Indianness” as entertainment provided a backdrop for the “Indian” spirits that sitters experienced in séances. While allusion to radio and vaudeville placed Lily Dale within a framework of modernism, these performances of “Indianness” served a similar function, though using different means. In the following section I will build upon Deloria’s concept of “playing Indian” to explain how performing a Native American identity in and outside of the séance contributed to the development of a modern, Spiritualist identity.

¹²⁵ K. Tsianina Lomawaima, “A Principle of Relativity through Indigenous Biography,” *Biography* 39, no. 3 (Summer 2016): 258. For more information about Princess Chinquilla, see “The Housekeeper at Large: The People She Meets,” *Good Housekeeping* 35, no. 3 (Mar. 1902), 925. “From the Mimic World of Plays and Players,” *The National Police Gazette* 84, no. 1391 (April 9, 1904), 2. See also Miller, “Reservation Limits,” 57.

¹²⁶ “Oskenton and Princess Chinquilla in a Genuine Indian Program,” program in Oskenton scrapbook. Marion Skidmore Library, Lily Dale, NY.

2.3 The Non-modern of the Indianist Spirit

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Spiritualists at Lily Dale developed a modern identity by crafting a community around middle-class whiteness, consumer culture, and aspects of vernacular modernism. This modernism manifested sonically at Lily Dale in the way spirits communicated with séance sitters as well as in the sonic framework that sitters drew on in representing séance experiences. It is important to note that many of the spirits that mostly white Spiritualists communicated with at Lily Dale were unmarked as white. By white, I refer to a group of people who were primarily of Protestant and Western European heritage. This was partly because those who communicated with the living from beyond the earthly veil were often the spirits of intimate acquaintances of sitters such as spouses, parents, children, or friends, and in a racially segregated society that meant they were often, though not always, implicitly white-identified. However, one of the most common types of spirit to visit séance circles and mediumistic demonstrations, in Lily Dale as elsewhere in the Northeast, was the “Indian spirit.”

As Deloria explains, temporarily putting on the disguise of a stereotypical Native American had the liberating effects of the carnivalesque. While a disguise calls into question the idea of a fixed identity, wearing a mask also solidifies the “true” identity of the person underneath the mask.¹²⁷ Alternatively, Deloria argues that during the turn of the twentieth century, roughly a period from 1880 to 1920, playing Indian helped formulate a new modern identity for white Americans in the face of anxieties over “late nineteenth-century urban industrial capitalism.”¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 7.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

To combat the fear that individual American identity was being erased and swallowed by the mechanizations of modernity, playing Indian returned white Americans to an imaginary “premodern” period that was closely connected to nature, health, and freedom from urban centers.

As is the case with Deloria’s concept of playing Indian, Bergland’s conception of the haunted nature of American national identity is essential for understanding the spirit descriptions that follow. When Spiritualists spoke of spirits or hauntings, it was not understood as a metaphor but as an event, experience, or fact. These hauntings were sometimes related to the wrong doings committed by settlers—namely, stealing land and banishing Native Americans to a “vanished” status. A similar phenomenon can be seen at Lily Dale and the land the Spiritualists occupied. These conceptions of the land are essential for understanding the interactions Spiritualists had with Native American spirits as well as how Spiritualists framed themselves as modern subjects against a non-modern other. Considering Deloria’s and Bergland’s scholarship alongside the framing of Lily Dale’s land as haunted, it is not surprising that the presence of Native American ghosts was common in Lily Dale.¹²⁹

The area where Lily Dale lies (in present-day Chautauqua County in western New York state) was previously inhabited by members of the Erie people who lived along the south shore of Lake Erie, but in the seventeenth century the Seneca took control of the area.¹³⁰ Following the

¹²⁹ The haunting of European settlers by Native American ghosts has been a common trope from the time of European resettlement of North America. According to Colleen Boyd and Coll Thrush, hauntings of this type were tied directly to the land and were representative of the struggles over power and land between Indigenous peoples and encroaching settlers. See Boyd and Thrush, xx.

¹³⁰ The Columbia Encyclopedia, 8th ed., s.v. “Erie, Indigenous People of North America,” 2018; and Seneca Nation of Indians, “Birth of a Nation,” <https://sni.org/culture/birth-of-a-nation/>.

American Revolution, the United States government and land speculation companies gradually eroded the western boundary line separating the national border from the Haudenosaunee, a boundary supposedly protected by treaty. As Laurence Hauptman has argued, settlers' desire for these lands became increasingly desperate as plans for a statewide transportation system, the Erie Canal, developed. By the 1820s Buffalo was emerging as a major port city for goods moving eastward, its growth dependent upon the removal of Native Americans from the surrounding land.¹³¹

The land where Lily Dale was founded, on the Cassadaga Lakes, was known to its residents as a prolific site of Native American cultural artifacts. Though the Seneca nation had long kept this area of western New York, nineteenth-century settler histories of the county emphasized the earlier presence of archaic mound-building peoples. According to one contemporary historian and antiquarian of the area, Obed Edson, the shoreline surrounding the Cassadaga Lake system teemed with large mounds. When he visited the area in 1870 the mounds could still be seen, the highest

¹³¹ Laurence M. Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests: Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 102-6, 119. The reservation, established in the 1798 Treaty of Big Tree, was reduced in size through an 1826 treaty made in a fraudulent agreement with the Seneca. The Buffalo Creek reservation became a ceremonial and organizational center for the Seneca as well as the larger Haudenosaunee confederation. In 1823 the Ogden Land Company was granted permission by the United States government to preemptively survey the lands included in the Buffalo Creek reservation. The following year the Commissioner of Indian Affairs declared the Seneca leader Red Jacket to be hostile and therefore undeserving of governmental recognition.

points of some reaching 12 feet in height.¹³² Earthen breastwork spanned two shores of the lake.¹³³ Settlers found a variety of items in this area including pottery, pipes, and stone artifacts. In 1822, likely while cultivating the land for farming, the mounds were excavated, and human skeletons were discovered along with pottery and utensils. Interest in the excavation sites around Cassadaga mirrored the development of American archeology and a general fascination with mound builder sites, as evident in publications like *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (1848) by Ephraim Squier and Edwin H. Davis and *Antiquities of the State of New York* (1851) by Squier.¹³⁴ A variety of explanations were developed to address who had made the mounds. Some claimed that the mounds must be the work of early European settlers, while others connected them to

¹³² Obed Edson, "Notes on the Aboriginal Occupation of the Cassadaga Valley," *New York State Museum Bulletin* 233, no. 38 (May-June 1920), 523.

¹³³ Young, 19.

¹³⁴ Mark J. Lynott. *Hopewell Ceremonial Landscapes of Ohio: More than Mounds and Geometric Earthworks* (Havertown, PA: Oxbow Books, 2015), 8. The studies and publications of Ephraim Squier and Edwin H. Davis did much to popularize both the mounds and North American archeology in general. One of their most influential works, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*, was published in the landmark year 1848. Popularity in these sites grew in the late nineteenth century with books being written for public consumption from the 1870s until the early years of the twentieth century (Lynott, 10). Squier wrote another publication, *Antiquities of the State of New York*, several years later in 1851. Though he visited and wrote about many New York counties, including Erie County (directly north of Chautauqua), Squier unfortunately did not have the time to visit Chautauqua. However, he did admit that there were many reports of mounds there and they were likely similar to those in Erie County, which he described as very numerous. Many theories were proposed to explain the engineering feat of the mounds and their creators. Explanations for the mounds' purposes included sacred altars for worship, fortification in warfare, and the foundation for communal villages.

archaic Native Americans.¹³⁵ Edson attributed the mounds to a “race” of Native Americans who far preceded the Erie people and later Seneca tribes.¹³⁶

An important aspect of the mounds was the association that Euro-American settlers had with mounds, burial grounds, and skeletons. The excavation of mounds often revealed skeletons, described as cemeteries and “bone pits.”¹³⁷ The fascination with the burial sites of Indigenous people partially explains settlers’ hauntings by Native American spirits. The presence of skeletons and gravesites marked the earth as the property of its former inhabitants. Squier’s description of a burial site is inflected with a melancholic nostalgia for the forced removal of a people that made his livelihood and the livelihoods of other settlers possible. Specifically, Squier’s melancholic call refers to the Seneca’s right to land in Erie County as justified by the presence of their ancestor’s skeletons:

*A small band [of Seneca] are at bay upon the borders of the Tonawanda, sullenly defying the grasping cupidity of those who, [...] sustained by fraudulent contracts, are impatient to anticipate the certain doom which impends over this scanty remnant, and would deny them the poor boon of laying their bones beside those of their fathers.*¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Lynott, 6. See also Nicholas A. Timmerman, “Contested Indigenous Landscapes: Indian Mounds and the Political Creation of the Mythical ‘Mound Builder’ Race,” *Ethnohistory* 67, no. 1 (2020): 75-95.

¹³⁶ Edson, 20.

¹³⁷ Ephraim Squier, *Antiquates of the State of New York: Being the Results of Extensive Original surveys and Explorations, with a Supplement on the Antiquities of the West* (Buffalo, NY: G. H. Derby and Co., 1851), 72-9.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

Though Squier acknowledges the contractual wrong inflicted upon the Seneca by referencing the Buffalo Creek Reservation after its dissolution, his melancholic depiction of the Seneca also aligns with contemporary myths of the “vanishing Indian.” The remaining members of the Seneca—whom Squier describes as refusing to remove to reservations to the south—are depicted as literally anticipating death: waiting on the land so that their bodies may be laid to rest alongside their ancestors.

Despite the presence of living Native American communities such as the Cattaraugus and Allegany Indian Reservations near Spiritualist communities like Lily Dale, scholars have argued that Spiritualist practice conformed to the “vanishing Indian” ideology. Molly McGarry has argued that Spiritualists often relied on romanticized notions of Native Americans when channeling them in the séance and that these formulations tended to rely on and contribute to notions of the vanishing Indian. However, McGarry also highlights the nebulous distinctions between considering Native Americans to be “gone” and a reformist impulse to advocate for Native American rights. In opposition to McGarry, Kathryn Troy has argued that Spiritualists viewed Native Americans as contemporary subjects and neighbors that prompted Spiritualist reform efforts meant to better the position of Native Americans. While Troy is extremely concerned with emphasizing the reformist nature of many Spiritualists, she does this at the cost of acknowledging the full extent of reformist impulses on Native communities. For example, though many Spiritualists were sympathetic and had sincere concern for Native Americans that often turned to legislative advocacy, their efforts to assimilate Native Americans into Euro-American culture and

society had devastating effects on Native cultures. Troy tends to deemphasize colonialist results like this in her mission to prove her primary argument.¹³⁹

Also speaking to Spiritualists' fascination with Native American spirits, Darryl Catherine has linked the presence of Indianist spirits to narratives of industrialization and progressive modernization.¹⁴⁰ In this formulation, the spirits represented the actual bodies of the Native Americans who had to be removed from the land to make industrialization possible by freeing up natural resources. As Catherine points out, Andrew Jackson Davis's conception of the afterlife segregated Native American spirits to their own Summerland, separate from that of white spirits, and was imagined as being lower and closer to the earth. In fact, the Native American Summerland was envisioned as a more perfect, untouched version of the American landscape.¹⁴¹ Catherine concludes that, while Indianist spirits visited Spiritualists in anger, they also displayed a forgiveness for the brutality of colonialism cultivated in their enlightened spiritual state. Furthermore, these displays of forgiveness and retribution served as a model for reconciling political and racial animosity following the Civil War.¹⁴²

Though Catherine makes a convincing argument, his primary examples of Spiritualist theory and metaphysics are drawn from Spiritualism's antebellum period, from Davis's writings from 1847 to the 1860s, and John Murray Spear's mechanical experiments and settlement in Chautauqua

¹³⁹ For example, see Kathryn Troy, *The Specter of the Indian: Race, Gender, and Ghosts in American Séances, 1848-1890* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2017), 38-39.

¹⁴⁰ Darryl Catherine, "The Haunted Grid: Nature, Electricity, and Indian Spirits in the American Metaphysical Tradition," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82 no. 2 (2014): 371-97.

¹⁴¹ Catherine, 388.

¹⁴² Ibid., 389.

County in the 1850s. What stands at odds with my study and research, however, is Catherine's insistence that "Native spirit guides [disappeared] from séance rooms at the end of the nineteenth century." From the accounts that I will reference in this chapter, it is apparent that Indianist spirits certainly had not disappeared from séances at the end of the nineteenth century or even into the twentieth. In fact, I would argue that Lily Dale's attachment to and fascination with the specter of Native Americans remained strong or was even strengthened as seen in the numerous mediums like John Slater who relied on Indianist spirit guides and the presence of Native American performers like Oskenton and Princess Chiniqua on the grounds. While there were instances of angered spirits of displaced Native Americans visiting white Spiritualists with warnings, there were other representations of Native American spirits in séances that point to a different way of interacting with these spirits and coming to terms with the horrors of settler culture.

These understandings of past and contemporary Native American culture and its relationship to the land likely influenced the members of Lily Dale as they began the process of creating their community. Edson's description of the Cassadaga mounds was published in *History of Chautauqua County, New York* in 1875 during Lily Dale's construction. Likewise, interest in the mound builders and the popularity of archaeology, including the place of both in newspaper articles and lecturers' presentations, meant that the Spiritualists—many of whom were literate and concerned with social reform movements—would have been aware of them.¹⁴³ The presence of these mounds—which, according to Edson's descriptions were every day in plain sight of the

¹⁴³ While the Laona Freethinkers and Spiritualists arranged for lectures concerning religious and spiritual matters, they also programmed talks on scientific topics such as geology, demonstrating broad interest in a variety of subjects.

Spiritualists—likely affected how they understood the land they inhabited, their place on that land, and how they heard the land. In turn, conceptualizations of the land influenced and explained hauntings and the presence of Indianist spirits.

These conceptions of the land and Spiritualists' place on it played out in the campgrounds both during spirit communications and popular forms of entertainment. In the following section, I look closer at instances of Indianist spirits at Lily Dale. These spirits made frequent visits, both in and outside of the séance. Of primary interest here is how these spirits were depicted and identified sonically.

2.4 Spiritualist Vaudeville: Constructing Modernity through Spirit Sound

As I have shown, a modern identity at Lily Dale was constructed around a paradigm of vernacular modernism that juxtaposed spiritual epistemologies and belief in spirit communications with a nineteenth-century modernity of middle-class whiteness, consumer culture, and popular entertainments. In addition to these conditions of American modernism, identity at Lily Dale was established through its opposite: the imaginary of the “non-modern” Native American.

One of the most important aspects of Lily Dale's modernism was exemplified through its sonic cultures. As mentioned earlier, the sounds of vaudeville mixed with concert music, spirit sounds emanating from the séance, and the calls of progressive movements like suffrage and temperance. These sonic spaces allowed Spiritualists to experiment with identity, test the limits of their own conceptions of modernism, and to explore identities beyond their own social, class and racial circles. In this section I explain how these sounds mingled to create an American identity

that synthesized low and high forms of art and technology through a model of vernacular modernism.

Vernacular modernism at Lily Dale worked primarily in two ways. One, the spirit communications that occurred in séances relied on sonic and visual techniques borrowed from the vaudeville and theatrical stages. These scenes included musical performances, the sound of acousmatic voices and singing, and racialized vocal timbres taken from the minstrel stage. Two, séance sitters framed their interactions with spirits in terms of these performance practices and technologies. As I show, it was not unusual for sitters to reference vaudeville performances or sound recording technology like the radio or phonograph in their descriptions. In some cases, such as when white sitters interacted with the spirits of Native Americans or Black Americans, these sonic experiences were made legible by relating them to the sounds of minstrelsy and “Indian shows.” These examples of spirit communication, particularly racialized spirit communication, show the influence that popular entertainments had on Spiritualist communities like Lily Dale and how they engaged with and identified spirits.

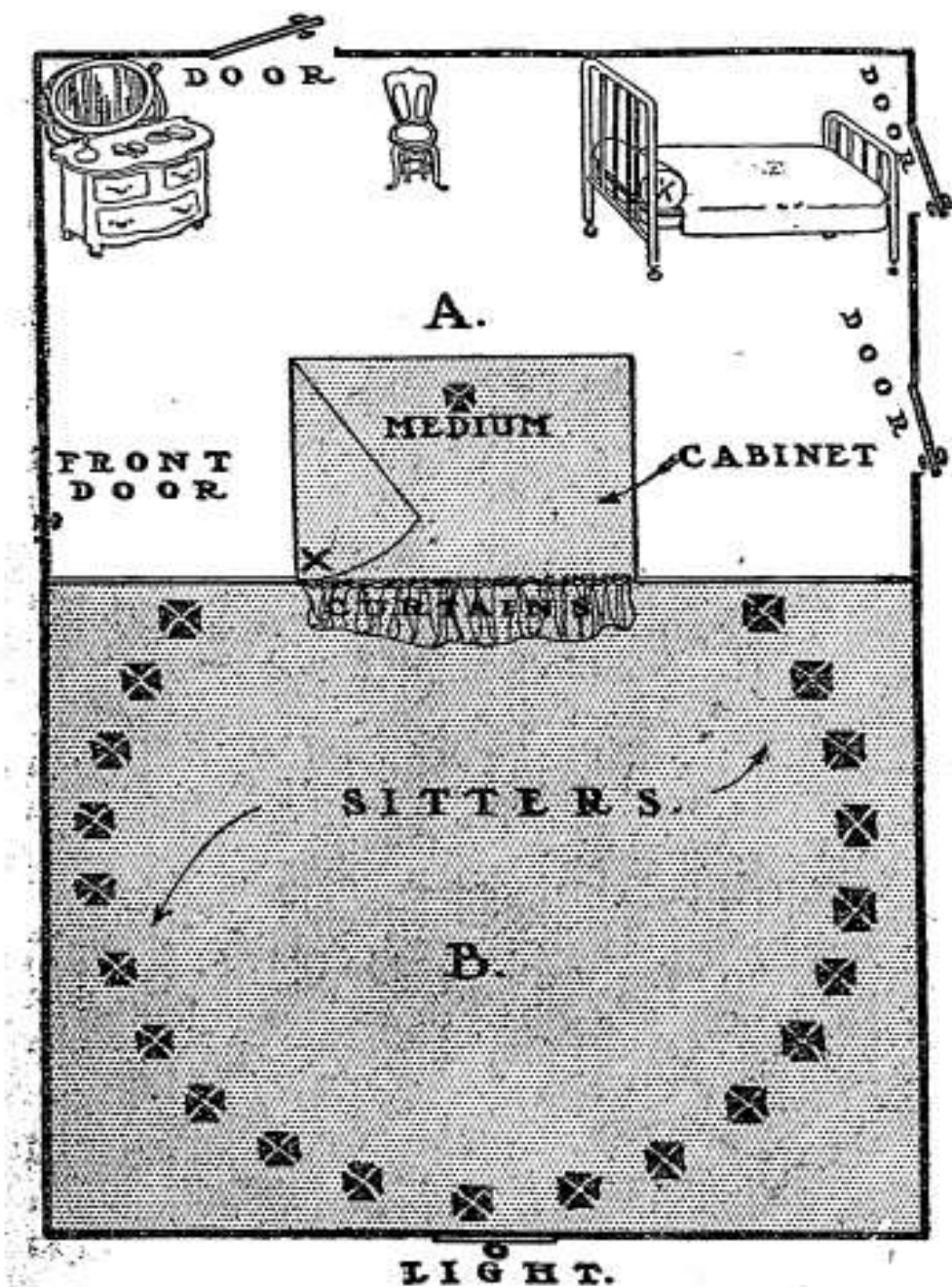
During séances spirits were identified through aural classification of their gender, race, class, and nationality. There was a general expectation that aspects of a person’s identity would remain constant in the Spiritualist Summerland, particularly the sound of their voice.¹⁴⁴ Though spirit identification was often based on tropes established in theatrical genres like vaudeville and minstrel shows, spirits that were ethnically white and middle class often went unmarked in

¹⁴⁴ While characteristics such as race and gender could be conveyed through the sound of the spirit, it often also manifested itself in their appearance. Sitters reported seeing the likeness of family and friends appear as apparitions in séances while spirit photographers specialized in making specters appear beside their subjects using the technique of double exposure. See Grove, 141-73.

descriptions of the aural. The sonic characteristics of unmarked, white spirits became a referent to which other spirits were compared. In fact, elements of a spirit's race and class often went unnoticed in séance descriptions unless they diverged from the white referent.

When discussing the perception of spirit voices and the belief that vocal timbre could express a stable identity, it is useful to consider Nina Sun Eidsheim's writing on racial timbre. In *The Race of Sound*, Eidsheim argues that attempts to identify a person by their voice along racial or gendered lines will ultimately be unsuccessful because vocal timbre cannot express the essence of an identity. Rather, Eidsheim argues that attempts to identify a voice based on timbre reveals more about the listener than it does the vocalizer.¹⁴⁵ In the case of Lily Dale Spiritualists, then, how they heard spirit voices tells us more about their understandings of identity—and about vocal timbre's ability to convey identity—than it does about the spirit voices. Therefore, as I analyze instances of sonic spirit communications at Lily Dale, I focus on listeners' experience of the sound and how they interpreted the sound. Rather than speculating that spirit voices sounded a certain way, I consider sound to be channeled through the interpretive frame of the listener. Using Eidsheim's listener-focused framework reveals the connections between what listeners heard in the séance and what they heard in popular entertainment. For many séance attendees, the only way to make sense of what they heard and make their experiences legible was to point to widely understood sonic references like radio and vaudeville.

¹⁴⁵ Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre and Vocality in African American Music* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 12-14.



This diagram shows, according to Mr. Carrington, how "materializations" were worked at the seances of Joseph Johnson. "All that any 'spirit' would have to do," says Mr. Carrington, "would be to enter room A by one of the doors leading to the adjoining rooms; creep up to the cabinet, pry out four or five of the locks holding the cloth cover, lift up the corner; and enter the cabinet."

Figure 8: The arrangement of the seance room of medium Joseph Johnson, who Carrington visited at Lily

Dale

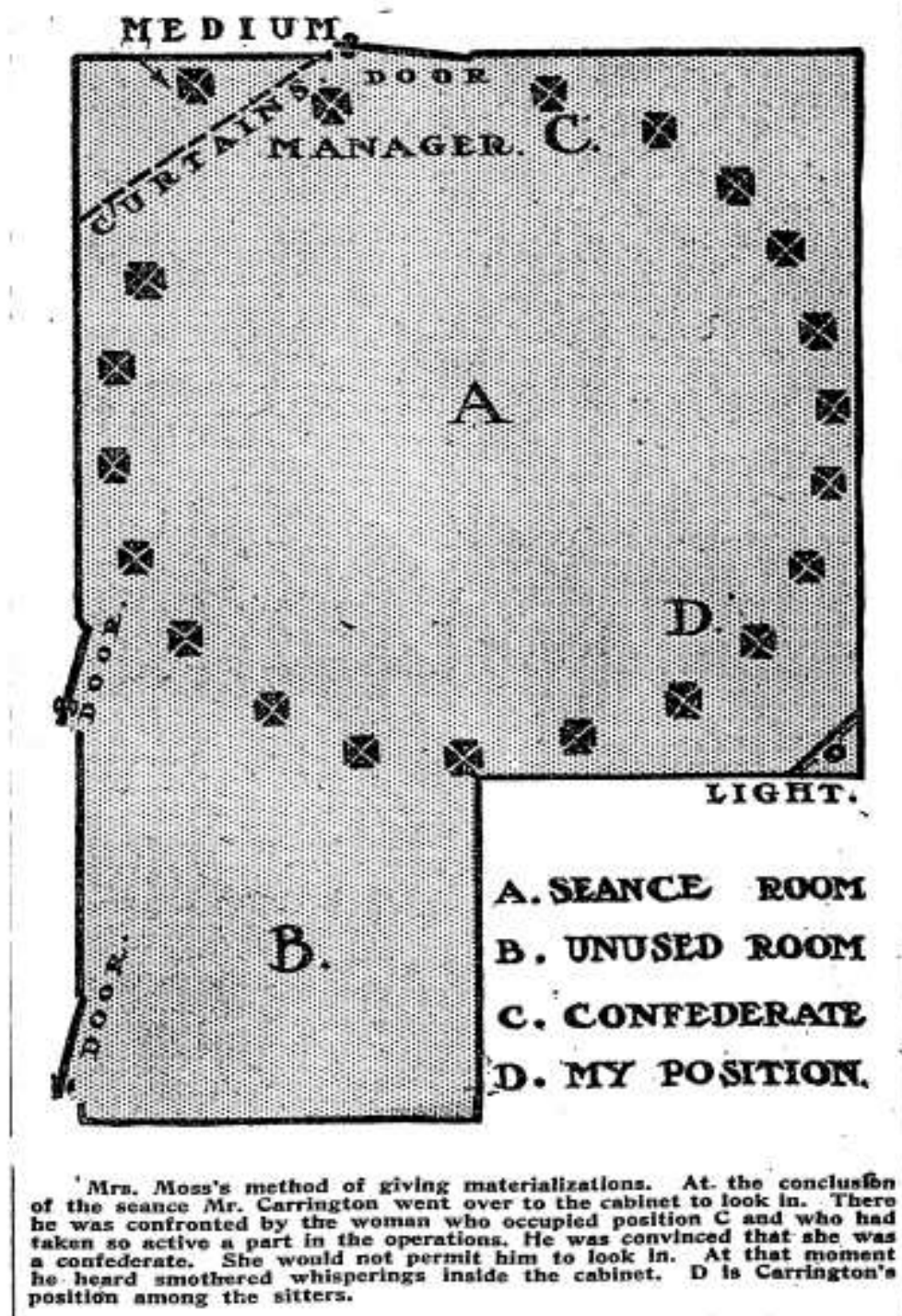


Figure 9: The arrangement of the séance room of medium Mrs. Moss. Carrington also visited her while at

Lily Dale

One example is the spirit descriptions provide by Hereward Carrington during his 1908 visit to Lily Dale. Carrington was a noted psychical investigator and assistant to James Hyslop, a founder of the American Society for Psychical Research. Carrington visited several mediums during his visit, but a particularly illustrative example occurred during a séance led by a trumpet medium, Mrs. M. T. McCoy. A trumpet medium employed a spirit trumpet, a lightweight metallic cone, to speak with spirits. Sometimes the trumpet would levitate above the séance table, but more often spirits spoke through the smaller opening of the cone and their voice was amplified through the larger opening. Carrington was seated in a dark cabinet with McCoy, separated from the other twenty sitters. (See Figures 8 and 9 for similar séance arrangements at Lily Dale.)

Several different spirits spoke through the conical piece of aluminum and he relied on the sounds of the voices as criteria for determining the communications' authenticity. Carrington immediately had doubts about the spirit of his father because of what he perceived as an inaccuracy in the voice. According to Carrington, the spirits' accent and grammatical choices did not match those he remembered his father using in life. While his father had spoken with an English accent, the voice that emanated from the spirit trumpet had an American one. Furthermore, Carrington asserted that the spirit used informal language that his father never would have employed because his father "disliked most things American—particularly the manner of speaking and the slang."¹⁴⁶

Over the course of the séance the manifestations became more and more spectacular and performative. After speaking with several spirits, none of which Carrington found convincing, a tambourine and bell began to shake from just behind the curtain separating them from the other sitters. The medium claimed that the sounds were produced by an "Indian spirit." Though

¹⁴⁶ Carrington.

Carrington was skeptical of everything he saw and heard at Lily Dale, the sudden change in sonic manifestation facilitated by the medium may have pointed to a broader practice. Whereas the previous three spirits—who were presumably understood to be white because they went unmarked—communicated by amplifying their voices through the spirit trumpet, the Indianist spirit was devoid of language. Instead, this spirit created commotion by sounding simple instruments. The association with Indianist spirits and raucous spirit displays was not unusual. One famous and oft-channeled Native American spirit, that of the Sauk leader Black Hawk (1767—1838), was frequently portrayed as being mischievous or disruptive to the séance proceedings.

There were several aural cues that were used to determine the racial identity of spirits in séance contexts like the one Carrington attended. One was by the sounds produced by the clothing spirits wore. When white spirits appeared visually, they typically wore white costumes or flowing robes, or else the clothing they wore while living.¹⁴⁷ In contrast, Indian spirits wore stereotypical Native American costumes—costumes based on white settler expectations of Indian dress. During an 1862 musical séance hosted by musical mediums Jennie and Annie Lord, the sound of clothing was used to identify Indianist spirits. As the spirit performed an “Indian dance” for the séance sitters, the sounds of the costume, in particular the spirit’s moccasined feet, seemed to make the spirit racially identifiable.¹⁴⁸

Other sonic markers of spirit identity included the tone of voice, singing style, and grammar and vocabulary. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, spirit voices could be produced in several different ways. A medium could be entranced, at which point the spirit would

¹⁴⁷ Bennett, 122-3.

¹⁴⁸ Troy, 40.

speak using the medium's voice. In another form, spirit voices sounded independently of the medium and were heard as being separate from any living individual at the séance table. A medium's channeling was sometimes indicated by a change in voice or inflection. A woman channeling a man's spirit might deepen her voice or, alternatively, raise her pitch to depict a child's spirit. An independent spirit voice was typically heard as a new or different voice from anyone present. Gender difference was conveyed through pitch, while racial and national difference was vocally denoted by word choice, grammatical usage, and accent.

Séance appearances of the spirit of Black Hawk offer an example of how "Indianness" was conveyed through voice. During his life Black Hawk was known for the strong resistance he gave the United States government in defense of his people's Midwestern land during the Black Hawk War of 1832.¹⁴⁹ A widely-read 1833 autobiography written by a U. S. government interpreter, along with resistance to compromise with the government, made him a nineteenth-century celebrity.¹⁵⁰ When Black Hawk and other leaders were captured by the United States at the end of 1832, they were held captive and forced to tour eastern cities. Crowds gathered to see the spectacle and "Blackhawkiana"—what amounted to gossip columns—were published to accompany the tour.¹⁵¹

Likely due to this popularity, after his death Black Hawk's spirit reportedly appeared frequently in seances throughout the United States. Black Hawk's spirit initially only appeared to the Lord Sisters beginning in the 1860s, but by the end of the nineteenth century many others

¹⁴⁹ Troy, 21.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 25-6.

¹⁵¹ Laura L. Mielke, "'Native to the Question': William Apess, Black Hawk, and the Sentimental Context of Early Native American Autobiography," *American Indian Quarterly* 26, No. 2 (2002): 256.

claimed to converse with him.¹⁵² In the séances held by the Lord Sisters, several sonic characteristics were used to identify Black Hawk's spirit, particularly regarding his presumed identity as a Native American man. Spiritualists identified Native spirits by their speech pattern, often transcribed as a form of broken English. At other times Native spirits used poetic language abundant with metaphor and nature-related themes. Native spirit speech was often modeled after the tropes established by the works of James Fenimore Cooper.¹⁵³ As Troy has explained, "[t]he utilization of both eloquent and crude speech in séance rooms reflected the nineteenth-century conflict between noble and savage imagery..."¹⁵⁴ Séance rooms were a stage to demonstrate this tension between admiration and condescending attitudes.

The spirit of Black Hawk made at least one appearance at Lily Dale in a séance attended by Willy Reichel. Reichel was a German physician and magnetist who left Germany after being blackballed for promoting mesmerism and "somnambulist practices."¹⁵⁵ He subsequently travelled the world and wrote several travelogues, including *An Occultist's Travels* in 1908 which described the three visits he made to Lily Dale from 1902 to 1907. Reichel's description of the campgrounds recalled the mythologies of the land as haunted and belonging to a primitive, atemporal Native past by referring to the community's forest as "ancient woods."¹⁵⁶

Reichel's travelogue reported numerous instances of contact with Native American and Black spirits at Lily Dale and across North America. During his second visit to Lily Dale, Reichel

¹⁵² Troy, 31.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 33.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 34.

¹⁵⁵ Willy Reichel, *An Occultist's Travels* (New York: R. F. Fenno and Company, 1908), 9.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 156.

sat with Mrs. De Bartholomew, a trumpet and trance medium. It was during this séance that Reichel communicated with Black Hawk's spirit, though not for the first time:

The room was entirely darkened, so that the trumpet through which the spirits were said to speak could never be seen. The first to speak was said to be an Indian, who gave his name as Black Hawk, and reminded me that he had spoken to me at [San Francisco medium, C. V.] Miller's [séance], which I afterwards remembered was the case. As there is an interesting story connected with this Indian, I will relate it, just as "Betsy," Mr. Miller's chief control, told it to me. In 1905, I changed my residence in Southern California, and soon afterwards had occasion to see Mr. Miller in San Francisco. Among others Black Hawk came at that interview. Though I was not interested in his coming, I asked Betsy afterwards what this Indian wanted. Her answer was, that he was the chief of a band of Indians who had lived on the site of my former dwelling; they had followed me into the new house, because the purchaser of the former one was not to their liking. (Nor did living people like him much!) This Indian and his band took a great interest in all my affairs and pursuits. He now came again through Mrs. Bartholomew, and was very glad to be able to speak to me; he first asked me if I like him, and I readily assented. Then I asked him how my dog Moppel was, at home. He replied that he was all right, but that I had now two dogs. This was correct, for five months before I had bought a St. Bernard dog. To my second question, what readers in Germany of my travel experiences thought of me, I received an answer which made me laugh heartily, namely, that some thought I was crazy, because some things that I had written about Miller's

sittings were impossible. It is evident that Black Hawk has at any rate an open and candid character!

In this excerpt, as was the case with the other séance scenes Reichel described, the sonic and aural is not given much consideration. Aside from indications that the spirit voices were speaking through the spirit trumpet independently of the medium's voice, Reichel did not provide further information regarding what the voices sounded like or how he might have identified spirits based on vocal timbre, grammatical usage, accent, or other aural cues. Despite this lack of concrete information, however, it is possible to speculate as to what Reichel heard and how those sounds were framed by his identity as a German man, his understandings of race, and as someone who was likely a consumer of popular entertainment. Specifically, I explain this in terms of Reichel's fascination with Native American culture and the "Indian shows" that were performed at Lily Dale, across the continent, and even internationally.

It is important to note that Reichel's conversation with Black Hawk's spirit, as his description implies, was not the first time he encountered the spirit. It was because of a previous interaction with the spirit in a San Francisco séance that Reichel was familiar with Black Hawk. Despite Black Hawk's celebrity status, Reichel seemed to be unfamiliar with the spirit's earthly identity and fame. According to Reichel, Black Hawk had managed to follow him from one séance to another, almost as if he were haunting the German man. Rather than suggesting that Black Hawk's spirit would literally take this degree of interest in the German man as Reichel's account suggests, I speculate that Reichel enjoyed the notion that he attracted the attention of the Indigenous spirit.

The scenario, of an intimate relationship between German and Native American, is reminiscent of what Hartmut Lutz has termed “Indianthusiasm,” from the German *Indianertümelei*, a German “fascination with American Indians [or] a romanticizing about a supposed Indian essence...”¹⁵⁷ Lutz argues that the German imperialist imagination was reworked into a literary tradition that fashioned a German hero as the admiration of an Indian companion who possessed a certain quality of Germanness.¹⁵⁸ Similar to Lutz’s figuration of German colonialist literature, Reichel fashions his interaction with Black Hawk as a colonial fantasy. According to Reichel, Black Hawk felt a kinship towards Reichel and was thus attached to him. The episode serves to boost Reichel’s ego and, as Lutz argues, representations of Indian-German interactions like this were designed to boost the German national character. Though the context was different, the interactions between white Americans and Indians served a similar function of creating a settler identity in contrast with Indianness.

The Euro-American and German fascination with Indian spirit was once again demonstrated in another incident Reichel reported during his visit to Lily Dale. While approaching an outdoor chapel, the Forest Temple, Reichel encountered a group of mediums:

I happened to meet there one day perhaps ten mediums whom I knew, and who were standing round a man who was distributing pop-corn, a favourite American delicacy. Suddenly a number of these mediums seemed to be

¹⁵⁷ Hartmut Lutz, “German Indianthusiasm: A Socially Constructed German National(ist) Myth,” in *Germans and Indians: Fantasies, Encounters, Projections*, eds. Colin G. Calloway et. al. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 167-85.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

*possessed; they ran about and executed a veritable Indian dance. These mediums were really in trance and appeared to be controlled by Indians, who had formerly been killed on this spot.*¹⁵⁹

There are several points to take away from this explanation. First, in his description of this sudden obsession, Reichel emphasizes the spirits as rooted in the land. Specifically, he suggests that the Native American spirits are linked to this place because they were killed there. Much like Bergland's formulation of the American landscape, the land was haunted by Native spirits. Though it is not specified, the disappearance of the Native Americans who once inhabited the land were linked to the current presence of the settlers. Euro-American Spiritualists were the current residents, their presence made possible by the colonial enterprises that expelled the Seneca people, and their bodies were available vessels for the remnants of the Native Americans—the "Indian spirits"—to inhabit. The land's purported haunting by Native spirits was tied up with settlers' beliefs that the forest was a sacred space and that there was a spiritual presence inherent in the land because it had been wrongly taken from its former Indigenous inhabitants.

"Indian dances" were a common display at séances. Materialized Native spirits were sometimes seen or heard to dance, as was the case with the Lord Sisters' séances mentioned earlier.¹⁶⁰ More common, perhaps, was the possession of mediums by Native spirits who led the (mostly) women's bodies in dance. As Bridget Bennett has written in *Transatlantic Spiritualism and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, performance by nonwhite spirits in white settings

¹⁵⁹ Reichel, 166.

¹⁶⁰ Troy, 40.

relied on exaggerated movements and language, particularly regarding dancing resulting from spirit possession.¹⁶¹ These dances were not actual dances performed by Native Americans, but rather a creation of the settler imagination.¹⁶²

It is essential to place Reichel's descriptions of hearing Native American spirits in the séance and witnessing white mediums becoming entranced and performing "Indian dances" in this vaudevillian performance of race. It is difficult to imagine that the diverse array of performances taking place within the limited boundaries of a tight-knit community like Lily Dale did not affect and influence one another. A Lily Dale visitor might attend a recital given by Oskentown and Princess Chiniqua in the evening and the next morning attend a séance where they heard Indianist spirits. At the very least, even if the aural cues in the séance meant to highlight a spirit's Indianist identity did not align with those performed in recitals, sitters' experiences were still framed by what they heard. They might be more likely to draw connections between the performance of "Indianness" in the séance and on the stage. Likewise, they may have used these vaudeville-style performances as a reference when recounting what they heard.

