

EATING, FEEDING, AND FLESH: FOOD IN VICTORIAN SPIRITUALISM

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Communing and Spiritualism

Victorian Spiritualism--the religion of tipping tables, spirit rappings, automatic writing, and spirit materializations--often centered on "communion." For Spiritualists, communion implied connection with the spirits, God, and other Spiritualists, but it might also mean more. Scholars have so far overlooked the penchant of many Spiritualists to engage in more literal forms of communion. This involved the physical act of eating--sometimes wine and bread as the body and blood of Christ, sometimes shared feasting, sometimes by physically feeding or being fed by materialized spirits, all of which foregrounded a parallel between the body and the sanctified bread. Fascinating and heterodox, communion in the séance underscored many other Spiritualistic disruptions of norms. Not only did the distribution of communion outside the sanctioned church violate religious codes, but the allocation of bread and wine or other food was often placed in the hands of women in the séance. Since women in the nineteenth century were already largely responsible for food management, the manipulation of food and drink in the séance became a means for women to exercise some measure of control over both the landscape of the sacred and their bodies--especially significant in countering perceptions of women's bodies as passive spiritual receptacles. In this essay, I bring contemporary feminist food studies into conversation with nineteenth-century mediumship, to better understand gender roles and their disruption in Victorian Spiritualism, exploring narratives of communion and the flesh in Spiritualism.

One might be tempted to say that Spiritualism was "not your everyday Victorian religion" because it involved ghosts, Ouija boards, and an almost scandalous dabbling in the

other side that we don't ordinarily associate with the Victorians. In reality, however, millions of people identified themselves as Spiritualists by the end of the nineteenth century. Alex Owen says that "by the time spiritualism reached its heyday in 1870 there can hardly have been a household in the land that had not been touched by spiritualistic fever."¹ What this meant in practical terms was that people were holding séances in their homes or attending them in others'; visiting the public halls of Spiritualist associations when they offered lectures, soirees, or demonstrations; or experimenting privately on their own. Most people looked for the assistance of a medium, who acted as an "antenna" for the spirits of the dead, or hoped to develop mediumistic powers themselves. Some Spiritualists believed only a few had the medium's "gift;" others thought that anyone could develop it, though individuals had different levels of native talent. Once contact with the other side was made, the spirits might rap ("one rap for yes, two raps for no"), speak (either through the medium or in their own voices), draw, write, or move objects through the room.

As the years went on, the séance became increasingly material. Physical objects previously not present in the room would appear on the séance table or drop from above, often fruits and flowers. Eventually, with the help of a "materialization cabinet," spirits began to appear fully formed in flesh and blood, right before the eyes of the séance attenders, or sitters, as they were called. This required a powerful medium entering a cabinet (or some facsimile, like the curtained recess of a room) and the spirit emerging, while the medium remained behind. Séances generally called for low light—people often compared the emergence of a ghost to the development of a photographic plate—and typically involved securing the medium in the cabinet to ensure that he or she wasn't the one coming out in the disguise of flowing white spirit draperies. If sitters tied, chained, or otherwise fixed the medium in the cabinet, they were

creating “test conditions,” which were believed to supply more certain proof of the spirit’s presence.

Even while engaging in such ghost-seeking practices, people typically didn’t abandon their “home” faith. In fact, most British Spiritualists had been raised in a Christian environment and Spiritualism cut widely across churches and classes, from high to low and broad church Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism to virtually all of the Dissenting faiths. Sometimes, even disenchanted atheists returned to faith through Spiritualism, regarding it as a rational proof of life after death and of a sacred quality to that afterlife. Like Evangelicalism, Spiritualism was not a denomination, but rather an amplification or overlay on one’s denominational beliefs and practices. Certainly, Spiritualism as an “overlay” affected one’s personal practice and theology, palimpsestically, just as Evangelicalism did. Very few religious leaders were hearty advocates of Spiritualism, as they might be of Evangelicalism, however. Spiritualism had no role for clergy, though the movement had leaders and important mediums. There was no dogmatic form of confession or absolution; no sermons (unless one could describe inspired spirit commentary as such); no recitation of the Apostles’ Creed; and the followers were responsible for carving out their own path to the higher planes of life. Rather than drawing people closer to the church, it may have drawn them closer to home. Perhaps this is why the influence of Spiritualism in the period has often been underestimated. Even excellent surveys of Victorian religion exclude Spiritualism;² others describe it only as “the occult.” Certainly, our contemporary sensibility of Spiritualism as more secular and New Age may make us perceive it as outside of mainstream “religion,” though many Victorians did not. More likely, our discomfort with the “supernatural” elements of the faith and a suspicion that mediums were simply frauds who duped the bereft and

unwary matches that of many investigators in the nineteenth century who dismissed Spiritualism as poppycock.

