IMAGES OF WOMAN AS MEDIUM: POWER, PATHOLOGY AND PASSIVITY IN THE WRITINGS OF FREDERIC MARVIN AND CESARE LOMBROSO

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Recent historical explorations of women's experiences in the 19th and early 20th centuries have examined images of woman. The most dominant 19th-century image was woman as inherently inferior to man, both biologically and psychologically. Another image, that woman as creature was fixed and unevolving without potential for change, provided justification for her continued entrapment in a severely limited role in society. The nagging presence of women who did not fit the mold, however—among them trance speakers and Spiritualist mediums—fueled the development of a sexual science that was designed to defend against the incursion of women into the wider public sphere. (For various treatments of sexual science, see Jordanova, 1989; Maclean, 1980; Merchant, 1980; Rosenberg, 1982; Russett, 1989; and Schiebinger, 1989.)

In this paper, I will focus particularly on two authors whose work contributed to this sexual science, North American physician and minister Frederic Marvin (1847-c. 1904) and Italian psychiatrist and criminologist Cesare Lombroso (1836-1909). I will examine two lectures delivered by Marvin at the New York Liberal Club in 1874, which were published in a slim volume titled *The philosophy of Spiritualism and the pathology and treatment of mediomania*. In addition, I will focus on Lombroso's book, *After death—What? spiritistic phenomena and their interpretation*, which was published in 1909.

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Marvin's *Philosophy of Spiritualism* was situated squarely within a tradition of medically-based criticism of Spiritualism, which sought to pathologize as psychological dysfunction what was essentially social deviance.[2] Lombroso defended Italian physical medium Eusapia Palladino (1854-1918), psychical phenomena, and Spiritualistic beliefs in his *After death—What?* His book expressed the views of a small group of believers who, although accepting the fruits of mediumship as objective events, characterized the mediums themselves as medically or psychologically compromised.[3]

By locating these books in the traditions in which they were written, I will show how each functioned to divest the medium of her paradoxical power, and by doing so, defend against the threat presented by any woman who dared to venture beyond the boundary of her assigned sphere in society. First, however, it will be important to briefly review the place 19th-century women occupied in both the U.S. and Italy, as well as 19th-century medical views of hysteria, a syndrome both Marvin and Lombroso associated with mediumship. But before I begin, I would like to make a few comments on the importance of both Marvin and Lombroso to the historiography of parapsychology.

THE INTERSECTION OF BELIEF AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

Commentators generally expressed one of three types of beliefs when they dealt with mediumistic phenomena in the 19th century. First, there were those who believed in an afterlife and in the possibility of spirit intervention in the material world. Second, there were those who believed in some other unexplained and transcendent force of nature that endowed the living with such psychic abilities as thought-transference. Third, there were those who saw only fraud or mental illness in all Spiritualistic beliefs and practices. Individual writers tended to be identified with only one of these three shadings of belief; or if not, they changed from one stance to another over the course of a lifetime, much

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[2] Among these are Beard (1875), Hamilton (1875), Hammond (1876), Maudsley (1868), and Winslow (1877). See also Alvarado (1989), Brown (1983), and Shortt (1984).

[3] Among these was Morselli (1908).

as Lombroso moved from belief in psychic abilities to Spiritualistic beliefs over the course of his work with Palladino.[4]

Commentators generally characterized the psychological health of the mediums they studied in one of three ways. First, there were those who felt that so-called mediums were common cheats who, for reasons of social degeneracy, had embarked on the path of public fraud. From this point of view, the medium was socially pathological, a "mere" liar but not necessarily insane. Second, there were those who looked upon mediums as persons who were sometimes socially, intellectually, or religiously radical but who were otherwise not necessarily pathological. From this point of view, beyond the expression of her mediumship, the medium was considered generally psychologically healthy, and the behaviors and abilities she exhibited were thought to be potentially available to psychologically normal persons. Third, there were those who felt that anyone who exhibited mediumistic behavior necessarily suffered from a variety of social, intellectual, and mental illnesses, definitely exhibited pathology on one or more levels, and was desperately in need of treatment. In general, writers made their attributions of psychological health on a case-by-case basis. An investigator's methodological or medical recommendations flowed from the intersection of his or her beliefs and his or her estimation of a medium's psychological health.

The medical community in general, and the newly emergent psychiatric community in particular, were mainly composed of disbelievers who characterized mediums as mentally ill. In general, 19th-century physicians looked for physiological symptomatology to explain psychological pathology. They emphasized brain lesions or other functional disturbances as root causes of such psychological dysfunctions as hysteria, mediumistic behavior, or Spiritualistic beliefs (Alvarado, 1989; Brown, 1983; Shortt, 1984). With the introduction of Darwin's theories of evolution and their metamorphosis into Social Darwinism in the late 1800s (Hofstadter, 1955), the medical and scientific community added evolutionary explanations. For these theorists, mediumistic behaviors and Spiritualistic beliefs were indicative of a low point on an evolutionary scale of social and intellectual development.

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[4] For discussions of the criticisms of Spiritualism, see Braude (1989), Coon (1992), Moore (1977), Oppenheim (1985), and Owen (1990), for example.

Marvin fought to stem the tide of what English physiologist W.B. Carpenter (1813-1885) called "the epidemic delusion" (Carpenter, 1877, p. 109); Lombroso, on the other hand, heralded the glimpse into the spirit world his hysterical medium provided him. Yet both men, in fact, used their research and their theories to conserve the hierarchy of power that protected the privilege of socially correct white men. To put it another way, as both Marvin and Lombroso worked to reify the inequities of gender, class, and race into scientific facts, they differed only in their use of the medium. For Marvin, the image was medium as patient, someone in dire need of psychiatric intervention and social control. For Lombroso, the image was medium as walking laboratory, someone who could be exploited in the name of science (namely, psychical research) and Spiritualism. In the formulations of both men, woman as medium was essential woman, a creature who, by virtue of her biology, was frozen within a limited sphere of action, to be cured or controlled. The role of medium both typified this limited sphere, and paradoxically transcended it. But what, in fact, was this separate sphere?

THE PLACE OF WOMAN IN 19TH-CENTURY SOCIETY

There are three concepts in women's history that embody the most widely accepted definitions of proper womanhood in 19th-century North America, the cult of true womanhood (Welter, 1966), the cult of domesticity, and the doctrine of separate spheres (Cott, 1977). The portrait of early 19th-century ideas of true womanhood emphasized purity, submissiveness, and religious piety. A true woman was morally superior to man. Her special role was to pass on moral teachings and pious behavior to her children within the context of her home (Welter, 1966).

The cult of domesticity served to formalize the position of women within the household at a time when major economic change was occurring in the young United States (Cott, 1977). Industrialization took

hold, and the prevailing political rhetoric of the times cried out for the ascendance of the individual, and in particular, the common man.[5]

As these changes took place, the domestic sphere became a refuge for male members of the family who worked outside the home, a kind of "sanctuary" (Kessler-Harris, 1982) where the quality of a woman's work as household manager, cook, mother, and wife was key to her husband's ability to work and to her children's potential for morally sound and socially acceptable adulthoods.

Although some historians have seen 19th-century women as victims of this image, in fact many women found their domestic lives extremely satisfying (Cott, 1977, p. 197). Others used the doctrine of separate spheres to expand their roles into the world. They pushed the bounds of their sphere of influence beyond the confines of their own drawing rooms into their cities, their state, their nation. For example, women reformers declared war on the "domestic" troubles in their municipalities. In the context of their churches and clubs, they attacked prostitution, the quality of hospital and medical care, and the education of indigent and immigrant children, among other things (see, for example, Hewitt, 1984; Reverby, 1987). Other women were able to use their role as moral teacher in the household to justify the expansion of their own educational opportunities as well as to agitate for suffrage and other legal rights (see, for example, Kerber, 1980).