Indianist spirits were not the only spirits to be in contact with Lily Dale Spiritualists. Though less common, sitters occasionally encountered Black spirits in the séance. Reichel's attendance at the San Francisco séance of medium C. W. Miller gives an insightful look into two different characteristics Black spirits could exhibit in Spiritualists circles. During this séance

¹⁶¹ Bennett, 103.

¹⁶² Spiritualists were not the first to channel Indian spirits in dance. The practice of channeling Indian spirits and spirit dancing was associated with the Shakers before the advent of Spiritualism. Bennett details the practice of "playing Indian" and the performance of "Indian" dances in Shaker communities in the third chapter of her book, *Transatlantic Spiritualism and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Bennett, 83-113.

Reichel experienced two different spirits, both of whom he stated were the spirits of Black women. One was Miller's control spirit, named Betsy. The other was an irate spirit who expressed anger and rage. The interaction with Betsy was a positive one and the other was negative. According to Reichel, Betsy was the spirit of Miller's grandparents' servant. Each time she appeared Betsy was kind, hardworking and filled with "gratitude for the good treatment which she received" from Miller's family.¹⁶³ "Betsy" was more in line with a minstrel stock character than any real person. Though it is unclear whether as a living person she was enslaved or a free servant, her role as Miller's spirit guide was clearly meant to be a testament to white benevolence. Her presence at the séance as a spirit guide was only permissible because she was compliant with white hierarchies and (because her spirit accepted her earthly status with gratitude rather than resentment or feelings of injustice) she was spiritually developed enough to act as a guide.

Betsy is the only example that I have found of a Black spirit acting as a spirit guide. Bennett has explained the lack of white Spiritualists' engagement with Black spiritual subjects as a response to the failure of African Americans to effectively "disappear." While Indianist spirits frequently appeared in séances at the same time white Americans understood them to be vanishing from the national landscape, the same could not be said of African Americans. While many white Spiritualists hoped that Native Americans could be assimilated to white society—effectively destroying their culture in the process—legacies of chattel slavery and segregationist practices made it more difficult to justify a similar route for Black spirits after the Civil War. As Bennett explains, the presence of African American spirits was difficult to fathom because it was based "in

¹⁶³ Reichel, 44.

a memory that can be only imperfectly and problematically invoked.”¹⁶⁴ When Black spirits were represented in the séance room, it was often as a threatening presence.

Such was the case with the other Black spirit Reichel communicated with at Miller’s séance. This spirit, the spirit of an unnamed Black woman, “stole” into the séance unexpectedly and uninvited.¹⁶⁵ Betsy, as the control spirit, was a line of protection against the entrance of lower-level spirits. In this instance, Reichel explained, Betsy had been preoccupied, effectively allowing the other Black spirit to enter. This unnamed spirit was angry and visited each of the sitters at the table “striking and spitting upon nearly all of them, and continually using abusive language.”¹⁶⁶ The spirit’s presence was physically violent and aggressive, and sitters were accosted physically and verbally. I imagine that sitters in this moment would likely have been overwhelmed or frightened by the sudden shift in affect, from the obliging Betsy to the malicious anonymous spirit. Perhaps this spirit aligned with their own expectations of what the spirit of a Black woman would act like in the afterlife. The spirit’s anger was attributed to a religious *faux pas* committed in life. Apparently, Betsy later relayed to the sitters, the spirit had paid an Episcopal minister a large sum of money who promised she would meet Christ once she passed into the afterlife. The spirit had neglected her spiritual development during her earthly lifetime, instead attempting to buy spiritual enlightenment. As a result, she was barred from entering higher cosmological spheres.

While sonic description is not given to indicate the racial identity of the spirit, race is indicated by the behavior of the spirit. Additionally, Reichel explicitly stated the race of both

¹⁶⁴ Bennett, 13.

¹⁶⁵ Reichel, 106.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

spirits. Betsy's racial identity was presumably known because Miller had known her in life as she worked for his grandparents. In the case of the unnamed spirit, Reichel implies that Betsy relayed the information regarding the spirit's race. Aside from these explicit statements, however, it is difficult to know from Reichel's account how race may have been conveyed through the spirit's sonic or visual manifestations.

When white spirits appeared, they often greeted sitters congenially, sometimes individually with a caress or embrace.¹⁶⁷ White spirits were often described as stately or stoic (for masculine spirits) or gentle, kind, or childlike (for feminine spirits). Negative or disruptive demeanors, such as that of the spirit of the Black woman's spirit, were usually only attributed to unwelcomed low-level spirits.¹⁶⁸ Spirits of this sort generally gained access to the séance by mistake, either because the medium's control spirit was weakened or the sitters were unprepared, uninitiated, or otherwise improperly protected. The spirit of the Black woman was raced for its failure to adhere to protocols of white spirit behavior. Just as white womanhood was judged by fidelity to middle-class domesticity, devoutness, and morality, spiritual gender roles were expected to be upheld even after death. Black womanhood, which white Americans already considered suspect and incomplete

¹⁶⁷ Reichel, 42,60, 103, 181.

¹⁶⁸ Another, more nuanced example of a racialized "low-level" spirits can be found in the archive of Arthur Conan Doyle. In a séance conducted in Altadena, California in 1924, the sitters made contact with the spirit of a young "Hindu" man who in life had become addicted to opium and committed suicide. Though not necessarily disruptive, the spirit was in a "darkened condition" and refused to let himself be brought into the light of spiritual development and enlightenment. Report: Los Angeles Institute of Psychic Science and Research Incorporate dun the Laws of the State of California. Dated 1924. Add MS 88924/4/14. British Library.

under the guidelines for white womanhood, was deemed unfeminine and hypersexualized.¹⁶⁹ The spirit in this example is masculinized by the aggressiveness and violence that she demonstrates towards the members of the circle.

Another example of a Black feminine spirit was demonstrated at Lily Dale and recorded again by Reichel. While delivering a trance lecture to a crowd in the Leolyn Woods, likely near the Inspiration Stump, a medium named Charles Hulbert unexpectedly came under the influence of a young Black girl's spirit. In this scenario, the medium became entranced before a crowd and delivered a speech on Darwin's theory of descent. Like the previous scenario, the appearance of the Black girl's spirit was spontaneous and unwanted. Reichel explained that Hulbert came under the control of the spirit,

*...who gradually dropped into an indelicate way of speaking, so that the ladies who were present left, and were soon followed by the men. The poor man told me the next day that he remained entranced so long that it was midnight before he got home from the woods, and that when he awoke he could not understand why he was all alone, because at the beginning of the sitting he was surrounded with people. This experience is a good proof the genuineness of Mr. Hulbert's mediumship, for in his waking state he is incapable of talk of this description.*¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 27-31.

¹⁷⁰ Reichel, 162.

One of the most curious questions that this paragraph elicits is, how did the audience know the spirit was that of a Black girl? In his account Reichel identified the spirit by her race, but he did not explain how he or the witnesses of the channeling acquired this information. What racialized characteristics, particularly regarding the sonic, did listeners seize upon to come to this conclusion?

As Eidsheim has shown, timbral characteristics stemming from cultural particularism are mistaken for biological essence, leading listeners to believe that they can identify who they hear. The same surely applies here. Though there is no sound recording to refer to regarding Reichel's description—and not even a written transcription—I speculate that listeners' perception of the spirit voice as Black was based on several characteristics, namely, timbre, grammatical usage, and subject matter of the speech. However, whatever it was about the sonic quality of the entrancement that pointed listeners to identify the spirit as a Black girl, the identification was based more on the listeners' conception of what Blackness sounded like at the beginning of the twentieth century than the actual sonic quality. These conceptions were likely based largely on listeners' familiarity with minstrel shows, both because Spiritualists lived in segregated communities and because theater was a primary way that conceptions of racial characteristics entered popular white culture.

The influence of blackface minstrelsy and staged representations of blackness on Spiritualism has been noted by Bridget Bennett and Daphne Brooks. Daphne Brooks has drawn comparisons between the representations of race in staged performance and in the séance.¹⁷¹ Bennett has also acknowledged the influence of minstrelsy and minstrel stereotypes on séances and spirit communication. According to Bennett, "Séance goers witnessed a form of performance

¹⁷¹ Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*, 15.

that was at least in part familiar to them because it corresponded to aspects of culture they had experienced or knew of.”¹⁷² Minstrel shows performed by white entertainers were regularly scheduled for performance at Lily Dale, documented in several summer programs and camp flyers.¹⁷³ As mentioned earlier, the spirit of the blackface minstrel was a regular visitor to séances led by the medium Keeler. Additionally, the community horse that was responsible for harvesting ice in the winter and public work projects in the summer was named Topsy. This was a reference to a character in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which later became a comic minstrel stock character, a character in popular musical “Tom shows,” and a popular visitor to séances in the twentieth century.¹⁷⁴

Reichel’s description of the Black spirit girl stands in stark contrast to many of the other accounts of spirit children’s visits to séance rooms. Most of the accounts I have found portray spirit children as either white or Native American spirits and typically girls. For example, Mary T. Longley, who is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three and was sitting medium for the *Banner of Light*, wrote of a young spirit named Nannie.¹⁷⁵ Nannie seems to stand in stark contrast to the spirit girl described by Reichel. Nannie had long, blonde curls, large blue eyes, and a light

¹⁷² Bennett, 12.

¹⁷³ Nagy, 203-5.

¹⁷⁴ Bridget Bennett, “Spirited Away: The Death of Little Eva and the Farewell Performances of “Katie King,” *Journal of American Studies* 40, no. 1 (2006): 15.

¹⁷⁵ Nannie was a familiar spirit of Longley and was featured throughout Longley’s book, *Teachings and Illuminations as they Emanate from the Spirit World*. This book was published under Longley’s maiden name, Shelhamer.

complexion.¹⁷⁶ Nannie was adept at the arts, recited poetry, and sang songs to those she visited.¹⁷⁷ The spirit was deemed to be an innocent child who, through her innocent and unassuming nature, was able to teach and guide the living sitters in spiritual lessons. Nannie's righteousness and moral character were directly tied to her appearance as a young white girl. She was intelligent and educated yet retained her innocence and "artless simplicity."¹⁷⁸ In fact, Nannie bore a striking resemblance to Harriet Beecher Stowe's character, Eva, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The young blonde girl, who also died tragically young, was an emblem of white innocence, upper class gentility, and Christian piety.¹⁷⁹

Nannie's innocence was key in establishing her white girlhood. At the same time her innocence endeared her to the Spiritualists she encountered, and it is what solidified her identification as a white spirit. The Black spirit girl in Reichel's account, however, did not display innocence, but rather the opposite. Her "indelicate way of speaking" alluded to a use of either foul or sexually charged language. While white girlhood was imagined as a delicate flower to be protected, the same could not be said for Black girlhood. As Nazera Sadiq Wright has written

¹⁷⁶ Mary Longley Shelhamer, *Teachings and Illuminations as they Emanate from the Spirit World* (Chicago: The Progressive Thinker Publishing House, 1908), 36.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 37-8.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁷⁹ Bridget Bennett has drawn the connection between Eva's deathbed scene and melodramatic séance performances; "A crucial element is that the focus on the death of Eva effectively effaces the deaths of the black characters in the novel. Spiritualist mediums, many of whom were white women, appropriated the aesthetic features of Eva's death and largely ignored the novel's engagement with abolition." Bennett, *Transatlantic Spiritualism and Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 117.

about Black girlhood in the nineteenth century, Black women and girls were not protected from sexual assault, especially in slavery.¹⁸⁰ The maintenance of their innocence was not given the priority of that of white girls. Black girls could not live up to the expectations of white girlhood.

Like the spirit of the Black woman who unexpectedly visited the Miller séance in San Francisco, the spirit of the Black girl in the forest at Lily Dale was unwelcomed and unwanted. The members of the audience who had gathered to hear Hulbert's Darwinian trance lecture were repulsed, so much so that they gradually left the medium alone in the woods. The indelicacy of the spirit's speech is emphasized by the description that the women left first, and eventually even the men were too embarrassed to remain. Unlike the spontaneous Indian dance experienced nearby at the Forest Temple, the Spiritualists found nothing salvageable from this experience. While the sudden possession of mediums by Indianist spirits was attributed to the hauntedness of the land, the most substantial conclusion to come from Hulbert's possession was to testify to the "genuineness" of his mediumship because he would never willingly submit to such language or subject matter himself. The episode simply becomes an uncomfortable and confusing demonstration for the Spiritualists at Lily Dale.

2.5 Conclusion

The soundscape of Lily Dale sonically represented several important cultural, political, and spiritual issues that were crucial to Spiritualists' self-conceptualizations. An examination of the

¹⁸⁰ Nazera Sadiq Wright, *Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 9.

sounds heard on the campgrounds and in the séance, as well as sounds' positioning within the context that Spiritualists heard them, demonstrates how visitors' and residents' listening practices facilitated a settler worldview and sonic perspective. In this chapter I have focused on how the community's soundscape was constructed around vernacular modernism. Analyzing Lily Dale through the lens of vernacular modernism not only explains the prevalence of middle-class entertainment forms, but it also frames spirit communication as an alternative way of experiencing modernism. By communicating with the spirits of loved ones and the spirits of racial or socioeconomic others, Spiritualists constructed themselves as modern subjects while simultaneously experiencing modern technologies and innovations in a sensually tangible way.

It is important to note the influence that popular entertainment had on spiritual practices like the séance. The events that occurred at Lily Dale, whether meant for spiritual development, healing, or pure entertainment, were not independent of each other. Rather, they inflected and supported one another. In the case of spirit communication, the sounds of popular entertainment seeped into the experience both in terms of how the spirits communicated with the living as well as how séance sitters relayed what they had heard. These sonic trends and the prevalence of middlebrow culture points to the ways that Spiritualists form a modern identity during a time of increasing instability and uncertainty.

The mingling of affect and vernacular culture was a key aspect of Spiritualism, and as the following chapters will demonstrate, both were present in many other facets of Spiritualist practice. These two parts worked collaboratively to create an environment where spirits could be seen, heard, and experienced.

3.0 Spiritualist Hymns and Parlor Songs for the Dead

3.1 Introduction

The Marion Skidmore Library at Lily Dale has an impressive collection of hymnals and songbooks. The hymnals in the collection include numerous Christian hymnals as well as those with a distinctly Spiritualist disposition. The Christian hymnals outnumber the Spiritualist ones, but among the library's collection are several worn copies of *The Spiritual Harp* (1868) and *The Spiritual Wreath* (1885). Both appear to be like any other hymnal one might find in any given Christian church, but both were compiled by Spiritualists for Spiritualists.

Inside the front page of a copy of *The Spiritual Wreath* is a handwritten note pertaining to musical performance during a Spiritualist service. The note reads, "After Mr. Barrett finishes the little girl sings then Mrs. Prior after which she wants you to play No. 65 in the Gospel Hymns instead of 'song by choir'" (Figure 8). The note, which is undated but was likely written during the 1890s, was probably meant to communicate a change in performance plans during a religious service when spoken communication was inappropriate. The Mr. Barrett of the inscription likely refers to Harrison D. Barrett, Lily Dale summer resident and president of the National Spiritualist Association (NSA) in the 1890s. The Mrs. Prior referred to in the inscription was a regular delegate to the NSA conventions. Though she was Canadian, she travelled frequently throughout the United States as a missionary for Spiritualism. When I read through this penciled script for the first time, the reference to the Gospel Hymns caught my eye. How did the gospel hymns, presumably those of Ira Sankey, fit into Spiritualist practice? Was this singular, documented moment of the songs' inclusion in a Spiritualist community's musical life indicative of a broader practice?

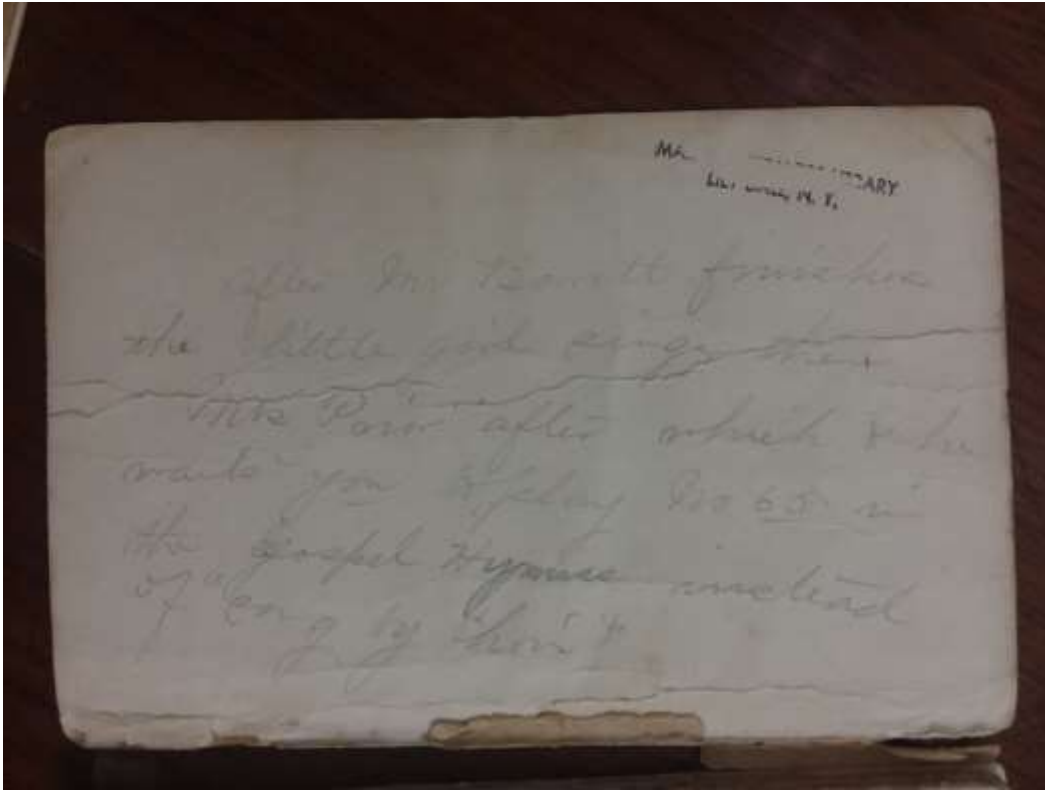


Figure 10: A handwritten note inside the cover of the hymnal, *The Spiritual Wreath* (1885)

Histories of Spiritualism have focused on a variety of material objects like the planchette, automatic-writing slates, and spirit trumpets used in séances, yet Spiritualist hymnal and song practice has gone understudied. These printed musical materials and script annotations, where they exist, open a new route for understanding histories of nineteenth-century Spiritualism, its accompanying culture, social structure, and spiritual epistemology. Analysis of Spiritualist song is valuable not only for understanding the musical interests of a religious community, but because these songs implied spirit communication. Spiritualist songs are unremarkable musically and textually when compared to sacred and secular songs of the nineteenth century, yet the songs' underlying Spiritualist philosophy invites a more nuanced understanding of how their performance functioned in the manifestation of spirit communication. Song lyrics often explicitly addressed

spirits directly, and, as I will explain later in more detail, practitioners understood singing in the context of a physics of vibrational frequency. By increasing their own vibrational frequency through singing, the living could contact spirits. Communication with spirits through song and singing depended on an understanding that contact could occur by narrowing the distance between vibrational frequencies among the living and dead.

In this chapter I argue that communication with the dead was embedded within the musical performance of Spiritualist songs. In many cases, spirit communication was implied by a song's text and performance. Spiritualists believed that hymn singing at the very beginning of a séance created both sonic and spiritual vibrations that acted as a kind of telegraphic, communicative call to the spirit world. To achieve this communication through music, early Spiritualists relied on the familiar songs and musical languages of Protestant denominations such as Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist traditions.

While using these musical forms, however, Spiritualists simultaneously and consciously distanced themselves from the Christian mainstream. This tension—between musical reference to Protestantism and emphasis on an ideological difference from Christianity—was a dance meant to set Spiritualism apart from Christianity while, at the same time, courting practitioners who were comfortable with familiar Protestant practices and the respectability it could endow their movement.

Respectability, stemming from a white middle-class domestic ideal, was particularly important when considering that Spiritualists' attunement to spirit communication distinguished them from mainstream Protestant religions that revolved around Calvinist beliefs of predestination,

infant damnation, and institutionalized authority.¹⁸¹ In Protestant settings, the congregation's collective participation in rituals and music-making was important, but the service was organized around hierarchies of authority, led by minsters or other church leaders. Conversely, Spiritualist settings were more decentered, allowing all practitioners the possibility of spirit communication. Women mediums, as opposed to male clergy, were typically in charge of more formalized Spiritualist rituals like the *séance*, where they acted as conduits for spirits contacting the living. Though mediums were often framed as passive vessels for spirit, women's bodies were at the center of the proceedings and controlled the ritual.¹⁸² For many observers, the primacy of women in the practice added additional suspicion concerning its social acceptability. As scholars like Daphne Brooks have shown, the mingling of women's bodies with spirits, especially spirits that expressed racial or gendered difference, invoked fears of miscegenation and promiscuity.¹⁸³

In the previous chapter I explained how Spiritualist practice at Lily Dale was constituted by a vernacular modernism that relied on a display of middle-class whiteness and the popular entertainments it was associated with. Musical culture at Lily Dale, for example, included both classical and popular music. Though performances like vaudeville and minstrelsy were not elevated cultural forms, they were familiar and pointed to the middle-class status of the camp's visitors, signaling their socioeconomic background as well as their access to disposable income. A similar middle-class culture can be seen in the songs collected in the hymnals used by

¹⁸¹ Braude, *Radical Spirits*, 34-40.

¹⁸² Ibid, 83-5.

¹⁸³ Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*, 15-21.

Spiritualists. In the case of printed song, Spiritualists once again drew from vernacular cultures like the evangelical camp meeting, singing school instruction books, and popular parlor song.

As I show with my analysis of Lily Dale's Spiritualist song collection in this chapter, Spiritualists' desire to reach spirits through song and sound paralleled a desire to establish Spiritualism as a religion independent of centralized Protestant practices. In other words, Spiritualists' distinct view of sonic vibration as a method for communicating with spirits set them apart from other Anglo-American religions. This distinction is particularly important because Spiritualist songs were often musically and textually indistinguishable from Christian songs.¹⁸⁴ My research demonstrates that Spiritualists' opinions regarding the place of Christian influence in Spiritualist songs varied widely, and this resulted in an eclectic mixture of compositional techniques in Spiritualist communities, ranging from contrafacta to fully original songwriting in a state of trance or inspiration. As the nineteenth century progressed and practitioners sought to establish Spiritualism as an institutionalized religion, at least by the 1880s Spiritualists began to call for a music practice that was fundamentally distinct from its Christian origins. Spiritualists, especially musicians, began to argue over what Spiritualist music should sound like and how it should be produced. Though devising different practical solutions, these arguments concluded that spirit communication was the tool that could separate Spiritualist songs from their Christian counterparts. By harnessing spirit communication in songs' textual topics, ritual, and

¹⁸⁴ In fact, the thematic index of the hymnals compiled in the Spiritualist hymnal, *The Spiritual Harp* (1868), in many ways resembles the complex classification system employed in the *Hymn Book of the Methodist Protestant Church*, ed. 14 (1852).

compositional technique, Spiritualists believed they would be able to boast of music that was truly distinct from Christian Protestant worship.

It should be noted that Spiritualist conceptions of spirit sound were distinct in that they generally acknowledged both audible and inaudible modes of sound. For example, a spirit might make its presence known by producing an independent, audible voice. On the other hand, practitioners reported instances of clairaudience or spiritual hearing, in which the spirit voice was received internally and was thus inaudible to other living practitioners. Spiritualist hymnals and songbooks implied these conceptualizations both directly and indirectly. Textually, songs could act as a welcoming invitation to spirits. Participants sang words of greeting, asking spirits to come down and join in their communal ritual. Spiritualists theorized and wrote about the vibrations resulting from musical tones as well as singing's power to produce sympathetic energy and vibrations. For example, when James Martin Peebles and Joseph Osgood Barrett compiled their hymnal, *The Spiritual Harp*, in 1868, they noted in a preface that, while singers' words literally called to the spirits, the physical vibrations singers created in the process also acted as a beckoning call. Another compositional form—pieces composed with the aid of spirit inspiration—represents an artistic collaboration between spirits and Spiritualist composers. Spiritually inspired pieces were included in both hymnal collections and songbooks. Lyrics and melodies composed by spiritually inspired individuals like C. P. Longley and Leah Fish served as symbols of hope and evidence for the existence of the Summerland, a Spiritualist heaven that awaited the living once they transitioned into the afterlife.

This chapter will begin by first setting Spiritualist music and musical discourse against a context of nineteenth-century religious revivalism. Arising partly from an English Wesleyan tradition of bringing religious worship to the people, evangelical Protestant revival camp meetings

became widespread across the United States during the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Though there was a strong camp meeting tradition in the southern states, I will focus on revivalism and camp meetings that occurred in the northeast, particularly New York state, designated the “burned over district” by Whitney Cross for the number of revivals that swept through the area.¹⁸⁵ Revivals are significant for their influence on sacred music collections from the 1790s through the 1840s, such as official and unofficial collections compiled for use at meetings, and for their subsequent influence on Spiritualist hymnals, which were published beginning in the 1850s. In particular, the denominational eclecticism that inflected camp meetings permeated musical practice and hymnal compilations, and this eclecticism can likewise be seen in the multiple musical, religious, and philosophical traditions incorporated into Spiritualist hymnals like Peebles’s and Barrett’s *The Spiritual Harp*.

Next, building upon the context of religious revivalism, I explore how hymnal compilers relied on the rhetoric and musical legacy of Protestantism—albeit cautiously—in Spiritualist song compilations. I will use the popular hymnal, *The Spiritual Harp*, as a case study. While Peebles and Barrett were the primary compilers of the collection, they were assisted by musical editor Eben Howe Bailey who composed many of the hymnal’s songs. Aside from practical decisions to incorporate Protestant-style hymns and song compilations, including its efficacy for facilitating congregational participation, the music borrowed from Protestantism was familiar, recognizable, and because of the wide usage of hymn tunes, many Spiritualists would have known how to sing

¹⁸⁵ Whitney Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800—1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

them. As many practitioners were former Christians or continued to be Christian, Spiritualists sought to accommodate a population raised in revival Protestantism.

Hymn and song selection allowed a smooth transition from Protestantism to Spiritualism for two reasons. First, the use of well-known or beloved religious songs could have a powerful emotional impact on new Spiritualist converts. Familiar songs had the affective potential to put converts at ease almost instantly. Second, the use of secular texts that relied heavily on sentimental themes was a reference to Spiritualism's domestic and womanly influences. Many of these texts, such as the text to the songs, "The Lock of Hair" or "Mother's Dream," conjure images of the saintly mother, the innocent child, and the home. Domestic imagery likewise signaled a relationship between the feminine spiritual body and the role her body played in religion. As the guiding spiritual voice in the nineteenth-century white, middle-class nuclear family, women were at the center of religious practice, especially where Spiritualism and camp revivalism were concerned. In the case of revival and gospel hymns, Stephen Marini has pointed out the important role women lyricists like Fanny J. Crosby and Katherine Hankey played in producing popular hymns.¹⁸⁶ Although they were criticized for stepping beyond the bounds of their sphere, some women also took to the pulpit during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century to preach at

¹⁸⁶ Stephen Marini, "From Classical to Modern: Hymnody and the Development of American Evangelicalism, 1737—1970," in *Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land: Hymnody in the History of North American Protestantism*, eds. Edith L. Blumhofer and Mark A. Noll (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 19-22. See also Sandra Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1978); and Jane Hadden Hobbs, *"I Sing for I Cannot be Silent": The Feminization of American Hymnody, 1870—1920* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, 1997).

revivals.¹⁸⁷ Women's role in Spiritualism signaled to Christian-Spiritualists that the religion was a suitable and legitimate practice. Elements of respectability, such as the positioning of white women at the center of practice, legitimized Spiritualism. Respectability, which Woodruff Smith describes as a public discourse developed to promote the "right" kind of modernity (i.e., as informed by a Eurocentric perspective), gave those with the class and racial privilege to acquire and practice specific mannerisms access to circles of mainstream society.¹⁸⁸

Following this explanation of Spiritualist compilers' reworking of Christian hymns, I consider how belief in spirit communication was inherent within Spiritualist songs and their implied performance. While *The Spiritual Harp* closely mimicked contemporary Protestant hymnals, the collection also demonstrates close ties to the domestic music-making tradition of the parlor. These examples of Spiritualist song are thus stylistically similar to mainstream religious and parlor songs, but a proper understanding of their Spiritualist underpinnings reveals the songs' specific significance and efficacy for the community. Like many other relatively new religious movements, Spiritualists reworked common musical forms for their own spiritual purposes. In this case, their metaphysical reframing of songs and sound let Spiritualists navigate familiar sacred and secular settings while embedding the songs with new meaning and purpose.

Finally, I turn to the debates over Spiritualist song that began to emerge during the 1880s and carried through the 1890s during the establishment of the National Spiritualist Association (NSA). Working to legitimize their practice and establish themselves as a recognized religion with

¹⁸⁷ Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America 1740—1845* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 3-4.

¹⁸⁸ Woodruff D. Smith, *Respectability as Moral Map and Public Discourse in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 5.

legal protections, Spiritualists demanded a new form of music that was not indebted to Christian hymnody. It was during this period that songbooks like C. P. Longley's *Choice Collection of Beautiful Songs for Public Meetings and the Home*, were produced and published. Of the hymnals I have examined, Longley's collection stands out because he produced fully original songs. Though songbooks like *The Spiritual Harp* and *The Spirit Minstrel* included some original music and texts, the compilers of these hymnals republished a significant portion of previously composed tunes and songs.

Ultimately, both sets of Spiritualist songs I discuss—the hymnals directly influenced by Christian musical traditions and the parlor songs of the end of the nineteenth century—reflect the shifting attitudes of Spiritualists during this period, especially those at Lily Dale who collected these hymnals. In tracing the line from *The Spiritual Harp* to Longley's *Choice Collection* we see that there was a consistent distaste with Christian dogma. What is significant about Longley's collection, however, is that it coincided with a moment in which Spiritualist leaders and their national organization called for a more pronounced distancing from Christianity.

3.2 Christian Contexts of Spiritualist Song

Many of the musical characteristics of evangelical Protestantism and camp meetings can be found in Spiritualist song. Like Protestant and evangelical camp meetings, Spiritualism ushered in practitioners from a variety of religious backgrounds. Current or former Methodists rubbed elbows with Presbyterians and Quakers, Unitarians, and Universalists. As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, Spiritualism emerged as a cohesive movement following

the 1848 Rochester rappings produced by the Fox Sisters.¹⁸⁹ The major identifying marker of the religious movement was the belief that the living could communicate with the spirits of the dead. Unlike Christianity, Spiritualism did not predicate one's admittance into eternal life on salvation through Christ. Rather, it was generally believed that the afterlife was comprised of a series of cosmological spheres, outlined by Andrew Jackson Davis based on the teachings of the Swedish scientist-theologian Emmanuel Swedenborg.¹⁹⁰ Though Spiritualists should strive for spiritual enlightenment and adhere to moral codes of Christianity, such as assisting the poor, the spiritual hierarchy would be sorted in the Summerland. Those who were moral and enlightened would find themselves existing on a higher sphere while those who had been amoral would transition from earth into a lower, less desirable sphere.¹⁹¹

It is important to note the range of forms Spiritualist practice could take. Because the movement was decentralized for most of the nineteenth century, there were innumerable forms of Spiritualist practice. While some simply dabbled in spirit communication and séance sitting, others plunged fully into Spiritualist philosophy—many choosing to move to Spiritualist communities

¹⁸⁹ Though this moment marks the beginning of the movement, the Rochester rappings were preceded by decades of metaphysical thought in the United States. Following the girls' interaction with spirits, Spiritualists used the previously written work of Andrew Jackson Davis to explain the occurrence. Davis, known as the "Poughkeepsie Seer," was inspired by the writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg and Anton Mesmer's theories of animal magnetism. See Schmidt, *Hearing Things*.

¹⁹⁰ Schmidt, 228.

¹⁹¹ The idea of stratified levels of the afterlife based on morality was also demonstrated in works of fiction. One example is Margaret Oliphant's *Dies Irae: The Story of a Spirit in Prison* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1895).

throughout the Northeast and Midwest.¹⁹² Additionally, many reconciled their new belief in spirit communication with more mainstream Christianity. Spiritualist practitioners tended to come to the movement from Christian sects like Presbyterianism, Methodism, Baptist, as well as less mainstream forms such as Quakerism, Unitarianism, and Universalism.

Despite theological differences between mainstream Christianity and Spiritualism, there was overlap between their respective religious and musical practices. I will discuss three primary influences of Protestant practice of Spiritualism in this section. One, the evangelical camp meetings that emerged from the Second Great Awakening during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries broke down the strict division between sacred and secular environments by removing religious worship from the walls and altar of brick-and-mortar churches. Two, Spiritualist leaders took cues from Protestant preachers and clergy within the camp meeting movement. Like their evangelical predecessors, Spiritualist missionaries travelled from city to city, country to country, to spread the word of Spiritualism and their message of “no more death.”

Finally, and I would argue most importantly, both Spiritualism and Protestantism were influenced by a musical tradition developed during revival camp meetings, which effectively fused the musics of diverse populations to create a system for worship that was accessible to a mass audience. One example of a kind of nondenominational hymnal that incorporated a multitude of

¹⁹² Some of the most well-known Spiritualist communities were Lily Dale in New York, Camp Chesterfield in Indiana, and Lake Pleasant in Massachusetts. Additionally, New York state was also home to several other communal organizations like the Oneida community, the Kiantone community, and the Brotherhood of the New Life led by Thomas Lake Harris.

musical traditions is Jesse Mercer's *Cluster of Spiritual Songs*, first published in 1810.¹⁹³ While some denominations published their own songbooks, such as Methodists and their use of Wesleyan hymns, other hymns like Mercer's were not associated with any specific sect.¹⁹⁴ Musical characteristics included congregational singing rather than solo singing, simple and repetitive melodies that were easy to learn and remember, and the process of lining out hymns.¹⁹⁵ Without hymns or written texts, a preacher or song-leader might "line out" the hymn text to refresh congregants' memory. Additionally, Spiritualism frequently involved forms of spirit communication that resembled charismatic practices employed by some evangelicals. For example, Leigh Eric Schmidt has compared the process of a spirit "speaking" through the mouth of a medium to the charismatic gift of glossolalia or speaking in tongues.¹⁹⁶

Evangelical camp meetings and picnics provide explanation and historical precedent for a breakdown of the sacred-secular division regarding the physical space of worship. The Second

¹⁹³ Kay Norton gives an insightful analysis of this particular hymnal and its use of a broad range of musical sources. See Kay Norton, "Reading between the Lines: Slaves, Women, and Native Americans Reflected in a Southern Hymnal of 1810," in *Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land: Hymnody in the History of North American Protestantism*, eds. Edith L. Blumhofer and Mark A. Noll (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2004), 39; and Stephen Marini, "Hymnody as History: Early Evangelical Hymns and the Recovery of American Popular Religion," *Church History* 71, no. 2 (2002): 273-306.

¹⁹⁴ One example of a denominational hymnal is *The Methodist Pocket Hymn-book* (1788). Though it is not comprised exclusively of the hymns of Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts, these two authors make up the bulk of the compilation.

¹⁹⁵ Anne P. Wheeler, "The Music of the Early Nineteenth-century Camp Meeting: Song in Service to Evangelistic Revival," *Methodist History* 48, no. 1 (2009): 26.

¹⁹⁶ Schmidt, 236.

Great Awakening, particularly Methodist services, did not take place strictly inside the confines of churches or religious halls. In England during the eighteenth century the Wesley Brothers brought religion to the poor by preaching in public squares, theaters and taking the message of the gospel on the road with circuit riders.¹⁹⁷ In the United States the circuit evolved into outdoor meetings that transformed the cover of the forest into a sacred space in a process Russell Richey has described as “cathedraling.”¹⁹⁸ Spiritualists adopted both tools of the evangelical missionaries; impromptu outdoor meetings paired with circuit riding to bring Spiritualist practice and lecturers to sparse populations in rural areas.¹⁹⁹ As mentioned in Chapter One, an example of cathedraling can be found at Lily Dale in the Leolyn Woods. While Spiritualism boasted a large following of both dedicated practitioners and more casual followers who were simply curious, during most of the nineteenth century it avoided the structures of centrally organized religions. Spiritualist experience could take place anywhere. The spirits could communicate with Spiritualists at any time or in any space, though a gathering in a private parlor was often the preferred location. A markedly religious space controlled by clergy such as a church, altar, or sanctified space was not necessary.

Unsurprisingly, the Protestants who participated in camp meetings were also the ranks from which Spiritualist converts came.²⁰⁰ Spiritualists followed in the footsteps of their inherited legacy,

¹⁹⁷ Russell Richey, *Methodism in the American Forest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4.

¹⁹⁸ Richey, 61.

¹⁹⁹ William D. Moore, ““To Hold Communion with Nature and the Spirit-World”: New England’s Spiritualist Camp Meetings, 1865—1910,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 7 (1997): 231.

²⁰⁰ Lauren Lindsey, “Fostering Community: Spatial Arrangements of Early Nineteenth Century Camp Meeting Grounds in South Carolina” (MA Thesis, Clemson University, 2018), 7.

with James Martin Peebles and others traveling across the continent and even the world to give lectures on Spiritualist themes. Spiritualists like musician Jesse Shepard (1848-1927) experienced camp meetings in their youths before discovering Spiritualism. Shepard, who grew up in Illinois during the late 1850s and early 1860s, recollected his attendance at a camp meeting in his memoir. Shepard described a raucous occasion where thousands gathered in the woods. Methodists mingling with Baptists and Presbyterians, white with Black attendees, and political tensions were near boiling point.²⁰¹ In Shepard's account, there was stratification across the camp, with white and Black attendees separated from one another; the more religiously devout concentrated towards the center around the preachers' platforms and the edges of the circle populated by a crowd more interested in drinking alcohol and causing disruption than experiencing religious conversion.²⁰²

Camp meetings also included attendees from different social classes and racial backgrounds. In certain areas, enslaved persons attended with slave owners and contributed their own musical traditions to the melodious cacophony.²⁰³ The songs sung at the early revivals of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were spirituals from both white and Black traditions.

²⁰¹ Francis Grierson, *Valley of Shadows* (New York: John Lane Company, 1913), 134.

²⁰² Grierson, 142-46.

²⁰³ See Wheeler, "The Music of the Early Nineteenth-century Camp Meeting"; and Don Cusic, *The Sound of Light* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2002), 50; Sarah Jean Mount Elewononi, "Converting Rituals: The Worship of Nineteenth-Century Camp Meetings and the Growth of the Methodist Episcopal Church in New England" (Dissertation: Boston University, 2015), 53-4. In a study of Methodist revival camps, Sarah Mount Elewononi explains that a large percentage of Methodist gatherings between Baltimore and North Carolina were attended by people of West African descent. These meetings allowed cross-cultural exchange between Black and white attendees. White Methodists began to incorporate the traditions of Black participants—particularly in terms of bodily movements such as dancing—which they invoked to induce "religious possession" (54).

James C. Downey describes the early revival tunes as folk melodies set to Isaac Watts' hymn and psalm texts.²⁰⁴ These hymn texts tended to be personal in nature, written in first person, and as a result, encouraged singers and listeners to be emotionally moved. D. Bruce Hindmarsh gives the example of "Amazing Grace," whose composer, John Newton, made effective use of the first-person.²⁰⁵ Camp meeting song texts drew on similar themes, particularly the need to endure the harshness of life to achieve eternal salvation in death.²⁰⁶ As Dickinson D. Bruce, Jr. notes in discussing the differences between camp meeting songs and their evangelical predecessors, "[i]n the degree to which the plain-folk believers do appear to have given up on this life, they were going far beyond the evangelical religion out of which camp-meeting beliefs had developed. While their evangelical predecessors had sung of death, those earlier believers saw death as a fact rather than as an integral part of their hope."²⁰⁷

Revival spirituals also encouraged practitioners to testify to their conversion and experience of spirituality through religion.²⁰⁸ This practice of "witnessing" can be traced to Spiritualist music, as well. While Spiritualist song texts often emphasized the happiness and emotional relief that could be found through belief in the afterlife, they were also filled with

²⁰⁴ Grove Music Online, s.v. "White Spiritual," by James C. Downey, 2001.

²⁰⁵ D. Bruce Hindmarsh, "'Amazing Grace': The History of a Hymn and a Cultural Icon," in *Sing Them Over Again to Me: Hymns and Hymnbooks in America*, eds. Mark A. Noll and Edith L. Blumhofer (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2006), 5-6.

²⁰⁶ Bruce D. Dickinson, Jr. *And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800—1845*. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1974), 101.

²⁰⁷ Dickinson, 100.

²⁰⁸ Downey.

examples of spirit activity that supported the claims of Spiritualism, such as in the songs “Lock of Hair” and “Mother’s Dream” (Figures 12 and 13). While the Protestant view of death can be seen as more teleological in nature (i.e., death delivers the soul to its final, everlasting rest), Spiritualism’s framing of death was more cyclical and continuous. A spirit’s development was never complete, and the afterlife was similar to the earth in social, familial, and cultural structures.²⁰⁹ Additionally, spirits had the potential to return to earth and communicate with the living. Unlike the more static position of the Protestant heaven, Spiritualism advocated for a vision of spirits that continued to develop, even after death.

The heterogeneity of the camp meeting in terms of practitioners’ religious backgrounds, combined with the fact that the event might be a one-off occasion in any given location, presented a problem for musical practice and how to facilitate participation of the greatest number of people. A diverse body of participants brought their own hymn traditions, singing the hymns of Isaac Watts, the Wesley brothers, or the gospel hymns of Ira Sankey. Once at a camp meeting, it was difficult or impossible to obtain hymnals for everyone in attendance. Even if enough hymnals were available, there was no guarantee that attendees would be able to read the musical notation. Hymnals that were available might be torn apart and distributed among the crowd so that everyone had a *different* song, but everyone had a chance to sing at least *one* song.²¹⁰ Because of the theological mixture and diversity in levels of literacy, the camp meeting required that music be relatively easy for the masses of people—often in the thousands—to be able to sing in unison.

²⁰⁹ For example, Mary Longley Shelhamer described the development of spirit children in her book, *Teachings and Illuminations as they Emanate from the Spirit World*. Shelhamer describes how in the afterlife children grew physically and mentally as they would have on earth. They attended school and even took music lessons.

²¹⁰ Wheeler, 24-5.

Repeated phrases, or “taglines,” were frequently inserted in between lines of verse so that all could join in.

Spiritualist gatherings often faced a similar dilemma. Welcoming practitioners from diverse Christian traditions who may or may not have a common musical background, a primary dilemma was developing a musical practice that would appeal to people with different sets of musical experience and memory. Peebles’s and Barrett’s *Spiritual Harp* demonstrates one attempt to address this problem.

3.3 The Spiritual Harp

To accommodate a large breadth of religious experience—and because they were drawing on their personal musical collections—early (and some later) Spiritualist songbooks combined a mixture of popular Christian hymns from multiple traditions with original, Spiritualist-produced songs. The settings of many of the songs, especially in Peebles’s and Barrett’s *The Spiritual Harp*, are set in standard choral, four-voice writing. Along with an emphasis on group singing akin to Protestant congregational singing—albeit with a different underlying set of goals—Spiritualist hymnals reflected a deep influence from the evangelical Protestant tradition.

The Spirit Minstrel (1853) is a Spiritualist songbook that predated *The Spiritual Harp* and is a prime example of the musical legacies Spiritualism inherited from Christian practice. Even just in its physical construction, *The Spirit Minstrel* resembles a hardcover, oblong hymnal like that of *The Sacred Harp* or song collections used for singing schools such as George F. Root’s *The Coronet*. Out of 86 tunes published in *The Spirit Minstrel*, 29 songs were based on hymn tunes. The rest were either original compositions or folk tunes. *The Spiritual Harp*, which borrowed

several pieces of music from *The Spirit Minstrel*, also displayed the influences of Christian hymns. The hymnal's title likely references the well-known and widely used *Sacred Harp*.²¹¹

Peebles' and Barrett's *The Spiritual Harp* became a standard text for Spiritualists after its publication in 1868. The book itself is similar to other Christian hymnals such as the *Sacred Harp* or the *Gospel Hymns* in terms of its use of melody, harmony, and textual language. Though many hymns in *The Spiritual Harp* might resemble Christian song collections, these Christian-like hymns are interspersed with original compositions that provide a worldview and belief system of a Spiritualist bent. The differences in rhetoric between *The Spiritual Harp* and other hymnals might be subtle but hearing these songs from a Spiritualist perspective—specifically with the understanding that those singing the songs could communicate with the dead—had an impact on how the lyrics were understood. For example, nineteenth-century Christians would likely use the word “angel” to reference a heavenly being as described in the Bible. Spiritualists, however, frequently used the term in the Swedenborgian sense to refer to spiritual beings who had passed on to the afterlife. Furthermore, when Spiritualists referenced the angels, they often referred to loved ones or individuals they had known in life—most frequently a mother or young child. Such a distinction concerning the word “angel” can turn a hymn about unseen and distant celestial beings into a presence that is at once more personal, emotional, and immediate.

The Spiritual Harp was written by Peebles and Barrett during 1868 while Peebles was residing with Barrett and his family in Wisconsin. The two men, both former Universalist

²¹¹ Shape-note notation developed from the early 19th-century singing schools of the northeastern United States. They feature shaped note heads paired with solfege syllables (“fa,” “sol,” “la,” and “mi”) to represent the seven notes of the major scale. For further reading see Jesse P. Karlsberg, “Folklore’s Filter: Race, Place, and Sacred Harp Singing” (PhD Dissertation, Emory University, 2015).

ministers, met in 1864 in Palmyra, Wisconsin while organizing around “liberal Christian” ideas.²¹² They became close friends, and Barrett wrote a biography of Peebles’s life, *The Spiritual Pilgrim*, several years later.²¹³

Their hymnal collaboration was completed with the help of Boston musician Eben Howe Bailey (1843-1943) as musical editor. Bailey was known as a church organist throughout Boston and composed sacred and popular parlor pieces as well as a musical method book intended for school students.²¹⁴ Aside from having his work regularly printed in the popular *Folio* journal published by White, Smith and Company,²¹⁵ Bailey was selected as one of the conductors for the National Peace Jubilee concert in Boston in 1869.²¹⁶ Not only was Bailey a professional musician, organist, and composer, but his experience bridging the musical distinctions between sacred church music and sentimental parlor songs made him a prime candidate for the task of editing Peebles’s and Barrett’s Spiritualist hymnal.²¹⁷ *The Spiritual Harp* was published by William White and Company of Boston, a prominent Spiritualist publisher known for their publication of the longest running Spiritualist newspaper, *The Banner of Light*. It is not clear what the personal or

²¹² Joseph Osgood Barrett, *The Spiritual Pilgrim* (Boston: William White and Company, 1872), 90-91.

²¹³ In addition to *The Spiritual Harp*, Peebles also wrote a philosophical and theological history of Spiritualism, *Seer of the Ages*, while staying with Barrett and his family.

²¹⁴ Eben H. Bailey, *Bailey’s School Songs and Music Reader* (Boston: White, Smith and Company, 1880).

²¹⁵ H. Earle Johnson, “The Folio of White, Smith and Company,” *American Music* 2, no. 1 (1984): 90.

²¹⁶ “Eben Howe Bailey (1843—1943) Music Collection” Phillips Library Finding Aids. Peabody Essex Museum.

²¹⁷ Though Bailey’s oeuvre includes several more mainstream Christian compositions and song, this seems to have been his only foray into Spiritualist song.

working relationships between Peebles, Barrett, and Bailey were. Peebles and Barrett contributed a handful of original texts to the hymnal, but Bailey (and likely several members of his family) contributed numerous compositions.²¹⁸

Like the *Sacred Harp*, *The Spiritual Harp* contains an eclectic mixture of songs from different Christian denominations such as Methodist, Baptist, and Unitarian churches. In addition to the use of more traditional Christian hymns, Peebles and Barrett also included songs from the *Spirit Minstrel*, songs by popular songwriter George F. Root, and songs previously printed in domestic publications, like the woman's magazine *Arthur's Home Magazine*. Although *The Spiritual Harp* relied on a number of previously published hymns, approximately one-third of the collection's songs and texts were original (see Appendix Table 1). These original compositions were gathered from well-known Spiritualists such as Emma and Hudson Tuttle, Thomas Lake Harris, Mary F. Davis, Lizzie Doten, and Achsa Sprague. Additionally, many of the musical tunes and texts written for the collection were understood to have been written with inspiration from spirits, meaning the songs were examples and proof of spirit communication.

²¹⁸ See Table 1 in the Appendix. Along with E. H. Bailey's musical contributions, M. M. Bailey and James Bailey both contributed several songs to the collection.

THE OLD HUNDREDTH.

1. A new re - lig - ion shakes the earth; Christ, un - be - known to out - ward sage,
De-scends, in forms of love, to birth, And leads from heaven the gold - en age.

194. NEW RELIGION.

<p>1 A NEW religion shakes the earth; Christ, unbeknown to outward sage, Descends, in forms of love, to birth, And leads from heaven the golden age.</p> <p>2 A new religion, new, yet old, The spirit's faith, the Eden theme, Descends, the weary earth to fold In joy transcending angel's dream.</p>	<p>3 Break chains, thrill heart, glow mind, for aye! From heaven the angel splendors fall; Wake eyes, shout lips, love's endless day Consumes old error's darksome pall!</p> <p>4 Whence comes the light, whence comes the power, To burst the chains and break the rod? Whence comes the bright delivering hour? 'Tis all of God, 'tis all of God!</p>
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Figure 11: Text written by Thomas Lake Harris set to the well-known tune, “The Old Hundredth” from *The Spiritual Harp*

Though Christian hymns were incorporated into *The Spiritual Harp*, the authors explained that Christian texts had been “carefully criticised till every theological taint [had been] expunged.”²¹⁹ This is not to say that all traces of Christianity were washed from the collection’s songs. On the contrary, there are ample references to God and Christ. But Peebles and Barrett meant to remove any unfavorable theological content—particularly unforgiving teachings of sin

²¹⁹ James Martin Peebles and Joseph Osgood Barrett, *The Spiritual Harp* (Boston: William White and Company, 1868), 3.

and death—that would not be received well by their intended Spiritualist audience. One example is their re-texting of the well-known Christian hymn, “The Old Hundredth” (Figure 11).

In some circles, the lyricist, Spiritualist Thomas Lake Harris, was considered a prophet and was the leader of a utopian community based on Spiritualist concepts. Harris’s new lyrics express a specific strand of Christian Spirituality, one promoted by *Spiritual Harp* compiler James Martin Peebles. In his full-length history of Spiritualism, *Seer of the Ages*, Peebles equates Spiritualism to an original Christianity, one which was more pure than contemporary Christianity, considered by Peebles to be tainted by time and dogma. In the same vein, Harris’s hymn text references Spiritualism as a new religion based in old truths. Christ is mentioned explicitly as leading the earth toward a progressive age. Spiritualists’ belief in Christ could vary widely; some still placed faith in Christ as a savior-figure while others considered him to be merely one of many spiritual guides. Aside from this understanding, however, the lyrics reflect popular themes of Christianity: a transcendence to heaven, a breaking from sin, and a deliverance from earthly bonds. Additionally, the new lyrics were set to a beloved Christian hymn, “The Old Hundredth.” People may have had mixed reactions to the melody. Some may have instantly felt excitement at having the opportunity to sing a song they knew well, but with lyrics that resonated with them. Others may have been repulsed by memories of the former Christian life they wished to forget. Regardless of the reaction, however, most Spiritualist practitioners would have already known the melody.

Aside from popular Christian hymns, *The Spiritual Harp* included songs that dealt with popular sentimental themes such as motherhood, mourning, and the death of children (i.e., “Beautiful Visions of Joy,” “Hush-A-By,” and “We Shall Meet Again, Mother”). It also included songs utilized by social movements like woman’s suffrage and temperance. Some titles include

the suffrage song, “Equal Rights” and the temperance song, “Cold Water for Me.” Spiritualism was firmly placed within the domain of women—the parlor and other domestic settings—and Spiritualists often took up the causes of social uplift associated with woman’s work.

The inclusion of sentimental songs, typically meant for private performance in domestic parlors, into the hymnal points to the nebulous division between the sacred and secular within a Spiritualist context.²²⁰ Unlike Christian religions that typically met in a church, Spiritualist ritual often occurred in the home and parlor. It is telling, then, that Peebles and Barrett would choose to include songs meant for a domestic setting. The domestic nature of sentimental songs also brings focus to the driving force behind Spiritualism—women. The songs included in *The Spiritual Harp* acknowledge and highlight this womanly influence. For example, the song “Cradle Song of the Poor” is sung from the perspective of a mother who cannot afford to feed her child and thus hopes her child will have a swift and painless death. Though speaking of death, these songs offered hopeful understandings of the next life and painted imagery of the living passing over to a land of light and love. The song, “Passed Over,” for example, begins with the line, “She’s crossed the shining river, to meet the loved ones there, who wait with starry banners now floating in the air.”²²¹ Other songs, such as “Indian Hunter” and “Pushmataha,” refer to the political situation of Native

²²⁰ For more information about sentimental song, see Robert Arbour, “Such Verses for My Body Let Us Write”: Civil War Song, Sentimentalism, and Whitman’s Drum-Taps,” in *Sentimentalism in Nineteenth-Century America: Literary and Cultural Practices*, eds. by Mary G. DeJong and Paula Bernat Bennett (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013), 145-62.

²²¹ Ibid., 160.

Americans and rely on tropes of the vanishing Indian in sentimental fashion. Songs of this type reflect Spiritualists' interest in Indigenous peoples but were inherently colonialist in nature.²²²

The hymn, "Lock of Hair," draws on these sentimental topics, particularly the themes of domestic tranquility and mourning. "Lock of Hair" combines several elements of nineteenth-century song traditions. The song is set in a simple four-part chorale style, and the text's narrator is a mourner who witnesses the spirit of a loved one after clipping a lock of their hair at their death. The lock serves to preserve the memory of the deceased while also preserving the narrator's pain. Like the songs employed at camp meeting revivals, "Lock of Hair" employs the first-person perspective to maximize the song's affective nature. The first-person account anthropomorphizes the lock of hair, which metaphorically speaks and produces sound in remembrance of the departed spirit (Figure 12).

The lock of hair in the text refers to memento mori, keepsakes fashioned in remembrance of loved ones that were popular during the nineteenth century. Though, as Ann Braude argues, overall death rates declined during the nineteenth century, "[u]rbanization and industrialization transformed death from an event that deprived the community of a unique social actor into a

²²² This interest manifested in the appropriation of "Indian spirits" and "Indian spirit guides" in spirit communication and, though many were sympathetic to the removal and destruction of Native Americans and their culture, their concern and activism often ended with disastrous results. See Troy, *The Specter of the Indian: Race, Gender, and Ghosts in American Séances, 1848–1890* and McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*, 64–85; and Bridget Bennett, *Transatlantic Spiritualism and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

LOCK OF HAIR.

1. The sun - ny spir - it pass'd from sight, The eyes that shed love - beams,
Though clos'd to earth in star - ry night, Shone down from land of dreams;
A - mid the melt - ing, ho - ly calm, Re - mov'd with ten - der care,
Suf - fis - ing it with tear - ful balm, I clipped a lock of hair.

211. THE LOCK OF HAIR.

- 2 ITS glory is undimmed by years;
Its charms new hopes enfold;
I bathe it oft with hallowed tears,
More precious far than gold.
And as it curls my fingers round
Life's mem'ries clear and meek
Come pulsing with a loving sound;
That lock of hair doth speak!
- 3 From it, oh, never will I part,
But feel its mute caress
The closer in my grateful heart,
All weeping hours to bless.
Unbroken shall this tie remain,
Though from its owner riven,
Enwoven into ringlet chain
That draws me up to heaven.

212. NIGHT VIGIL.

- 1 SWEET Peace, descend with noiseless
And seek each human breast, [wing,
And through the night in sweetness sing,
And soothe to quiet rest.
Smooth every aching brow of pain
Till busy thought shall sleep;
Till morning light shall come again,
Keep thou thy vigil, keep!
- 2 Good-night! O eyes that look on mine!
Hope's golden dreams for thee!
May morning's hour bring joy to thine,
As daybreak to the sea.
Good-night! my soul pours out its prayer,
That heaven's eternal light
May be the mantle thou shalt wear,
Good-night, good-night, good-night!

Figure 12: "Lock of Hair" from *The Spiritual Harp*

personal loss felt only by family and friends.”²²³ The privatization of loss resulted in an intensification of mourning displays.²²⁴ The resulting cultures of mourning revolved around outward and sometimes grand displays of grief, such as adherence to a strict dress code for mourners. Mementos included post-mortem photographs of loved ones—often posed with family members—or hair of the dead gathered into locks or woven into jewelry or ornaments.²²⁵ The melody of “Lock of Hair” is simple and melodious enough to be learned quickly by ear or rote, especially when aided by a keyboard or choir.²²⁶

The tune is credited to J. H. Crawford, while the lyrics are noted as an original “Evangel” text. Although not much information about Crawford is available, it is known that he was a Spiritualist from Vermont who exchanged letters with medium Achsa Sprague, the author of the text. In fact, the creativity—or perhaps inspiration—of both Crawford and Sprague were combined in another song in *The Spiritual Harp*, “Mother’s Dream” (Figure 13).²²⁷

²²³ Braude, 51.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ McGarry, 28-31; and Deborah Lutz, *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

²²⁶ The tune is credited to J.H. Crawford while the lyrics are noted as an original “Evangel” text. Although not much information about J.H. Crawford is available, it is known that he was a Spiritualist from Vermont who exchanged letters with medium Achsa Sprague, the author of the text. In fact, the creativity—or perhaps inspiration—of both Crawford and Sprague were combined in another song in *The Spiritual Harp*, “Mother’s Dream.” Sprague wrote the text while Crawford composed the melody and harmony.

²²⁷ The author of the song’s text, Achsa Sprague, was a prolific Spiritualist poet considering the short span of her short life. Sprague (1827-1862) was born in Plymouth, Vermont to a family of farmers. She became a schoolteacher at the young age of 12, but her career was interrupted when she contracted rheumatic fever, at which

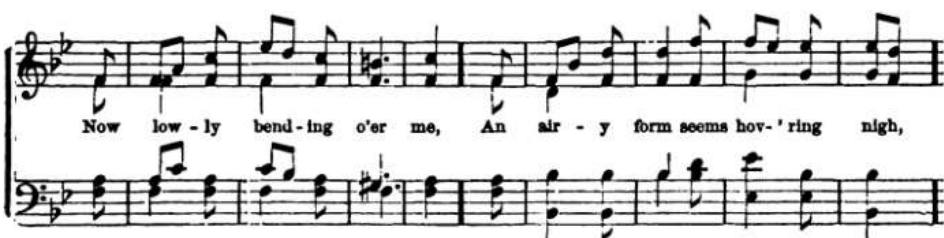
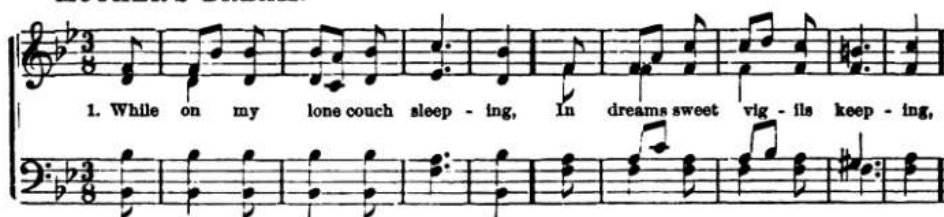
Victorian sentimentalism once again makes an appearance in “Mother’s Dream.” The text tells the story of a spirit visitation from the perspective of a mourning mother. The mother has a vision of her dead child who visits her as a spirit. The image of the mourning mother and angelic child exemplifies the cult of true womanhood and the ways domesticity was idealized as the most appropriate and noble position to which a woman could aspire.²²⁸

Textually, “Mother’s Dream” explores a range of senses and the sensations through which Spiritualist experience was possible. The song’s narrator conjures images of the departed child as a shadow whom she sees move closer to her. The shadow finally takes the form of her child, becoming so clear that she can see “the sunlight in her eyes.” It is the sense of hearing, however, that the mother mentions first in her description, referencing the sounds that the wind makes in the night prior to her vision. In the second verse the mother implores the spirit to speak: [“Come nearer, angel, speak, oh, speak!”]. In the third verse the spirit replies with “whispered answers” and by the fourth verse speaks in full sentences.

point the pain she suffered made it impossible for her to carry out her teaching duties. Bedridden for six years, she credited her eventual recovery to a spiritual healing where all other traditional cures had failed. Sprague became a medium known for trance speaking and automatic writing. It was in trance and through automatic writing that she wrote her inspired poems, many of which were published in *The Banner of Light* as well as individual collections. The narrative of a young woman being stricken with illness, bedridden, and then turning to Spiritualism was a popular trope. In these scenarios the illness served to place the woman into an altered state, increasing their openness to being infiltrated by benevolent spirits who healed them and bid that they pass on the hope and compassion that they have been shown by preaching the truth of Spiritualism. See Braude, 99-116.

²²⁸ McGarry 29-30.

MOTHER'S DREAM.



65.

MOTHER'S DREAM.

- 1 WHILE on my lone couch sleeping,
In dreams sweet vigils keeping,
And night-winds moan along the sky;
In shadows dim before me,
Now lowly bending o'er me,
An airy form seems hovering nigh,
- 2 Is this some idle vision,
Or fancy's bright elysian?
Come nearer, angel, speak, oh, speak!
Now softly near me stealing,
And by my bedside kneeling,
I feel her warm breath on my cheek,
Her warm breath on my cheek.

- 3 This surely is no dreaming,
It must be more than seeming,
For now the sunlight in her eyes
Dispels my soul's dark sadness,
And brings, in tones of gladness,
These whispered answers to my sighs,
These answers to my sighs.

- 4 "Dear mother, I am near thee,
My presence now shall cheer thee,
Thy darling child can ne'er forget.
Henceforth to thee 'tis given
To know the loved in heaven, —
Watch o'er thy path and love thee yet,
Watch o'er and love thee yet."

- 5 Now softly she is going,
One tender look bestowing,
Now vanished o'er the purple sea;
No longer am I only
Sad, desolate, and lonely;
My darling lives and comes to me,
My darling comes to me.

Figure 13: "Mother's Dream" from *The Spiritual Harp*

Throughout the song, spiritual sound becomes increasingly human and intelligible. First, the sleeping speaker hears the “moan” of the night-winds, then the spirit emerges as whispers and finally as complete speech. This progression mirrors the transformation of sound in the Fox Sisters’ séances as well as Spiritualism at large. In the early days of Spiritualism, the Fox Sisters only heard knocks and raps. As they continued to explore spirit communication, the responses they received from the unseen grew more complex. Over the next few decades through the end of the nineteenth century, spirit sounds became more and more human. By the century’s end, hearing the voice of spirit was a common occurrence in séances, with spirits speaking and singing. In explaining this transformation in sound over time, I agree with Steven Connor who makes the connection between the increasingly “telematic processes of relay” in spirit communication at the development of technology.²²⁹ When the Fox Sisters heard their first raps, the telegraph was just several years old. Like the clicks of the telegraphic message that needed translation, Spiritualists developed methods of translation for spirit raps and knocks. The 1870s saw the invention of the telephone and phonograph, which modeled the possibility of communicating with the human voice. As mentioned in Chapter One, the connection between technology and spirit communication was not lost to Spiritualists. The relation between the two were documented in songs like “The Electric Age,” printed in H. W. Boozer’s *Inspiration’s Voice*.

²²⁹ Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 364.

3.4 Spiritualist Songs in Practice

While an analysis of the hymnal's songs is insightful for entering the world of Spiritualist thought and belief, the introduction to *The Spiritual Harp* is especially important for understanding the underlying sonic implications that made spirit communication possible. The introduction written by Peebles and Barrett paints a transcendental philosophy of music and sound inextricably tied to nature and the natural world. Nature and those who inhabited it—both living and dead—were sensitive to the effects of musical vibrations: “Music envelops every surrounding object with Aeolian vibrations.”²³⁰ The reference here to Aeolian vibration alludes to the Aeolian harp, a harp with strings strummed by the unseen forces of the wind. The effectiveness of the Aeolian harp imagery for Spiritualist discourse is clear: like the immaterial strains of music produced by the harp, Spiritualists understood unseen spirit forces to create acousmatic sounds heard by the living. Yet, the allusion employed by the hymnal compilers references a history of the Aeolian harp as both a healing, almost mystical device and as a model for the human nervous system.²³¹ As Shelley Trower has explained, conceptualizations of the human nervous system shifted towards the end of the eighteenth century. Whereas it was previously believed that nerves were hollow and stimulated by fluid flowing through, nerves came to be understood as solid and susceptible to vibrational movement like the Aeolian harp.²³²

²³⁰ Peebles and Barrett, 3.

²³¹ Shelley Trower, “Nerves, Vibration and the Aeolian Harp,” *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net* 54 (May 2009).

²³² Trower.

According to Peebles and Barrett, the Aeolian harp, like the human mind and especially the Spiritualist medium, was “active in that it is not only sensitive but sonorous, it hears and is heard, receives and transmits.”²³³ For example, a person perceives acts of speech as it is produced through physical vibrations resonating with the auditory organ. A similar understanding applied to spirit communication. Sounds produced by the living and dead were conceptualized as existing at different vibrational frequencies. To contact one another, the vibrational frequency of either group had to be adjusted to reach the other, either raised or lowered. Speaking of the advent of sound reproduction decades later, Jonathan Sterne pointed to the logic of statements purporting that radio would allow the living to communicate with the dead. As Sterne puts it:

*The logic is impeccable—if sound reproduction simply stratifies vibration in new ways, if we learn to “hear” other areas of the vibrating world, then it would only make sense that we might pick up the voices of the dead. The writer simply failed to mention that the frequency of the dead’s vibrations approaches zero, thereby rendering them difficult to hear.*²³⁴

Sterne’s reference to communicating with the dead, a response to a newspaper article written in the 1920s, points to (and simultaneously ignores) a possibility of spirit communication touted by Spiritualists that preceded the publication by at least fifty years. Like Spiritualists, Sterne argues that those interested in recording technology in the 1920s understood that extraordinary communications could occur when vibrational frequencies were sympathetic. Unlike Sterne’s

²³³ Peebles and Barrett, 3.

²³⁴ Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 289.

explanation theorizing the dead's vibrational frequency to be close to zero, however, Spiritualists understood the spirits of the deceased as residing on a higher spiritual plane and thus existing at a higher vibrational frequency.²³⁵ Therefore, the living had to raise their vibrational frequency in a metaphorical, spiritual sense—or in common parlance, to “raise their vibrations”—to make contact with spirits.²³⁶

One of the most effective ways of raising the vibrations of a group or congregation was to participate in singing songs together. In their introduction to the hymnal, Peebles and Barrett specify that because congregational singing “harmonizes an audience better,” they recommended group singing in meetings and conferences. According to the pair, the singing of all in attendance would enhance the religious experience and lead to their spiritual elevation. The religious meeting should shake with the sounds of every voice present, even though the resulting sounds might not be as polished or pleasant as a trained soloist or choir. The importance of energy and vibrations superseded the quality of the acoustic sound. The power of dozens of voices joined in song at full volume in a small church or meeting house was just as important to Spiritualists as it was to their Christian predecessors and contemporaries. Peebles and Barrett sought to harness this kind of whole-hearted singing style in *The Spiritual Harp*, but again, with more emphasis on the energy produced rather than the quality.

Their emphasis on the effect of collective singing finds roots in the evangelical camp meeting. For a camp in the woods, where people felt a closer connection to the natural world

²³⁵ J. C. F. Grumbine, *Clairaudience* (Boston: The Order of the White Rose, 1911), 7

²³⁶ Elizabeth Schleber Lowry, *Invisible Hosts: Performing the Nineteenth-Century Spirit Medium's Autobiography* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2017), ix.

around them as they joined with thousands of others, many individual voices joined together to bolster the group's vocal power. With a focus on the affective nature of singing, emphasis was on the medium rather than the message. Put another way, the subject matter or text was important, but not as important as the power given to them by a collective force of voices joining together. *The Spiritual Harp's* author once again made a plea to those who would use their book:

*We appeal to choir-members, not merely to permit the congregation to sing an occasional slow measured tune, but to heartily encourage all to sing with them every piece that is used in the religious meeting. Beautiful solo, quartet, and select chorus singers are heard with profit and delight in the concert-room; but in the religious meeting, let us have the great, throbbing, swelling, mountain voice of the people.*²³⁷

While focus was placed on the act of singing with others to metaphysically raise vibrational energies that would be sympathetic with the higher vibrational frequency of spirits, song text did matter. Séances, a primary location of Spiritualist ritual and spirit communication, typically opened with singing. Many Spiritualists chose to preface spirit contact with the singing of a Christian hymn. Well-known Spiritualists like the Fox Sisters and decades later, Arthur Conan Doyle, frequently noted the practice.²³⁸ Christian hymns were chosen specifically because they

²³⁷ Peebles and Barrett, 3.

²³⁸ Add MS 88924/4/8: Writings on Spiritualism by Arthur Conan Doyle (1901-1930), British Library: Doyle noted on numerous occasions the practice of singing Christian hymns in the séances he attended. His archive at the

were believed to set the appropriate mood, one of a serious and spiritual nature. While describing a séance in 1928, Arthur Conan Doyle explained that the hymn, “Onward, Christian Soldiers,” was used because “it has been found by experience that musical sounds are helpful, and also because a religious and dignified atmosphere is the best.”²³⁹ The hymn was typically preceded by a Christian-inflected affirmation, such as “We believe in God,” meant to safeguard against low-level, undeveloped spirits. Such spirits were undesirable for sitters because they often proved disruptive or dishonest. As discussed in Chapter Two, spirits of this sort were classed or racialized in ways that set them apart from white middle-class séance circles.

Aside from raising practitioners’ vibrational energy, hymn singing was frequently used as an entrance device for spirits making their presence known in the ritual space. In the example from Doyle’s 1928 séance above, the group of sitters had not finished singing the first verse of “Onward, Christian Soldiers” before an unfamiliar man’s baritone voice was heard to join them. Doyle testified that the voice was independent of the medium, whom he could hear singing when the spirit joined. This is one example of a common phenomenon where hymn singing acted as an invitation to spirit voices. It reasoned that the heightened vibrations created by group singing reached the otherworldly ears of spirits, who then responded by adding their voices to the song. Spirit voices were generally understood to manifest in two ways. Spirits could speak through the medium. In cases like this, sitters heard the medium’s voice, but understood that the voice was representative of an unseen spirit. Additionally, the medium’s voice might shift and change to

British Library is also filled with séance reports that he did not attend personally. These séances, too, frequently noted the singing of Christian hymns.

²³⁹ Add MS 88924/4/8: Writings on Spiritualism by Arthur Conan Doyle (1901-1930), British Library.

convey any differences apparent in the spirit's identity such as age, gender, race, or nationality. This was known as direct voice mediumship. The other method of manifesting spirit voices, independent voice mediumship, occurred when the spirit was able to harness physical energy—typically from the sitting medium—and manifest their own voice from thin air.²⁴⁰

Spirit vocal manifestation is important when considering both the function of Spiritualist hymns as well as their potential meanings. In referencing the Aeolian harp in their *Spiritual Harp* introduction, Peebles and Barrett point to an understanding reflected in the above examples. Namely, that the act of singing could facilitate direct communication with spirits. This conception of communication, along with the possibility of spiritual inspiration in the compositional process, is perhaps what separated Spiritualist hymns philosophically from their Christian counterparts. The music itself was not particularly distinct in terms of style or text-setting. There were more noticeable differences in the choice of texts, though some Spiritualist texts could easily be slipped into Christian hymns and worship unnoticed. Rather, the important distinction lay in the practice of the singing and how Spiritualists understood the performance of song to play a key role in contacting spirits. Despite this distinction, by the end of the nineteenth century many Spiritualists were no longer satisfied with the Spiritualist hymnals they had been using for decades. Echoing a renewed effort to organize at a national level, Spiritualists began to demand a new kind of song tradition that would be fundamentally different from Christian hymnody.

²⁴⁰See Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism*, 2:152-70. Later histories written in the early twentieth century like Doyle's study explained the manifestations of independent spirit voices through the physical manifestation of a spiritual substance, ectoplasm.

3.5 Moving Beyond Christian Musical Legacies

By the 1890s, many Spiritualists were dissatisfied with the Christian tradition they had inherited and began to call for a move away from Christian-inflected hymns. The move to distinguish themselves from Christianity paralleled renewed attempts to organize on a national level. In 1888 Spiritualist W. G. Haskell wrote a brief essay in the *Religio-Philosophical Journal* disparaging the use of Christian music in Spiritualist congregations. Though he conceded that music, and especially congregational singing, was of utmost importance to both Spiritualism and Christianity, Haskell found it difficult and counterintuitive to use Christian hymns to contact spirits. The reason Christian hymns do not work well for communing with spirits, Haskell explains, is that the source of the song is objectionable to Spiritualist beliefs and thus detracts from their energy:

[I]t has been my experience [...] that a quite large proportion of the hymns so used by our people are by no means consistent with the philosophy of Spiritualism, or with the experience of those who have passed from the earth-life [...]. Our hymns or songs, as found in our collections, are quite largely those of the churches, with perhaps, here and there the elimination of a manifestly objectionable word, but often deeply tinged with sentiments which plainly imply the positions of orthodoxy. I know how I feel when I listen to them. I am a dear lover of music, and especially so of vocal music; but when such hymns are sung by our people, in their circles or public assemblages, it is often with a

*feeling not conducive to harmony, because of my mental protest against the sentiments they utter.*²⁴¹

Instead of relying on Christian hymns steeped in orthodox dogma, Haskell suggested that new songbooks use original and popular tunes and lyrics written by well-known poets or produced through automatic spirit writing, writing occurring under the control of a spirit. He recommends that these collections be published as inexpensive songsters so that all Spiritualists will have the opportunity to own one.²⁴² The use of contrafacts in this way was not new. Contrafacta, or settings assigning new lyrics to preexisting (in this case, popular) music, have a long history but were especially popular during the nineteenth century among social and political reformers in movements such as abolition, temperance, suffrage, and workers' unionization efforts. Spiritualists tended to be involved in many of these reform movements, so they were familiar with this type of musical borrowing. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, Spiritualist hymnals like *The Spiritual Harp* relied on this practice when adapting Christian hymns.

A similar sentiment was expressed in a short column in an 1892 issue of *The Progressive Thinker*. H. W. Boozer, the composer of the songbook *Inspiration's Voice* (1895), wrote to bemoan Spiritualist music's imitation of Christian song. Writing nearly thirty years after *The Spiritual Harp*'s initial publication, he briefly traces a trend in worship music through the intervening years: a "universal custom" of congregational singing eventually gave way to the use of an organ with a

²⁴¹ W. G. Haskell, "The Hymnology of Spiritualism," *Religio-Philosophical Journal* no. 2 (July 28, 1888).