For some women, though, the ideal of purity devolved into passionlessness (Cott, 1978), submissiveness into subservience, a sense of place into dependency and inactivity, and finally, hysteria (Barker-Benfield, 1976; Showalter, 1985). The 19th-century understanding of the hysterical woman was an offshoot of the rhetoric of separate spheres. Smith-Rosenberg (1972) characterized hysteria as the antithesis of the image of the ideal bourgeois matron. Rather than being an effective helpmate for her husband, the hysteric was idle and unproductive. She was unable to fulfill her domestic duties, and she exhibited behaviors well beyond what was socially acceptable. She was selfish, passive-aggressive, a disrupter of the domestic sphere, but also, in the eyes of such male physicians as George M. Beard (1839-1889) and S. Weir Mitchell (1829-1914), she was more of a true woman than was the

[5] See Cott (1977). Also, for an early, but still instructive, analysis of the impact of Andrew Jackson's presidency on American values and social mores, see Schlesinger (1945).

sensible, productive woman. Popular and medical literature reinforced the idea that every woman was a nascent hysteric, a dangerous being, disorder incarnate (see, for example, Merchant, 1980, on disorder; Smith-Rosenberg, 1972, on hysteria).

POSITIVIST CRIMINOLOGY AND THE PLACE OF WOMAN IN ITALIAN SOCIETY

Lombroso's Italy, on the other hand, industrialized in the late 1800s, having gone through enormous political changes across the century, not the least of which was Garibaldi's Revolution in 1860. In Italy, as in the United States, however, the doctrine of separate spheres most definitely existed. A web of legal and social restrictions kept Italian women of every class for the most part homebound and powerless. Gibson (1982) notes that in Lombroso's Italy a "fledgling Italian feminist movement" (p. 155) was beginning to make itself felt in the face of the "dominant nineteenth-century views about women's nature . . . that 'normal' women were inferior in biology and intelligence, emotional, passive, domestic, maternal, and pious . . . and that women needed protection" so as to maintain their maidenly and matronly virtues and not "fall" into criminal ways (p. 163).

Cesare Lombroso was a leading proponent and developer of positivist criminology, a discipline that over the course of its examinations of inherent criminal behavior had much to say about the proper place of women in Italian society and about the physiological characteristics that supposedly made women's place on the evolutionary scale unchangeable.[6] Feminist critic of science Sandra Harding has noted the not so "curious coincidence" that "the emergence of severe threats to the

[6] Lombroso and his colleagues saw woman as a variation on the species Homo Sapiens that had found its niche (the domestic sphere) and therefore had no need to evolve any further. The idea resonates with a tenet of sexual science in the U.S. that purported to have proved that woman as creature varied less than man (i.e., sexual scientists asserted that there were fewer morons and fewer geniuses among women, and thus less variation in intelligence, among other more subtle arguments). For a description of this hypothesis and its effect on psychology and sociology in the United States, see Shields (1975).

existing gender order are often followed by new scientific definitions of women's inferiority and deviance" (Harding, 1986, p. 86). Science does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, it is a "social activity, a historically varying set of social practices" (Harding, 1986, p. 39). As such, science can never be separated from the social context in which it occurs. Italian criminologists, Gibson (1990) argues, "were consequently . . . unable to construct scientific hypotheses, gather evidence, or draw conclusions without recourse to their preconceptions about women's nature" (p. 21). And there were indeed threats to Lombroso's preconceptions in the decades in which he worked. More Italian women than ever before were literate. Feminist groups and other women's organizations were beginning to agitate for substantial social and political change (Gibson, 1990, p. 11). One of Lombroso's colleagues wrote in 1896: "It is not simply out of curiosity that renowned authorities are addressing themselves to this question; it is intimately related to the difficult problem of the position of women in society" (Ottolenghi, 1896, p. 3, my translation).

The positivist criminologists sought to build a scientifically delineated hierarchy of human physiological and psychological attributes. It was their intention to locate all men and women, races and ethnic groups, all classes in society, the law-abiding citizen and the criminal, the healthy and the ill, along an evolutionary continuum that culminated in that paragon of advancement, privileged male members of their own race and class. They studied hundreds of Italian men and women, measuring their height, weight, eye color, and the dimensions of their facial features, ears, and skulls. In addition, they tested physiological sensitivity to various intensities of pain by applying electrical current to various parts of their subjects' anatomies (Gibson, 1990, pp. 15-19; Lombroso-Ferrero, 1911/1972, pp. 219-257).

Like North American physicians, the Italian criminologists identified outward physiological attributes with social and psychological differences. They adopted the detailed methodology of natural history as described in Darwin's (1859/1982) *Origin of species*, first published in 1859, as well as in his *Descent of man* (Darwin, 1871/1981), originally published in 1871. It was Darwin's method to publish innumerable measurements and examples and, by so doing, to scientifically chart the evolutionary scale. The Italians applied Darwin's metaphors to

absolutely every aspect of human beings and human life (Hofstadter, 1955).[7]

One scholar (Gibson, 1990) noted:

> [T]his tendency to divide humans into groups and search for differences rather than similarities among them may have emerged not only from nineteenth-century preconceptions about the appropriateness of the separate sexual spheres but also, as Cynthia Russett (1989) has recently argued, from the anxiety aroused in white male scientists by the Darwinian connection of man to animals. To reconstitute a distance between themselves and the apes, they insisted on the inferiority of other groups—like women and blacks—and placed them into intermediate positions on the evolutionary scale. (p. 14)
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> Like most social Darwinists, positivist criminologists envisioned an evolutionary ladder stretching from plant to lower animal life through the "savage races" to the most advanced human form. Criminal anthropologists proposed to identify and count, for example, the physical atavisms of certain groups like criminals, epileptics, and the insane that marked them as throwbacks on the Darwinian scale. . . . [C]riminal anthropology taught that the inferiority of certain groups was hereditary and legible on the physical body. This biological emphasis was captured in the most famous phrase coined by positivist criminology—the "born criminal" (*delinquente nato*)—a phrase that minimized the social and environmental influences on human behavior. (p. 13)

In addition to "locating" the Italian woman on the evolutionary scale, Lombroso's work also acted to constrict the separate sphere she already occupied. Rather than granting women the moral superiority that North American authors attributed to her, Lombroso claimed that women were "morally incompetent" on the grounds that they were less "sensitive" to pain and other stimuli and more "irritable" in reaction to such stimuli. Because true sensitivity was considered to be a trait indicative of advancement along the evolutionary scale, Lombroso "found" that only men were truly sensitive. Woman's reactivity was not true sensitivity but "irritability." Lombroso meant that women who showed high levels of reactivity to pain and other forms of stimuli in sensitivity tests exhibited a developmentally lower, more instinctual form of sensitivity. Lombroso and his colleagues did not seem at all bothered by the fact that they had

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[7] For the impact of Darwinism on psychology, see Richards (1987).

invented two terms for the same basic levels of physiological reactivity, nor that they had applied these terms in a very gendered way!