²⁴² This phenomenon also occurred in the publication of camp meeting songs and white gospel hymns as printing and wood-based paper became cheaper.

small number of voices. Boozer explains that quartets were most recently the custom, but many congregations had begun to return to congregational singing. He champions congregational singing as the best option for Spiritualist practice:

*The general interest being always aroused in proportion as the elements comprised within the assemblage are in harmony with each other, when each person becomes a participant in the exercises, as in congregational vocal effort all else is forgotten, and the thought is concentrated on that which makes the occasion. A oneness of feeling, such as the revivalist makes, is produced, impressing the Spiritualist with the greatness of this revelation of the century and the skeptic with the solid earnestness of the believer, while the occult influence through which the spirit operators make their best impressions on individual minds is thus given the most favorable conditions for its exercise.*²⁴³

Boozer's statement recalls the need to "raise the vibrations" during séance sittings by speaking to the need to focus and unify the energies of those participating. He also highlights the practice of lining out verses as having a "wondrously unifying effect" as Peebles and Barrett did with their "Spirit Echoes" in *The Spiritual Harp*.

Like Haskell, Boozer calls for a music practice that is uniquely Spiritualist but warns against the use of poor musical choices to accomplish this task. Boozer suggests that folk and popular tunes like the "Marsallaise" and "Nellie Grey" be combined with popular poems by

²⁴³ H.W. Boozer, "Our Song Service," *Progressive Thinker* no. 139 (July 23, 1892).

Spiritualist lyricists Mattie Hull, Emma Tuttle, and Ella Wheeler Wilcox to produce songs that would be memorable enough that Spiritualists eventually would not need to rely on printed songsters. A body of songs such as this, Boozer explains, would be ideal for Spiritualists who often had impromptu gatherings and travelled frequently.

The topic was once again brought up during the fourth annual convention of the National Spiritualist Association in 1897 when President Harrison D. Barrett took the floor to address numerous issues on his mind. He spoke of the persecution of mediums who were being accused of fraudulence and fortune-telling. Barrett championed the recognition of Spiritualism as a religion worthy of religious rights and legal protections, particularly regarding institutional stability and the right to practice without oppression or threat of arrest. Another issue brought to light during this meeting was Spiritualist music. In fact, Barrett dedicated a sizable amount of time to the discussion of music, going so far as to name “poor music” as a primary reason for weakened Spiritualist communities across the country. In the following address Barrett disparages the lack of suitable hymns for Spiritualist gatherings:

Inspirational poems of great length, able lectures, profound essays upon all sorts of themes, have been given to the public for nearly fifty years, yet less than a dozen attempts to furnish us a spiritual hymnology have been made. The “Spiritual Harp” and other musical works are all very well in their way, but none of them seem to have the melodies that catch the public ear and fasten themselves to the public heart. The music is nearly always difficult, and the beauty of the words is often lost in the attempt to adapt them to the peculiar airs attached to them. Some of our good people have tried to change the wording of popular melodies so that a spiritual meaning would be thereby conveyed, yet the

tunes are unchanged, and whenever one begins to sing to the tune of “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” the supposed new meaning is forgotten in the memories roused by the song. At some of my meetings during the past year such inspiring songs as “Jesus Paid It All,” “Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,” etc. (laughter), were wailed out to invoke to my aid the inspiring spirits who have long since entered the Home Beautiful beyond the Gates of Dawn.

Barrett lists several complaints: 1) the lack of original, memorable melodies or else the use of “peculiar airs” (likely meaning Christian melodies) that are difficult to sing; 2) the use of popular melodies, which resulted in the arousal of *memories* associated with the original, non-Spiritualist tune; and 3) Spiritualists’ use of Christian hymns with unchanged text that many Spiritualists found objectionable because of a distaste for Christianity. Barrett argues that despite an attempt to adapt hymns textually, the origins of the tune were too strongly tied to Christianity and, thus, to the singers’ memories.

Another important point to note from Barrett’s address is the reaction the convention audience had to the mention of hymns like “Jesus Paid It All” and “Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove.” They laughed. They laughed at the absurdity of relying on Christian hymns to summon unseen spirits when many of them had fought to distance themselves from the old religion. Yet, for decades Spiritualists freely used Christian songs—both melody and text—and Christian-influenced hymnals like *The Spiritual Harp* during private séances and large public meetings. Even after 1894, Spiritualists continued to use Christian hymns. It is particularly ironic that Barrett should speak against the use of Christian hymns because, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the

handwritten annotation inside a hymnal cover at Lily Dale indicated that the musicians had performed the Gospel hymns in his presence following his lecture.

While Barrett named *The Spiritual Harp* as exemplifying an older, outdated mode of Spiritualist song, later during his speech he pointed out C. Payson Longley's songs as a "step in the right direction."²⁴⁴ Longley published two sets of song books, *Echoes from the World of Song* (1893) and his *Choice Collection of Beautiful Songs for Public Meetings and the Home* (1899). Longley's *Choice Collection of Beautiful Songs* was a particularly popular choice for Spiritualists' musical needs by the turn of the twentieth century. Like *The Spiritual Harp*, Longley's *Beautiful Songs* were written primarily in four-part harmony and could be performed by a four-voice choir, quartet, or a soloist accompanied by a keyboard instrument. The contents of the Longley collection are more secular in nature than *The Spiritual Harp*, devoid of direct Christian or traditional religious references. Longley's collection is exclusively composed of original compositions by Longley set to texts by various authors, though most frequently his wife, Mary Longley.

The songs that C. P. and Mary Longley collaborated on were often inspired by spirit or were based on accounts of spiritualistic events. Two examples include the songs "Our Darling Nannie" (Figure 14) and "Mother, Take Me in Your Arms" (Figures 15 and 16), which explain certain workings of the spirit world. Another topic this collection deals with heavily is mourning the loss of a loved one, especially a young child or mother. "Waiting Near the Golden Stairs" and "Kiss Me Dood Night" both deal with the death of young children told from the perspective of the

²⁴⁴ *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention of the National Spiritualists Association* (Washington, DC: The National Spiritualists Association, 1896), 34.

parents who attempt to find comfort in Spiritualism. “Kiss Me Dood Night” quotes to speech of a young child, hence the mispronunciation of “good.” The inscription of “Our Darling Nannie” explains that the text is “lovingly inscribed to the little Spirit Messenger of Mrs. Longley.” Mary Longley is listed as the author. Mary Longley was a medium and medical doctor who also wrote numerous publications about the workings of Spiritualism and her own spirit guide, Nannie.²⁴⁵ Many of the lyrics that Mary wrote were attributed to Nannie, who was known for reciting poetry and verses. At the time of the collection’s publication the Longley’s resided in Washington, D.C. where Mary Longley served as secretary for the NSA.

In her book, *Teachings and Illustrations as they Emanate from the Spirit World*, Mary Longley explains the spirit’s journey after passing into the afterlife through the spirit, Nannie.²⁴⁶ Nannie was the spirit of a young girl of three years old who visited with the Longley’s frequently, using Mary as a channel during séances and more casual gatherings. In her book, Longley states that she and her husband grew very fond of visits from the child and “adopted” her as their own.²⁴⁷ Under the influence of Nannie, Mary Longley would recite poetry that Nannie either improvised or had learned at her “spirit school”. C. P. Longley then composed music to accompany her words.

Though not inspired by Nannie, another song from this collection, “Mother, Take Me in Your Arms” is a sentimental song inspired by an instance of spirit communication. The subject of

²⁴⁵ Mary Longley would sometimes publish under her maiden name, Mary T. Shelhamer.

²⁴⁶ Nannie’s visits with the Longley’s are described at great length in this book. One purpose of Mary Longley’s focus on Nannie in *Teachings and Illustrations* is to explain and demonstrate the ways children’s spirits developed in the spirit world as they would have if they were living. She describes intellectual, mental, physical, and moral development.

²⁴⁷ Mary Longley Shelhamer, 15.

this song is that of a young child transitioning into the Summerland. The composition includes a printed note explaining that the song is based on a story told by a reverend during a sermon. While working as a physician, the reverend came to know “a little boy of eight years, who had been injured by a run-away horse. [He] was brought into one of the wards. The little fellow—whose mother had passed from earth [...]—was found to be in a dying condition, and just before he breathed his last, he opened his eyes and with a smile, stretched out his little hands, exclaiming in a glad voice, ‘Mother, take me in your arms.’” The text narrates a living person’s transition into spirit-life. It is based on the belief that spirits helped the living through this transition and helped to ease their pain and suffering by projecting magnetic forces onto them. It also attests to the belief that someone in a transitional state between life and death had a clearer vision into the spirit world.

Like the other songs in Longley’s collection, “Mother, Take Me in Your Arms” would be suitable for a recital settings, such as a performance at a Spiritualist convention, or more informal séances and circle meetings. The vocal parts are written as melodic and accompanying harmonic lines in soprano and alto ranges, respectively. The piano accompaniment is simple enough that an amateur musician would be able to perform it in the parlor, perhaps joined by one or two vocalists singing the vocal parts. This song, like “Our Darling Nannie,” is similar both musically and textually to sentimental songs of the period. Both of Longley’s songs deal with the subject of the untimely death of children, though they are framed in different light. While “Nannie” explores the charm of the spirit child and the blessings she bestows on the living she interacts with, the narrative

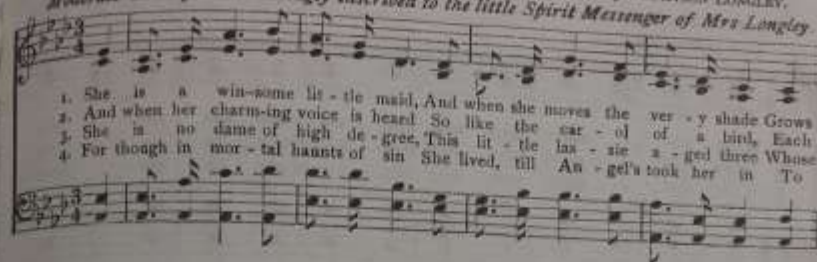
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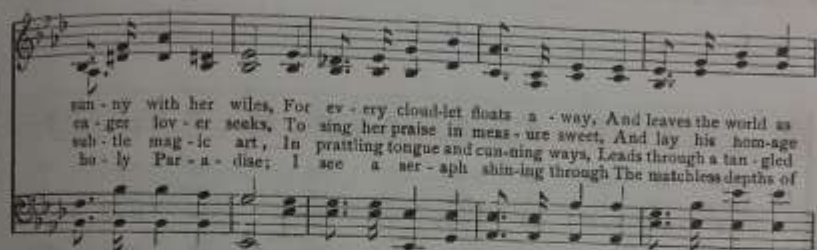
OUR DARLING NANNIE.

Words by M. T. LONGLEY.

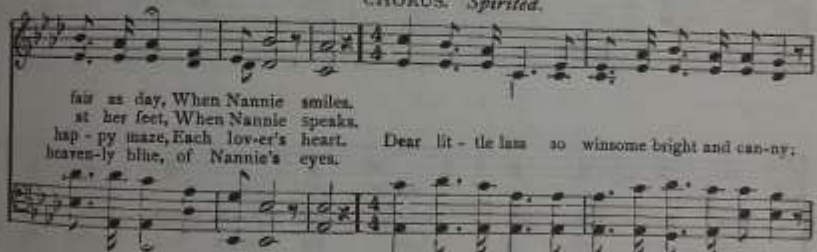
Music by C. PAYSON LONGLEY.

Moderato Con espress. Lovingly inscribed to the little Spirit Messenger of Mrs Longley.


1. She is a win-some lit-tle maid, And when she moves the ver-y shade Grows
2. And when her charm-ing voice is heard So like the car-ol of a bird, Each
3. She is no dame of high de-gree, This lit-tle lassie a-ged three Whose
4. For though in mor-tal haunts of sin She lived, till An-gels took her in To



sun-ny with her wiles, For ev-ry cloud-let floats a-way, And leaves the world as
ea-ger lov-er seeks, To sing her praise in meas-ure sweet, And lay his hom-age
sub-tle mag-ic art, In prattling tongue and cun-ning ways, Leads through a tan-gled
ho-ly Par-a-dise; I see a ser-aph shin-ing through The matchless depths of

CHORUS. *Spirited.*


fair as day, When Nannie smiles,
at her feet, When Nannie speaks.
hap-py maze, Each lov-er's heart.
heaven-ly blue, of Nannie's eyes. Dear lit-tle lass so winsome bright and can-ny.



Sweet laugh-ing sprite, Our dar-ling maiden Nan-nie, Pure as the flowers, Each



rit.
field and hill a-dorn-ing, Fair as the sun-ny glow of sum-mer morn-ing.

Copyright, 1900, by C. Payson Longley.

Figure 14: "Our Darling Nannie" from Longley's *Choice Collection of Beautiful Songs*

No. 41. * "MOTHER, TAKE ME IN YOUR ARMS."

Music by C. PAYSON LONGLEY.

Words by M. T. LONGLEY.
Lento, Con espress.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 3/4 time signature. The tempo and mood are indicated as 'Lento, Con espress.' The score consists of two systems of music. The first system includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'take me in your arms, While I feel your gen - tle breath Em - ing
take me in your arms, Hold me clo - ser, clo - ser now, While I
take me in your arms, An - gel moth - er, pure and sweet, Dear to
all my vague a - larms, At the slow ap - proach of death Take me
feel the heav'n - ly balms, Blow - ing soft - ly on my brow, Take me
me the heav'n - ly calms, With e - ter - nal love re - plete, Take me

Copyright, 1900, by C. Payson Longley.

* The following song is founded upon an incident related by the Rev. Dr. Thomson of Los Angeles Cal; in a sermon delivered by him in that city. The Reverend gentleman in his earlier years had been a physician in Europe, and while serving professionally in that capacity in a large hospital, a little boy of eight years, who had been injured by a run-away horse was brought in to one of the wards. The little fellow—whose mother had passed from earth when he was a mere babe—was found to be in a dying condition, and just before he breathed his last, he opened his eyes and with a smile, stretched out his little hands, exclaiming in a glad voice, "Mother, take me in your arms."

Figure 15: "Mother, Take Me in Your Arms" from Longley's *Choice Collection of Beautiful Songs*

"Mother, Take Me in Your Arms." Concluded.

rit. *cres.*

in your arms once more, Hold my face close to your breast, Bear me
 in your arms a - gain, Ere I pass be - yond the tide, Nev - er
 in your arms to - night, Soothe me with your tend - er love, Bear me

to the heav'n - ly por - tals, Where the won - ry find sweet rest,
 more to suf - fer pain, On the hap - py gold en side,
 to your home of light, In God's man - sions, bright a - love.

CHORUS.

Take me moth - er, an - gel moth - er, Hold me safe from all a - harms, Bear me

rit. *ff* *pp*

to the heav'n - ly por - tals, Moth - er, take me in your arms.

Last time repeat Chorus ppp.

Figure 16: "Mother, Take Me in Your Arms," second page, from Longely's *Choice Collection of Beautiful Songs*

of “Mother” is more tragic and heartbreaking. In the case of Nannie, Longley and his wife only knew of her as a spirit who was well-adjusted in the spirit world. The boy in “Mother,” however, not only is an orphan, but is dying alone. His loneliness is lessened by the presence of his spirit mother, but the situation still aligns with the tragic side of the sentimental song.

Similar themes of loss and death were abundant in nineteenth-century song. Songs produced during the Civil War relied heavily on these themes in an appeal to the personal and national sense of loss felt by the absence of those lost in the war (one popular example is “The Vacant Chair” by George F. Root, 1861).²⁴⁸ Similar themes can be found in the sentimental songs of Stephen Foster (“Where is thy Spirit Mary,” “Bury Me in the Morning, Mother,” “Willie’s Gone to Heaven”).²⁴⁹ Like Foster’s songs, such as “Willie’s Gone to Heaven,” “Nannie” and “Mother” are both written in major keys despite their melancholic lyrical content.²⁵⁰ Though this was a stylistic convention, I would also argue that for Spiritualists, the subject matter of these two songs was not exactly tragic. Instead, it was a hopeful view of the Summerland that Spiritualists looked forward to entering.

Longley’s compositions were most certainly intended as parlor pieces for domestic settings, implied by the expressive directions he indicated in the score. The piece is marked *Lento*

²⁴⁸ Paul Sanders analyzes both G. F. Root’s “The Vacant Chair” and several of Foster’s songs as temperance songs. See Paul D. Sanders, “The Temperance Songs of Stephen C. Foster,” *American Music* 34, no. 3 (2016): 288.

²⁴⁹ George Pullen Jackson notes the “dying” songs that were popular in Foster’s day and compares the melodic outline of several tunes to a theme he identified in “The Dying Boy” from the Sacred Harp. See George Pullen Jackson, “Stephen Foster’s Debt to American Folk-Song,” *The Musical Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (1936): 165.

²⁵⁰ Grove Music Online, s.v. “Stephen Collins Foster,” by Deane L. Root. October 16, 2013, <https://doi-org.pitt.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2252809>.

con espressione and features a wide range of dynamic markings. Hairpin crescendos and decrescendos are used throughout as well as rubato and passages out of time. The use of *fermata* on certain notes to divide sections of the text as well as the use of *ritardandos* assume a vocalist who is able to perform the melody accurately while adding artistic expression and interpretation. The chorus—"Take me mother, angel mother/ Hold me safe from all alarms./ Bear me to the heav'nly portals,/ Mother, take me in your arms"—is marked with a *piano* dynamic. Overall, the expressive markings are nuanced and require an attentive performer or performers. It is highly unlikely that a typical congregation, such as that implied by the writing of *The Spiritual Harp*, would be able to perform this song in the same way as a small group of trained musicians.

C.P. Longley's musical compositions were a combination of his training as a musician and his status as a clairaudient, able to hear and notate songs as they were sung to him by spirits. He could reportedly hear spirits like Nannie and would dictate the notes as she sang. This process explained how many of the young spirit's songs were notated and incorporated into Longley's body of work. It might also account for some awkwardness in the vocal writing. If the melodies were spiritually inspired, Longley may have been reluctant to change or adapt the writing as he likely would have considered himself to be a transcriber of the music rather than its composer.

While clairaudience was a frequent method by which spirit songs were transmitted to the living, there are stories of slightly different scenarios. One intriguing event concerns Leah Fish, the eldest Fox Sister who made her living as a music teacher.²⁵¹ The Reverend C. Hammond visited

²⁵¹ Leah Fox's first married name was Fish. She was Mrs. Fish when the Rochester Rappings began. She later remarried, becoming Mrs. Leah Underhill. I refer to her here as Mrs. Fish because that is the name she went by at the time of the occurrences. In her autobiography, *The Missing Link in Spiritualism*, Fish explains that her husband abandoned her and her young child, forcing Fish to earn a living by giving piano lessons.

the Fox home several times to attend séances soon after the first “rappings” began. On one visit Hammond participated in a séance with Mrs. Fox, Katie and Maggie, and Mrs. Fish. Seated in a dim room at a table lit by one candle, Hammond describes the sounds: “On taking our positions the sounds were heard, and continued to multiply and become more violent until every part of the room trembled with their demonstrations. They were unlike any I had heard before.”²⁵² The table began to levitate six feet above the floor. As the séance progressed, the sounds became louder and louder until the Fox family began to sing. According to Hammond the women sang “The Spirit’s Song.” This song was transcribed by Mrs. Fish as the spirits rapped out the notes of a melody. The spirits indicated the metric divisions and rhythm of the melody and that is should be sung to the words of a poem, “The Haunted Spring”: “At one of these circles the spirits rapped out a simple melody by way of the alphabet, which being given by letters to Mrs. Fish with instructions how to divide it into bars and rhythm, that lady being a musician, readily arranged the given letters into the air.”²⁵³ While they sang this song the spirits participated by marking the beat with their raps on the table.

Fish described another event where music was transmitted by spirits in a similar manner. The Fox Sisters had an alphabet-based system for communing with the spirits. Fish and Maggie were spending a quiet night in their parlor at home in Rochester. While she was reading, the spirits began to rap. The sisters interpreted the raps as a series of letters that did not form any comprehensible words (“GAGCBAG...”). After some confusion and questions to the spirit they

²⁵² Britten, 50.

²⁵³ Britten, Ibid.

THE HAUNTED GROUND.

Art. by J. JAY WATSON.

Moderato.

1. Yes, it is haunted, this
2. Have I not, under these

ORGAN. *Retardando.*

qui - et scene, Fair as it looks, and all soft - ly green ;
whisp'ring leaves, Wo - ven such dreams as the young heart weaves ?

Yet fear thou not, for the spell is thrown, And the might of the shadow 's on
Shadows yet un - to which life seem'd bound, And is it not—is it not

crescendo.

me a - lone.
haunted ground ?

Retardando. *Retardando.*

Figure 17: "Haunted Ground" composed by Leah Fish with the assistance of spirit

were instructed to “Apply the letters to your piano.”²⁵⁴ The spirit told them to set the melody to a poem, “Haunted Ground,” by the English poet Felicia Hemans:

*On doing so I recognized in them, to my surprise and delight, a sweet and tender melody. I was then told to set the music to “Haunted Ground” in Mrs. Heman’s Poems, but with the variation of changing “Haunted” to “Hallowed” in the last verse. [...] I have always considered this one of the most beautiful and interesting tests I have ever received. It certainly was not mind-reading. The letters as given had of course conveyed no sense to me, nor any idea of musical notes.*²⁵⁵

The resulting song was later arranged by Professor J. Jay Watson at the request of Fish. The arrangement is set in 6/8 meter and written with an organ accompaniment (Figure 17).

The scene described by Fish is very different in method from that of C. P. Longley. Longley could hear the musical tones being sung by spirits through a form of spiritual hearing. An introduction to Longley’s *Beautiful Songs* similarly depicts the creation of songs as a spontaneous crystallization in Longley’s mind. The inspired songs “came singing through his brain.”²⁵⁶ In contrast, Fish’s experience receiving song did not involve the production of musical tones at all.

²⁵⁴ A. Leah Underhill, *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism* (New York: T.R. Knox and Company, 1885), 416.

²⁵⁵ Underhill, *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ “To the Musical Public: Introduction to Vols. III and IV of Longley’s *Beautiful Songs*,” *Longley’s Choice Collection of Beautiful Songs for Public Meetings and the Home* (Washington, DC: C. Payson Longley, 1899).

As she wrote above, she did not initially realize the letters communicated by the spirit corresponded to pitches until given explicit instruction. This communication still involved sound as the pitches were indicated by raps, but it was a transcription rather than a performance that was transmitted. Despite these differences, however, both forms of inspiration were considered valuable and legitimate to the practice and furtherance of Spiritualism. It was this type of composition that Harrison Barrett sought to promote during his 1896 address. The simple philosophical and intentional distinction between Spiritualist and Christian hymns were no longer enough. By the end of the century Spiritualists were looking for ways to further separate themselves from the musical traditions they had inherited. Ironically, the compositions Spiritualists began to produce were parlor songs, which themselves were steeped in Christian ideals of domestic piety.

3.6 Conclusion

To understand the body of Spiritualist songs, it is not enough to simply look at text and music. It is necessary to understand the songs' metaphysical underpinnings and the struggles of a marginalized and largely decentered religious movement. The songs that Spiritualists chose to sing tell a deeper story of their religious convictions, their understanding of the spiritual world and their cosmological fate. Wishing to gain respectability in a society where many thought them to be hysterical, tricksters, or both, Spiritualists frequently relied on a Christian-inflected vocabulary that included sacred music.

Many Spiritualists came to their new spiritual practice from a Christian background or continued to practice Christianity as they investigated the claims of spirit communication.

Unsurprisingly, their musical libraries and personal familiarity lay in Christian hymns, those sung in church and at camp meetings. These songs, then, functioned as pivoting points for Christians who were gradually exploring and shifting to the tenets of Spiritualism. Protestant hymnals and the music performed at revival camp meetings offered a model for Spiritualists who had to adapt to a body of practitioners who were diverse in their beliefs and former religious traditions. Much like the camp meeting songbooks, Spiritualist hymnals like Peebles's and Barrett's *The Spiritual Harp* were comprised of an eclectic mixture of hymns from a wide variety of Protestant musical traditions. Additionally, Spiritualists employed the old tradition of contrafaction to align the hymns with their own spiritual beliefs.

Later Spiritualists were more forceful in their attempt to distance Spiritualism from Christianity. Song collections were one place to make this point, though as my research has shown, there were limitations. Thus, Spiritualists began to advocate methods of composition that were specific to Spiritualism; namely, music composed through inspired spirit communication. The examples of inspired composition given in this chapter by C. P. Longley and Leah Fish demonstrate two different modes this kind of communication could take. While Longley produced music by hearing clairaudient sounds, Fish heard spirits create audible sounds that directed her composition. Both compositional processes resulted in songs imitative of contemporary parlor songs.

Most important for a study of Spiritualist song collection, however, is arguably the actual performance of the songs and how Spiritualists understood them. Though suitable texts were considered necessary, especially in consideration of their influence on singers, it was the performance of the songs that was the most important. Singing was crucial for contacting spirits and was commonly employed at the beginning of a séance to initiate spirit communication.

Spiritualists developed a physics of sound that not only accounted for the difference between human and spiritual vibrations but identified methods for bridging the gap. Singing raised sitters' vibrational energy to a point that allowed them to contact spirits. The songs, textually and musically, are important for transmitting the complicated nature of Spiritualist beliefs. But it was their performance by Spiritualists in ritual settings that gave the songs their meaning.

4.0 (In)Audible Sound and Spiritualist Acoustemologies

Experiment XI.

Sit still and listen. Learn to think less and less of material and trivial things and more and more of the spiritual. Listen deeply, divinely, not for sounds or voices, but gentle whispering of the spirit loved ones. Value and learn to value spiritual blessedness above material pleasures. Go often into the still woods, or the hills and mountains where crowds and vulgar sights never obtrude. Extract the spirit from too close association with the physical senses. Love purity and truth above money. Avoid arguments and so never dispute. Avoid music which, in a subtle way lures the spirit from the silence. Joy in loneliness, if in it saints visit you and minister unto you. Then your loneliness will be ensphered by heavenly and rapturous voices of dear ones gone before. Never doubt but that you will hear. Be of good faith. The deaf shall hear, for spirit can and will commune with spirit.

J. C. F. Grumbine, Clairaudience (1911)

J.C.F. Grumbine's 1911 booklet, *Clairaudience*, was an instruction manual for those who wished to hear the dead. *Clairaudience* offered students of Spiritualism lessons in the mechanics of spiritual hearing. Each lesson was complemented by an experiment like the one above, designed to help readers hone their practice of listening. In this work, Grumbine explained how direct, independent spirit voices were made audible to séance sitters using the medium's physical body and metaphysical energy. The physical, material body became the transmitter for excarnate spirits

that were not otherwise tethered to the earthly plane. Spirit voices, he explained, maintained a certain vibrational frequency that made them audible only to the inner spiritual ear, the “etheric ear.” Listening with this oracular organ was a skill that had to be learned and practiced and should be, Grumbine insisted, accompanied by an internal, spiritual development.

Grumbine’s experiment XI demonstrates a particular way of listening based on an understanding of sound that developed over the course of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Theories of spiritual sound and the inner ear far predated Spiritualism’s emergence in the 1840s. Spiritualists themselves linked the newly occurring acousmatic sounds they heard to Swedish scientist-theologian Emanuel Swedenborg, by way of the self-proclaimed “Poughkeepsie Seer,” Andrew Jackson Davis. Eventually, listening practices and theories about how the mysterious sounds were produced solidified into general Spiritualist rules for conducting séances and spirit communication. In fact, from the first days of the Rochester rappings, practitioners created their own methods for interpreting the knocks and raps heard throughout the séance room. By the time Grumbine penned his booklet, in the first decades of the twentieth century, Spiritualists recognized a range of spirit sounds. No longer restricted to knocks, spiritual sound materialized as spoken words, disembodied singing, and musical tones.²⁵⁷

Spiritualism demanded a special way of listening to these sounds. Spiritualist methods of listening depended upon an understanding of earthly life and the afterlife as distinct, distant cosmological spheres that could be broached by vibrational frequencies creating either audible or inaudible sounds. What is distinct about these modes of listening and sounding is that

²⁵⁷ As discussed in Chapters One and Two, the development of spirit sounds paralleled the development of technology. See Connor, 364.

communication between the living and deceased was a two-way street, and it was facilitated by a number of sounds, some that would not traditionally be understood as “sound” because of their inaudibility. Spiritualist listening tested the limits of sound and listening by insisting on the significance of inaudible sounds, sounds that could not necessarily be shared or even proven.

As this listening practice suggests, Spiritualist history requires a nuanced understanding of the sounds that occurred, how they were heard, and how those sounds were interpreted. In this chapter I dive deeper into Spiritualist methods of listening and consider how spiritual sound produced knowledge of the world, what I call *Spiritualist acoustemologies*. I begin by reviewing the texts and treatises that initially influenced Spiritualism and the acoustemologies associated with it, specifically the work of Swedenborg and Davis. Then, starting with the frameworks developed by Steven Feld and Nina Sun Eidsheim for understanding modes of cultural hearing, I theorize Spiritualist methods of listening to the dead as acoustemologies. Spiritualist acoustemologies were based on a belief that spirits could produce either audible or inaudible sounds to communicate with the living. They also revolved around the notion that nearly any sound could be produced by spirits, including the sounds of musical instruments, those of a ship at sea, and the human voice. I show how certain types of listening were codified through the production of books like Grumbine’s *Clairaudience* as well as Spiritualists’ participation in séance circles.

By analyzing Spiritualist listening, the reasoning behind Spiritualists’ beliefs become clearer. Spirits communicated with the living by producing sounds and images and by manipulating the senses. In reaction to the emphasis on the spiritual senses, practitioners turned inward to develop their psychic abilities, placing increasing importance on their sensorial experiences. In the process they developed methods for honing their spiritual senses as well as protocol for contacting the dead. Much of this literature revolved around sound and listening.

While it may not seem reasonable to many observers—both modern and contemporary to the nineteenth century—a closer look at the sounds Spiritualists heard and how they listened offers one explanation of how practitioners came to possess their beliefs and understandings of existence on earth and in the afterlife based on the sounds produced by spirits.

4.1 Harmonial Mysticism: A Prelude

As stated in previous chapters, the beginning of Modern Spiritualism was marked by the Rochester rappings of 1848, in which the Fox Sisters heard sounds mysteriously emanating throughout their home. A more material understanding of sound might explain them away as architectural creaks or high winds pressing upon the outer walls of the home. The raps were sometimes explained as the sonic result of the girls' cracking their toe joints against the resonant surfaces of table legs and walls. Though any of these explanations certainly could have caused such sounds, for my purposes the ethereal reasoning that Spiritualists developed to explain the rappings are more important. We could analyze the sound events that occurred in historical moments of Spiritualism to determine the most “reasonable” physical causes, but this would not speak to the issues that were important to Spiritualists as they experienced them. For them, audible, acousmatic sounds—sounds that were heard with the auricular organ as the result of physical vibrations—were accompanied by a spiritual source.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ Brian Kane explores the concept of the acousmatic in more detail. See Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

For the Fox family and later Spiritualists, the disembodied raps and knocks experienced by the Fox Sisters were explained as communication with a spirit residing in the home. They referred to the ghost as “Splitfoot,” the spirit of a traveling salesman who had been murdered in the home.²⁵⁹ The lore around the Fox home states that an investigation led to the uncovering of a skeleton in the home’s basement along with the salesman’s traveling trunk. The knocks that haunted the Fox Sisters were thought to be intelligible forms of communicating, answering questions and, in the case of Splitfoot, supplying information regarding his death and final resting place. During séances, participants interpreted raps to signify specific letters, words, and numbers. Over time these acousmatic noises crystalized in the minds of Spiritualists as the voices of sitters’ loved ones, musical tones, and the voices of spirits singing.

Nineteenth-century Spiritualist conceptions of sound paired experiential knowledge with theories developed during the previous centuries. Sonic understanding was partly based on participants’ personal observations of the sounds produced during séances and among séance circles. These experiences were explained by writings gleaned from texts written before the Rochester rappings occurred, namely Emanuel Swedenborg’s and Andrew Jackson Davis’s treatises of the afterlife and its organization. Both men—Swedenborg, a Swedish mystic, and Davis, an American Unitarian minister—were known to enter trances that facilitated visions of the afterlife and its accompanying cosmology. The subsequent writings of both men were popular and much read by Spiritualists of the nineteenth century.

Davis’s early writings were heavily influenced by Swedenborg’s treatise. Swedenborg (1688-1772) was an inventor and scientist who took to religion and spirituality later in his lifetime.

²⁵⁹ This naming may have been meant to evoke the common conception that the Devil had cloven hooves.

His visions took him to the afterworld where he experienced its organizational levels of heaven and hell. He developed a cosmology and angelology based on these visions. Swedenborg's spiritual experiences are described as internal and inward facing. He described hearing angelic speech as an internal process accompanied by "'gentle vibrations' upon his tongue."²⁶⁰ These interactions with angels and the otherworldly occurred internally and in dream, devoid of physical sound.²⁶¹ Angels were understood to be the spirits of those who were once living. Additionally, his visions and writings were rooted in Christianity and he was heralded as a mystic and prophet. Many considered Swedenborg and his ideas concerning the afterlife to be insane, though he had a particularly strong following in England and North America.²⁶² Those wishing to salvage his mystic inspirations often referenced his earlier dedication to science and rational thought in order to reestablish him as an intellectual.²⁶³ His anti-Calvinist teachings undoubtedly drew Spiritualists in: a rejection of original sin, predestination, and infant damnation; and children's spiritual growth and angelic mentorship in the afterlife.²⁶⁴

As Leigh Schmidt explains in *Hearing Things*, Swedenborg's descriptions of afterlife sounds resembled those of the earthly realm. One difference, however, lay in the angelic language that "was cosmopolitan and unified," there being only one rather than the countless languages

²⁶⁰ Schmidt, *Hearing Things*, 230.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 202.

²⁶² As Schmidt tells us, "By the 1820s, *Heaven and Hell* was already an American bestseller, rivaling the novels of James Fenimore Cooper and Walter Scott for sales" (p. 206).

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 204.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 205.

spoken on earth.²⁶⁵ Furthermore, Swedenborg emphasized the precision of angelic language as opposed to human language, in which one angelic word could express more than a thousand human words.²⁶⁶ Swedenborg's angels had a finely tuned sense of hearing, able to know speakers' internal states based only on the sounds of their voice. Though he studied the five senses and how they operated in the spiritual realm, Swedenborg concluded that an earthly person's internal experience of any of these senses, such as hearing a hymn inside one's head, pointed to a spiritual source.²⁶⁷

Early Swedenborgians—members of the New Church—were concerned with presenting a respectable image to the public who remained skeptical of spirit and angelic communications. One method for developing an image of respectability was to introduce a system of rules for spirit communications (i.e., who could be contacted, who could contact spirits, and when). As Schmidt notes, “[k]eeping people from talking to Swedenborg's angels was part of creating that image of order, refinement, and rationality.”²⁶⁸ Though they might try their best to maintain control, New Church members could not control the various off-shoots and spiritual movements that popped up during the nineteenth century—including mesmerism and Spiritualism—that drew inspiration and guidance from Swedenborg's writings and theology.

Andrew Jackson Davis (1826-1910) emerged from the meeting point of various belief systems mingling at the mid-nineteenth century, particularly Swedenborgianism and mesmerism.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 208.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 215. Additionally, Swedenborgian legacies posed the difference between sight and hearing as rational and inquisitive versus emotive and obedient. Furthermore, cause of these distinctions the eye was stereotyped as being inherently masculine while the ear was passive and feminine. Ibid., 217.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 228.

Davis was known as a clairaudient who toured the northeastern United States beginning in the 1840s, giving lectures in trance while writing several books that would serve as a foundation for Spiritualism over the next few years.²⁶⁹ His spiritual experiences were marked by an internal, spiritual hearing, and Swedenborg himself was one of the many spirit voices with whom Davis was able to communicate. This last point was particularly threatening for many members of the New Church who saw Swedenborg's presence in a nineteenth-century mystic as going against their teachings.²⁷⁰

Nevertheless, Spiritualists inspired by Swedenborg's teachings focused more intently on spiritual sound, on making the inaudible audible. The discourse they developed around spiritual hearing—hearing the dead—revolved around retraining the ear to a new, enhanced way of listening. As Swedenborg biographer Gareth Wilkinson put it “the ... ear has to die, and be born again, to exercise these delicate attentions.”²⁷¹ A re-tuning of the ears was accompanied by theories and writings on spiritual sound and music of the spheres. Davis and Thomas Lake Harris both wrote about spiritual harmonies and music of the universe.²⁷² As Schmidt explained, “A Pythagorean who listened for ‘the music of the spheres’ and delved into ‘the secrets of harmony,’ Davis developed his own spiritual acoustics. Sailing on ‘a boundless ocean’ of ‘soul-sounds’ that

²⁶⁹ Robert W. Delp, “Andrew Jackson Davis and Spiritualism,” in *Pseudo-Science and Society in 19th-Century America*, ed. Arthur Wrobel (University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 101-103.

²⁷⁰ Schmidt, 229. Schmidt explains that by channeling Swedenborg, Davis was providing a mouthpiece and opportunity for Swedenborg to have to admit the errors in his revelations, thus diminishing his authority.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 239.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 238.

were ‘absolutely inaudible to the physical ear,’ he filled his autobiography with episodes of mysterious voices and strange music.”²⁷³

Davis’s theories of spiritual sound were brought to a head in 1848 with the Rochester rappings. Many in the area heard sounds they could not explain. Davis’s early writings predate the rappings by only a year, and, though Davis often disagreed with many Spiritualist understandings, his writings were used to support the movement. While Davis remained a major figure in Spiritualism for the remainder of the century, ideas concerning sound continued to develop. Others began to hear what Davis purported to hear. They developed their own methods of listening and tuning into the spiritual realm. Protocols for reaching the spirits and interpreting the resulting sounds soon followed.

4.2 Spiritualist Acoustemologies

To analyze Spiritualist acoustical worlds and their understandings of sound events as they related to spiritual sources, I turn to the work of ethnomusicologist and anthropologist Steven Feld and his concept of acoustemology. The term “acoustemology” was coined by Feld to describe a way of knowing through sound as it is inseparably tied to a specific environment. It combines “acoustics” and “epistemology” “to investigate sounding and listening as a knowing-in-action: a knowing-with and knowing-through the audible.”²⁷⁴ Feld’s formulation was a result of years spent working with the people of the Bosavi region of Papua New Guinea. Feld found that music and

²⁷³ Ibid., 229.

²⁷⁴ Feld, “Acoustemology,” 12.

sound were constituted by an ecosystem of relationships between human and animals, the living and non-living. Accordingly, listening in this particular location was dependent on the natural environment and the creatures with whom the people lived. In understanding how songs connect humans to birds of the rainforest (who are understood to be embodiments of human spirits who have passed on), Feld realized the complex system of past and present that the songs document.²⁷⁵

As Feld suggests, acoustemology supports knowledge of sound that is not restricted to the living but can be understood to create relationality between the living and dead. This is a major part of Spiritualist acoustemologies. Sound can connect the living to the dead and the dead to the living. Though Bosavi acoustemology is different in terms of how spirits are presented to the living (i.e., embodied in birds rather than ethereal spirit), both convey an understanding of the afterlife as relational by way of sound. Acoustemology relies on a foundation of cohabitation, not just between living creatures but between the living, non-living, inanimate, and generally any aspect of a space.²⁷⁶ This conceptualization is necessary for a study of Spiritualist sound because of the ways Spiritualists interacted with sound, whether it was understood to be produced independently by a spirit voice, through the voice of a medium channeling a spirit, or the resonant sounding of an inanimate object, such as raps on a floorboard or the chiming of a piano key. Rather than just hearing these sounds as coincidental or insignificant, Spiritualists heard them in the context of a

²⁷⁵ As Feld puts it, “Could it be that when Bosavi people utter just this one word [“Dabuwi? (Did you hear that?)”] they are acknowledging audibility and perceptibility as simultaneously materializing past, present, and future social relations? Could they, in that sparse gesture, be theorizing that every sound is equally immediate to human experience and to the perceptual faculties of others, of perceivers who may even be absent, nonhuman, or dead?” (p. 17).

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 15.

listening history that was at least decades old. The sounds of spirit voices and non-vocal sounds were treated as independent subjects, something that could be communicated with and understood as separate from any other living individual in the room. Like Andrew Jackson Davis hearing the sounds of a musical symphony while plowing farmland or like witnesses to the Rochester rappings, Spiritualists heard the sounds of séances and the voices of mediums against a background of sonic manifestations that proved a life beyond the earthly realm, just across the thin veil separating them from the Summerland.

Feld specifies that the sonic and musical communications that take place between the Bosavi people and the systems of the rainforest are relational because of the attention and importance granted to these environmental sounds by the people and their listening practice. Listening practices are learned and developed over time. Song creation and listening create a cohabitation through sound, giving voice to the birds, plants, and natural resources of the rainforest. In Feld's formulation, listening is reflexive and places agency on all sides of the sonic experience, particularly to those who have traditionally been thought to lack agency. In a similar manner, ordinary sounds heard by Spiritualists in certain settings were granted agency. Though in a non-Spiritualist setting an acousmatic sound like a rap or scratch might be explained away as the result of a mundane source, Spiritualists heard these sounds as having a spiritual motivation. The sound did not happen accidentally but delivered specific messages. Spiritualists understood spiritual sounds to be one part of an active and dynamic communication between the living and dead. The process of acoustemology places agency in the figure of the spirits; Spiritualists did the same.

While this project is deeply indebted to Feld's formulation of acoustemology, my theorization of Spiritualist acoustemologies differs from Feld's in at least one major way. Feld

specifies that acoustemology is meant to address audible sounds and the ways listening creates social relations.²⁷⁷ Audibility in Feld's case is essential because sounds shared between agents are what constitute communication. In exploring Spiritualist acoustemologies, however, it is necessary to expand this acoustemological understanding to accommodate practices of spiritual listening, a listening practice that did not always rely on physical hearing.

The sounds that influenced and inflected Spiritualist acoustemologies could be audible, as in the case of a *séance* medium acting as a vessel through which a spirit spoke, sang, or created music. In such an instance, attending sitters were able to hear the medium's voice, to possess their own memory and understanding of the voice and how it interacted with the *séance* circle, and to discuss the sound event with those in attendance and those who did not attend. Furthermore, the living could communicate with the dead by using their physical voice to address them in speech or song. A major component of Spiritualist acoustemologies, however, were sounds that could not be heard by the average bystander: sounds that were not audible in a traditional sense but had an important part in the creation of acoustemology and understandings of spirit communication.

Spirit communication was frequently facilitated by the process of mediumship and clairaudience. In these cases, one Spiritualist heard voices or sounds emanating from the spirit world. These events were inaudible to others and heard through the "inner ear," a spiritual auricular/oracular organ that was attuned to spirits residing on another plane of existence. While spiritual sounds were not shareable with others—they did not produce physically audible vibrations that could be heard by anyone else—these moments were fundamental to Spiritualist

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 12.

understandings of spiritual sound and a basis for their communal religiosity. The inaudible was abundant with potential.

In theorizing sounds that are inaudible to the average listener, or what might be understood as imagined sounds, I draw inspiration from Nina Sun Eidsheim's *Sensing Sound*. Eidsheim and Feld's conceptions of sound are similar in that both understand it as relational and not purely isolated to hearing but affected by a range of senses. As Eidsheim states, "My desire to recover the thick event is fueled by the impulse to understand more about the integral part that music plays in how we forge our relations to one another."²⁷⁸ Both focus on the materiality of sound as it is produced in and through the body, by the producer of sound, and by the listener. However, Eidsheim takes Feld's acoustemology to another level by complicating and deconstructing what sound and listening mean.

Throughout *Sensing Sound* Eidsheim questions and destabilizes what sound is by studying modern vocal works such as underwater opera and opera transmitted through wireless headphones. This understanding of sound goes beyond an exchange of intermaterial vibration by separating sound signals from auditory events. According to Eidsheim, "[s]ome auditory events that are not caused by a sound signal but by other actors could include auditory hallucinations, disease conditions (such as tinnitus), or sound experienced as the result of artificial stimulation of the acoustic nerve."²⁷⁹ In other words, an auditory event might cause an individual to hear a sound which is inaudible to another listener because there was no sound signal to create an audible sound. To borrow from Eidsheim, the thick event of music or sound is comprised of more than just the

²⁷⁸ Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound*, 3.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 176.

sonic vibrations which produce an audible sound. Thus, my definition of Spiritualist acoustemologies is heavily influenced by the work of Feld and Eidsheim regarding their work with sound studies and its relation to social networks created through sound and music.

Several salient points are notable surrounding *Spiritualist acoustemologies*. The first point that I would like to emphasize is its plurality and the many modes it could take. As Eidsheim theorizes in *Sensing Sound*, listening is contingent on the individuals involved in the process of listening, the social and cultural perspective from which they receive sound, the assumptions they make as listeners regarding sound and its sources, and the assumptions placed on the listener by other individuals or agents involved in the listening process. The Spiritualists in upstate New York came from a recent history of colonial land seizure and settlement where ideas of a not-so-distant Native American “past” circulated freely. As Matthew Dennis has written, western and central New York state during the early and mid-nineteenth century was a time of great social, economic, and religious change for Native and non-Native residents alike.²⁸⁰ In the area that Whitney Cross deemed the “Burned-over District,” mainstream and non-mainstream Christians mingled together alongside religions and spiritual movements that were not necessarily Christian in nature.²⁸¹ These included Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, Universalists, and Mormonism as well as millennial religions and the Seneca-based Code of Handsome Lake.²⁸²

Just as the Spiritualist religion and culture was diverse in the beliefs and approaches practitioners could take, listening differed widely as it was dependent upon the individual listeners,

²⁸⁰ Matthew Dennis, *Seneca Possessed: Indians, Witchcraft, and Power in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 8.

²⁸¹ Cross, *The Burned-over District*.

²⁸² Ibid., 56.

the spaces they occupied, and their individual beliefs in spiritual and sonic metaphysics. Spiritual sounds and their source could be understood in different ways depending on the position of the receiver. A first-time séance sitter might be completely enamored by the disembodied hands performing a piano solo and convinced that spirits were in fact communicating with them from the afterlife. More skeptical sitters might concern themselves with discovering the earthly source of the knocks and raps they heard emanating from around the séance room, under the table, or just behind their head. Such a skepticism did not necessarily equate to disbelief, however. Many self-respecting and sincere Spiritualists would not feel they had done their duty if they did not examine the possibility of fraud to a satisfactory degree. And because of the personal nature of Spiritualism as a whole, sound could be particularly powerful in assuring participants that their beliefs were justified—or conversely, a personalized sound that was misdirected might have the opposite effect. For example, a disembodied voice or a medium-channeled spirit voice that claimed to be the loved one of a particular sitter would be more meaningful and thus more powerful in convincing them of Spiritualism's truth than it would be to another in the circle who had no connection to that particular spirit. Continuing in this line of thought, sounds that might convince one person because of their particular familial, cultural, socio-economic or religious history would not have the same effect on another individual who did not share the same social markers. Despite these distinctions, however, there were certain, documented understandings of sounds that were widely shared, discussed in more detail in the following section.

Aside from the plurality of Spiritualist acoustemologies, it is also necessary to note the significance of sound's multisensory nature within Spiritualist contexts. In rituals such as the séance, the senses and their manipulation took center stage. Lights were typically dimmed because it was believed that spirits would move more freely and be more easily visible in a darkened room

than one flooded with sunlight or candlelight. In such a setting, participants' eyes would be ready to see images or shadows that they might not normally perceive. And it was not just the sounds that offered snippets of the Summerland, but the vibrational frequencies attached to them. As mentioned in Chapter Three, vibrations were especially important to Spiritualists' conception of spirit communication, particularly concerning singing and music. Vibrations were how communications could cross over the planes separating the living from the dead. Vibrations took on many forms—from those that accompanied audible sounds to those that were too fine for human ears to perceive ("raised vibrations").

In ritual settings such as the séance, too, vibrations were something to be noted. In many accounts, particularly those depicting the Rochester rappings and séances sat with the Fox family, participants described the ways that they could *feel* the vibrations that accompanied the sounds that they heard. From these descriptions—many which came from individuals who either believed in the spirit communications or were at least sympathetic to those who communicated with the dead—the mention of the felt vibrations seem to bolster their claims. Because they could feel the vibrations, not just hear them, it is implied that there is more truth and reality to what they experienced. The vibrations grounded the spirit sounds in a felt materiality. If they could feel it, it must be real.

Eidsheim's notion of sound as a relational experience that is codified and restricted by the application of language is relevant to Spiritualist descriptions of sound. On one level, the use of Spiritualist-inflected language and naming of phenomena presupposed the meaning of particular experiences. Eidsheim argues that music and sound are pre-symbolic until language and signification are placed upon it. Once music is brought into the symbolic order, it does not cease to be pre-symbolic, but the application of language reduces its potential meaning by transforming

it into a trope. By emphasizing the pre-symbolic and prelinguistic nature of music and sound, Eidsheim deals with the affective element of sound. Referring to a “knock” or “rap” outside of a Spiritualist context simply referred to a sound as it was heard. Such a naming does not typically specify a significance behind it, though it might imply an agent who is doing the knocking or rapping. A Spiritualist use of the words “knock” or “rap” to identify a sonic experience, however, introduced the potential of spirit intervention. In the context of a séance report or accounts of spirit activity, the use of the term “knocking”—and specifically “rapping”—came with the implication that spirits exerted energy from the Summerland to create vibrations and auditory events on the earthly plane. The use of this language was codified during the first few years following the initial Rochester rappings. One example of this word’s use can be seen in D.M. Dewey’s *History of the Strange Sounds of Rappings* (1850). Dewey gathered reports of and testaments to the rappings which surrounded the Fox family following the spring of 1848. Numerous individuals gave their testimony to their own experiences of the sounds. Nearly all explicitly link the rappings to unseen spiritual sources or a source that is unlikely human in nature.

In addition to the naming of these sounds, specific meanings were credited to slight distinctions in the sounds. In one vignette, the Reverend C. Hammond described his communications with spirit and the spirit’s answers to his questions. Furthermore, he provides additional explanations based on a common practice and his own experience:

Have all spirits their distinct and different signals by which they may be known?

Answer in the affirmative. The signal consists of raps, varying in number, and emphasis, so that in hearing a great number of different signals called for by persons who were leading in the interrogatories, I never heard any two that were precisely alike. In asking questions which may be answered by the syllable yes,

a rap or two is taken for an affirmative answer. This is generally so intended I believe, but not always as most persons suppose it to be. I have noticed that a low and apparently hesitating rap should seldom be received as an absolute affirmative, and in such cases I have said, You do not answer me promptly, what am I to understand by the answer? Doubtful. You did not mean an affirmative then, but doubtful? Answer, Yes [...] Have spirits power over matter to move or effect it? They have. On being requested to give an evidence of such power I have seen tables, chairs, bureaus, move at different places and sometimes against the apparent efforts of several gentlemen: and in the day time with the usual light and without any thing to obstruct the sight. And sometimes the sounds which are produced by mechanics in using different tools, such as a saw, hammer, plane, chisel, &c., are very closely imitated—apparently on or about the table around which the company is seated; also the creaking of the timbers of a vessel, when laboring against the waves, in a storm, at sea; the working the rigging, pumps, &c. These representations are usually made for persons that are familiar with such sounds and at their request.²⁸³

The descriptions of spirit sounds given by Hammond are extremely nuanced. A knock or rap is not just a singular noise, but as he states above, “I never heard any two that were precisely alike.” In this case, a knock is not just a knock, but takes on a unique tone, like a subject’s voice. An affirmative answer or a “yes” was indicated by a spirit knocking once or twice. Silence usually

²⁸³ Dewey, 36-7.

signified a negative answer or a “no.” This distinction was at least true for Spiritualists and séance sitters in and around Rochester at mid-century.²⁸⁴

Despite this neat distinction between “yes” and “no” spirit responses, there were shades in between indicated by the strength or weakness of the knock. A weak or less forceful knock might shade the “yes,” bringing into question the answer that could be provided in the moment or perhaps even the validity of the question asked. A common test given to spirits, for example, was to indicate whether the family members of a sitter were alive or in spirit. When asked if they were alive, a knock or two would be given to indicate that the person was alive; silence would indicate a person’s status as a spirit. An affirmative knock shaded by hesitancy or a softened articulation might indicate that a particular member was close to passing to the afterlife or was suffering from a fatal illness. The distinctions in the volume and strength of a knock would of course be subjective. One person might interpret a knock as relatively softer while another heard it at the same volume as previous knocks. To clear up confusion, additional questions would need to be posed to the spirits.

In his description of the significance of spirit sounds, Hammond also mentioned spirits’ imitation of mechanical sounds. The sounds of tools such as hammers, saws, chisels, or sounds associated with ships occurred in séance scenarios. According to Hammond, these sounds were employed to communicate with sitters who were familiar with them and would find them meaningful. Sitters might even ask the spirits to produce these sounds as a test of their validity. In such an instance, certain sounds were targeted at individual sitters and thus would not have the same effect on those who did not have the same connection to the sounds.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

Spiritualists and séance sitters developed particular ways of listening and interpreting sound based on the early spirit communications of the Fox family and others in the Rochester area. These methods of listening were influenced by earlier practices developed by Andrew Jackson Davis, Swedenborg, and the members of the New Church. Nineteenth-century practitioners interested in the sounds and sonic practice of communing with spirits continued to write about the topic of hearing ghosts through the early twentieth century. Instructional booklets were written to guide newcomers in developing their spiritual hearing and ear. Combined with spiritual philosophers as well as Feld's and Eidsheim's theories of sound and listening, instructional guides fill in the missing piece in the construction of Spiritualist acoustemologies.

4.3 The Spiritualist Ear: Instructions in Listening

Instructional guides were written to help those who were interested in or else dabbled in Spiritualism to develop modes of mediumship. These manuals were often short in length (less than one hundred pages) and ordered through the mail, advertised in Spiritualist journals and periodicals. Topics included courses on spirit communication generally, the organization of the cosmos, telepathy, clairvoyance, or mediumship—just to name a few. Mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century J. C. F. Grumbine published numerous short instruction books, including *Clairvoyance* (1897), *Psychometry* (1898), *The Spirit World: Where and What It Is* (1909), *Telepathy* (1910), and *Clairaudience* (1911).

Grumbine (1861-1938) made frequent visits to Lily Dale in the early years of the 1900s, giving lectures during the summer season. He spoke about the subjects discussed in his books,

which were sold in the bookstore on the grounds. Grumbine was a founder of his own society, the Order of the White Rose, which was first established in Syracuse, New York. The Order of the White Rose practiced a New Thought strain of Spiritualism and Grumbine's books were meant to disseminate their teachings. John Patrick Deveney describes a split in Spiritualist practice that began to develop in 1850. The division between the two sides amounted to a focus on spirit communication alone (Spiritualism, sometimes referred to as *Spiritism*) and the other which emphasized the spirit as embedded in the living *and* the deceased. The latter camp, especially by the end of the nineteenth century, leaned toward New Thought teachings, Theosophy, and Mesmerist practices. Those who adhered to New Thought modes of Spiritualism were more concerned with developing their own spirit rather than only communicating with the dead. This included magical practice, mind-healing, and abilities such as astral projection and the spirit momentarily leaving the body, sometimes with the assistance of psychotropic drugs.

Deveney depicts James Martin Peebles as a critic of New Thought and stalwart supporter of the Spiritualism that focused on spirit communication.²⁸⁵ On the other side of this spiritual coin, J.C.F. Grumbine is depicted as a spiritual leader who fell into the New Thought camp, albeit one who still incorporated elements of spirit communication.²⁸⁶ Considering his support of spiritual development during life, it is not surprising that Grumbine's booklets focused on instructing others in spiritual growth.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ John Patrick Deveney, "Man is a Spirit Here and Now: The Two Faces of Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and the Creation of the Magical Occult Theosophical Spiritualist New Thought Amalgam," in *Handbook of Spiritualism and Channeling*, ed. Cathy Gutierrez (Boston: Brill, 2015), 142-43.

Grumbine's 1911 instruction manual for clairaudience was one in a series of books titled *The System of Philosophy Concerning Divinity* meant to help the reader develop spiritually in different areas, including clairvoyance and psychical perception. He begins with a definition of clairaudience, defining it as “[s]upernormal hearing, or clairaudience, is hearing thoughts unmanifest or unexpressed in sounds.”²⁸⁷ This “clear or spiritual hearing” differs from regular or “normal hearing” in which an individual hears sounds and interprets thoughts based on those sounds:

*Normal hearing deals with thoughts, forms or pictures created by sound waves or vibrations; while clairaudience deals with vibrations which transcend the normal scale or spectrum. It is specifically the language of the spirit, or one of the spiritual modes of communication and communion between excarnate and incarnate spirits. For since we are spirits, whether in or out of the physical body, we have access to spiritual as well as material means of communication.*²⁸⁸

Normal hearing occurred when one could hear the sonic results of physical vibrations. Unlike the physical vibrations that were heard by normal hearing, vibrations heard by clairaudients were heightened and presumably spiritual in nature. Grumbine specifies that the voices heard by a clairaudient are separate entities from their own voice.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ J. C. F. Grumbine, *Clairaudience* (Boston: The Order of the White Rose, 1911), 7.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

This is an important distinction between the sounds heard internally by a clairaudient versus the independent voices produced by spirits. The presence of a clairaudient voice signifies contact taking place within the soul—spirit communicating with spirit—and thus does not require hearing physical vibrations with the auricular organ. An example of this kind of communication is represented by the musical and compositional inspiration of C. Payson Longley demonstrated in Chapter Three. He “heard” the music in his mind and transcribed it onto the page. In the case of a musical performance where sounds are audible, such as a congregation singing a Spiritualist hymn, a clairaudient communication does not necessarily take place. Singers produce physical vibrations and audible sounds, and spirits (if they respond at all) produce independent voices that are audible and heard by all in attendance, not just those who are clairaudient. Despite a clairaudient voice being ethereal, however, the voice as it is “heard” can take on a material quality, seeming to be physically present and near. As Grumbine explains:

*Often one’s attention will be suddenly and startlingly arrested by a clairaudient spirit voice, spoken and heard so loudly that one may be surprised not to see a mortal standing near; or a voice may be heard so loudly in one’s sleep as to awaken one, and yet no one physically visible called. These clairaudient voices are so subjectified as to make them seem objective or material, the impression of sound being registered on the objective mind as such sufficiently through the subjective, spiritual process as to make it seem physically audible.*²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 9.

According to Grumbine's description of clairaudient voices, spirit voices and sounds were often perceived as real and material in presence. Though another person in their company may not hear anything, a clairaudient who heard these voices heard them as though with normal hearing. Grumbine's explanation, that the voices were "so subjectified as to make them seem objective or material" claims that though they lacked a physical earthly body, the spirit voices were able to present themselves to clairaudients so clearly that they took on subjecthood to the point that they seemed to come to the hearer from a place other than their internal person.

While those who experienced clairaudient voices may not have been able to explain them, Grumbine continues, Spiritualist theorists attempted to understand clairaudient sounds in terms of vibrational frequency. According to Sir Oliver Lodge, British Spiritualist and psychical researcher, spiritual vibrations or ethereal waves were thought to fall in between what was humanly perceptible by sight and hearing. A human's ocular organ could perceive a range of vibrations moving at the speed of light and the auricular perceived a range of vibrations at a slower rate, at the speed of sound. It was reasoned that there was a vibrational gap in between these two senses that neither the eyes nor ears could perceive. It was at this speed that ethereal waves moved. At this frequency, only the clairaudient or "etheric ear" was able to distinguish the spiritual

vibrations.²⁹¹ As such, the physical ear was not required in clairsaudience.²⁹² Rather, clairsaudience employed a “third ear” “which [heard] without an ear and [was] spiritual.”²⁹³

Grumbine’s explanations of clairsaudience tend to deal with the nature of speech, language, and intelligence. Spirits do not need to rely on language to communicate with other spirits, unlike humans who use speech (“intelligence expressed in sounds”²⁹⁴) to communicate with one another.²⁹⁵ In terms of the contemporaneous work of Ferdinand de Saussure, spirit-to-spirit communication did not have need for the signifier (sound pattern) for spirits could communicate directly using the signified (concept) without the use of spoken or verbal language.²⁹⁶ It was only when communicating with living humans that spirits used signifiers. Such an understanding of spiritual language is reminiscent of Swedenborg’s singular, angelic language. However, in their communications with the human mind, spirits express themselves in language so that they will be

²⁹¹ Ibid., 11.

²⁹² Though Grumbine maintains that physical hearing and deafness do not necessarily affect clairsaudience, a knowledge of language is necessary to understand spirits: “it is through language that the mind of man perceives and understands thought as it relates to material things, everything having a name, so the spirit people feel obliged to relate their thought and even inspirations to the symbols, forms, idioms of our mental world...” (Grumbine, 13).

²⁹³ Ibid., 17.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 34.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. C. Bally and A. Sechehaye, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959).

intelligible to the living.²⁹⁷ “Inspiration” is a fitting description for clairaudient conversations between the living and spirit for, if the individual is sensitive to spirit, the communication unfolds easily and takes on the quality of a casual conversation spoken aloud. Grumbine provides the transcript of a clairaudient conversation that a man might have with his departed wife:

*Take a concrete example. A spirit wishes to talk with a mortal. If the mortal is highly sensitized and realizes in his or her atmosphere the influence of spirits, he is all attention. He listens. He may think of or speak inaudibly to the familiar and beloved spirit friend or helper. If he hears clairaudiently, what he hears will often (not always) enter into the immediate thought which is present as the inspiration of the moment. Let this following conversation, now make this clear. His thought or inspiration,— “Dearest, (his wife) is here?” The spirit: “Yes, it is your Dearest.” Did you rest well last night?” he asks. “Yes,” she replies, “I rested very well.” “Spirits do not sleep,” she adds. Then she asks, “Are you going out for a walk?” He answers, “Yes, Dearest, presently.”*²⁹⁸

If the spiritual nature of this conversation were not known, a reader would not be able to distinguish it from a dialogue between two members of the living. Grumbine states that while

²⁹⁷ “Speech need not be spoken, and if transcendental or immanent, as the sentence “Thus saith the Lord” must be conceived, it is heard clairaudiently, spirit by spirit; and not as though addressed outwardly by vocal sounds to the normal sense of hearing.” Grumbine, 34.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 35.

many believe inspiration to be bestowed upon only a few, it is universal to all.²⁹⁹ Though Grumbine considers inspiration to be universal, the criteria he lists for achieving clairaudience is explicitly moral in nature. In turn, this morality, though not explicitly stated, was undoubtedly tied up with notions of race, gender, and class. For example, a moral woman at this period followed middle-class protocols that were unmarked as white.³⁰⁰ Though it is not clear, it is suggested that inspiration is the means through which the human mind is able to understand spirits without spoken language. As language is only necessary to communicate ideas aloud, the afterlife is “language-less,” and spirits only use language, numbers, and symbols when communicating with humans.³⁰¹

Returning to the technicality of hearing, Grumbine makes an important point concerning spirit voices: “Whether one hears clairaudiently, or hears dependent and independent voices, no voice of a spirit can reach a mortal except by means of the functions which make voices audible.”³⁰² Dependent voices refer to spirit voices as channeled through the voice of a medium.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 37.

³⁰⁰ In the 1960s Barbara Welter’s article “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820—1860” formulated an idealized archetype for middle-class woman’s behavior based on four qualities: purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity. However, because of the ways women of color—particularly Black women—were constructed as sexually deviant, it was inherently impossible for them to adhere to these pillars of morality. Writing about nineteenth-century Black women and enslaved women, Donna Aza Weir-Soley writes, “For if a woman had to be pious, (sexually) pure, submissive, and domestic, where did that leave black women who were sexually coerced out of virtue and piety and then put out to work in someone else’s field or house? Black women, by the definition of the cult of true womanhood, could not be “true Women.” See Donna Aza Weir-Soley, *Eroticism, Spirituality and Resistance in Black Women’s Writings* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2009), 23-4.

³⁰¹ Grumbine, 37.

³⁰² Ibid., 45.

Dependent voices could be produced by physical sound or clairaudient voices, which Grumbine classifies as “normal and supernormal,—voices of speech which we make or hear by sound waves, and voices which though soundless are not speechless, but are heard within and clairaudiently as spirit hears spirit.”³⁰³ Independent voices refer to voices that are produced directly by the spirit, seemingly emanating from thin air. Though independent voices use the presence of a medium, the medium’s voice was not heard. Instead, the spirit’s voice would be heard near or around the medium’s head “and seem to issue out of the lips and vocal organs of the medium without any effort on his part.”³⁰⁴ According to Grumbine, for a spirit to produce sounds that are audible to normal hearing, the spirit must draw energy or materiality from a medium’s body. Though bodiless, the voice relies on the body of the medium, coupled with the intelligence of the spirit itself.³⁰⁵

While Grumbine’s manual on clairaudience is only one method of explaining spiritual sounds and hearing, it offers a mechanical understanding of the way spiritual sounds were produced and communicated to the living. Furthermore, it maintains that clairaudience and inspiration were not only available to the chosen few, but could be developed by anyone, provided they possessed a spiritual mind and soul, as deemed by social and cultural conventions.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 46.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Though R. Murray Schafer’s use of the term “clairaudience” differs from Grumbine’s usage, especially because Schafer explicitly states that he does not use it in a mystical sense, some similarities between the two conceptions can be seen. Both men understood clairaudience as a skill that anyone could develop, and Schafer’s ear

Grumbine's explanations of spiritual sound shine light on Spiritualist acoustemologies and how Spiritualists understood the spirit communications they participated in, in and out of the séance. Séances, however, were host to a wide spectrum of spiritual activity and as such could host differing Spiritualist acoustemologies. In the following section I look closely at several séance reports and accounts to break down the sounds that were heard and their effect on the sitters who heard them.

4.4 Hearing Ghosts: Spiritualist Acoustemologies of the Séance

The spirit communications that occurred during séances could be sonically diverse, either relying on a singular mode of sounding and listening—perhaps audible or inaudible modes—or they might incorporate different sounding methods in one sitting. In the section that follows I provide several examples of séance reports in order to analyze the role of sound and how Spiritualist acoustemologies unfolded in each unique setting. These reports range from those of the mid-nineteenth century to those occurring in the early decades of the twentieth century, taking place across the continental United States. Many of these accounts come from the archives of Arthur Conan Doyle and are records of séances that he attended or reports—many from the United States—that he found interesting enough to collect and keep with his papers concerning Spiritualism. Accordingly, these accounts often represent practitioners of a white, middle- and upper-class social background.

cleaning exercises are reminiscent of Grumbine's clairaudient experiments. See R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1977), 208.

It is important to note that because séance reports are written transcripts of sonic events, it is often difficult to decipher what exactly occurred in that moment. Complex events that rely on a first-hand knowledge of the acoustic environment can seem confusing to an outside viewer who was and is not privy to the sitting's happenings. In *Anatomy of a Séance*, Stanley McMullin notes the difficulty of working with written séance reports originating in Canada during the 1930s and 40s. For McMullin, the séance notes he wished to use as the basis for his study were lackluster and unconvincing. However, his discovery of séance recordings from a circle that met during the 1960s motivated him to complete the study. The sound recordings provided a window into the dramatic events where the written word could not.³⁰⁷ Though I do not have recordings from the séance reports discussed in this chapter, I do have access to recordings of trance speakers and mediums' spirit messages from Lily Dale during the 1960s and 70s. These events are inevitably different from the sittings that I focus on because of the period and setting, yet they do offer a hint of what the sonic experience of audible and inaudible spirit communication might have been like.

Séances could vary widely depending on elements such as their context and the people who participated in the sitting. Contemporary séance descriptions contain a number of characteristics and proceedings that were consistent in a typical sitting. As discussed in the previous chapter, séances often began with a prayer and the singing of a hymn. The practice of both was a safeguard against lower-level or malevolent spirits. Affirmations attesting to sitters' belief in God were also common. There were optimum conditions for the room itself. The room where the séance took place was often a domestic space, perhaps a parlor in a private home. As many circles were social

³⁰⁷ Stan McMullin, *Anatomy of a Séance: A History of Spirit Communication in Central Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), xviii.

gatherings that developed communally, domestic spaces were the primary venue available to practitioners. Specifically, the séance room should be well-ventilated, cool in temperature, and devoid of bright lights.³⁰⁸ Excessive lighting was believed to hinder spirit presence and manifestation. The number of participants could range from three to twelve, though eight was considered by many to be ideal.³⁰⁹ Sitters usually sat around a table which could tip, tilt, or levitate, depending on the skill set of the medium in control. It was common practice for sitters to touch or hold hands, creating a complete link around the table. Some circles insisted that the sitters alternate between men and women. This was to better balance the gendered energies of both parties as they were understood in contemporary society to have certain charges—the positive masculine and negative feminine.

Séance reports were often kept during the latter decades of the nineteenth century (from the 1880s) into the twentieth century. These records paralleled the movement of Spiritualism toward a more scientific and evidence-based practice. The reports recorded the date and time of the séance, the location, and the names of the medium and sitters. Alternatively, sitters would simply record the séances they sat in as they experienced them. Some were more critical than others. These depictions were most often recorded in memoirs, usually ones focusing on the writers' Spiritualist conversion as in May Wright Sewall's *Neither Dead nor Sleeping* (1920), or in travelogues like Willy Reichel's *An Occultist's Travels* (1908). Depending on the author, observers might describe phantasmagoric scenes that could not possibly be faked or a hoax where

³⁰⁸ Julian Holloway, "Enchanted Spaces: The Séance, Affect, and Geographies of Religion," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96, no. 1 (2006): 182-87.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

every—or nearly every—sleight of hand was detected. Comparing séance reports from 1850 and 1924 demonstrates changing beliefs concerning sound in the séance as well as differences in séance protocol and process.

The first séance I will examine is one that was conducted in 1850 in New York City. The sitting was led by the Fox Sisters in the very early days after Spiritualism's official beginning in 1848. The séance took place at the home of Rufus Griswold, writer and rival to Edgar Allan Poe, who had been introduced to the phenomenon of spirit communication through his brother. Attendees included members of an esteemed literary set with the guest list including James Fenimore Cooper, John Bigelow, William Cullen Bryant, and George Bancroft. This so-called "Post-mortem Soiree" demonstrates early Spiritualist processes for communicating with the dead during the mid-nineteenth century. Specifically, they relied on non-vocal raps and knocks to communicate spirits' responses. Additionally, a type of mental-thought communication—implied to be inaudible in nature—was sometimes employed by sitters to pose their questions to spirit.

It was a Thursday evening and the group of men had been invited to be ear-witnesses to the spirit sounds produced in the presence of the famed women and girls from Rochester—Mrs. Fox, Mrs. Fish, Katie, and Maggie. Griswold's home was chosen for the séance because the women had never set foot in the dwelling prior to that night. Their unfamiliarity with the location was meant to protect the proceedings from tricks or fraudulence. Once the men gathered in the appointed room, the Fox women entered, and the group sat in silence. They waited for the sounds for half an hour. Though it seems most obvious to talk about the sounds that they heard, it is also important to note this period where they did *not* hear the spirits. For thirty minutes a group of prominent men waited in silence with their attentions focused on a pair of young girls. As the minutes wore on the men grew impatient.

Though accounts of the evening made no mention of this silence, the room could not have been absolutely silent. What sounds did they hear in these moments as they waited? In a room where conversation and movement presumably stopped, their sense of hearing became heightened, tuning in to the least change in the room's acoustic atmosphere. They likely became hyperaware of their own breath or the breathing of those near them. As the prolonged moments of "silence" wore on, perhaps one or two members of the party expelled a deep sigh as a sign of impatience. Perhaps in their heightened state of concentration they began to hear things that they might not normally perceive. Maybe they even attributed these sounds to the spirits.

After half an hour with no audible results attributed to spirits, they rearranged themselves in hopes of enticing the spirits to sound. The men were instructed to form a tight circle around a table directly in front of where the women sat. Soon after their reconfiguration the rappings began, faint and coming from under the floor, around the table, and from various places around the room. This moment once again called the men to engage in a deep practice of listening to follow the sounds as they travelled around the room, emanating from behind and below them. The raps grew louder until "no one could deny their presence nor trace them to any visible cause."³¹⁰ The group questioned the spirits, who gave knocks to indicate that they would answer questions posed by the men, one at a time. The process of question and answer demonstrated in this séance was developed by the Fox Sisters during the previous two years. The sitter asking questions would silently think about a deceased person that they wished to communicate with.³¹¹ They would then ask questions, either audibly or to themselves, and the spirits would respond—raps for "yes" and silence for "no."

³¹⁰ Britten, 64.

³¹¹ 102.

Dr. Marcy was the first to pose a series of questions that evening, after which he attested that the spirits' answers had been correct.³¹²

The members of the sitting had varying degrees of success with their spirit conversations. Dr. Francis Hawks's questions were met with faint sounds that failed to constitute communications and he soon resigned himself to the background of the séance. The following communicator, Dr. John Francis, was greeted by the spirits with a loud and generous roll of knocks. Francis's conversation, which turned out to be with the spirit of Scottish poet Robert Burns, was as follows:

'Would they [the spirits] vouchsafe to speak to his illustrious friend, the world-renowned author, Mr. Cooper? Would they converse with the great American poet, Mr. Bryant? ... [N]o reply was given. Would they speak to so humble an individual as himself? Loud knocks. Dr. [Francis] then asked, fixing on a person, 'Was he an American? Was he an Englishman? Was he a Scotchman?' The knocks were loud and unanimous. 'Was he a merchant? Was he a lawyer? Was he an author?' Loud knocks. 'Was he a poet?' 'Yes," in distinct knocks. 'Will you tell his name?' Here the spirits called for the alphabet, by sounds intelligible to the 'ghost-seers' [the Fox sisters]. The answers by this method are given in knocks at the letter desired, when the alphabet is repeated by one of the ladies. It then spelled out B-u-r, when the company indiscreetly, but spontaneously, interrupted, by crying out, 'Robert Burns.' This was the true

³¹² "He inquired whether the spirit which he wished to converse with was a relation, was a child, and what was its age at the time of its death, etc." Britten, 64.

*answer, and after the interview with the favorite Scotch poet Dr. F. declined any further communication.*³¹³

Francis began his conversation with the spirits by inquiring whether they would speak with other members of the circle. When no reply was given—implying a “no”—Francis asked if they would speak with him, to which he received loud affirmative knocks. Francis began asking a series of questions to narrow down the identity of the spirit: “Was he an American? Was he an Englishman? Was he a Scotchman?” After each question there was a pause as those gathered waited for the knock that may or may not come. Did the sitters hear complete silence during those moments? Or did the shifting of a nearby sitter or the shuffling of a foot under the table momentarily trick the listener into thinking them the knocks of the spirits? Regardless, the spirits’ replies to Francis’ questions were clear and apparently did not cause any confusion as to the correct answer. Eventually—after a request to spell the spirit’s name—the alphabet was called for by the spirits. The spirits called for the alphabet with a sonic signal that only the Fox sisters could distinguish. As they recited the alphabet slowly, the knocks sounding after the correct letter was spoken, the above quote makes the anticipation of the sitters palpable. Eager to unveil the spirit’s identity the sitters “indiscreetly, but spontaneously” exclaimed Robert Burns’ name together.