In Lombroso's (1895) key work on women, *The female offender*, written with his future son-in-law, William Ferrero, Lombroso reported the following findings regarding both *La donna delinquente* and *La donna normale*: (a) Women showed less emotional sensitivity or physical sensitivity than men. (b) Women's perceived strength in caretaking, nursing, and childbirth was explained as the consequence of less true sensitivity, that is, a woman was able to endure more emotional and physical hardship because she was incapable of really feeling the hardship she experienced. (c) Women exhibited sexual frigidity, both because of insensitivity and because "female love . . . was basically nothing but a secondary aspect of maternity." (d) Women were irrationally angry, vain, and prone to jealousy and vengeance. Even the best women were unable to distinguish between "rights and duties, [between] egotism and altruism, . . . [and thus were incapable of fulfilling] the goals of moral evolution" (Gibson, 1990, p. 17). Unlike the North American ideal of true womanhood, then, the Italian identification of woman with motherhood did not elevate her morally. Rather, it denigrated her because her strengths arose from insensitivities, from evolutionary flaws. Lombroso felt that all women, no matter what their training or personal attributes, could at any moment blossom into active criminality or mental illness (Gibson, 1990, p. 21).

Not surprisingly, Lombroso's definition of a hysterical woman was, like that of his North American counterparts, merely an amplification of the attributes of "every woman." He wrote:

> In a good half of hysterical women there is sufficient intelligence if little power of fixing the attention; but their disposition is profoundly egotistical, and their absorbing preoccupation with themselves makes them love scandal and a public sensation. They are excessively impressionable, consequently easily moved to choler, ferocity, to sudden and unreasonable likes and dislikes. Their will is always unstable; they take delight in evil-speaking, and if they cannot draw public attention by baseless trials and scandalous forms of revenge, they embitter the life of those around them by continual quarrels and disputes. (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1895, p. 218)

THE MEDICAL VIEW OF HYSTERIA

There were some male hysterics (Micale, 1990), of course, but in general, the medical authorities in several countries agreed with Lombroso: Hysteria was a female disease (Goldstein, 1987; Showalter, 1985). Physicians described a wide variety of symptoms in their hysterical patients, the most consistent of which were sensations of strangulation or the feeling of a knot rising in the chest cavity (what Lombroso called the "esophogeal bole" (Lombroso, 1909, p. 107); contracture of muscles in the legs and arms; unexplainable anesthesias, aphasias, and hyperesthesias; trance phenomena; heightened or uncontrollable emotionality; and claims to or presentation of symptoms that seemingly had no identifiable physiological origins. (For a comprehensive review of the historiography of hysteria, see Micale, 1989.)

As for causes, 19th-century physicians attributed hysterical symptoms to pathologies of the uterine lining, to the consequences of an inactive or too active sexual experience, or, like Lombroso, to an inherent female propensity for disordered emotions (Veith, 1965). Therapies have included the application of sweet scents and ointments to the vulva so as to lure the wandering womb back to its place, the prescription of sex, marriage or pregnancy, the manual adjustment of the positioning of the uterus, ovariotomies or hysterectomies (King, 1891, p. 528), hypnotic suggestion, the rest cure, and a diet of meat and milk (Mitchell, 1877) or red meat and wine (Skey, 1867), the ingestion of narcotics and other pharmaceutical remedies, and "intellectual and muscular exercise" (King, 1891, p. 530) within the confines of whatever constituted socially appropriate physical activity for ladies.

A great number of 19th-century physicians dealt with what seemed to be an epidemic of hysteria in their practices. Hysteria struck women mainly between the ages of 15 and 45, with symptom onset usually coinciding with such reproductive milestones as puberty, childbirth, or menopause.

In addition to somatic disturbances, hysterics presented behavioral "symptoms," such as the expression of discontent with husbands and families; a yearning for meaningful work; exaggerated emotionality; and an unwillingness to capitulate to espousal, familial, or societal authority.

A patient could not have presented any ameliorating defense of these symptoms as her testimony would not have been solicited or accepted. In Italy, the consequence of Lombroso's colleagues fixing themselves at "the highest level of evolutionary advancement on the basis of their dubious scientific findings was a most complete confidence in their own ability to assess, without testimony, the experiences, behaviors and needs of persons lower down the evolutionary scale" (Gibson, 1990, p. 13). Similarly, North American physician George Beard did not heed the testimony of his patients on the grounds that "the rejection of non-expert human testimony is, and has ever been, the first step in the development of a science; it is only by rejecting or ignoring all testimony save that of experts that any science is possible" (Beard, 1879, p. 70).[8]

Physicians warned that women could only avoid the natural flowering of mental illness by attending assiduously to the roles society had dictated for them, that is by being good, sensible, and essentially uncomplaining (King, 1891). One English physician, Frederic Skey (1867), cautioned that the women who were particularly at risk were those who indulged in "strong resolution," who were "fearless of danger. . . [and had] plenty of what is termed nerve."

Even though physicians often suspected their patients of malingering, they did sometimes insist that they had found evidence of sexual or reproductive pathology. Even with presenting symptoms, however, hysterics seldom showed external signs of illness, such as skin pallor. In fact, one physician noted that the "beauty" of hysterics was "not impaired" at all by their illness, that in fact, the hysteric was often strangely attractive to the physician (King, 1891, pp. 518-519).

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[8] The belief of Italian and North American physicians and scientists in their own ability to assess their patients' experiences without the benefit of a fair hearing of their patients' testimony probably led to the number of odd cases of "hysterical mendacity" one finds in the literature. In these cases, women who reported rapes and beatings, even when extreme physical evidence was presented, were dismissed as hysterics when the stories seemed too outlandish or when prominent men were accused. See, for example, Kiernan (1885), a physician who tries the patience of the modern reader in his apparent conviction that the women who sought his help could do so much physical damage to themselves (i.e., bruises, broken bones, lacerations, and so on) purely to gain his attention.

When one compares these descriptions with séance room narratives, it is easy to understand why, for some physicians and scientists, whether they held spiritualistic beliefs or not, mediumship seemed naturally identifiable with hysteria. Most mediums were young women, whose abilities to communicate with the spirit world flowed out of childhoods laden with illness and daydreams. Many mediums discovered their talents as they grappled with reproductive milestones such as puberty, and, of course, trance itself, and its accompanying amnesia, were classic symptoms of hysteria.

Mediumship from the 1840s to the 1870s generally took two forms: trance speaking and séance mediumship. Within séance mediumship, one was either a mental medium (producing messages and "spirit" voices) or a physical medium (table-tipping, producing movements, touchs, blows, and materializations). Trance speaking was almost always conducted in public and in an atmosphere similar to that of Lyceum lectures or tent revivals (Braude, 1989, pp. 173-182). Trance-speaking mediums rented large halls, advertised their performances, and invited audiences to suggest weighty philosophical or theological topics. The medium then proceeding to lapse into trance and extemporaneously discuss the suggested topics. With uplifted arms and in breathless voices, these young women delivered relatively coherent addresses that by the very fact that they were coherent convinced many of the assembled audiences that the spirit world was responsible (Braude, 1989, pp. 84-98, 107-109). (How else, after all, could a mere girl be coherent in public?!)

Séance mediums operated either within the confines of their families as private circle or as "test" mediums, or, for a fee, as public sitting mediums (Owen, 1990, pp. 49-61, 113-114). During their trances, raps were produced in their vicinities, the translation of which, according to some simple code, purported to convey messages from the spirit world. In the 1870s and on into the 20th century, table-tipping and automatic-writing mediums gave way to physical-materialization mediums, whose primary phenomena were so-called apparitions of the dead. (Lombroso, 1909, pp. 195-203, provides some dramatic descriptions of these in both Palladino's and other mediums' séances. See also Braude, 1989, pp. 176-178, 181-182; Owen, 1990, pp. 45-49). After séances, or sometimes during them, if over-eager sitters dared to surprise the medium with light or capture, a disruption that frequently revealed a medium disguised as a

spirit, the medium would fall into a near-epileptic fit or suffer other severe symptoms of hysteria.