The Fox séance demonstrates the early procedures for contacting the spirits, namely a reliance on acousmatic raps and knocks. In this séance verbal exchanges were rare. Language was incorporated into responses using the alphabet, but letters were indicated once more with the acousmatic knocks. The acoustemological environment of this séance was comprised of the sounds

³¹³ Ibid.

of the knocks and the silences that separated the raps. It also implies instances of inaudible sound. The sitters thought the spirit they wished to communicate with—and often the questions—to themselves rather than aloud. According to the above account the spirits were able to hear the sitters' thoughts and their audible speech. In this setting the ears became sensitive to the slightest changes. The mobile nature of the spirit sounds meant that sitters had to listen carefully to the space of the room. The object of their attention frequently shifted as the raps emanated from above or below them, behind or in front, near or far. The sitters also had varying degrees of success. While the spirits were apparently excited to see some sitters, such as when they rapped enthusiastically for Dr. Francis, they would not sound for others.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Spiritualist conceptions of séance sound transformed over the course of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. While the Fox séance conducted in 1850 functioned largely using spirit sounds that were non-vocal in nature, over the next few decades séance sounds became more varied and complex. Physical manifestations became prevalent, with the use of cabinets making more and more fantastical visions possible.³¹⁴ The second séance that I will discuss is one that occurred in 1924 in Altadena, California and is representative of the vocal communications and physical manifestations that were more common by the beginning of the twentieth century. The acoustemological setting of this séance is different in terms of the types of sounds heard and the ways that the sitters communicated with spirits. While

³¹⁴ Medium cabinets were small spaces that were separated from the rest of the séance room, either as boxes that could fit one or two people or as a small enclave closed off by walls or curtains. Mediums could use the cabinets in several ways. Often a medium would enter a cabinet and while inside produce spectral images or an array of musical instrumental sounds. Sometimes, as was the case with a séance sat by Hereward Carrington in Lily Dale (discussed in Chapter One), individual sitters would sit with mediums inside the cabinet where they would witness or hear spirit.

the prestigious men who attended the Fox séance likely did so out of curiosity for the new phenomenon and perhaps to gather evidence for or against the event's validity, the members of the Altadena séance met regularly, with multiple séance reports demonstrating their serious investment in spirit communication.

Like the Fox séance, the Altadena séance was held at the home of two of the sitters, Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Baker. The séance was attended by the members of a regular circle with the addition of several guests. The sitters joined together in the evening. Gathered in a circle, the lights were lowered and an affirmation spoken. Next, the circle sang two hymns, "Ask the Angels to Bless You" and "Nearer my God to Thee." During the second hymn the circle heard a spirit voice join them in singing. The voice was strong and deep, changing the dynamic and timbre of the group singing. The voice was identified as that of the medium's father:

*In the latter hymn a strong Spirit voice joined, and was recognized by the medium as her father. She so addressed him, and he replied, "Yes it is Byron Wanamaker and I love to sing. I always sang in the choir and enjoyed it. Let us sing another verse." This was done and again he joined in.*³¹⁵

This séance report provides short asides to inform the reader of insider-knowledge of the circumstances of the séance, the circles, and their usual habits. After the opening song, the first spirit to make contact with the circle was Daisy, an "Indian maid." As mentioned in Chapter Two, it was common for Native American spirits to be contacted during Spiritualist séances, often as

³¹⁵ Séance Report from Altadena, CA; May 8th, 1924. Add MS 88924, 1, 14. Arthur Conan Doyle Archives, British Library.

spirit guides who connected the medium to other spirits in the Summerland. In this case, Daisy was the medium's guide and spoke independently of the medium. As an independent voice she was heard as a separate entity from the medium or any other sitter in the room.³¹⁶ During this séance the medium was not entranced and joined in the conversation with Daisy and other spirits. As described by Grumbine in *Clairaudience*, the independent voice referred to a spirit voice that was heard independently of the medium's vocal apparatus. Though it is not specified in this report, sitters probably heard Daisy's voice emanating near the medium or above their heads. Daisy greeted each sitter individually by name, demonstrating familiarity and regularity. Much of the transcript records Daisy speaking almost uninterrupted, though there are moments where replies by the sitters have been noted.

One interesting portion of Daisy's monologue is her greeting to a particular sitter, Mrs. Gates. The spirit references Mrs. Gate's hearing loss and that she might get her hearing back "if we can just get the vibration started."³¹⁷ Daisy goes on to say, "We must get the arteries and [nerves] functioning."³¹⁸ Not only was it believed that the spirit could make contact with the circle and participate in polite conversation, but spirits were also able to influence and heal the bodies of the living from beyond with magnetic and vibrational influences. In fact, the healing aspect of spirit communication and mediumship was especially common. Mediums were often advertised as healers or doctors. As a young woman and medium Victoria Woodhull offered her services to clients as a magnetic healer and James Martin Peebles advertised himself as a healer selling various

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

healing ointments and tonics. Furthermore, it is not surprising that Daisy, a Native American spirit, should be tasked with healing this attendee. Historically, white religious followers of Spiritualism and Shakerism looked to Native American spirits for remedies and healing, of both physical and social ailments.³¹⁹

Spiritual healing phenomena like those Daisy referred to were also discussed in Mary Shelhamer Longley's *Teachings and Illustrations as They Emanate from the Spirit World*. In Longley's conceptualization of the Spiritualist afterlife, newly transitioned spirits underwent instruction and learned how to create objects such as flowers by focusing their thoughts and energy.³²⁰ These objects could be infused with healing magnetic properties.³²¹ Once they were practiced and had reached a certain level of training, the spirits could impart these objects to members of the living who were ill or dying. According to Longley's writings, these magnetized objects offered the ill comforting thoughts, rest, and if necessary, helped to guide and ease them into the afterlife. Like the spirits that visited Longley and explained the afterlife to her, Daisy expressed similar conceptions of healing the earthly human body through a spiritual transference of magnetized energy.

The rest of the sitting featured a revolving cast of spirits who communicated through several methods including independent, audible voice and automatic writing. Many of the spirits were familiar with the members of the circle and frequent visitors to their séances and included: the physician-poet Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.; Crystal, the spirit of a young girl who in other

³¹⁹ Darryl Caterine, "The Haunted Grid," 389.

³²⁰ Mary Shelhamer Longley, 11-16.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

séances had conversed with Arthur Conan Doyle; Raymond Lodge, the son of psychical researcher Sir Oliver Lodge; and children of sitters including George, Ernest, and Mary Chitester; William Stilson Baker; and Jacky Murray. The last set of spirits, those of the sitters' children, is particularly important for a study of this séance's acoustemology. The other spirits who communicated were either names famous within the Spiritualist community or spirits that, though not famous nor known by the sitters during life, had a specific attachment to either the circle or the medium. The children's spirits, however, were intensely personal and implied an intimate domestic setting. Not only did these parents have the chance to converse with their departed children, but they attested that they *heard their voices*.

The following quotation is taken from the transcript of the sitting and describes the entrance of the children of sitters Mr. and Mrs. Chitester: "Three children of Mr. and Mrs. Chitester here came in, George, Ernest and Mary, each speaking in turn and each in a different voice. Conversation was personal, giving many names of those both in Spirit and in Earth Plane. All seemed to be recognized."³²² Take a moment to contemplate the implications of this description. By the time the Chitester children joined this séance, the sitters had been communicating for a lengthy period of time, perhaps half an hour to an hour. They had been concentrating for an extended period, focusing their senses—particularly their hearing—to perceive and understand the independent spirit voices. Perhaps by this time their energy was waning, weakened after continuous concentration. The report's amanuensis indicated that three different voices were heard, each one representing a different Chitester child. It is implied that the voices, like the ones that came before, were independent. The exact conversation was not recorded, instead simply

³²² Séance Report from Altadena, CA; May 8th, 1924.

reported as being “personal.” Perhaps the nature of the conversation was so intimate that the transcriber did not feel comfortable committing it to the report or else it was personal to a degree that made it uninteresting to anyone else. Hearing the voice of a deceased child was a common phenomenon experienced by parents taking part in séances. For people like the Chitesters who had lost children, the séance was a space where they could once again speak with them, hear them, and perhaps even see them.

Unlike the Fox séance of 1850, where simple knocks and raps gave proof of invisible intelligence capable of communication, the sounds of the Altadena séances crystallized into individual voices. From an evidential perspective, the difference is enormous. The sounds made by rappings served to signal the presence of an agent separate from the circle, but their meaning was nebulous and impersonal. The strength or weakness of the knocks could signal a variety of different responses. However, the communication was dependent upon the activity of the living, their ability to ask qualifying questions, and to voice both correct and incorrect answers. In this scenario the living voice—either audible or in silent thought—was essential for communicating with the spirits who were voiceless, aside from their ability to create generic sound.

In the Altadena séance the voice became the proof of life after death. Spirit voices were able to provide additional evidence by way of answering questions directly. The introduction of independent spirit voices into séance circles added an element of extreme specificity and intimacy to living/non-living interactions. If the voice was recognized by a sitter as a loved one or acquaintance—if they could “hear” the spirit’s identity—the communication immediately became more significant. They no longer relied on anonymous raps and knocks to speak with the dead but could lean on the power of the “human” voice. Even if the voice was not recognized as familiar, speaking with a voice that was human (even though it was understood to be unhuman in nature)

made the communion more “real.” A responding knock might be enough to convince a sitter of the presence of an intelligent being, but hearing the disembodied voice lent a certain relatability and humanity to the conversations. Speaking with a human-like spirit voice gave the exchanges a sense of normalcy. Mundanity marked the audible séance conversations taking place towards the end of the nineteenth century. Dialogue with spirit voices often involved talking about previous events, family members, and events in the lives of the living and the deceased.

For many, sitting in a séance was not unusual or extraordinary, but was scientifically rational and something they participated in on a regular basis. Circles could meet once a month, once a week, or even more frequently. These spaces gave practitioners a place where they could hear the spirits and draw conclusions about the afterlife and the continuing spiritual-life of their loved ones through the sounds they heard.

4.5 Conclusion

The séance was a treasure trove of spirit activity. One could see instruments fly, tables tilt, spirits manifest and evaporate, and hear any number of sounds. The physics of spiritual sound go a long way to explain the acoustemologies of Spiritualism and the séance, how knowledge of the afterlife was produced by listening to the sounds in the spaces of spirit communication. As the examples above have shown, the use of sound could vary widely in circles, especially as the century wore on. Voiceless knocks constituted spirit communications at the very beginning of the movement but became increasingly human over the next few decades. Sitters hearing the voices of spirit and their deceased loved ones developed different acoustemological understandings than their spiritual predecessors. The result was that their understanding of the afterlife and their ability

to contact it was much more personal and intimate, often recreating domestic social interactions like the Chitester parents who momentarily reunited with their children.

Spiritualist conceptions of listening began to develop long before Spiritualism came to fruition as a loosely organized body, with Swedenborg and Davis sounding as prominent voices throughout the nineteenth century. Spiritualists used their writings to explain the sounds they could not account for using traditional means. Building from these foundational writings, practitioners developed their own systems for making sense of the sounds based on what they experienced in instances of spirit communications, such as systems for “yes,” “no,” and shades in between. These conceptions of sonic possibility paved the way for studies like J. C. F. Grumbine’s *Clairaudience* at the turn of the twentieth century. Though a single study, Grumbine’s formulation of spiritual hearing synthesized acoustemological understandings of sound as they developed during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

How Spiritualists heard and experienced otherworldly sounds was crucial for building their understanding of the afterlife and the spirit’s journey after death. Furthermore, a shared belief in spirit communication brought people together on a consistent basis in their regular séance circles where they conversed with each other and the spirits of their loved ones.

5.0 Musical Virtuosity, the Séance, and the Musical Medium

5.1 Introduction

On April 28, 1926 Arthur Conan Doyle wrote his wife, Jean, about an evening spent with several friends in London. The letter began with Doyle's typically adoring greeting to Jean: "I think of your loving face and your sweet voice and the London fog seems less grey."³²³ He then wasted no time in relaying his recent experiences at the home of his friends, the Bartletts. Prior to the séance that night, which was attended by a small, intimate circle, Doyle described the parlor performance that took place in the Bartletts' home, given by a singer Doyle referred to as "the Indian Chief":

All well here. I had an hour and a half with the Bartletts. What a funny bunch! About the queerest relationship in London. The Indian Chief came and sang. It is an old house and the top story with the roof not too secure. He nearly pitched it off. He bought 30£ worth of books in the morning so I am friendly. He was the [thick?] dark man at the concert [...] on our night. I can't pronounce his name so I just call him "Chief." He alludes of the stars on the campfires which is pretty.

³²³ Arthur Conan Doyle to Jean Conan Doyle, 28 April 1926. British Library Add MS 88924/1/51: Letters to Jean Conan Doyle from Arthur Conan Doyle (1925-1930).

Lascelles and Mr. Simpson arrived about 8 o'clock. He said nothing about Clara's case but he gave her vigorous message. Perhaps he will say more today but I won't be there, I fear, if he comes in the morning. He asked me if I knew Prof. Little John. Now Little John, under whom I studied in 1881 was a very old man and came well within Lascelles' life period. So that was extremely evidential. He also said with some impatience "There is a spirit here called Phineas" –rather as if he were in the way. I fancy it was Phineas' humble representative or he would have been more respectful. I at once said how high a being Phineas was, to which D.L. nodded sympathy.³²⁴

For those unfamiliar with the language of séance descriptions and Doyle's familiar spirits, a short explanation is in order. As Doyle mentioned in his letter, the evening began with a vocal performance. Doyle noted that the singer bought many books from Doyle's own Psychic Bookshop, which he had opened in London in 1925. Doyle was friendly indeed. Following the musical opening, the séance itself began at eight o'clock in the evening. The medium was most likely C. A. Simpson, a New Zealander man who, upon developing mediumship, moved to England. His primary spirit guide was Dr. Lascelles, who performed spiritual healings on sitters,

³²⁴ Ibid. This transcription is based on archival research conducted at the British Library. The letter is handwritten and unusually difficult to read compared with other examples of Doyle's writing. Thus, there was some uncertainty in deciphering several of the written characters. I created this transcription to the best of my ability while studying the writing at the archive, as photographs of this item were not permitted. Specifically, there were three words that presented confusion and that I interpreted to the best of my ability; "bought", "30£", and "thick", and an unknown word represented by the ellipse that I could not convincingly interpret.

and Lascelles was the primary spirit that sitters interacted with that night.³²⁵ At one point, Doyle noted, Lascelles became irritated by the intrusion of a spirit named Phineas. Phineas was Doyle's spirit guide and usually made his presence known in the seances the writer attended.

This séance description is notable for several reasons, but perhaps most intriguing is the evening's schedule of events. Before guests gathered around a séance table to hear the sonic indications of spirit communication, they sat before the singer to hear a vocal recital. Doyle's descriptive language concerning the power of the singer's voice ("He nearly pitched [the roof] off.") gives readers a visceral understanding of what his voice must have sounded and felt like. From Doyle's letter, it seems certain that the room shook and reverberated with the man's singing, and the power of his voice suggests that he was operatically trained. Doyle's attention to the vibrational force of the singer's voice was likely honed by his Spiritualist practice.³²⁶ The recital was attended by only a few audience members in a relatively small room. How did they experience the sound of the voice in this space? Further, how did this vocal recital frame the spiritual space or prepare sitters for the contact they were about to make with spirit?

This letter, and the séance it depicts, is a bit of a mystery. Doyle leaves many questions unanswered. Who, for example, were the Bartletts? Doyle wrote of them in a casual way, avoiding further identification, presumably with the assumption that Jean Conan Doyle would know who he was referring to. One possibility is the family of John Allen Bartlett, a retired British naval

³²⁵ Sheryl Root, "The Healing Touch: Spiritual Healing in England, c. 1870—1955," (PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2005), 41.

³²⁶ As discussed in Chapter Three and Four, Spiritualists understood audible spirit communications in terms of vibrational frequency.

officer and medium.³²⁷ In his *History of Spiritualism*, Doyle wrote of how, in partnership with archeologist and psychical researcher Frederick Bligh Bond, Bartlett channeled spirits in automatic writing to uncover the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey in the first decade of the twentieth century.³²⁸ However, I have not found any other indications that the two men knew each other. Moving to the question of the vocalist, why did the “Indian chief” buy so many books earlier that day? Was his visit intended as one of acquisition during a time when books such as these would have been difficult to get in North America? Did he stay for the séance that followed his performance? Perhaps most importantly, who was the “Indian chief?”

One potential answer to this last question lies in two photographs found in a scrapbook at Lily Dale’s Marion Skidmore Library. Both photographs captured the image of two men. One was Oskenton (Kanien’kehá:ka/Mohawk), a musician and Lily Dale resident who went publicly by a single name, sometimes with the added title “Chief.” In the photographs he wears a fringed buckskin tunic over a long-sleeved shirt, matching leggings, and moccasins. The ensemble is completed by long, layered necklaces and a large, feathered headdress. Oskenton stands angled and looking towards another man, who the scrapbook’s text identifies as Arthur Conan Doyle.³²⁹ Doyle, with white hair and a walrus-style mustache, wears a three-piece suit, tie, and double-breasted overcoat. In the first photograph (Figure 18) Doyle holds and aims a bow and arrow toward a target outside of the picture’s frame. In the second (Figure 19), the two men stand together, Oskenton’s arm draped over Doyle’s shoulder.

³²⁷ Doyle, *History of Spiritualism*, 2: 202

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ The text that has been pasted underneath the second photograph reads “England’s Sir Arthur Conan Doyle... in addition to Sir Arthur’s fame as the author of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries”.



Figure 18: Oskanonton and Arthur Conan Doyle



Figure 19: Oskanonton and Arthur Conan Doyle

It is not clear where these photographs were taken. Though Doyle visited and toured the United States multiple times, there is no indication that he visited Lily Dale. It is possible that the images may have been captured somewhere else in North America, but I think it is likely that these photographs were taken in England. Oskenonton was a frequent traveler to that country. During the height of his career from the 1920s to the 1930s, Oskenonton made the journey by steam ship numerous times a year to perform his signature role as the Medicine Man in the London production of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *The Song of Hiawatha*. It is not a stretch to imagine that Doyle and Oskenonton—who garnered a degree of celebrity in London during this time—would have become acquainted. It is for this reason (in addition to reasons that I will explain in more detail later in this chapter) that it is likely that Oskenonton may have been the “Indian chief” in the séance that Doyle attended at the Bartletts’.

This scene—set up in the archives of both men—offers an important look into the role music played in the séance, in the spiritual lives of Spiritualists, and in the careers of musical mediums. By musical mediums, I refer both to mediums who employed music and musicians who were closely connected to Spiritualist communities and related practices of channeling. As I have demonstrated in previous chapters, music was a crucial part of many séance circles and scenes. Hymn singing provided structure to the ritual of the séance while, as often was the case, also syncing the earthy and ethereal realms. Popular musical genres and performance techniques gave mediums a common vocabulary to draw from, especially when channeling spirits of the Other. What has gone unexamined thus far, however, is how musicians operated within séances and Spiritualist circles. Here, the distinction lies in musical performance by highly trained, virtuosic musicians as opposed to music solely as a means to an end.

In this chapter I examine the musical séance and how musicianship, mediumship, and virtuosity mingled together in this space to create experiences of spirit communication. I rely on accounts of musical séances in addition to focusing on Oskenonton's musical and spiritual career as a case study. I argue that musical mediums utilized the virtuosity of their musical performance to create an experience of mediumistic virtuosity in Spiritualist settings. Virtuosity was present in the performances of musicians like the "Indian chief" whose singing was a prelude to a séance. Some musicians like the violinist Florizel von Reuter transformed their musical virtuosity into mediumistic virtuosity by eliciting spirit communication through music. Virtuosity was also evident in the mediumship of those who channeled the spirits—both through musical performance and otherwise—as they created an atmosphere of ethereal manifestations. Though I do not mean to say their mediumship was an "act" or fraudulent in nature, theirs was a performance in terms of creating a certain affective environment, preparing and guiding séance sitters, and acting as a channel between spirits and the living. Here, I use the term "affective" in a general way, to signify the overall emotional and sensorial impressions séance sitters experienced.

Virtuosity has long been a topic of intense debate within musical discourse and criticism. In the context of the nineteenth century and the subsequent decades of the early twentieth century, to be virtuosic meant to possess a highly advanced technical prowess. Usage of the term could also at times bestow certain judgements on the performer, such as the idea that the virtuoso was nothing more than a musical automaton or, alternatively, the musicians' technical abilities were predicated on a supernatural or superhuman quality. This is where the virtuosity of mediumship becomes clearer. Like the virtuosic musician, mediums were frequently understood to be nothing more than a passive instrument or conduit through which spirits could contact the living. Additionally, mediums had direct access to the supernatural and were not entirely of the earthly realm. They had

one foot anchored in the other side. In this chapter I examine virtuosity in these terms and as a legacy of nineteenth-century musical discourse. I demonstrate how virtuosity infiltrated the séance with a focus on musical performance in these spaces.

As I have discussed over the course of this dissertation, music infiltrated Spiritualist practice in numerous ways. In Chapter Two, the language of popular music was incorporated into descriptions of séances to make sitters' experiences of spirit communication legible to a population familiar with vaudeville and minstrelsy. Chapter Three emphasized the importance of hymnal traditions and singing to the process of preparing sitters to encounter spirits. Though not focused on music per se, the fourth chapter understands the mechanics and physics of audible and inaudible spirit communications. This chapter presents yet one more example of music in the Spiritualist practice, this time from trained musicians.

I begin by exploring musical virtuosity in more depth. Referencing various musicological understandings of virtuosity, I apply the concept both to musical mediums and to mediums generally. I demonstrate that virtuosity was present in mediums' performances in the way they created an environment where sitters could immerse themselves in sensuous experiences, how they manifested spirits, and how they delivered spirit communications in their various formats.

Next, I provide a brief overview of musical séance performances and demonstrate how mediumistic virtuosity played out in Spiritualist circles. Unlike in Chapter Three, which focuses on hymn singing, the focus of this chapter will primarily be on the performance of concert music or the performances given by trained musicians. For many, music was proof of spirit communication. Just as automatic writings or spirit paintings were evidence of the existence of life after death, spirit-motivated song could have the same positivistic meaning.

In the final section I apply the elements analyzed in the first half of the chapter—virtuosity and séance performance—to Oskenton's performance. Though Oskenton demonstrated musical virtuosity and spirituality in many of the same ways as the other musical mediums I detail, Oskenton moved differently in Spiritualist spaces, or at least the archive frames him differently. In this case study, mediumship and spirituality manifested in different ways. While white musical mediums like Reuter used his musical performance in specific and structured ways to initiate spirit communication—and in turn, his musicianship was influenced significantly by his mediumship—the connections between Oskenton's musicality and spirituality are less clearly defined. In many ways Oskenton's musical mediumship is hidden and obscured, much like the identity of the "Indian chief" in Doyle's séance. I tease out the ways that Oskenton's musical virtuosity mingled with his mediumship as well as how both were influenced by Oskenton's identity as a Kanien'kehá:ka man.

Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates the ways that musical virtuosity was used to create the affective environment of the musical séance. Musical mediums used their musicality constructively in séance scenes and, conversely, their mediumship often effected how they thought about and utilized their own musical practice. Just as Spiritualism tended to be a highly individualized religious and spiritual practice, musical mediumship took unique forms. The following section analyzes Romantic discourses of virtuosity and its relationship to musical mediumship. As I demonstrate, the framework of virtuosity offers a comprehensive understanding of how mediums created musical séances.

5.2 The Virtuosity of Spirit Music

What made the performances of musical mediums so impressive to listeners was the aura of virtuosity that hung over them. Musical mediums were known for producing unbelievable manifestations regarding musical instruments, such as making instruments move, float, or produce music without even touching them. They could also produce music that was astonishing for a variety of reasons, either because of their technical prowess, extraordinary range in terms of voice or musical style, or because of their lack of musical training and knowledge. These moments of virtuosity were explained as the result of spirit inspiration or influence, yet the discourse around these incidents also mirrored the discourse surrounding virtuosity in the nineteenth century.

The phenomenon of the virtuoso performer emerged and reached its climax in the decades proceeding the emergence of Spiritualism. As Alexander Stefaniak has written, for many contemporary writers and musical critics “the heyday of virtuosity symbolically began in the late 1820s, when Niccolò Paganini began touring outside of Italy, and it reached an iconic height with Berlin “Lisztomania” in 1841.”³³⁰ There have been many ways of understanding virtuosity and the performative characteristics the label invokes. For Jim Samson, the nineteenth-century virtuoso was marked by individualism: a lonely soul who was separated from society by their “genius” and an ability to push the bounds of the possible.³³¹ Dance scholar Judith Hamera understands

³³⁰ Alexander Stefaniak, *Schumann's Virtuosity: Criticism, Composition, and Performance in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016).

³³¹ Jim Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work: The Transcendental Studies of Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 76.

virtuosity in terms of a relational economy.³³² In this framing, virtuosi possess a high level of skill that allows them to stand apart from other performers, even when they are performing similar actions, like the same dance moves, for example.³³³ Stefaniak explains that while virtuosity “entailed an extraordinary display of physical skill from the performer—velocity, power, facility, even the ability to invent and execute radically new sounds,” many music critics feared that such a level of technical skill detracted from the intellectual and spiritual nature of the performance.³³⁴ Furthermore, discourse of virtuosity demonstrated tension between these two extremes, exemplified in the writings of Robert Schumann. For example, Schumann wrote of performers like Thalberg in feminizing language, criticizing his virtuosity as empty and frivolous, yet framed the virtuosity of Liszt as deeper, masculine, and sublime.³³⁵ In dealing with present day discourse around virtuosity, Mina Yang argues that a similar legacy is found in the anti-Asian racist myths that assume Asian and Asian American musicians will possess flawless technical skills, yet deem them lacking expression and akin to soulless automatons.³³⁶

Though I keep these many elements of virtuosic performance in mind, for the purposes of this chapter I focus on virtuosity’s evocation of the supernatural and the implication that virtuosi

³³² Judith Hamera, “The Labors of Michael Jackson: Virtuosity, Deindustrialization, and Dancing Work,” *PMLA* 127, no. 4 (2012): 751-65.

³³³ Hamera, 752.

³³⁴ Stefaniak, 2 and 14.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 133-4.

³³⁶ Mina Yang, *Planet Beethoven: Classical Music at the Turn of the Millennium* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), 79-80.

pushed the limits of what was rationally possible.³³⁷ I understand this form of virtuosity in connection to mediumistic virtuosity. By mediumistic virtuosity, I mean the ways that mediums—both musical and nonmusical—used virtuosity to create the atmosphere of the séance. Mediums employed virtuosic performance in the ways they conjured spirits, through the inflections of their voice, by their ability to make objects move and float in their presence, and the fantastic sensations that pushed the limits of what was humanly possible.

While mediumistic virtuosity pushed against the boundary separating the living from the dead, musical virtuosity could inspire similar spiritual sensations in listeners. As Stefaniak has argued, Liszt's virtuosity represented the sublime for many listeners: a quality that they could not quite comprehend that left them in awe.³³⁸ Experiences of witnessing this kind of sublime performance left listeners with a "mixture of thrill, sensory overload, and discomfort."³³⁹ This idea of sensory overload in relationship to experiences of the sublime is key for understanding the performances of the musical séance. Like the virtuoso, the musical medium was able to make listeners feel and hear things that were thought to be beyond the realm of possibility. While musical virtuosos pushed the limits of technique, showmanship, and sound, musical mediums pushed against the boundaries of the material realm to tap into the ethereal and its intangible accompaniment.

The language of Spiritualism was reminiscent of German Romanticism and the discourse of Romantic musical aesthetics. Holly Watkins has written about the "transmigration of soul," or

³³⁷ See James Q. Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014).

³³⁸ Stefaniak, 125.

³³⁹ Ibid.

the transmission of “soul-states” (*Seelenzustände*) through music.³⁴⁰ The language around romantic aesthetics pointed to a communion between spirits through music. As Watkins explains, her conception of Schumann’s “soul-states” involves an understanding that music facilitates “experiences of unusual resonance between internal states and external realities, or, ...between affect and perception.”³⁴¹ In a discussion of Friedrich Schelling’s unfinished novella, *Clara, or, On Nature’s Relation to the Spirit World* (1810), Watkins describes Schelling’s desire to tap into the unfettered mobility of the spirit as a means of freedom, to escape from every day “social repression” and “human violence.”³⁴²

For Schelling, music and musical tones could facilitate the transfer of spirit because, like spirit, music was independent from material corporeality. By this, I believe he means that the sounds of music, not the mechanisms that produced it, were free of corporeality. In the examples of medium musicianship in the previous section, a similar conception of spirit music emerges. Medium musicians performed the role of the conduit. Their materiality embodied the visiting spirit musician and simultaneously served as a vessel through which musicality could be produced. In effect, the medium made the unseen, internal spirit external to listeners’ perceptions by channeling their energies through sound, by allowing their own materiality—fingers, vocal cords, bodies—to be momentarily controlled by spirit in the creation of ethereal tones. It should be noted that there were cases where the body was not directly necessary or responsible for the production of music. Disembodied spirit voices might perform an aria or invisible spirit fingers perform a solo on a

³⁴⁰ Holly Watkins, “Romantic Musical Aesthetics and the Transmigration of Soul,” *New Literary History* 49, no. 4 (Autumn 2018): 583.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 588.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 592.

locked keyboard.³⁴³ In such instances, though the body itself was not used in the same way, the medium's body and their energies were still necessary to channel the spirit.

Aside from notions of the spirit's ability to communicate through music, connections regarding listening practices should also be noted. As Deirdre Loughridge argues, listening in the early Romantic era was marked by a separation of the listener from the performer—"of observer from observed, and the obtainment of access to hidden realms"—as well as forms of mediation that "provided an alternative framework to mimesis and expression, one that valorized sensory engagement with phenomena beyond rational understanding."³⁴⁴ Loughridge details contemporaneous technology that provided new perspective on familiar objects, such as the microscope and telescope. Along these lines she identifies keyboard improvisations, specifically the keyboard fantasia, as a microscope that allowed listeners to peer into the unmediated soul of the performer.³⁴⁵ As Loughridge states, "In the 1770s a convergence of keyboard fantasizing with theories of inspiration fuelled a special fascination with the activity, described as taking place in a dream-like state characterized by complete withdrawal from the surrounding world."³⁴⁶ Much like a medium, in a trance-like state the fantasia performer was unconscious to their own performance, thus allowing the listener to experience music as "pure inspiration, coming from beyond his conscious mind."³⁴⁷

³⁴³ "Wonderful Phenomena through Dr. Monck," *Medium and Daybreak* 7, no. 340 (October 6, 1876), 637.

³⁴⁴ Deirdre Loughridge, "Magnified Vision, Mediated Listening and the 'Point of Audition' of Early Romanticism," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 10, no. 2 (2013): 183.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 197-8.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

The early Romantic musical scene that Loughridge conjures predicted the happenings of the musical séance several decades later. Unlike the eavesdropper of the piano fantasia, the musical séance took the act of covertly listening to the musician's soul to a more literal conclusion. Rather than listening for an essence inherent within the fantasia's performance, or even a glimpse of the performer's *Geist*, séance sitters listened to inspired performance and improvisation to bear earwitness to the presence and influence of spirit inspiration.

An important element of connection between the two performance types—the fantasia and the musical séance—was the act of improvisation. As Dana Gooley explains, during the nineteenth century improvised performance was “imagined as less bounded, less finite, less mediated than a performance of a finished piece. It would be infinitely deeper and richer, like poetry glimpsed in the moment of inspiration and invention.”³⁴⁸ Improvised performance, playing music not previously locked into place by written notation, offered unmediated access to the supposed genius and spirit of the musician. Yet the flip side of this belief about improvisation and inspiration were myths of race, disability, and an attributed lack of agency. As an example, the African American enslaved and blind pianist Thomas Wiggins performed a range of musical styles at a high level, but Daphne Brooks writes that his skill as a performer, including his astonishing aural imitation and improvisation, was illegible for many white listeners. These listeners could not reconcile Wiggins's virtuosity with his Blackness because audiences “thought it impossible for these two categories to co-exist.”³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸ Ibid. 212.

³⁴⁹ Daphne A. Brooks, “Puzzling the Intervals”: Blind Tom and the Poetics of the Sonic Slave Narrative,” *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative*, ed. John Ernest (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 393-4.

A similar danger exists when analyzing the accomplishments of musicians who claim to be merely a conduit for spirit: that they were not demonstrating a performance practice developed over time and with great effort, but were mechanical automata or “human phonographs,” as Wiggins was described.³⁵⁰ This narrative of mechanization was strengthened by improvising medium musicians who claimed to enter trance or were unable to account for their own bodily movements. Musical mediums like white pianist Jesse Shepard asserted that they did not control their own hands, but temporarily relinquished autonomy to a subconscious intelligence that guided the fingers to the keys.³⁵¹ It is essential, however, to note how Wiggins’s race and disability affected the framing of his musicality, as opposed to that of the white musical mediums I mention in this chapter. White musical mediums’ selective relinquishing of agency over their playing was a privilege not afforded to Black musicians like Wiggins who were not considered to be human subjects in the first place.³⁵²

Shepard was particularly well-known as an improviser and his own writings about spirituality and musical improvisation reflect Gooley’s representation of nineteenth-century

³⁵⁰ Brooks, 6.

³⁵¹ Harold Peter Simonson, “Francis Grierson: A Biographical and Critical Study,” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1958), 24. See Francis Grierson, *Anecdotes and Episodes*. Np. San Diego Historical Society.

³⁵² Alexander G. Weheliye, ““Feenin”: Posthuman Voices in Contemporary Black Popular Music,” *Social Text* 20, no. 2 (2002): 24. In writing on the ways race has gone untheorized in posthuman studies, Weheliye writes, “The literal dehumanization of black people through chattel slavery, as well as the legal, political, anthropological, scientific, economic, and cultural forces supporting and enforcing this system, afforded black subjects no easy passage to the sign of the human. ...Consequently, the human has had a very different meaning in black culture and politics that it has enjoyed in mainstream American.

impromptu performance as more spiritually and musically elevated than notated compositions. The topic of Shepard's writings frequently turned to music and its spiritual properties.³⁵³ Shepard indirectly connected his own improvisations to famed romantic virtuosos like Chopin, Liszt, and Paganini when he critiqued the presence of inspired moments in each musician's performance. Shepard incorporated description of Paganini's improvisations to illustrate the special nature of music. Rather than relying on rational thought, music like Paganini's improvisations "contained an element of emotional hysteria that turned sentiment into tears."³⁵⁴ Shepard's descriptions leaned into romanticism's anti-Enlightenment turn away from rational thought and towards sensual experience. He believed improvisation and other "impromptu arts" to be the most magical, capable of producing meaningful spiritual experiences.³⁵⁵

Unlike Shepard, the white violin virtuoso Florizel von Reuter tended to avoid improvisation in the séance in favor of composed concert pieces. Yet, Reuter noted similar experiences of external control when encountering spirit influence, with marked differences. Reuter's commitment to maintaining a conscious awareness during spirit inspiration is contrary to both the discourse of musical séance performance I have discussed thus far as well as Loughridge's observation that unconscious improvisation in the fantasia allowed listeners an unmediated glimpse into the performer's soul. Reuter's spiritual inspiration was predicated on a need to prove

³⁵³ After 1899, Shepard focused his attentions away from musical performance to writing. He adopted the nom de plume, Francis Grierson.

³⁵⁴ Grierson, *The Celtic Temperament and Other Essays* (London: S. Swift and Co., 1911), 141-2.

³⁵⁵ Ibid, xvi-xvii. Shepard wrote, "When we hear a great orator speak we receive the psychic power which comes with the first contact of thought; when we read the printed speech we get the form without the spirit—it has been stripped of the thing which made it vital."

and validate the phenomena he experienced. His understanding and subsequent experiences were more material, bodily, technical, and practical than many other musician mediums like Shepard. Yet, despite his resistance to relent to the unconscious or trance-like state, Reuter's descriptions of spirit inspiration were consistent with others' séance performances. This was especially true when Paganini's spirit was involved, which was often.

Paganini's spirit was in almost constant contact, appearing in séances and Reuter's daily life. This association even extended to preparation for concert programs. While Reuter and his mother sat in a séance one evening, the medium's spirit guide transmitted Paganini's instructions for Reuter's upcoming concert.³⁵⁶ The spirit's comments on the program were vague at the time, but several days later Reuter wrote of a peculiar experience he had while preparing for the concert. Practicing Paganini's *La Campanella*, he felt as though his fingers were no longer under his control:

Suddenly, without any premeditation, while playing a difficult passage, my fingers seemed to be impelled...to abandon suddenly the fingering I had used

³⁵⁶Florizel von Reuter, *Psychical Experiences of a Musician* (London: The Psychic Press, 1928), 72-3. Reuter's conversation with the medium was as follows, beginning with the medium's statement: "He wishes to give you some advice about your next New York concert programme. He strongly advises you not to play any Bach. He says the American public is not up to Bach. He says America is good for the pocket-book, but death to musical idealism." ... I asked: "How about the Tschaiakowsky [sic] Concerto?" Fletch [the medium's spirit guide]: "He says that would be very good for the principal number. He says he would like to go over the programme with you some day."³⁵⁶

*for years, the substitution of a perfectly different fingering taking place as naturally as if it had been a simple passage instead of a very complicated one.*³⁵⁷

While playing, Reuter was suddenly inspired to perform a piece he knew well with a new fingering that he had not previously considered. He attributed the inspiration to Paganini's spiritual presence. In the following hour of practice, Reuter claimed the same sensation came to his technical movements as if through telepathy or as if he were controlled by an outside intelligence. He compared the sensation to taking a lesson with a violin master because of the way technique and mechanics had been solidified in his memory and physical movements.

The autonomy of Reuter's fingers resembles that of the improvising musician who received inspiration in a dream-like state. The obvious distinction between Reuter and other medium musicians is that he remained conscious of the new fingers and phrasings that he experienced. Yet, there is an element of the unconscious and the uncontrolled in Reuter's fingers as they seem to momentarily allude his command. In these moments Reuter retreats from the world into his own conscious so that he might fully communicate with the spirit. So deep is this communication that, though avoiding a trance state, Reuter's fingers give into the influence of Paganini's spirit, who lends his own virtuosity to the living violinist's technical maneuvers.

One question that arises from the comparison of early Romantic aesthetics of virtuosity and the virtuosic performances of musical mediums is, simply: Why compare the two? An obvious answer is that the association of virtuosity with the Romantic supernatural made it a useful tool in séance performance for achieving certain affects and atmosphere. The spectacle of virtuosity could

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 75.

inspire awe in viewers and induce a certain frame of mind, one that primed sitters to experience the manifestations that would take place next. Because virtuosity was already associated with the rupturing of the human body's limits, the concept readily transitioned to the rupturing of the earthly plane.³⁵⁸ Virtuosity provided mediums and musicians alike with the means to dazzle audiences by pushing past human and earthly expectations.