From the 1840s to the 1870s, Spiritualist séances and the "profession" of mediumship grew to such an extent that physicians, scientists, and other educated men were compelled to take an interest. Many of these men characterized the activities and beliefs of mediums, sitters, and even investigators as indicative of pathological conditions arising from a "deranged" action of the nervous system (see Brown, 1983; Shortt, 1984). Physicians, such as Frederic Marvin, and specialists in psychiatry, such as Henry Maudsley, conceptualized both mediumship and the need to rely on mediums as a type of madness related to hysteria (Maudsley, 1868). One physician wrote in an anonymous review: "The counterpart of the wretched medium we find in the half-deluded and half-designing hysterical patient, who persists . . . in simulating some extraordinary or impossible disease" ("The Delusions," 1860, p. 466).

Some of Marvin's colleagues claimed that "Spiritualism should rank among the most fruitful causes of mental alienation," that is, the withdrawal of the patient from contact with reality (Burlet, 1863, p. 375). Medical and psychiatric literatures occasionally published estimates of the percentage of asylum inmates whose insanity had been caused by contact with Spiritualism, percentages that ranged from the plausible to the impossible, depending on the anti-Spiritualist zeal of the writer.

William Hammond (1828-1900), a well-known North American physician who specialized in diseases such as hysteria, strongly supported the idea that Spiritualism was a primary cause of insanity in the U.S. (Hammond, 1876). Many other physicians and "alienists" (the term by which psychiatrists were known, because they dealt with patients who were "alienated," that is, withdrawn from reality), such as English physician L.S.F. Winslow (1877), felt that exhibiting interest in any of the socially unacceptable "isms" such as Spiritualism, socialism, or suffragism was a sure sign of underlying mental derangement.

For the anti-Spiritualists, this characterization of Spiritualism and mediumship as categories of mental illness was deadly serious and could be used to strip "the patient" of legal rights and social privileges. Owen (1990) uncovered an abundance of legal records of "lunacy" cases tried in England. A number of similar cases were litigated in the United States

as well (Haber, 1986). The evidence in some of these cases rested solely on defendants' interest in, practice of, or belief in Spiritualistic phenomena. Purely on this basis, many persons, mostly women, were involuntarily committed to asylums. Only a handful of these inmates were able to obtain their release, and then, only after enlisting the legal and financial aid of other, more socially powerful Spiritualists (Owen, 1990, pp. 160-167; 168-201). Many others—again, mostly women—lost legal control of their monetary resources to members of their immediate families—usually men—on the grounds that commitment to Spiritualism was symptomatic of a severe chronic mental incapacity (Owen, 1990, pp. 160-167). In addition, some legal writers of the time wondered if merely by leaving money to Spiritualist groups or for research into Spiritualist phenomena a will might be judged nonbinding, on the grounds that any mind making such a bequest was necessarily unsound (Field, 1888).

The fact that Spiritualist speakers and the Spiritualist press tended to support such socially radical causes as anti-Christianity or Owenite labor reforms (working class English Spiritualists) (Barrow, 1986, pp. 19-29, 105, 114, 197), suffragism (both American and English Spiritualist women) (Braude, 1989, pp. 56-81; Owen, 1990, p. 151), the abolition of marriage, the principle of free love (a minority of Spiritualists, generally American) (Braude, 1989, pp. 117-141; Moore, 1977, pp. 117-119), and various unusual and medically unsanctioned types of health care and health practitioners (Braude, 1989, pp. 142-161; Owen, 1990, pp. 107-138) complicated and deepened the opposition of conservative, traditional Christians as well as that of the medical and psychiatric communities. Frederic Marvin, who trained both as a physician and a minister, was so outraged by Spiritualism and its practices that he developed a distinct syndrome by which such radicalism might be diagnosed, treated, and ultimately eradicated from what he called the "noon-day" of the 19th century (Marvin, 1874, p. 27).

MARVIN AND MEDIOMANIA

Like many other medical men and professionals of his era, then, Frederic Marvin knew that Spiritualism was both a symptom of insanity and an affront to conventional Christianity and conventional social mores. It signaled some underlying physiological condition that if

untreated, over generations would devolve a family line to an atavistic state. Because of his training, Marvin fought Spiritualism on both medical and theological grounds. In the first half of his book, Marvin refuted the philosophy and phenomena of Spiritualism. In the second half, he described the syndrome of mediomania, a disease he subsumed under the rubric of hysteria. Marvin's review of mediomania was, in essence, a medical lecture that included case studies to illustrate its diagnosis and such treatments as suggestion and pharmacological remedies.

For Marvin, Spiritualistic beliefs were based on three types of phenomena: "the physical, the metaphysical, and [the] physico-metaphysical" (p. 17). By physical phenomena, he meant the séance room phenomena that were physically visible or audible to all the sitters, such as table-tipping and raps or noises heard by everyone in the room. By metaphysical phenomena, Marvin meant the phenomena individual séance-goers reported, such as sighting apparitions, claiming to hear sounds or feel touches that other sitters did not hear or feel, as well as sitters' claims that deceased relatives had communicated in such a way as to make their actual presence irrefutable. By the "physico-metaphysical" phenomena, Marvin meant all other dramatic phenomena occurring in the séance room (Marvin, 1874, p. 17). These phenomena, Marvin maintained, were two-thirds fraud and one-third unusual or seemingly inexplicable phenomena that would someday, however, "be explained without resorting to Spiritualism" (p. 17).

Marvin felt that in any case, séance room phenomena of any type did not have the bearing on theology Spiritualists liked to believe. Marvin argued that the soul was immaterial and could not take on a physical form or affect the physical world in the way Spiritualists maintained it did. Interestingly enough, Marvin used the science of his day to support his rejection of both spirit intervention and an ether-like nervous fluid (an explanation favored by some psychical researchers). He believed that science had proved that the soul was not matter and could not be comprised of any kind of matter, even the most subtle form. Consequently, Spiritualistic interpretations of reported séance room phenomena were necessarily wrongheaded scientifically.

Having proven the incompatibility of Spiritualism with modern science, Marvin simultaneously shored up conventional Christian beliefs with two assumptions, which he treated as irrefutable scientific evidence.

Sane and rational people, he argued, accepted socially acceptable conventional beliefs. Only lunatics did otherwise. Sane and rational people avoided Spiritualistic beliefs. Only mediomaniacs did otherwise.

As Marvin (1874) defended his theory of mediomania, he noted that "convulsions of mediomaniacs resemble[d] very closely those of epilepsy, but . . . [were] usually less violent . . . Like hysteria there . . . [was] little or no distortion of the countenance, and the face . . . [of the hysteric wore] a very calm and satisfied expression" (p. 40). "In Mediomania of a Nonconvulsive Character," Marvin argued, "the loss of consciousness [was] . . . seldom complete . . . [rather it usually happened] that a mediomaniac . . . [was] able to answer questions and converse fluently while deeply entranced" (p. 42). Marvin also noted that when mediums were not just past puberty, they were usually menopausal, and that conversions to Spiritualism frequently occurred around those ever important reproductive milestones: puberty, childbirth, and menopause (p. 42). A mediomaniac was, like a hysteric, "proverbially erotic, egotistic, and religious" (p. 52). Among her symptoms were "a love of solitude, irritability of temper, [an] offensive and steadily increasing egotism ... profound and unnatural ... suspicious [ness] and vengeful[ness]" (p. 54).

Like hysteria, mediomania arose from somatic causes, such as uterine disorders and reproductive trauma, from promiscuity, or from an unnatural abstention from sex and pregnancy, or, Marvin contended, from the position of the uterus. He went so far as to assert:

> Tilt the organ a little forward . . . and immediately the patient . . . embraces some strange and ultra ism—Mormonism, Mesmerism, Fourierism, Socialism, oftener Spiritualism. She becomes possessed by the idea that she has some startling mission in the world. She forsakes her home, her children, and her duty, to mount the rostrum and proclaim the peculiar virtues of free love, elective affinity, or the reincarnation of souls. (pp. 42-43)

As for the propensity of mediomania to devolve into an inheritable evolutionary degeneration, Marvin maintained that "hysteria or Mediomania in the first generation . . . [became] chorea [convulsive, involuntary movements of the limbs] and melancholia in the second, open insanity in the third . . . idiocy in the fourth" and, due to "the merciful laws of nature," usually precluded completely the birth of a

fifth generation (p. 45). In addition, mediomania, like hysteria, was psychologically contagious and of epidemic proportions. It seemed to afflict almost all persons of particularly volatile temperaments, that is, women.

Marvin claimed he could detect mediomania through an examination of his patients' behavior and beliefs as well as through uterine examinations and analysis of the chemical content of urine. If a mediomaniac's urine was low on phosphates, for example, Marvin concluded that she avoided eating animal products—an unhealthy practice, Marvin believed, because the ingestion of meat was, he thought, necessary for "correct cerebration" (p. 61).

The operative word in Marvin's theory of mediomania and, indeed, in many other theories of mental illness in his time, was "correct" (see, for example, Showalter, 1985; Smith-Rosenberg, 1972). He was not afraid to reify into psychiatric necessities correct thought, appropriate behavior, and adherence to the hierarchical rules of power and social control. If a patient was "fond of the marvellous [*sic*], and ignorant or careless of the physical laws by which the Creator has ordained that the universe shall be governed" ("The Delusions," 1860) or merely disobedient or rebellious (Showalter, 1980, p. 172), the patient was mentally ill. Whether or not she was able to attend to her daily life in a rational and orderly manner or attempted to make some defense of her anger or beliefs did not enter into the diagnosis. Marvin, like his contemporaries, was often wholly indifferent to the perceptions, exhortations, explanations, or even complaints of his female patients. He simply knew best, and his propensity to ignore his patients' experiences became greater as the class distance between them widened.

Indeed, Marvin, like many of his contemporaries, could not conceive of mental illness affecting his own class. He asserted that victims of the mediomania epidemic were "almost altogether [taken] from the vulgar and illiterate classes, and scientific men [did] . . . not seem to be liable to the contagion" (Marvin, 1874, p. 45).

Marvin's unshakable sense of confidence in the rights and abilities of his own class and gender was most certainly shared by Cesare Lombroso. Marvin's theological and medical outrage at mediomania was not. Unlike Marvin, Lombroso had both great affection for his hysterical medium and great belief in her psychic abilities and in her potential for contact with the spirit world.

PAPA LOMBROSO AND THE MEDIUM

After death—What? is not only about Eusapia Palladino. (For a bibliography of work done with this medium, see Alvarado, 1987.) Lombroso also covers a wide list of topics of interest to the psychical researchers and Spiritualists of his day, among them, hypnotic phenomena, mediums and magicians among primitive tribes, haunted houses and telepathy, and an intriguing review of the sensory and perceptual changes mediums seemed to undergo when they claimed to be in contact with the spirit world. The other chapters deal with Palladino. Lombroso (1909) recounts biographical details, describing sets of experiments conducted with Palladino to test her psychic abilities, including her mediumistic powers as well as her physiological and psychological responses. In accordance with Lombroso's emphasis on the importance of physical appearance and measurements there are long lists of Palladino's physiological characteristics collected by Lombroso and others as well as detailed clinical discussions of her personality traits. What Marvin did in generalities, Lombroso did in particulars. No characteristic of Palladino's biological, psychological, psychical, or "spiritual" make-up was left unexamined.

In general, Lombroso saw a connection between hysteria and psychic ability, a kind of propensity towards a muddling of the senses that leads to a hyperexcitability psychically, a state of readiness for spirit influences. He contended:

> An immense series of psychical phenomena . . . take place more readily in individuals subject to hysteria, or who are neuropathic, or who are in the hypnotic or dreaming condition, just at the moment . . . when the normal ideation is more or less completely inactive, and in its stead the action of the unconscious dominates, which is more difficult to subject to scientific examination of any kind. (p. 38)

Lombroso's descriptions speak so eloquently of both Palladino's and Lombroso's methods and assumptions that I include a long extract from his clinical examination here. Lombroso (1909) writes:

Her culture is that of a villager of the lower order. She frequently fails in good sense and in common sense, but has a subtlety and intuition of the intellect in sharp contrast with her lack of cultivation, and which make her, in spite of that, judge and appreciate at their true worth the men of genius whom she meets, without being influenced in her judgments by prestige or the false stamp that wealth and authority set upon people.

She is ingenuous to the extent of allowing herself to be imposed on and mystified by an intriguer, and, on the other hand, sometimes exhibits, both before and during her trance states, a slyness that in some cases goes as far as deception. . . .

She possesses a most keen visual memory, to the extent of remembering five to ten mental texts presented to her during three seconds. She has the ability to recall very vividly, especially with her eyes shut, the outline of persons, and with a power of vision so precise as to be able to delineate their characteristic traits.

But she is not without morbid characteristics, which sometimes extend to hysterical insanity. She passes rapidly from joy to grief, has strange phobias (for example, the fear of staining her hands), is extremely impressionable and subject to dreams in spite of her mature age. Not rarely she has hallucinations, frequently sees her own ghost. As a child she believed two eyes glared at her from behind trees and hedges. When she is in anger, especially when her reputation as a medium is insulted, she is so violent and impulsive as actually to fly at her adversaries and beat them.

These tendencies are offset in her by a singular kindness of heart which leads her to lavish her gains upon the poor and upon infants in order to relieve their misfortunes, and which impels her to feel boundless pity for the old and the weak and to lie awake nights thinking of them. The same goodness of heart drives her to protect animals that are being maltreated, by sharply rebuking their cruel oppressors. . . . When she is about to enter into the trance state . . . [t]he hands are seized with jerkings and tremors. The joints of the feet and the hands take on movements of flexure or extension, and every little while become rigid. . . . Morselli observed in her trance state all the characteristics of hysteria, namely, (1) loss of memory; (2) her personifications as John King, in whose name she speaks; (3) passional acts, now erotic, now sarcastic; (4) obsession, especially in the shape of fear that she may not succeed in the séances; (5) hallucinations; and so forth. Toward the end of the trance, when the more important phenomena occur, she falls into true convulsions and cries out like a woman who is lying-in, or else falls into a profound sleep, while from the aperture in the parietal bone of her head there exhales a warm fluid, or vapor, sensible to the touch. . . .