As both Stefaniak and Shepard describe, the virtuosity of musical performance and virtuosity in the séance shared the strategy of sensory overload. Spirit communication was already a sensorial experience relying on sound, sight, touch, and smell. Just like the virtuoso violinist or pianist, mediums relied on a host of virtuosic movements: selecting just the right song to usher in the spirits; producing unbelievable sonic and physical manifestations; and convincingly channeling spirits into improvised song. Returning to Loughridge's rendering of improvisation as a window into the soul and Watkin's point about music as a connecting agent between soul-states, to experience the musical séance was to peer into the inner workings of the spirit world. Considering Romantic music's status as a means for unmediated communion because of its detachment from corporeality, it stands to reason that music would be especially apt at extending the spirits of the living to contact disembodied spirits—souls that were even further removed from the materiality of the body.

Keeping these notions of virtuosity in mind, I analyze musical séance performance and the ways they employed virtuosic mediumship. As I show, musical virtuosity and mediumistic virtuosity had a reciprocal relationship. Musical virtuosity increased the sense of the extraordinary inherent within spirit communication, thus enhancing the overall impact of mediumship. On the

³⁵⁸ James Q. Davies talks about this idea in more length in his book, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance*.

other hand, mediumistic virtuosity aided the musical performer by adding to the mystery and mystique of the channeled, spiritually inspired performance. Both worked hand in hand to create an environment that transported sitters to a space beyond the limits of the human.

5.3 Music in the Séance

Séance music appeared primarily in two forms: music that was performed to initiate spirit communication and spiritually inspired music. As I demonstrate in this section, each kind of performance served different functions and meant different things for those who experienced them. In both instances of musical mediumship, musical virtuosity was employed to enhance the moment and convince sitters of the reality of what they heard and experienced.

Musical musicianship was not necessarily an unusual form of mediumship. In fact, Spiritualist writers like Doyle and Emma Hardinge Britten listed musical mediumship alongside other forms of communication such as direct voice mediumship, materializing mediumship, and automatic writing mediumship.³⁵⁹ The presence of music, especially musical performance that was thought to possess an otherworldly or superhuman quality, offered proof of the existence of life after death. In cases where music was evidentiary, the performance of musicians who were understood to be untrained or lacking in technical ability in normal life were especially cause for celebration. Their virtuosic ability—to sing multiple voices at once or to perform multiple instruments at once—in the moment of trance or spirit inspiration was a proof similar to automatic writings or vocal spirit communications. On the other hand, musicians whose talent and virtuosity

³⁵⁹ See Doyle, 1:246; Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism*.

were already established outside of the séance room were sometimes considered to gain part of their musical ability through spirit assistance.³⁶⁰

In surveying accounts of musical seances, I have noted several different forms of musical manifestations that appeared with consistency. This includes: the performance of impromptu or “extempore” musical pieces that the musician had not prepared; superhuman feats of musicianship such as a single vocalist singing a two-voice duet or multiple voice parts; and the phenomena of floating instruments or disembodied instrumental sounds. Accounts of these manifestations appear in personal memoirs written by Spiritualists and mediums, histories of Spiritualism dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and séance accounts printed in newspapers. The publication, *The Medium and Daybreak*, is a strong source for phenomena of this sort. While the periodical was printed in London, there was a great deal of information published about, and communication with, Spiritualists living in the United States. Many issues from the 1870s printed accounts from regular contributors who frequently experienced musical manifestations in the séance room.

Two points of interest emerge from a study of these accounts, of which there are many. One was the function of the music. Music, whether spiritually inspired or not, was often used to create a particular affective atmosphere or to structure the proceedings of the circle meeting. In terms of music as a structuring device, the performances described in these accounts were used to introduce or accompany the entrance of certain spirits. Sometimes music was even used to invoke spirits. The second point is music as evidence for spirit communication. While the music performed during a séance was sometimes inconsequential—perhaps merely a hymn or popular parlor song—musical choice could mark the spirit’s identity or alert séance goers to spirits’

³⁶⁰ Kate Irving, *Clear Light from the Spirit World* (New York: G. W. Carleton and Co., 1884), 73.

presence. For example, Mozart and Beethoven were perhaps the two composers most frequently claimed by musical mediums as their spirit guide.³⁶¹ To hear a Mozart sonata or an excerpt from his *Requiem* during a séance meant to recognize that Mozart was present and performing his own music through the musical medium.

A séance held in England on August 16, 1870 demonstrates several of the points listed above.³⁶² The séance was held at the home of Mrs. Berry, a Spiritualist, beginning at eight in the evening. The circle sat in a small room with an upright cottage piano sitting against a wall. The medium was Mr. Herne and another sitter, Mr. Gray, sat at the piano and performed during the evening's proceedings. They began by singing a song accompanied by piano and heard spirit voices join them, followed by spoken dialogue with the disembodied, independent spirit voice. The sitters' experiences were multisensorial as, in addition to the sounds of spirit voices, they felt the sensation of being touched. The phenomena became increasingly fantastical, with furniture moving about the room and the piano moving nearly two feet away from the wall. Next, the medium, while entranced,

seized one of Mrs. Berry's arms, and began to play some imaginary airs on it, while her other hand touched Mr. Gray's shoulder; we immediately perceived a difference in his style of play, and did not know the reason until, the lights being

³⁶¹ Even James Martin Peebles claimed Mozart as one of his familiar spirits, a member of his "Band of Spirits." See Joseph Osgood Barrett, *The Spiritual Pilgrim: A Biography of James M. Peebles* (Boston: William White and Company, 1872), 82.

³⁶² H. C. Mayer, W. Gray, E. Ellis, and Frank Herne, "Séances at Mrs. Berry's," *The Medium and Daybreak: A Weekly Journal, Devoted to the History, Phenomena, Philosophy, and Teachings of Spiritualism* 1 no. 23 (London), Sept. 9, 1870.

*called for, ...[disclosed] the three in the positions just mentioned. During this time Mr. Gray was executing an extremely rapid piece of music, which he afterwards declared he never heard in his life before, and said that he could not play in that style in his ordinary state.*³⁶³

In this account, several characteristics of the musical séance arise. First, the séance began in a typical way with singing, which invoked a response from the spirits in the form of singing. Second, the piano, along with other furniture and items about the room, began to move and float. This moment marks the spirits' presence more strongly and might allude to a strengthening of their powers. In the account, items sitting on the table are first described as “gently” rising above their heads, but soon are thrown “violently” against a wall, likely serving as a warning to the sitters regarding who they had channeled. Finally, a very unusual image in which the medium grabs the host's arm and quite improperly runs his fingers across it as if it were a keyboard. Though the sitters were unable to see this last point of action take place because the lights were dimmed, it was marked sonically by a change in the pianist Mr. Gray's performance style.

Gray's stylistic change is not noted by specific musical elements other than tempo. The transformation in his performance was the last event in a series of increasingly chaotic episodes (from singing, to moving objects, to vigorous touch, to “extremely rapid” music). It is pure speculation, but when reading this account, I imagine that the music may have become increasing harmonic as his speed increased, drifting from a tonal center as the séance scene unfolded. In my mind, the wandering from the tonic would serve a sonic indication of the séance's descent from

³⁶³ Ibid.

orderliness, similar to the thematic breakdown during the development of sonata form. Whatever the case may have been, the change in his style is framed as superhuman and beyond his own comprehension. Once the lights were raised, Gray claimed that he had never heard that music before. In fact, he did not know how to perform in such a style as he had just demonstrated. This episode of his performance is framed as being spiritually inspired, endowing him with a previously inaccessible virtuosity that enabled him to do that of which he would normally be incapable.

One more example of a musical séance led by a medium, Mr. Robson, provides more context and explanation for how music functioned in séances.³⁶⁴ Like Jesse Shepard, Robson was noted for his ability to perform a range of voices while entranced, often channeling the likes of Italian operatic baritones and sopranos. Accounts of both men's musical mediumship note their ability to sing in an identifiably "female" voice. Additionally, their séance repertoire included the music of canonical composers like Mozart, Weber, and Rossini. For example, on August 28, 1870 Robson acted as the medium in a séance where he performed as excerpt from Handel's *Messiah*, improvised a piece under the influence of Felix Mendelssohn, a funeral march by Beethoven, and an inspired piece under Weber's influence.³⁶⁵ The presence of these composers, which was alluded to by Robson's performance of their compositions, was further solidified by a written message following the performance: "'Ludwig Von Beethoven: Funeral March, with the triumphal entry of the spirit to its home after—L.V.B.' Next, 'Carl Von Weber'."³⁶⁶ The signatures and written

³⁶⁴ I have not been able to find additional information about Robson other than from a series of articles printed in *The Medium and Daybreak* during the 1870s.

³⁶⁵ Thomas Weeks, "Musical and Historical Seances: Séance with M. Jacob and Mr. Shepard," *The Medium and Daybreak* 1, no. 23 (London), Sept. 9, 1870.

³⁶⁶ Weeks, *Ibid.*

messages offered an additional proof of the spirit musicians' influence in the séance if it was not already apparent.

Later that same week, Robson acted as the medium in another séance hosted in the home of Thomas Weeks. Robson sang "He shall feed His flock" from Handel's *Messiah* in a "clear, female voice."³⁶⁷ Robson then proceeded to channel several different spirits who each sang and spoke in a different voice. His soprano voice transformed into that of a tenor as a spirit, W. Harrison, sang the aria "Let Me Like a Soldier Fall!" from the English operetta, *Maritana* (1845) by William Vincent Wallace. The next vocal performance was given by "Giuglini," presumably the spirit of an Italian opera singer, who sang three "operatic airs with increased power."³⁶⁸ Robson was given a break when another sitter, Mr. Child, "whom the spirits [had] promised to develop into a great musical medium," performed at the piano under the influence of Mozart and Weber. A rendition of "La Marseillaise" ushered in the spirits of Napoleon Bonaparte and Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle, the composer of the French national anthem. The next séance scene saw Robson return to the spotlight with a performance of "The Last Rose of Summer," likely the arrangement composed by John Andrew Stevenson (c. 1817).³⁶⁹ The stunning, virtuosic element of his performance was that each of the song's verses was sung in a different spirit voice: Giuglini the Italian opera singer; W. H. Weiss, with a deeper, perhaps baritone voice; and Clara Novello, the "clear female voice" who had sung "He shall feed His flock" earlier in the evening.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ John Andrew Stevenson, "Tis the Last Rose of Summer" (New York: Wm. Dubois, 1817-18).

Robson's musical mediumship was clearly valued for the range of music he could produce. He channeled pianistic performances from the great composers of music history and, in the same evening, produced multiple voices that sitters heard as distinct entities in addition to convincingly crossing vocal ranges coded as feminine. This last bit of information is important when considering my earlier point, that many musical mediums were thought to produce music that was beyond the possibility of what was human. In the following section I will speak more to this as a facet of virtuosity and the coded language around technique and the supernatural. In the cases of Robson and Jesse Shepard it is possible that they had very wide vocal ranges, use of the falsetto, and an ability to move through their range quickly and effortlessly that astonished listeners who could conceive of it only as a phenomenon produced with the help of spirits.

Apart from Robson's virtuosity and technical prowess, this séance is important for noting how music acted as a structuring and organizational tool. The rotation of visiting spirits and their accompanying songs resembles the acts of a vaudeville show. Music served as an introduction for newly entering spirits, after which point, they might offer additional spoken or written communications. Music also functioned as an introductory revelry, as was the case with the French spirits who were announced by "La Marseillaise." In part because of the episodic nature of the spirit music, the musical séance reads as the ultimate evening of parlor performance. There were few limitations on who might make an appearance and grace sitters with music: the performer simply had to be dead. Séance-goers in the late nineteenth century could witness intimate, private performances by the most well-known musicians of the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods as well as the great operatic stars of the earlier half of the nineteenth century. For example, Jesse Shepard alone was known to channel Bach, Beethoven, Donizetti, Weber, and Maria Malibran.

In the following section I build upon my analysis of virtuosity and musical séances to focus on the virtuosity of Oskenton. Oskenton's musical and spiritual life serves as a case study for the practice of musical mediumship and the ways virtuosity entered Spiritualist spaces and promoted the presence of and interactions with spirit. Oskenton's story demonstrates the ways that musical virtuosity created a contact zone for spiritual experience within musical séances and how the connection between music and Spiritualism was sometimes obscured based on practitioners' ethnic and national identity.

5.4 Oskenton's Voice: Virtuosity, Musicianship, and Difference

Having surveyed the practices of musical séances and its accompaniment of virtuosity, I now return to the séance described by Doyle at the beginning of this chapter. To reiterate, the séance Doyle attended was prefaced with a vocal recital in the same parlor room. Aside from writing about his own reactions to the materiality of the singer's powerful voice, Doyle did not mention sound or music within the séance itself. Despite a lack of sonic detail, I believe that it is significant that the séance was preceded by a virtuosic show of musicianship. In this case, the virtuosity of the performance lay in the awe-inspiring fullness and strength of the "Indian chief's" voice. "The Indian Chief came and sang," Doyle wrote. "It is an old house and the top story with the roof not too secure. He nearly pitched it off."

Oskenton's voice was described as having similar vibrational energy and power.³⁷⁰ Writing in 1921 about the singer's voice, Remington Schuyler noted its fullness and resonance, so powerful that "his voice seemed to search out every corner of the hall and awaken a sympathetic vibration in his hearers."³⁷¹ Schuyler noted that this voice was one that a listener "could not easily forget."³⁷² In addition to the strength of his sound and his ability to resonate throughout a concert hall, Oskenton's virtuosity was inherent in the way he could hold an audience's attention by seamlessly shifting from extremes, from the full voice that could cause the audience to shake with sympathetic vibrations to his ability to sing in a compelling, captivating whisper.³⁷³ Considering the similarity between descriptions of Oskenton's voice and that of the "Indian chief," along with ample evidence that places Oskenton in similar London parlor and séance settings during

³⁷⁰ Remington Schuyler, "My Mohawk Friend, "Oskenton", The Voice from the Woods," *The Musical Monitor* (June 1921), 439.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Though Oskenton made many recordings, due to the COVID-19 pandemic I was unable to access recordings available only in archives at the time of writing. See: Oskenton, with the Columbia Miniature Orchestra, *Tribal Prayer: (Omaha); Mohawk's Lullaby; Happy Song: (Mohawk)*, Columbia A3162, 1923, 78 rpm (held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Library System).; Oskenton, *Every-day Song: Indian Song and Drum*, Columbia A3092, 1920, 78 rpm (held at the University of Kansas Library).; Chief Oskenton, *Invocation to the Sun God*, His Master's Voice B2083, 1925, 78 rpm (held at the Archives of Traditional Music, Indiana University, and the Special Collections at UC Santa Barbara).; Running Deer, *Spirit's Song*, Shenandoah, WV: RD Enterprises, 1996, cassette (it is not clear whether this recording is available at any public institution). Additionally, a manuscript of a song titled, "Mohawk Indian Hunting Song," written by Oskenton is currently held at the New York Public Library (Oskenton, "Mohawk Indian Hunting Song," 1918).

April of 1926, I speculate that the two men were one and the same. If we accept this to be true, what meaning can be found in the links between Oskenonton's musical virtuosity, his presence in séances, and his personal spirituality, which included an interest in Spiritualism?

The connections between these complex events are not always straightforward or obvious. In many ways Oskenonton's role as a musical medium does not match that of the musicians discussed throughout this chapter. I have not been able to find many accounts of him performing music during séances, and, unlike the mediums who produced a large body of Spiritualist memoirs and autobiographies, accounts of Oskenonton's spirituality and musicality written in his own voice are not available. Yet, he was a musical medium. He moved through musical stages, séance parlors, and Spiritualist spaces. In the following analysis, I attempt to account for the ways that he used virtuosity in the intersections between spiritual and musical performance.

Oskenonton (Louie Deer, 1888-1955) belonged to the Kahnawá:ke community of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) nation, whose hereditary territories spanned the national borders of Canada and the United States. Audra Simpson (Mohawk) has described the community of Kahnawá:ke as on the fringes of the larger Haudenosaunee confederacy, simultaneously "deeply of and distanced from what is considered center."³⁷⁴ The territory of Kahnawá:ke was founded when, in the seventeenth century, Kanien'kehá:ka migrants moved from their traditional territory in New York state to a French Jesuit settlement south of Montreal.³⁷⁵ This area became known as a refuge for Catholic Haudenosaunee, although migrants did not always move strictly for religious

³⁷⁴ Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 31.

³⁷⁵ Simpson, 39.

reasons.³⁷⁶ Over the following years the community became more homogenous in terms of Mohawk membership as captives, both native and those of European descent, were incorporated through adoption.³⁷⁷ This description, however brief and simplified, is to give context for the specific community and space that Oskenton was born into, one with a long history of Catholicism and a heterogenous community composition.

Orphaned as a child, Oskenton was raised by relatives and then, like many Indigenous youths, sent to a residential school, a site of trauma and cultural erasure.³⁷⁸ Canada's government-funded and church-run residential schools were similar to their counterparts in the United States, in that they were meant to Christianize students and assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-settler society. As in the United States, Canadian residential schools were part of a process meant to disassemble First Nation tribes and land through "civilizing" processes of assimilation with the goal of making individuals "capable of managing [their] own affairs."³⁷⁹ These schools separated children of all ages from their family and had devastating effects on Indigenous cultures and individuals.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 46.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 47. As Simpson describes, this "racial mixing" has resulted in anxieties over membership and cultural loss in the present.

³⁷⁸ Helmut Kallmann and Edward B. Moogk, "Os-Ke-Non-Ton," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Online. February 7, 2006. <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/os-ke-non-ton#>.

³⁷⁹ *An Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of Indian Tribes in this Province, and to Amend the Laws Relating to Indians*, 3rd Session, 5th Parliament (1857) as quoted in Richard H. Bartlett, "Indian Act of Canada: An Unyielding Barrier," *American Indian Journal* 6, no. 2 (April 1980), 12.

³⁸⁰ See Brenda Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco*

Following his time at the residential school, Oskenton worked as a nature guide at the Wawa Hotel in Ontario, a waterfront resort. As Simpson notes, in the late nineteenth century members of Kahnawá:ke were well known for their expertise in navigating boats on the St. Lawrence River and often acted as guides.³⁸¹ It is likely that Oskenton demonstrated this skill on the waterfront while working as a guide. Later, during his visits to England he would give similar demonstrations with canoe. It is likely that while working at the summer resort he constructed a campsite meant to appeal to Euro-American visitors' misperceptions of what a "real Indian" would look like and how they would live. He performed a similar role at other summer camps like Lily Dale and Joseph Regneas's summer hotel for opera singers in Maine where Oskenton constructed and lived in a "teepee" (Figure 20). Darryl Catherine has noted that the attire and lodging that Oskenton was accustomed to wear was not based on Mohawk tradition, but was borrowed from the Lakota, "an adjustment he made presumably to conform to the European-American caricatures of Native cultures."³⁸² This performance of an exaggerated or stereotypical display of Native culture, of "playing Indian" as Philip Deloria puts it, became a mainstay of Oskenton's stagecraft for the rest of his musical career. While working in Ontario one summer, a Toronto vocalist named Leonara James-Kennedy "discovered" him singing and

Indian School (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); and David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875—1928* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1995).

³⁸¹ Simpson, 51.

³⁸² Darryl Catherine, "Profane Illuminations: Machines, Indian Ghosts, and Boundless Flights through Nature at Contemporary Paranormal Gatherings in America," *Paranthropology: Journal of Anthropological Approaches to the Paranormal* 5, no. 2 (2014): 14.

urged him to pursue music professionally.³⁸³ Not much is known about Oskenton's musical training prior to his move, but it is likely that he received European-style musical training while attending the residential school.³⁸⁴

Oskenton's early career was spent touring North America and performing recitals like the one given at Lily Dale in 1917 (Figure 21), recording with Columbia Records, and hosting a weekly radio program. By the 1920s Oskenton was regularly travelling to Europe, particularly England. Over the course of his career, he made the transatlantic trip over 35 times.³⁸⁵ In England Oskenton was known for his performance as the Medicine Man in Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *The Song of Hiawatha*.³⁸⁶ Aside from his performances of *Hiawatha*, Oskenton performed in

³⁸³ Kallmann and Moogk.

³⁸⁴ Lomawaima, "A Principle of Relativity through Indigenous Biography," 258-9. Other professional Indigenous singers from this period had similar experiences from their days in residential schools. For example, Oskenton's singing partner in the opera *Shanewis* was Tsianina Blackstone, a Creek and Cherokee woman who, as a child was sent to Eufaula Indian Boarding School (Oklahoma) where she took music lessons and eventually met, auditioned for, and developed a professional relationship with *Shanewis* composer Charles Wakefield Cadman. Blackstone's first audition for Cadman did not go well, but after months of practice and specific wardrobe choices that included wearing a buckskin costume and beaded headband that played on Indian Princess tropes, Blackstone got the part and spent the next three years touring with Cadman in a series of performance-lectures.

³⁸⁵ "Chief Os-ke-non-ton, Red Mohawk Indian, Returns to Lily Dale After Playing Hiawatha in World-Wide Concert Tour, and Characterizations in Movies," Fredonia, NY: August 22, 1941. Clipping in Oskenton Scrapbook, Marion Skidmore Library, Lily Dale, NY.

³⁸⁶ "Hiawatha in Operatic Form with Scenery and Costumes," program in Oskenton scrapbook. Marion Skidmore Library, Lily Dale, NY. The ensemble for *Hiawatha* was made up of members of the Royal Choral Society and thus were unpaid amateurs. See Jeffrey Green, "Requiem: 'Hiawatha' in the 1920s and 1930s," *Black Music*

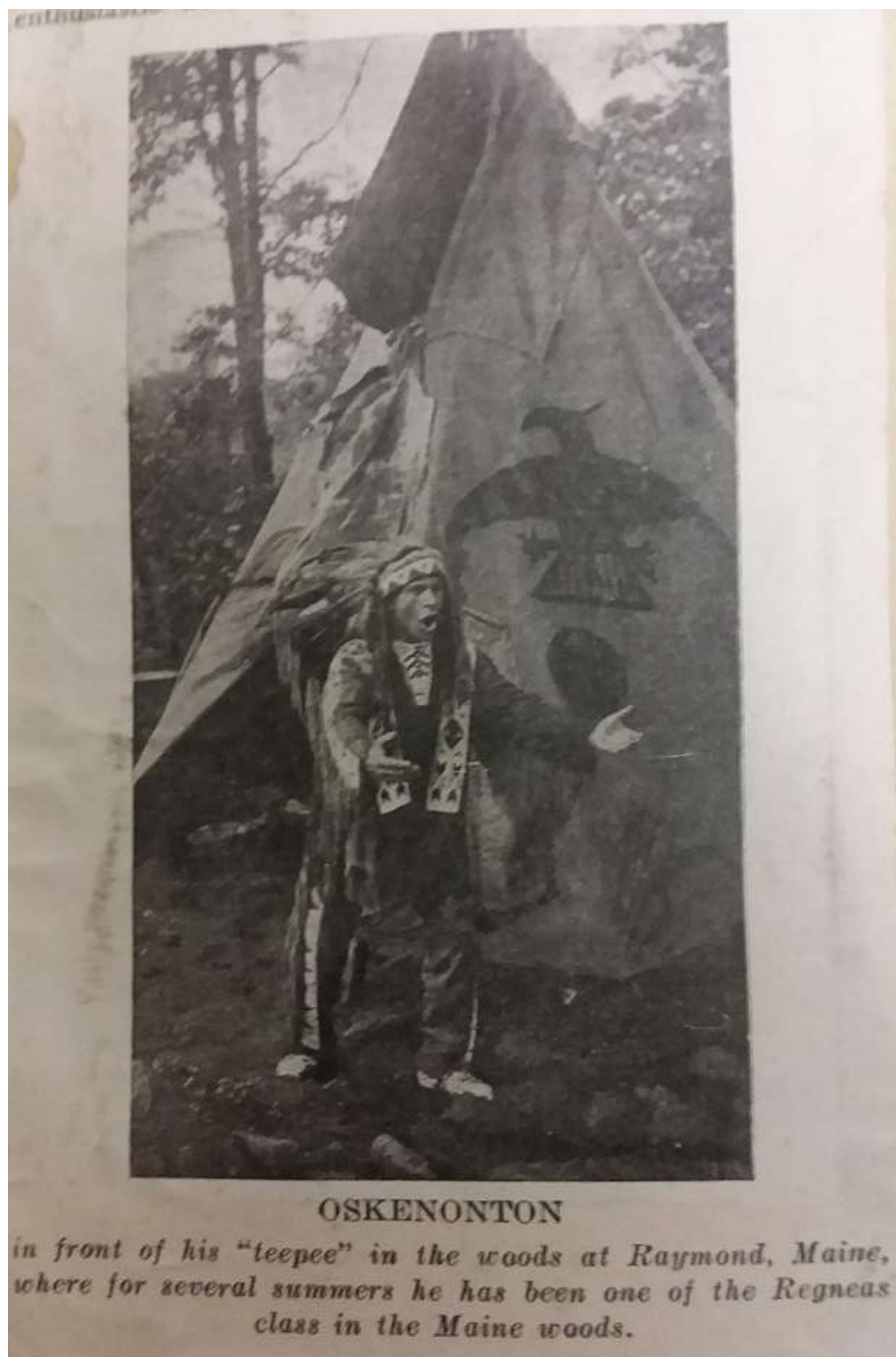


Figure 20: Oskenton at Regneas's summer camp for opera singers, Maine

Research Journal 21, no. 2 (2001): 284. See "Os-ke-non-ton in London Hiawatha" in Oskenton scrapbook. Marion Skidmore Library, Lily Dale, NY.

Oskenonton AND Princess Chinquilla

IN A GENUINE INDIAN PROGRAM

"Songs and Stories of the Red Man"

Auditorium - Lily Dale

FRIDAY NIGHT, JULY 20th, 1917

PROGRAM

Part First

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1 a Ojibah | (Evening Star) |
| b Mudjokovis - <i>Modern Hiawatha</i> | Readings by Chinquilla |
| 2 a Every Day Song | (In Indian) |
| b Feast Song | |
| c Appeal to the Great Spirit -- Niyo | Songs by Oskenonton |
| 3 a Yakowita | (Pilot of the Plains) |
| b Sakojanatha -- <i>Red Jacket Speech</i> | Readings by Chinquilla |
| 4 a Onkaweonekowa | (Story Three Pine Trees) |
| b Makwaakwa - <i>Canoe Song</i> | By Oskenonton |

INTERMISSION

Part Second

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 5 a Renenskwas | [Cattle Thief] |
| b Chawawa (Indian Love Song) | Reading and Song by Chinquilla |
| 6 a Naiwanes | [The Swan and the Maiden] |
| b Tokoda | [The Cradle Song] |
| c Okariataneh | [Mosquito Song] |
| d Medicine Man's Dance | By Oskenonton |
| 7 Indian Life in His Teepee and Dance of Thunder Bird | By Chinquilla |
| 8 Indian Wife's Appeal | By Chinquilla and Oskenonton |



LILY DALE
PRESS

Figure 21: Program from Oskenonton and Princess Chinquilla's recital at Lily Dale, July 20th, 1917

parlors and soirees hosted by the social elite of London. This may have been how his meeting with Arthur Conan Doyle occurred. During his private parlor songs, Oskenton typically sang “native songs” while dressed in costume. When the space allowed, Oskenton’s portion of the recital included the erection of a “wigwam.”³⁸⁷

Considering Oskenton’s extensive performances in private recitals and settings, it is not far-fetched to speculate that he performed for Doyle prior to the Bartletts’ séance. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there are no records that directly place Oskenton in Doyle’s séance. However, reports of Oskenton’s performances before and after the date of the séance place him in London at the correct time. Oskenton gave a recital at the Town Hall in New York City on April 5th, 1926.³⁸⁸ An article published in the *Los Angeles Times* on May 30th, 1926 noted that Oskenton would arrive in New York the following day direct from London on route to perform in Charles Wakefield Cadman’s California production of *Shanewis*.³⁸⁹ Performances of *Hiawatha* in London typically occurred during two weeks in June, so it is not clear what engagements Oskenton may have had in England during April and May.

Oskenton’s spirituality was frequently a source of interest in newspaper articles about his career and musical performance. Specifically, the question of his belief in spirit communication and Spiritualism often came up. Oskenton’s responses usually crafted a connection between Spiritualism and traditional Indigenous spirituality. For example, in a 1941 article about an

³⁸⁷ “Traditional Songs,” *Evening News* (June 1926) in Oskenton Scrapbook, Marion Skidmore Library, Lily Dale, NY.

³⁸⁸ “Indian Songs by Oskenton,” *New York Times* (New York) Apr. 6, 1926.

³⁸⁹ “Cast Assembling for Double Bill,” *Los Angeles Times*, C16 (May 20, 1926). Also see: “Indian Singer Here for Opera Role,” *Los Angeles Daily Times* (June 17, 1926).

upcoming performance at Lily Dale, Oskenton was asked about his thoughts on Spiritualists' belief in survival of the spirit after death. He responded, "Come right down to it, Indians are spiritualists. But we need no proof to make us believe we will go to a 'happy hunting ground.' We accept in faith."³⁹⁰ Oskenton claims that Indians are Spiritualists, presumably because of a shared belief in the continuation of the spirit and possibility of spirit communication. However, he did draw a line regarding faith and a desire for proof. While Spiritualism encouraged practitioners to investigate spiritual phenomena and determine their validity for themselves, Oskenton asserts that Indigenous spirituality did not require proof to maintain faith.

This article continued by stating that Oskenton had received "a few good messages" from mediums while he was at Lily Dale. Though Oskenton did not elaborate, the article's writer suggested that he had received messages from "mediums who might claim "Indian guides."³⁹¹ Interest in Oskenton's interactions with Native spirits was again brought up in a letter written to the editor of the psychical journal, *Light*, published on July 23rd, 1927. The writer, "J. A.," described his sitting with the London medium, Mr. W. E. Foster, and the medium's "Indian" spirit control, White Wing. The sitter suggested to Foster "that a meeting between White Wing and a genuine Red Man might be an excellent test of White Wing's authenticity."³⁹² Thus, J. A. arranged a meeting between Foster and Oskenton, whom he was acquainted with. The men thought that Oskenton—because of his identity as a Mohawk man—would be able to verify if the control

³⁹⁰ "Chief Os-ke-non-ton, Red Mohawk Indian, Returns to Lily Dale After Playing Hiawatha in World-Wide Concert Tour, and Characterizations in Movies," Fredonia, NY: August 22, 1941.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² J. A., "Letters to the Editor," *Light: A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research* (July 23, 1927).

spirit was an authentic Native spirit, presumably by identifying language, mannerisms, or other characteristics of “Indianness.”

The men began their meeting with about ten minutes of conversation and then J. A. persuaded Oskenton to sing “an Indian song.” During the song,

Mr. Foster’s countenance suddenly underwent a subtle change. His “atmosphere” became un-English; he spoke in a deep voice, and rising from his chair, he declaimed volubly in some language composed mainly of vowels and gutturals, at the same time making a variety of signs and gestures eloquent of a warm appreciation of his brother Red Man. Oskenton responded with a bright look of understanding. A long and dramatic series of movements followed, and this, Oskenton reports, was an accurate production of the Indian “Ceremonial of the four Winds.”

White Wing, sometimes in broken English, sometimes in his own language, described other ceremonials, referring to campfires; the smoke rising straight and blending the spiritual above with the Earth forces below. He described the women as sitting on one side, the men on the other, rocking in unison to a chant which he sang, and all this was quite familiar to Oskenton, who said it was correct.³⁹³

³⁹³ Ibid.

Music is key in this excerpt. This scenario perfectly aligns with the musical séance because of the way music is used and perceived to work. Here, Oskenton's singing triggered Foster's entrancement by the spirit, White Wing. As was the case with Florizel von Reuter's musical allurements, Oskenton's song invites White Wing's spirit into the séance space. The spirit's entrance is initially only marked by a "subtle change" to Foster's demeanor, but it soon becomes apparent that the Indianist spirit is marked by the stereotypical and racist identifiers employed in the Lily Dale séances discussed in Chapter Two. Foster's voice deepened, he spoke in broken English or in "guttural" language and began to perform dramatic gestures and movements. Towards the end of the communication, the spirit of White Wing, channeled through Foster, even sings his own song.

Along with this séance description, the journal also included an article that printed excerpts from Oskenton's own statement. In a letter to the journal concerning the spirit communication, Oskenton wrote "that he has seen and met many so-called mediums supposed to be controlled by Red-Indian spirits and he was always rather doubtful as to most of them; but in the case of "White Wing" he is quite convinced of the reality of that control whose knowledge of native ceremonials and signs, etc., was correct."³⁹⁴ There are several ways that Oskenton's interaction with Foster and the spirit White Wing can be read. The first possibility, taking the events at face value, may have been that Oskenton genuinely believed Foster's manifestation of White Wing to be an authentic example of spirit communication.³⁹⁵ Another possibility is that Oskenton did

³⁹⁴ "American Indian Spirit Controls," *Light: A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research* (July 23, 1927).

³⁹⁵ J. A. "Letters to the Editor," *Light: A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research* (July 23, 1927).

not believe the communication to be genuine. In such a case he may have claimed belief to develop social or professional relationships within the Spiritualist community. There are many scenarios in which Oskenonton may have benefited from encouraging the medium's attempt at a virtuosic séance performance, even if he was not necessarily convinced of the medium's channeling of a Native American spirit. For example, Oskenonton may have seen professional opportunity in Spiritualism. Communities like Lily Dale had hosted his musical performances throughout his career. Furthermore, and as discussed in more detail in Chapter Two, Spiritualists were fascinated with Indigenous cultures and the idea that Native Spirits sought communication with them. Indeed, Oskenonton eventually reinvented himself as a spiritual healer catering to Spiritualists.

Oskenonton made Lily Dale his permanent home in the 1940s. During this time, he opened an "Indian shop" from which he sold souvenirs like handmade Indian dolls, baskets, and tom toms. An undated flyer for his shop also announced that Oskenonton had been appointed the "Indian healer of Lily Dale" (Figure 22). Aside from running his store, Oskenonton also led healing classes at Assembly Hall three days a week, by private appointments, and offered healing circles at his shop, known as the "Wigwam." He taught some of these courses with C. A. Burgess, a white Spiritualist who claimed to practice healing techniques he learned from Pawnee people.³⁹⁶ Burgess also led "Indianist" vaudeville-style shows in the first decade of the twentieth century.³⁹⁷ Unfortunately, I have been unable to find any other records of the classes Oskenonton offered or accounts of attendees to his healing services or healing circles. He was not the only person to offer

³⁹⁶ Darryl Catherine, "Between Two Worlds: Transformations of Spiritualism in Contemporary Lily Dale," in *Handbook of Spiritualism and Channeling* ed. Cathy Gutierrez (Boston: Brill, 2015), 302.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

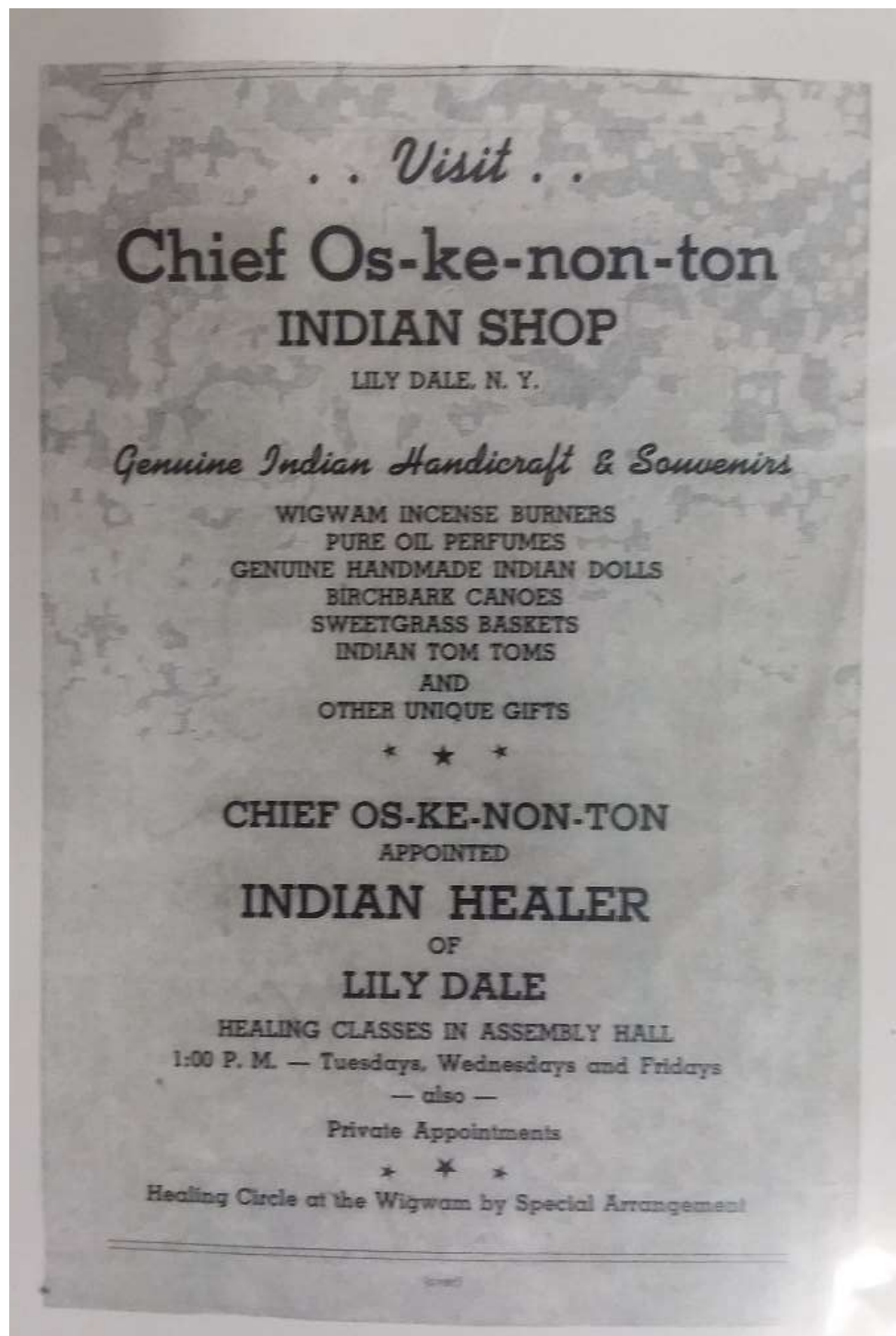


Figure 22: Flyer advertising Oskenton's shop at Lily Dale

healing services at Lily Dale, but as far as evidence shows he was the only one who was marketed specifically as an Indigenous healer.