> After the séance Eusapia is overcome by morbid sensitiveness, hyperaesthesia, photophobia, and often by hallucinations and delirium (during which she asks to be watched from harm), and by serious disturbances of the digestion, followed by vomiting if she has eaten before the séance, and finally by true paresis of the legs, on account of which it is necessary for her to be carried and to be undressed by others. (pp. 111-115)

Lombroso believed that only the physiologically weak or psychologically infirm (that is, an epileptic or hysteric or worse) were open to influences from the spirit world. Like Marvin, these characteristics signaled evolutionary atavism to Lombroso, and he believed that evolutionary degeneration could be passed on to future offspring. In her book explicating Lombroso's classification, *Criminal man* (Lombroso-Ferrero, 1911/1972), Lombroso's daughter Gina maintains that "almost all forms of chronic, constitutional diseases, especially those of a nervous character: chorea, sciatica, hysteria, insanity, and above all, epilepsy, may give rise to criminality in the descendants" (p. 137).

In Lombroso's other works it was clear that he believed women were inherently criminal. Many of the attributes of criminality delineated in *Criminal man* (Lombroso-Ferrero, 1911/1972) and in *The female offender* (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1895) are present in his descriptions of Palladino. She was prone to "mendacity." She was not above breaking free of the controls imposed upon her by scientific sitters and was said to have a number of ways to fraudulently levitate a table in the dark or produce other effects. Lombroso expected her to give in to her baser impulses, however, whenever he and other investigators were lax in their duty to control her. His descriptions of Eusapia's antics betray a supreme confidence in his ability to sift out the "real" from the fraudulent in her performances.

Lombroso (1909) didn't deny that Palladino was a hysteric. This diagnosis was, in fact, an essential part of her spiritual apparatus. He confirmed that she suffered from many of the classic symptoms: She had "the hyperaesthetic zone, especially in the ovary. She . . . [had] the bole in the esophagus that women with hysteria . . . [had], and general weakness, or paresis, in the limbs of the left side." She was also extremely suggestible in the hypnotic sense (pp. 104-105, 107).

Where Lombroso differed from Marvin was that Lombroso never considered Palladino's hysteria to be sufficient to negate the value of her mediumship. Instead, he characterized the diagnosis this way:

> [It] suffices very well for the conclusion that the whole thing is a true hysteric equivalent, a new form of hysterical attack, just as, in my opinion, the creative frenzy (or oestrus) of genius is an equivalent of the psycho-epileptic paroxysm on a neurotic and morbid background. . . . And we are so much the more led at the very outset to believe that all the spiritistic phenomena take their rise in the abnormal state of the medium, since many of these phenomena always take place in her immediate vicinity. (Lombroso, 1909, pp. 119-120)

Palladino was a difficult medium who was frequently caught in fraud and who did not always win support, even among Spiritualists or psychical researchers. Seen in this light, her relationship with Lombroso was quite special. Alippi (1962) writes:

> With Lombroso she became familiar, so that she called him "Papa Lombroso," and he called her "my daughter." It was a significant spiritual link that . . . [bound] the austere scientist and the humble and ignorant plebeian . . . in a meeting of mutual recognition. (p. 148)

In addition to what can be read into his descriptions of her ability to judge people in a way that fit with his own estimations, a hint as to what hold this "innocuous criminal" from the rough Southern Italian provinces had over him can be found in Lombroso's (1908) review of Enrique Morselli's (1908) *Psicologia e spiritismo*. Lombroso comments on an experience Morselli had at a séance both men attended in which Palladino claimed to have materialized Morselli's deceased mother (and Lombroso believed that she had). At the time, Morselli appeared to believe it too (at least Lombroso remembered it that way), but in the later account that Morselli published, Morselli was anything but confident that he had in fact seen his mother. Lombroso wrote:

> As to the feeling of intense repugnance at seeing his mother recalled, and against his will, by Eusapia, I confess that I not only do not share it, but, on the contrary, when I saw my mother again, I felt one of the most pleasing inward excitements of my life, a pleasure that was almost a spasm, which aroused a sense, not of resentment, but of gratitude to the

> medium who threw my mother again into my arms after so many years, and this great event caused me to forget, not once but many times, the humble position of Eusapia, who had done for me, even were it purely automatically, that which no giant in power and thought could ever have done. (p. 378)

Lombroso could not condemn the woman who brought his sainted mother before him to caress and comfort him. To do so, Lombroso would have had to admit that he was mistaken, that he had failed to recognize fraud, that his mother did not wait for him in the spirit world, that his powers of analysis and observation were not above being perverted by his own will to believe. It was easier to defend Palladino, indeed, even to be undyingly grateful to her. This simple human gratitude bound lesser individuals than Lombroso to the comforts of Spiritualism and the efforts of its mediums, comforts that underlay the power of mediums as much as or more than any other factor.

THE PARADOXICAL POWER OF MEDIUMSHIP

Converted Spiritualists and the hopeful bereaved consulted mediums for assurances that the ravages of death were, in fact, an illusion. Braude's (1989) volume begins with a poignant story about Annie Denton Cridge, a 19th-century Ohio mother who became a medium at the death of her adored infant son. She assuaged her grief by turning to the spirit world through which she claimed to see "the sweet spirit" of her baby on a daily basis, noting with satisfaction that "within a week [he] had recovered from the illness that took his life" (p. 1).

Barrow describes Spiritualist funerals among working-class English families in which deceased teenage girls were dressed in wedding finery—virginal white frocks festooned with flowers. As a matter of course, their bereaved parents would return from the graveyard to the parlor where, in the presence of friends and relatives, a medium would help them to contact the girl they had just buried, and they would often hear, as the séance progressed, stories of her reunion with other deceased relatives and friends as well as descriptions of her new home in the spirit world (Barrow, 1986, pp. 236-237).

Owen (1990) describes an upper-middle class, well-educated family, the Theobalds, who held séances regularly for many years with a private

circle comprised of family members with mediumistic gifts, a servant girl medium, and, quoting from Theobald (1870, p. 42), their "little children in the spirit home" (p. 83). As the Theobald's living children grew, so, they believed, did their spirit children, and their weekly family séances were always filled with communications from them. Many people, while in grief, could not long resist the comfort of Spiritualism's picture of an afterlife where everyone they loved waited and watched. Their hope empowered the medium because the medium opened the door for them onto what was most dear and most missed.

The medium also drew power from the intellectual hunger many Spiritualists felt. A number of historians (especially Oppenheim, 1985) have reviewed the seductiveness of combining "modern" empiricism with religious faith. Spiritualists were convinced that they had found a way to do away with faith, to combine science and religion in a rational investigation of the tenets of religion (see also Braude, 1989, pp. 10-31; Moore, 1977, pp. 4-39). The medium was the conduit to the spirit world through which such investigation might be made. As long as she remained above reproach, she was an essential and highly valued tool in the average Spiritualist's search for knowledge through—and I say this quite seriously—a kind of "popular science."

The medium wielded personal power, too. Because her actions in the séance room and on the Lyceum stage were the work of the spirits, she could engage in behaviors that would not be tolerated otherwise. Under the control of a "masculine spirit force" she could become "swearing sailors, strong Indian braves, or oversexed male suitors" (Moore, 1977, p. 111). Séance-goers described being kissed, punched, pinched, or finding themselves in the very unusual position, for Victorian times, of being in the presence of a young, female, and completely unclothed apparition. The séance room was indeed a protected environment in which both men and women could violate Victorian social norms with near impunity (Owen, 1990, pp. 202-236).

Mediums were empowered in other ways as well. "Spiritualist culture held possibilities for attention, opportunity, and status denied elsewhere. In certain circumstances, it could . . . provide a means of circumventing rigid nineteenth-century class and gender norms" (Owen, 1990, p. 4). Women could protest marriage, agitate for social change, gain financial independence, and presumably, at least some satisfaction from the practice of their profession—whether this meant delivering what they

thought were genuine messages, dispensing spirit-inspired health care and medical common sense, or, if they were conscious frauds, duping the great men of science on a regular basis. For a rare few at least, trance speaking and Spiritualist beliefs could lead into male professions such as politics or the law (Braude, 1989, pp. 200-201; Owen, 1990, pp. 160-167).

How far mediums were able to go with the power they wrested from their societies paradoxically depended on whether or not the image of their passivity was intact. If Cora Hatch, the trance speaker, or Margaret Fox, the rapping medium, were merely channels through which the spirit world spoke, their innocence and blamelessness went unchallenged. If, however, Cora Hatch was a much married, much traveled fraud and Margaret Fox was only a self-serving drunk, society had no patience for their excursions into the wider world. And if they were considered to be even more powerless, victims of derangement, social degeneracy, or evolutionary atavism, what little power they did have could be stripped away abruptly by physicians, psychiatrists, and judges; that is, by men who knew better.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

I have outlined the image of true womanhood, the cult of domesticity, and the doctrine of separate spheres as they were expressed in the U.S. and Italy during the 19th century. I have reviewed the understanding of hysteria at work in Marvin's and Lombroso's time and its identification with social radicalisms, among them Spiritualism and mediumship of various kinds. I have shown how, in the words of Marvin and Lombroso, among others, power and passivity combined and clashed and complicated the experiences of mediums, their investigators, their detractors, and their doctors. Let me finish my discussion by examining the similarities and differences between Marvin's and Lombroso's approaches to the intersection of mediumship and hysteria.

It is impossible to know at this point if Spiritualists or their mediums were among Marvin's patients or if his theories were a response to the "delusions" he saw operating among the patients of his colleagues. That he taught medicine at the New York Free Medical College for Women, that his students' practices upon graduation were likely to be largely

among women and children: These facts may have added to his sense of urgency. It would be fascinating to examine the records of the clinics affiliated with the Free Medical College to search for some tangible evidence of the complications and disruptions Spiritualist practice and belief might have caused. Certainly when one reads Owen's review of Louisa Lowe's commitment to Maudsley's asylum (Owen, 1990, pp. 169-171, 177-193), one can clearly see why a psychiatrist (or Louisa's family members, for that matter) would find her behavior alarming. Not only did she attempt to wriggle out from under the financial and legal control of her husband, but she also went on a number of fool's errands "demanded" of her by her spirit guides, traveling to distant cities in search of imaginary people to whom she had been "directed" to give spirit messages. Certainly, when one reads the descriptions of the active alternative health movements embodied in the thriving practices of both North American and English Spiritualist healers (Braude, 1989, pp. 145-151; Owen, 1990, pp. 107-138), one can feel sympathy for physicians and psychiatrists trying to establish their authority on the basis of scientific study and clinical experience. Certainly one can get caught up in the religious reformism of early Spiritualists like Amy and Isaac Post, two Reform Quakers who were among the earliest sitters with the Fox sisters in Hyde Park, New York in the 1840s (Braude, 1989, pp. 10-31). Just as one can feel the seriousness of the Posts' search for "individual sovereignty," their hunger to define their theology for themselves, to invite and interpret their own revelation, one can practically hear the chattering teeth of traditional theological authorities as they watched the receding backs of churchgoers who had discovered for themselves the power of the odd mix of empiricism and credulity that Spiritualism embodied. Then, of course, there were the scandals—mediums caught in outright fraud; the "twaddle" often spoken by the spirits—mistakes, inconsistencies, inanities; the radical social movements connected with Spiritualism, such as socialism and suffragism.[9] All these factors threatened to upset the illusion of a neat

[9] Moore (1977) makes the point that the threat these radicalisms posed was rather more rhetorical than anything else. He notes that whereas in the late 19th century the Spiritualist press "never stopped urging a greater social justice for Indians, wage earners, and women . . . it rarely made legislative proposals, and it never backed political candidates . . . [and when it came to] most specific reform proposals . . . it said next to nothing" (p. 84).

and permanent social hierarchy in which men like Marvin and Lombroso were assured of positions of power.

Another aspect that gnawed at people like Marvin was the notion of mediumship as a profession in which the uneducated, the lower classes, women, and other unsavory characters could gain ground, making a living, commanding audiences, and acquiring a kind of authority over ordinary lives. Moore (1977, p. 104) notes:

> In his journal Emerson included the Spiritualist medium among the new professions that had emerged in America in the 1850s. It was not a happy admission for him, for he thought the sudden and rapid proliferation of men and women who claimed access to scientific evidence of an afterlife, which they would share with others (for a fee), to be anything but a sign of a spiritual awakening in the United States. His listing of the medium along with the daguerrotypist, the railroad man, and the landscape gardener represented his troubled concession to the realities of a country that already had more than its share of hucksters and humbugs. The leveling ethos of Jacksonian America encouraged all, even the "unlearned," to aspire to professional status. None pressed the claim more vociferously than those who presumed to act as channels of communication with the spirit world.[10]

Among Spiritualists, the medium's appeal to the ideals of true womanhood rang true. She insisted on her own passivity in the matter, her weakness, her reliance on the strength of her spirit guides (usually male).[11] She expressed regret at being torn by the spirits from her domestic circle if she was a trance speaker or a public medium. She insisted on a delicate amazement at the antics of rude female spirits and belligerent male spirits who sent swaggering materializations out from her body during séances. All her protesting may have assured Spiritualists that what happened in the séance room was really proper, respectable, beyond social reproach, or if not, then at least explainable as beyond the medium's conscious control.

For the disbeliever, however, the antics of mediums must necessarily have had a profoundly different meaning. Mediums were not passive

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[10] Here Moore is paraphrasing from Emerson's journals (Emerson, 1912), Vol. 8, p. 574.

[11] See, for example, Braude's (1989, pp. 99-166) description of the career of Achsa Sprague.

receptacles of high spiritual understanding. They were willful or deranged girls who avoided marriage, traveled unescorted, and handled their own financial arrangements. They were promiscuous, although Moore says this didn't bother the disbelievers much more than it did the believers. Rather, disbelievers were "most bothered [by] . . . the encouragement they saw [Spiritualism] . . . giving to women's desertion of the home and family" (p. 118). Beyond that, they deplored the tendency of mediums to drink to excess and their pretense to professional status without benefit of education, licensure, or good breeding. The antics of mediums in the darkened séance room were known to be frequently bawdy, erotic, and even orgiastic. And, if these girls were not deranged, then they were surely frauds and cheats, and thus, criminals. Marvin's anxiety about the social contagion mediomaniacs represented was, paradoxically, similar in principle to Lombroso's rather calm analysis that all women were criminals to one degree or another. The two men's expectations of mediums, indeed of all women, were very different, however, as different as their assessment of the meaning of mediumistic phenomena.