It is important to note that in the years following his musical stage career Oskenonton made a career based on his spirituality. This is where we can see the different facets of his virtuosic performance—his musical virtuosity and his virtuosity as a Spiritualist and spiritual healer—coming together to create a space separate from the mundanity of the everyday. Connections between his services as a spiritual healer, specifically an “Indian healer,” and his musical performances are significant. Though more speculative due to a lack of archival evidence, I would suggest that Oskenonton incorporated elements of his musical virtuosity and performance into his spiritual persona.

The other musicians that I have discussed so far in this chapter combined musical and mediumistic virtuosity to set the séance stage, to create an affective atmosphere, and to invoke spirits. Oskenonton can be understood to be a prime and insightful example of musical mediumship. Unlike the other musicians of this chapter, Oskenonton did not necessarily fulfill each function of the musical medium at once. He did, however, accomplish all these tasks throughout his career, sometimes in combination and sometimes alone. As a musical medium Oskenonton demonstrated virtuosity in several ways including: his range of performance styles and adaptability to space (large operatic productions, small recitals, radio, and Broadway); his stagecraft as a musician and Spiritualist; and his virtuosity as a spiritual healer and possible medium.

As was the case with other forms of musical virtuosity and mediumistic virtuosity discussed in this chapter, Oskenonton’s virtuosic performances were likely reciprocal in nature, both building on and enhancing one another. Though there are not records that describe him

functioning specifically as a musical medium in séance settings, it is difficult to imagine that a musical performer such as Oskenton, who spent a large portion of his life on stage—performing music as well as an Indianist identity—would not incorporate elements of his craft into his role as a spiritual healer.

For a moment I would like to speculate on the potential intersections between Oskenton's musical and mediumistic virtuosity. Though it often went unwritten, I think it likely that Oskenton did perform in séances, even though his performances may have been understood to be casual or not directly related to the séance proper. In the two examples I have been able to access, Doyle's séance description and the séance visited by White Wing's spirit, Oskenton's performance was depicted as being outside the limits of the séance. In Doyle's description, the performance took place before the séance formally began and the same happened in the White Wing séance. Yet, the performances in both cases had a powerful effect on the spirit communication. Perhaps when attending séances Oskenton provided music, but not as the primary medium. He may have performed prior to the séance or else performed when requested by sitters or the medium. For example, in wishing to contact the spirits of Native Americans, sitters may have requested Oskenton perform a traditional Indigenous song as he did during his recitals.³⁹⁸ Sitters may have interpreted Oskenton's expertise of Indigenous song and the

³⁹⁸ Oskenton's recitals were typically comprised of a mixture of traditional Native American songs and Indianist arrangements. The programs for these recitals often did not specify the nation that the song belonged to. While the idealized songs were individually named and ownership was attributed to the composers (indicated by the inclusion of their name next to each selection), Native American songs were simply listed as "primitive music." One 1926 *New York Times* review, however, took the time to mention the distinctiveness and breadth of Native songs featured in Oskenton's program. The review noted that "North American Indian songs are largely tribal or of local

performance of his Indigenous identity to mean that he had a more direct spiritual connection to certain kinds of spirits, specifically the “Indianist” spirits that were highly sought after in these spaces. In other words, they may have viewed his “Indianness” as proof of his “authenticity,” an authenticity that would allow him direct communication to spirits.

Another space where Oskentonon may have employed his virtuosic performance was during his healing services. Throughout his musical career Oskentonon performed a public, Indianist identity for mostly white audiences, and it may have been possible that his role as a spiritual healer at Lily Dale required a similar kind of performance, particularly when one considers that he was marketed specifically as an “Indian healer” (see Figure 22).³⁹⁹ It is not known what happened in this space, but it is interesting to consider how virtuosity might have been present. How, for example, did Oskentonon use his voice to convey complex ideas about the spirit and the soul, to put his clients at ease, or to perform song? How might he have imbued the process of healing with the Indianist identity he crafted on the opera and recital stage? Did he develop a new vocabulary of movements in this space or did he incorporate similar physical expressions from his musical performance? Furthermore, how did he use his virtuosity to heal the broken bodies, minds, and souls that came to him for help and reprieve?

In framing Oskentonon’s virtuosic mediumship and healing as performance, I do not wish to suggest that his spirituality was insincere, for that does not seem to be the case. Rather, I think

derivations. They differ as much as Indian dialects. Mr. Oskentonon sang each song in the dialect for which it was composed and he also sang a song in English with good diction and musical phrasing” (“Indian Songs by Oskentonon,” *New York Times*. New York. April 6, 1926).

³⁹⁹ This title was bestowed upon Oskentonon by a flyer advertising his services at Lily Dale. It is not clear if Oskentonon created this flyer himself or if someone else created it for him.

it is likely that he relied on elements of his stagecraft to project an “Indian” identity in his role as a spiritual healer. Furthermore, Oskenton’s public “Indian” persona (as opposed to his personal self-identification as Kanien’kehá:ka) was often the focal point of his role at Lily Dale, from his first years singing there until his retirement there later in life. It seems that after a lifetime of learning to perform “Indianness” to white audiences, Oskenton knew how to present a successful performance. He seems to have developed and utilized different aspects of his virtuosic performance in a way that was highly attuned to his surroundings, allowing him to pivot readily from the stage to the Spiritualist circle.

5.5 Conclusion

During musical séances, music was typically incorporated into the night’s proceedings and served several important functions. Musical performances could invoke spirits, signify the presence of certain spirits, or transmit musical spirit messages through the medium. The scene that Arthur Conan Doyle describes in the letter to his wife does something different. In this instance, the musical performance was strictly separated from the spirit communications that followed. It is not even clear if the musician, the “Indian chief,” remained after his performance to attend the sitting. The direct connections between music and the sitting are obscured, perhaps taken for granted or thought to be unworthy of elaboration. Despite its difference from other musical séances, it was likely that the music hung in the air, continuing to resonate and inflect the events that followed. Noting Doyle’s focus on the singer’s power, maybe the experience of feeling the vibrations produced by the voice’s resonance in the small parlor reminded sitters of the mechanics of spirit communication through vibrational frequency as discussed in Chapters Three and Four.

Or perhaps in thinking of Romantic notions of music's ability to transmit soul-states, the sound of the voice reminded those in attendance of sound's freedom from corporeality and its ability to facilitate spirit communication.

In this chapter I have sought to identify the elements of the musical séance and to demonstrate the connections between spirit communication and musical virtuosity within Spiritualist contexts. Virtuosity was an essential component in the séance space, a way to demonstrate that which was beyond practical understanding. Mediumistic displays of virtuosity emerged in a variety of forms. Mediums produced fantastical visual manifestations, floating objects, voices, and wide-ranging musical performances. Furthermore, the examples I have provided demonstrate that different forms of virtuosic performance had a reciprocal relationship with one another. Each additional form of virtuosity compounded the other, building upon the atmosphere of the superhuman and the otherworldly.

The musicians who performed in séances were certainly talented. Some were casual, musical amateurs while others could perform instrumental and vocal acrobatics to rival any early Romantic virtuoso. Yet, a major element of this performance was the accompanying gestures and settings of mediumistic virtuosity. With the lights dimmed, sitters were more tuned in and consumed with the sound. At the same time, an alertness for indications of spirit communication, perhaps an adrenaline rush, made everything they experienced seem even more fantastical. The musical performance was enhanced by virtuosic gestures of mediumship that were, in fact, essential for the overall effect of experiencing spiritually inspired music.

The instances of musical and mediumistic virtuosity that I have set out to analyze in this chapter are significant because of the ways they interacted with one another. A topic for future research would be to consider how virtuosities might compound and enhance each other in settings

outside of the séance and Spiritualist circle. How, for example, might a twenty-first-century pop music star benefit from demonstrating a combination of various virtuosities including music, movement, and the ability to project a public persona? How might these virtuosities build upon one another in the minds of fans and viewers? Another example might be the movie studio stars of Hollywood's Golden Age who could sing, dance, and act, all during one two-hour film. How did these different virtuosic elements combine to contribute to their public image as superhuman performers? While this topic is beyond the scope of this dissertation, virtuosity's reciprocal relationship with other virtuosic forms can be seen in the séance. Spiritualist spaces offer a model for understanding how technique, performance, and stagecraft combined to create experiences that pushed the limits of the human.

6.0 Conclusion: Spiritualism's Contested Archive

In 2014, literary scholar Christine Ferguson penned an article titled “Recent Studies in Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism.”⁴⁰⁰ As the title suggests, Ferguson’s article sketched the state of research on Spiritualist studies over the previous thirty years and poses the question, “What is at stake, politically, ethically, and intellectually, in the ways in which contemporary critics have revived, aligned, and interrogated this dynamic heterodox movement?”⁴⁰¹ Part of this “revival” is due to the fact that Spiritualist texts of the past have been increasingly republished and digitized, making many materials that are otherwise difficult to find more easily accessible.⁴⁰² At the same time, Ferguson notes, scholars of the last three decades have shifted the default academic perspective on Spiritualism, approaching the topic with an astute seriousness that she claims, “would no doubt have pleased Victorian believers.”⁴⁰³

One reason that Ferguson expresses excitement over the increasing availability of Spiritualist texts, aside from accessibility, is the hope that a larger body of differing perspectives will allow historians and scholars to explore Spiritualism as the heterogenous system of thought that it was, as opposed to a monolithic belief structure. The dilemma of Spiritualism’s heterogeneity is one that has caused anxieties in this study and others. How are we to account for

⁴⁰⁰ Christine Ferguson, “Recent Studies in Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism,” *Literature Compass* 9 no. 6 (2012): 431-40.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 431.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 436.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 432.

a philosophical and spiritual movement that was so intimately personal and individualized that it is possible each source offers a different understanding of what practitioners experienced and how? This is not to say that there were not general beliefs consistent across time or geographical area, but individual experiences were highly personal and subjective. Complicating this further is the fluidity of Spiritualism as a belief system. Although I have chosen to study a community that practiced a relatively defined version of Spiritualism, particularly following the establishment of the National Spiritualist Association in 1893 with its accompanying tenets, Spiritualist practice could take so many forms and to such varying degrees. For example, someone who attended séances casually for entertainment and another who attended regular Spiritualist services and meetings while working to develop their own mediumship may have both labeled themselves Spiritualists. On the other hand, a Methodist who participated in Spiritualist séances and rituals may have hesitated to use the term because of their own understandings of how they related to their religious community.

These are not easy distinctions to make and, likewise, archival materials can be just as slippery. The scholar must determine which accounts are trustworthy and which are unworthy of discussion. They must decide how to best represent Spiritualists' many different methods of knowing and participating in spirit communications while simultaneously developing a consistent narrative. These are just a few of the troubles that have figuratively haunted me throughout this study.

In speaking of an archive, I do not refer just to a physical archive, or even to materials that are consistent with traditional definitions of archives as secure, contained places where documents gather dust. The Spiritualist archive, in my view, is a broad take on the sources and information that scholars have at their disposal. The archive that I work with is varied and includes

autobiographies, periodicals, séance accounts, correspondence, concert reviews, songbooks, and objects related to sound, such as the spirit trumpet. For the most part these sources are not unusual. There are documents and voices that might be found in any other historical study. The claims they make, however, sometimes present challenges. Frequently, these accounts contain information and experiences that were not taken seriously in their contemporary society and are not taken seriously now. By this, I mean that accounts of spirit communication and the knowledge it produced are often understood to be suspect. And though it is important to give these figures and writings serious consideration, it is also important to recognize their shortcomings. It is one thing to sympathize with a historical figure and to suspend disbelief, even if one has a hint of suspicion. But how should we approach these sources when we can see the damage they caused—be it gendered, racial, colonial, or otherwise—and the damage these ideologies still cause? In the sources discussed in Chapter Two, for example, how can we account for descriptions of fantastical events that would be otherwise marginalized because of the worldview they present (communication with spirit) that simultaneously invoke harmful tropes of the “Indian spirit” and Blackness?

Adding another layer of complication to this contested archive is the element of sound. Much of my research relies on written descriptions of sound that, in the process of being transcribed, have lost the crucial element of sonic quality. This is not a new dilemma and scholars of soundscape and sound studies have had to deal with this problem for many years.⁴⁰⁴ The

⁴⁰⁴ This is especially true of sound studies that focus on historical period prior to sound reproduction. See Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); and Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); and Mark M. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

descriptions I examine, however, look at very specific ways of listening and experiencing *spiritual* sound. Spiritualist sources simultaneously convey events that are typically understood to be inaudible and thus not sonic, as in the case of clairaudience or spiritual hearing. For this reason, much of my analysis has been speculative. These speculations are grounded in research, primary and secondary materials, yet the imagination is required because accounts are not always complete, nor could they be.

Of those who attended musical séances, for example, it is likely that many did not have the vocabulary to detail the music they heard. Likewise, if specific compositions were performed, witnesses may not have recognized the composition or have been able to identify it, and thus were unable to document it. Even when sound and music were recounted in great detail, there were still inaudible elements of spiritual sound that could not be physically heard. The internal, inaudible sounds received by mediums, for example, would not have been experienced by séance sitters. Sitters may have had an idea of what the spirit voices sounded like based on the medium's recreations, but this was a translation transmitted through the medium's vocal and bodily mechanisms. Thus, I can only imagine some of the sonic events, audible and inaudible, that occurred in these contexts.

The creators of Spiritualist archives should also be acknowledged. This includes the people who produced materials and who wrote the histories, the weekly periodicals, and the autobiographies that form the basis of many Spiritualist studies, including this one. Chapter Five is one example. Throughout that chapter I use sources that were written primarily by white men who enjoyed prominent status and position in Spiritualist circles and mainstream society. Arthur Conan Doyle, who provided a séance description featuring a vocal recital by a Native American man, was wealthy, highly educated, had been knighted, and was well-known worldwide for his

Sherlock Holmes stories. Other musical mediums like Jesse Shepard and Florizel von Reuter were also prominent white men who were established in these communities and garnered respect because of their position. White women acted as prominent agents and contributed to Spiritualist literature and writings. Spiritualists like Leah Fox and Emma Hardinge Britten penned autobiographies of their spiritual and mediumistic experiences to add to the large body of that genre.⁴⁰⁵

Yet in using these sources in Chapter Five, key parts of the story are left missing. As I mention in that chapter, it is impossible to know certain details about the séance singer in Doyle's account, including what the singer's relationship to Spiritualism was and whether he attended the séance after his performance. In a similar way, Oskenton's relationship to Spiritualism is also obscured. My archive for this study was predicated on others' voices and accounts of Oskenton's performances and actions, lacking his own. These descriptions came from Eurocentric and Euro-settler perspectives and consequently were unable to fully address Oskenton's experiences of Native-lived colonialism as a Kanien'kehá:ka man and a Spiritualist.⁴⁰⁶ Therefore, there is a disconnect between these aspects of his identity and how they interacted with one another. When the sources that I rely on to develop these narratives do not know how to adequately handle this

⁴⁰⁵ See Lowry, *Invisible Hosts*. Lowry discusses the autobiographies of nineteenth-century Spiritualist women, specifically those of the mediums Leah Fox Underhill, Emma Hardinge Britten, Amanda Theodosia Jones, and Nettie Colburn Maynard.

⁴⁰⁶ Neal Ferris uses the term "Native-lived colonialism" in his book, *The Archaeology of Native-Lived Colonialism*, to understand Native-lived histories as "complex strategies for accommodating contingencies, and informed by individual and community-specific historical realities." Neal Ferris, *The Archaeology of Native-Lived Colonialism: Challenging History in the Great Lakes* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2009), 1.

man's movements through Spiritualist circles, how can I use them to paint a more nuanced portrait? Furthermore, what can be done to fill in the spaces that these sources leave blank?

Scholars dealing with historical subjects, particularly colonial subjects, have had to deal with similar archives constructed by colonizing powers. As Kirsty Reid and Fiona Paisley have written, the process of building an archive is not a passive act of impartial knowledge collection, but a powerful force that seeks to bring the “uncivilized” under control.⁴⁰⁷ In her introduction to the collected volume, *Archive Stories*, Antoinette Burton dismisses the notion that archives are objective entities. Rather, “all archives come into being in and as history as a result of specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures—pressures which leave traces and which render archives themselves artifacts of history.”⁴⁰⁸ It is important to remember and recognize the underlying power structures that form archives. In the case of Spiritualist archives, the power dynamic is twofold: Spiritualists were marginalized from mainstream religious and philosophical thought, yet there were certainly power dynamics present within Spiritualist circles which determined whose voice was heard, published, and reprinted.

Uncovering Spiritualist history implies the exploration of the unknown and the unknowable. Many of the materials I have referenced in this study are not determined by or dependent on stable data or events that can be verified, measured, or re-created. They do not align with conventional, positivistic ways of knowing. Moreover, the Spiritualist methods that produced these sources have always been in question. In a way, the mystery inherent within historical studies

⁴⁰⁷ Kirsty Reid and Fiona Paisley, eds., *Sources and Methods in Histories of Colonialism: Approaching the Imperial Archive* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 3.

⁴⁰⁸ Antoinette Burton, ed., *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 6.

of Spiritualism—of the materials, the letters, the descriptions, the spaces, the people—is poetically appropriate. At times one feels like a sitter seated at the séance table in a darkened room, groping for answers that may or may not reveal themselves. Information comes in the form of many contradicting voices as they emerge from the depths of history like the spirit voices that internally inundated mediums. As Ann Braude puts it, “A historian is a bit like a spirit medium: one’s goal is to allow the dead to speak as clearly as possible.”⁴⁰⁹

In this dissertation I have attempted to understand how Spiritualist community and practice centered around and was influenced by sound. My goal has been to accomplish this task with understanding and empathy for practitioners who were and continue to be discounted because their beliefs do not match that which is considered practical or possible. My hope is that I have been able to illuminate aspects of historical Spiritualism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century—namely sound and music—that have likewise remained obscured or disregarded.

⁴⁰⁹ Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, [1998] 2001), xi.

Appendix A : The Spiritual Harp

The following tables list information pertaining to each song printed in *The Spiritual Harp* (14th edition). The four tables correspond with the different sections of the hymnal, excluding the final Chants and Spirit Echoes sections. A majority of this information has been transcribed from the hymnal itself, listing tune title, composer, and lyricist when known. Occasionally an original source is listed when applicable. When possible I have attempted to locate and notate previous usage of the tune and lyrics.

Table 1: *The Spiritual Harp*, “Harmonies for Various Occasions”

Song title	Page	Composer	Lyricist	Alternate text	Source
Spiritual Harp	5	E. H. Bailey	Mrs. C. J. Osborn		
Along the River of Time	6	George F. Root	George F. Root		<i>The Coronet</i> (c. 1865), 186
Beautiful Visions of Joy	7	E. H. Bailey	uncredited	The Inner Voice	
God Knows it All	8	S. W. Foster	uncredited		[Text] <i>Staunton Spectator</i> . Staunton, VA (October 19, 1853).
Then Do Right	9	Y. A. Leib	A. P. McCombs		
Be Happy	10	Dr. E. L. Perry	Emma Tuttle		

Cometh a Blessing Down	11	E. H. Bailey	Mary F. Tyler		
The Old and New	12		John Greenleaf Whittier	Divine Providence	
The Better Land	13		Mrs. Hemans		
We Come	14	Mrs. C. J. Osborn	Original	Smile and Be Contented	
Charity	15	W. S Ripley			
Scatter the Germs of the Beautiful	16	Y. A. Leib	Mrs. L. A. Cobb		
How to be Happy	17	E. H. Bailey	Original, Warren Chase		
Brother	18			Angel Friends	“Herald of Progress”
Oh, Sing to Me of Heaven	19	George F. Root	George F. Root		<i>The Coronet</i> , 100
Oh, Strike the Harp in Nature’s Praise!	20	A. B. Whiting	uncredited		
Star of Hope	21		#233 The New Hymn Book		The New Hymn Book, Designed for Universalist Societies (1837); <i>The Spirit Minstrel</i> (1853)
The Beautiful Shore	22		Mrs. O. S. Matteson		
God is Love	23		anonymous		

New Year	24	E. H. Bailey	J.C.L.		“The Radical” v. 1 (January 1866)
Balm	24	Emma Tuttle	Original, Mrs. C. J. Osborn		
Our Native Land	25	E. H. Bailey	Hudson Tuttle		
Leo	26		Spirit of William Penn (Reform); Mrs. H. N. Green (Social Science)	Reform; Social Science	
Keep the Heart Young	27	S. W. Foster	Likely original		
Affection	28		Adelaide A. Proctor (One by One)	One by One	
Come Gentle Spirits	29				
Emma	29			Budding Life	
Think Gently of the Erring	30	E. H. Bailey	Miss Fletcher		
Evening	31		H. A. Reid		
Trust	32	Cheatham’s Psalmody	Abbie O. Comstock		
We Are All Rejoicing	32	Familiar Melody			
She Sleeps Her Last Sleep	33	E. C. Riggs	E. C. Riggs		<i>The Coronet</i> , 98
Peace	34	Handel	Mrs. Price	Heaven	

Shall We Know the Loved Ones There?	35		W. W. Hebbard		
The Mystic Bark	36		Frances I. Keeler		
Immortality	37	M. M. Bailey	Original, O. S. Ingham		
Devotion	38		N. Frank White		
Uncertainty	38		Christian Intelligencer		<i>Christian Intelligencer</i>
The Spirit Bugle	39	E. H. Bailey	Parody, Tennyson's "Bugle Song"		
Song of the Harvesters	40		"Ohio Farmer"		<i>Ohio Farmer</i>
Ocean Life	41	Y. A. Leib	S. Graham		
Nature's Nobleman	42				
Strike Away	43				
Crystal Waters	44	Lorenzo Dow	Original, Barrett (?)		
Morning Light	45		Original, anonymous		
Dream of Heaven	46		Katie Hill		<i>Banner of Light</i>
Press On!	47	E. H. Bailey	"Spiritual Republic"		<i>Spiritual Republic</i>
Orient	48	S. W. Foster	Sarah W. Brooks		
Love On	49	Y. A. Leib	Mrs. Case		
Usher	49		Bernard Barton		<i>The Psalms of Life, #125 (1857)</i>

Do They Love Us Still?	50		Original, O. S. Ingham		
Mother's Dream	51	J. H. Crawford	Achsa Sprague		
Garden of the Heart	52	James Bailey	C. E. Howe	Long Ago	
Spirit Sun	53		Breviary. St. Ambrose		
Brighter View	53		Theodore Parker		
Adieu	54	Bond	Thomas Lake Harris	My Bird-Child (Emily Judson)	
Rock of Liberty	55	J. G. Clark	J. G. Clark		
Christmas Bells	56		Emma Tuttle		
Come Up Higher	57		Original, Mattie G. V. Smith		
Equal Rights	58	E. H. Bailey	Mrs. Corbin,		<i>Spiritual Republic</i>
Little Birdie	59		Tennyson		
Lament of Our Red Brothers	60	S. W. Foster	N. F. White	Echoes of Long Ago	
Thou Art Gone	61		"Herald of Progress"		<i>Herald of Progress</i>
Light	61				
The Casket	62		Original, Emma S. Ledsham		
Pleyel	62	Pleyel	E. C. Henck		

I Am Not Old	63		Park Benjamin	Martyrs (Lizzie Doten)	
Isle of the Blest	64	Bond	H. Clay Preuss		<i>Banner of Light</i>
America	65				
Heavenly Day	66	Lorenzo Dow	C. D. Stuart	Something Still to Do (D. Smith)	
Waiting, Only Waiting	67	A. B. Whiting	Original, A. B. Whiting		
Cradle Song of the Poor	68	E. H. Bailey	Adelaide A. Proctor		
Heavenly Accents	69		Hymns of the Spirit		<i>Hymns of the Spirit</i>
Reaping	70		Robert Buchanan		
Good Will	71		Lewin's Mead Col.		
Morn Amid the Mountains	72				
Words and Acts of Kindness	72				
Sleep, Little Baby, Sleep	73	E. H. Bailey			
The Spirit Artist	74		Original, L. B. Brown	Song-Bird of the Spirit Land (L. K. Coonley, "Hs. Of Reform")	
Summer Days	75				

Never Say Fail	76			Golden Steps (William Denton)	
Higher Law	77	E. H. Bailey			
Rejoice	77				
Portal	78		Ascha Sprague	Beauty of Heart	
Come to the Woods	79	Y. A. Leib	J. H. Powell		
Welcome	80	Y. A. Leib	T. L. Harris		
Rainbow of Promise	80	M. M. Bailey	Original, Evangel		
Ho! Hilly Ho!	81	Y. A. Leib			
Heavenly Union	82	S. W. Foster			
Temple	83	Joseph Barrett	Moore		
Triumph	83	E. H. Bailey			
Symbol	84		W. R. Wallace	Nature's Lesson (Mrs. E. P. Thorndyke)	
Argosy	85	E. H. Bailey	Original, Emma Tuttle		
Life	86		H. Bonar	Sun of Truth	
Prophet	87	S. N. Fogg	Mrs. M. A. Archer	Speak no Ill	
Nature's Harp	88	Y. A. Leib	Whittier	Maternal Love (Original, L. B. Brown)	
The Silent Land	89	Y. A. Leib			

Incense	90	Handel	John Pierpont		
Voice of Progress	90		Original, Lyman C. Howe		
The Heart's Dead	91				
Land of Bliss	92	F. C. Winans		Flowers (Mrs. E. Oakes Smith)	
O'er Billows Blue	93	E. H. Bailey	Arthur's Home Magazine	When Laughing Joy (Original, E. S. Ledsham)	<i>Arthur's Home Magazine</i>
Greetings	94		Original, Nettie Pease	The Heart	
Things That Never Die	95	E. H. Bailey		The Soul's Prophet	
Revelation	96		Lizzie Doten	Entrancement	
Make Home Pleasant	97				
Voyage	98	W. S. Ripley	Dr. J. R. Orton		
Released	99	E. H. Bailey	Original (O.S. Ingham)	Wound Not the Heart (Dexter Smith)	
Angels Bright	100	N. Billings	J. S. Adams		<i>The Psalms of Life</i>
Love	100	E. T. Blackmer			
He Leads Us On	101	N. B. Hollister			

The Other World	102		Harriet Beecher Stowe	The Home We Build	
Vale	103		Original, O.S. Ingham		
Fountain	103	James Bailey	Lydia H. Sigourney		
God in the Soul	104	E. H. Bailey		Passage Home	
Washtenong	105	E. H. Bailey	Hosmer		
Clear	105		Vaughn		
Joy in Grief	106	R. A. Whiting	R. Augusta Whiting		
Joy Shall Come at Last	107	E. H. Bailey			
Progress	108		Butts		
The Stars	109		William H. Furness		
The Lily	110	Charles H. Levering	Addie C. Barrett		
Blessing	112				
Relief	113	Cheatham's Psalmody	Proud		<i>Cheatham's Psalmody</i>
Spirit Serenade	113		Uhland		
Live Them Down	114				
Rest for the Weary	114	George R. Lowry			
Stand for the Right	115		Charles McKay		
Serenade. Soft Flowing River	116		"Home Journal"		<i>Home Journal</i>

Haste Not! Rest Not!	116		Goethe		
Rill: Temperance Song for Children	117		Pierpont		
Night Hymn at Sea	118	E. H. Bailey	Mrs. Hemans		
Patience	118		Bayard Taylor		

Table 2: *The Spiritual Harp*, “Congregational and Social”

Name	Page	Composer	Lyricist	Alternative text	Source
Sighing for Heaven	119		H. C. Preuss,		<i>Banner of Light</i>
Family Meeting in Heaven	120	“Happy Voices”	“Happy Voices” American Tract Society		<i>American Tract Society</i>
Anniversary	121		“Pierpont”, Lizzie Doten		
Home Above	122		Original, L.B. Brown		
Bethany	123	Lowell Mason	S.F. Adams	Heaven is My Home (T.R. Taylor)	<i>Sabbath Hymn and Tune Book</i>
Confidence	124		C.M. Sawyer	The Sea of Life	
Shadows	125	M.M. Bailey	Frances D. Gage	The Curse that Faileth Not (“Schoonberg Cotta Family”)	
The Temperance Ball is Rolling	126	“Sparkling Stream”	D. J. Mandell		
Mansions	127				

Ring the Bell Softly	128		Per. Russell and Co. Dexter Smith		
Do Good	129	E. H. Bailey			
The Welcome Back	130		Eliza Cook		
Shall We Meet Beyond the River!	131				
Garden	132		William Denton		
I'm a Traveller	133	E. H. Bailey	N. Billings		
Mason	134	Lowell Mason	O.W. Holmes		
There is No Death	134				
Spiritual Freedom	135		Original, Mary A. Whitaker		
When We Were Young	136			The Temperance Pledge ("Hopedale Col.")	
Liberty	137	A. W. Trask	Lizzie Doten		
Glory Hallelujah	138				
While the Days Are Going By	139				
The Old Hundredth	140		Thomas Lake Harris		
Duke Street	140	Hatton	N.P. Willis		
Forsake Not the Right	141		H.E. Wardwell		

Gloria! An Angel Born To-Day	142	A.B. Whiting	Original, A.B. Whiting		
Land of the Living	143	Dr. E.L. Perry	Original, Emma Tuttle		
Good-By	144				
Conference	145		Original, Sada Bailey	They Are Waiting (Dr. M.B. Lawrence)	
The Days Gone By	146			The Spirit Picture (Original, M.A. Archer)	
Coming to a Close	147			We're Going Home (Original, E.S. Ledsham)	
Golden Side	148	S. W. Tucker	Mrs. M.A. Kidder		
Boylston	149	Lowell Mason	Fawcett		
Badea	149		G.S. Burleigh		
God Will Remember the World	150		J.G. Holland	God is Forever with Man	
Lock of Hair	151	J. H. Crawford	Original, Evangel	Night Vigils (A.C. Sprague)	
Our Loved in Heaven	152			Shall We Know Each Other There?	
The Angels Told Me	153				
Aspirations	154	J. Field	Mrs. Hemans	There's No One Like Mother	

Bright Hills of Glory	155	E. H. Bailey	Lydia Baxter		
Rest in Heaven	156		Finley Johnson		
Eden	157		Rev. W. Hunter		
Resignation	158		Mrs. M. A. Whitaker	The Improvising Poet	
Vision	159		Original, Emma Tuttle	The Old Year and the New (Tennyson)	
Passed Over	160			Woman, the Architect of Love (Finley Johnson)	
Praise	161				
Consolation	161		S. Longfellow		<i>Hymns of Spirit</i>
There's a Home for All	162	E. H. Bailey			
Hereafter	163				
Evergreen Shore	165	S. W. Tucker	S. W. Tucker	Spirit Music (Original)	
Fireside	165	M. M. Bailey			
Grove	165				
Beautiful Home	166	A. J. Abbey (Silver Fountain)	Miss. K. M. Topping	Magnetic Spheres (Original, evangel)	<i>Silver Fountain</i>
Flowers	167	Nellie F. Burnett	Thomas Lake Harris		
Omnipresence	167	M. M. Bailey	Pope		

Lenox	168	Edson	Original, Mrs. M.A. Archer		
Coronation	168	O. Holden	“Spirit Minstrel”		<i>Spirit Minstrel</i>
Stream of Life	169	Arranged			
There is Joy for You	170				
Ray	171		Original, L.B. Brown	Spirit Healers (Original, M.A. Archer)	
Vina	172	Joseph Barrett	A. Ballou		
Edinburg	172				

Table 3: *The Spiritual Harp*, "Songs, Duets, and Quartets"

Tune	Page	Composer	Lyricist	Alternate Text	Source
Sparkling Waters	173	E. H. Bailey	Mrs. Cora Daniels		
Heart Song	174	Felix Schelling	Paschal Beverly Randolph		
Supplication	175		S. Hymn and Tune book		<i>Spiritual Hymn and Tune Book</i>
Dreaming To-Night	176	E. H. Bailey	Mrs. Charles A. Fenn		
Trance	177	Mrs. Cecelia Robinson	Original, M.A. Archer		
Oh, Come, Let Us Gather	178		Original Lois Waisbroker		

My Home in the Spirit-land	179	S.W. Tucker			
Fore-gleams	180	“L’éclair”	P. of Russel and Co., Dexter Smith		
Home	181				
Nothing but Water to Drink	182	E. H. Bailey	John Pierpont	“This was the last poem of this revered reformer whilst in the earth form.”	
Glimpse	183				
Union and Liberty	184	Asa V. Hill			
Sweet be Thy Rest	185				
Spirit Rappings	186		Original, Emma Tuttle		
Hero	187	George F. Root	William D. Gallagher	Gold of the Soul (Original, Nellie L. Davis)	
When We Are Gone	188	Felix Schelling			
Gentle Words	189	E. H. Bailey	Original, Mr. C. J. Osborn		
“Birdie’s” Spirit Song	190	John P. Ordway, MD	Lizzie Doten		
Realm of the West	192	E. H. Bailey	Amanda T. Jones		
Morning Land	193	E. H. Bailey	A. C. Sprague		

O Life, Beautiful Life!	194	S. W. Foster	Elizabeth N. Gladding		
Eclipse	195	James Bailey	S. C. Edgarton		
Gentle Spirits, Are You Near Me?	196	E. H. Bailey	G. F. De Vingut		
Summer Friends	197		Frances S. Osgood		
Hush-a-by	198	S. W. Foster	Anna M. Wells		
Millennium	199		E. W. Locke	Faith, Hope, and Charity (Original, S.C. Coffinberry)	
Build Him a Monument	200	L. B. Brown	L. B. Brown		
Day	201				
My Wife's Hand	202	C. H. Levering	Sarah Knowles Bolton		
Nature	203		Emerson		
Translation	204	E. H. Bailey	Original, L. B. Brown		
Are We Not Brothers?	205		Lydia H. Sigourney		
I Stand on Memory's Golden Shore	206	J. P. Webster (Root & Cady)	S. Fillmore Bennett		
Cold Water for Me	208		Rev. P. Stryker	Science	
Germ	209				

Make Home Beautiful	210	C. H. Levering			
The Song that I Love	212				
Beauty	14				
We Shall Meet Again, Mother	215	E. T. Blackmer	Original, E.H. Bailey		
Transfiguration	216	S. W. Foster	Original, J.O. Barrett		
Waiting by the River	217	“The Casket”	Asa Hull		
Golden Age	218	E. H. Bailey	Original, Emma Tuttle		
There’s Room in the World	219		Preuss		
Homeward Bound	220	“Lottie” by Mrs. Conant	Original “Birdie,” Mrs. Conant		
Heaven Our Home	221	Y. A. Leib	Alice Cary		
Whisper it Softly	222	E. H. Bailey			
Maternity	223	S. W. Foster	Original, J. O. Barrett		
Silent River	224	Y. A. Leib			
Dream Verified	225		Original, Luther Colby		
Where the Roses Ne’er Shall Wither	226	J. G. Clark	J. G. Clark		
Sweet Light of Heaven	227	Sep Winner	Original, Dexter Smith		

All They Works Praise Thee	228				
Unity	229		Original, M. A. Archer		
Angel Watchers' Serenade	230	E. H. Bailey	Original, J.M. Peebles		

Table 4: *The Spiritual Harp*, “Anthems, Sentences, Choruses”

Tune	Page	Composer	Lyricist	Alternative Text	Source
Joy Cometh	231	E. H. Bailey			
My God! How Shall I Thank Thee?	232		Theodore Parker		
Create in Me a Clean Heart	233	M. M. Bailey	“Psalms”		<i>Psalms</i>
Celestial Clime	233	N. B. Hollister	“Hymns of the Spirit’		<i>Hymns of the Spirit</i>
Blessed is the Heart	234	James Bailey	Original, Evangel		
All Hail, Sublime!	236	E. H. Bailey	Original, W. S. Trask	Our Lyceum (Lyceum Manual)	
We’ll Meet Our Loved Ones There	237	S. W. Foster			
God Hath Endowed Us	238	E. H. Bailey	“Sanscrit”		
Beatitude	239				
Gladsome Life	240	M. M. Bailey	Andrew Jackson Davis		

Peaceful Rest	240	N. B. Hollister			
Anthem of Liberty	241	S. W. Foster		Out of the Shadow (Mrs. Howart)	
God is Spirit	242				
Media	243	M. M. Bailey	Original, Evangel		
Morn of Freedom	244	S. W. Foster			
Divine Goodness	248				
O Bruised and Bleeding Heart!	249				
The Coming Day	150	E. H. Bailey	William Denton		
Blessed is the Man	151	Joseph Barrett			
When We Go Hence	252	E. H. Bailey	J. M. Peebles		
Hear! O Man	253				
Universal Patriotism	254		Original, J. O. Barrett		
Fear Not	255	Mendelssohn	Belle Bush		<i>Banner of Light</i>
Indian Hunter	256	Russell	Mrs. Hemans		
Fellowship	257		Barton		
Union	258	Y. A. Leib	Mrs. M. A. Archer		<i>Echoes</i>
Good-night	259			Hope for the Insane (original)	
Gladness	260				
Pushmataha	261	E. H. Bailey	Speech of Pushmataha		

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