There are two key differences between Marvin's and Lombroso's reading of the meaning of mediumship. The first was belief. Marvin was an enemy of Spiritualism, Lombroso was a friend. The second was their approach to the threat to the prevailing social order that mediumship represented. Lombroso seemed significantly less nervous about this threat. He had, after all, fixed Palladino (indeed, all women) on the evolutionary scale at a permanently unalterable point, a woman of hysterical temperament and "humble origins" (Lombroso, 1909, p. 39). In Lombroso's description of her characteristics, both as medium and as woman, however, one can almost see Palladino shuffling up and down the evolutionary continuum as Lombroso listed each new attribute: down a peg because she was a "populana" (a peasant); up a peg because she was keen enough in intellect to flatter his "genius"; down a peg because she was hysterical, prone to lying and cheating unless adequately controlled; up a peg because she could tell a man who had the "stamp of wealth" on him but not the mark of good breeding; down a peg because she was orgiastic in her trance convulsions and had a tendency to "fly at her adversaries and beat them"; and up a peg because she was generous and often gave her money to the poor and the sick. What truly fixed her worth in Lombroso's eyes, and made her an otherwise mentally ill but

nonetheless most valuable tool, was Lombroso's conviction that through her he could study both natural psychical abilities and the supernatural influence of the spirit world, a combination that would allow him to wax hopeful about the establishment of a science of spiritism and its eventual alliance with psychiatry (Lombroso, 1908, p. 380).

This second difference rests in Lombroso's alteration of the image of true womanhood. In Marvin's world, woman was supposed to be both passive and morally superior, a being with the potential to understand what society expected of her. In Marvin's world, woman possessed a more pure, essentialist moral sense. The true woman both sought and maintained her separate sphere because she understood the importance of her position at the family's center, as the angel in the house. In Lombroso's world, the true woman was a criminal, a whore. She was limited by better, more advanced beings to her separate sphere. She was inherently criminal, morally insensible, without the potential, except in rare cases, to even understand fully her place in the world. That a woman exceeded her bounds was in a sense to be expected in Lombroso's world. She couldn't be punished for her failings because she was expected to fail. She could, however, be rewarded for those rare moments when she succeeded, in the estimation of the men who controlled her. Paradoxically, mediomaniacs suffered from Marvin's greater moral expectations, and Palladino benefited from Lombroso's almost total lack of moral expectations.

The image of woman as medium derivable from both Marvin's and Lombroso's characterizations are simplistic, one-dimensional glimpses of the real women who filled the roles. At the same time that the content of *The philosophy of Spiritualism* and of *After death—What?* poses deeper historical questions about the experience, motives, and intellectual and social context of their authors, it poses more difficult questions about the experience of mediomania and mediumship as it was lived by Marvin's patients and by Palladino. Marvin's theory of mediomania and Lombroso's descriptions of Palladino, when examined in juxtaposition as I have done here, provide a broader picture of the varieties of reactions to Spiritualism and mediumship than is traditionally present in the historiography of parapsychology. Taken together, the writings of these two authors provide us with striking evidence of the subtleties of power and passivity played out in all aspects of gendered history, and of the richness these sources hold for

the historiography of parapsychology in general, and of women in parapsychology in particular.

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DISCUSSION

SCHLITZ: You seem to be using a kind of Foucaultian approach to the creation of discourse in the sense that this sort of medical model created a gendered identity for these mediums. I wonder if you could speculate on the change in discourse. Jessica talked today about one of the complaints being that women are not the object of the medical gaze at this point. And I wonder also, with the decline of Spiritualism, what does that say about the contemporary scene in some of these power relations that are occurring?

ZINGRONE: I'm not so sure about the causes of the decline of Spiritualism, but I was thinking that in fact, these kinds of ideas of woman as an evolutionary atavism may have led into the complete disregard of a woman's own experience as an important variable in experimental or medical investigations. This notion was that woman was never going to evolve anyway. Nineteenth-century physicians seem to have the ability to completely ignore not only the testimony and experience of their women patients but of all their patients. They just were not much interested in the testimony of their patients. I think possibly the characterization of women as dead-ends in evolution may have lead into this disregard. One place where we can find some

evidence for this speculation is that, until recently, a lot of medical and psychological research has not paid attention to the social aspects of race. In the 19th century, women were often categorized with Blacks and with immigrants. One thing I find really fascinating about this notion of setting up an evolutionary hierarchy in which you are at the top and everybody you despise is at the bottom is that it leads to some ironies. Some decades after Lombroso, when the eugenics movement got going in the U.S., one of the things Goddard and some of the others were very much worried about was the influx of Italian men, because they thought this would ruin the U.S., that suddenly we would all become short and stocky people with a passion for opera, and they did not want that to happen. So Lombroso may not have exactly been where he thought he was in the evolutionary scale, from Goddard's perspective.

KHILJI: No question—just an observation: I find very fascinating the attitude that the West had towards women as compared to the East. In general, in the East the attitude and approaches were such that one aspect of the all-powerful deity is feminine (*Durga* in Hinduism). In Islam, women were considered so powerful and strong that men had to curtail their powers by introducing the phenomena of veils and segregation. So you have very powerful images of women in the East as compared to what you are talking about.

ZINGRONE: It just occurred to me that one of the causes of the decline of Spiritualism was that in the 1870s when mediomania was proposed, Marvin characterized the Spiritualist as mentally ill. This characterization, coupled with the continuous increase in the number of frauds and just the wildness of mediumistic phenomena, particularly physical mediumship, may have lead to the evisceration of Spiritualism. But I'm not sufficiently conversant with that later period to be 100% sure about that.

UTTS: What about the women's movement?

ZINGRONE: The women's movement to some extent came out of both abolitionism and Spiritualism. There was an effort towards the end of the 19th century in Spiritualist circles to begin to separate from any kind of political movement that would slow down their ability to get acceptance. Partly they were reacting to bad experiences with Victoria Woodhall, a very wild lady, both personally and in other ways, who got very much involved with both the National Spiritualist Alliance and with the women's movement, and was the president of two important

organizations in both of these movements. Eventually she was caught in this terrible scandal, and the taint of free love and that kind of stuff became much more attached to Spiritualism. I think suffragism did a lot of what parapsychology does sometimes, which is to decide which things that you are associated with are political liabilities and begin to move away from these things. Spiritualism also did not have the power in the later decades that it had in the earlier decades of the 19th century, in terms of spirituality and theology. I'm not exactly sure why that is, but the religious underpinnings of the movement were slipping away as well. I think a lot of it, though, for women particularly, was this public outcry against fraud and so on, coupled with the psychiatric diagnosis, together with the goals of many women in the women's movement and their political need to shed unconventional things that would lose them the support of more conventional, more conservative people.

SCHLITZ: At the same time, a lot of those characterizations probably still hold true for women's self-conception—for example, the whole PMS syndrome.

ZINGRONE: Yes, exactly: that a woman is a walking time bomb basically. It is still with us.

SCHLITZ: It's fascinating.

HEINZE: I just want to make a brief remark. If you look at the whole situation historically, you can observe that when a male-oriented belief system is coming in, the feminine will return later. For example, Buddhism was at the beginning very male oriented; women could not become enlightened. They needed a son or a husband to do it for them. And then, as Buddhism developed further, you find Paramita. The highest wisdom is a female figure. The same thing happened in Taoism: They have Kwan-Yin. Kwan-Yin is now the highest female figure in Buddhism and Taoism. Or, if you look at Christianity, Sofia. So there is a return of the feminine historically. Now, in our times, when materialism is very much male oriented, we have the antimaterialistic forces coming in, one way or the other. They are not sex or gender oriented, but feminine in essence.

SCHLITZ: Is it a resistance movement though?

HEINZE: No, it is not a resistance movement; it just emerged from the bottom up. It was suppressed, repressed, for some time, and then it emerged naturally and is being recognized.