In spite of our sensibility of its otherness, many séances contained traditional religious elements—Bible readings, hymn singing and recitation of prayers. Moreover, many Spiritualists thought of themselves as expanding or improving normative religious practice in the séance, not simply replacing it. This would not have been tenable for most Victorians, for whom personal practice and theology was more than a Sunday-morning ritual. Quite simply, as Julie Melnyk argues, “[r]eligion permeated Victorian lives.”³ While this does not mean that all Christian Victorians were devout—it was, in fact, an age of doubt and disenchantment as well as devotion—it was a wholly naturalized part of day-to-day life in the nineteenth century. It was this very doubt and disenchantment, however, that made the promise Spiritualism offered—material proof of an afterlife—all that much more tantalizing. For those who came to the faith and kept their feet in the world of traditional religion, Spiritualism was a “movement” with the power to transform day-to-day religious practice by tapping into the spiritual insights from those who had already crossed over. In spite of the ties to prior faith systems, inserting anything resembling the convention of communion into the séance might seem puzzling. Why did they need communion in the séance? Most Spiritualists, however, emerged from traditions in which the Eucharist was a fundamental aspect of the religious experience. To participate in communion, of course, meant incorporating the body of Christ and the principles of the faith. This might happen metaphorically or literally, depending on denominational home and beliefs, but it certainly involved physical ingestion by at least some people on some occasions, a linking of body and spirit. This made Spiritualism, a faith in which lines between spirit and body often blurred, as I’ll explain in more detail below, an ideal location for communion.

Spiritual Foodways

For William Francis Cowper-Temple (politician, heir to both Lord Melbourne and Lord Palmerston, and the first Baron Mount Temple), the body of Christ, human food consumption, the spirit, and the fleshy body of the believer were intimately linked. Not simply a nominal Anglican or Spiritualist, Mount Temple expressed an earnest dedication to both. He hosted annual Christian retreats with the theme “conferences on the Higher Christian Life” at his Broadlands estate. “The conference requirements emphasized the attenders’ belief in God’s immediate presence and called upon all present to be open to and moved by the Holy Spirit in the moment, positions that the immediacy of Spiritualism and its direct contact with the other side encouraged. Each meeting included discussions on the uses of Spiritualism, the role of entrancement, the role of prayer, and the mission of God in the world.”⁴ These are surely lofty and largely respectable goals. Examining the way he read these goals into his private life—an effort in which he earnestly engaged—is telling. In a journal with the headnote, “Thoughts on religious matters,” Cowper expressed a profound focus on the relationship between food, spirit, and the flesh. Many of the entries in this notebook revolve around this triad. The body was necessary, as he noted in his diaries, to “glorify God” and, because the “body was a temple of the Holy Ghost,” what one chose to “eat [and] drink” must also be done for the glory of God. “I am entrusted with the care and management of [my body],” Cowper wrote, “Food, appetite, digestion have been given to me for it. ...I am responsible for the proper feeding of my body.”⁵ Eating was a spiritual act for this Spiritualist. As E.N. Anderson has noted of the complex face of food in faith, “food sharing is literally sacred in almost all religions.”⁶

While integral to traditional services and to the theology of the believer, communion was likely the *only* material eating going on during church; whereas, at a séance, food might take center stage, right next to the materialized spirits. We might wonder why, when you've got something as dazzling as the flesh and blood resurrection of the dead in the séance, you would focus on something as mundane as food. Food studies offers in-depth analysis of this phenomenon across cultures. From Levi-Strauss to Margaret Mead, scholars have explored the ways in which food reveals profound and often subtle social dynamics. Because food is physically vital, it is always present, but the varying processes of preparation, distribution, consumption, and ritualization make it a great "medium" for social meaning. As Carole M. Counihan has described it, "In every culture, foodways [all the social practices surrounding food] constitute an organized system, a language that—through its structure and components—conveys meaning and contributes to the organization of the natural and social world."⁷ Counihan also discusses the ways in which food serves as a significant path to both the supernatural and to physical intimacy between people.⁸ In its most simple terms, because we both eat and kiss with the mouth and because food is sustenance, romance, and sacred communion, food is a socially and spiritually fundamental construct.

The mainstream church provided strict control on the preparation, distribution, and consumption of spiritual food, managing it all with the leadership of consecrating (male) clergy, but in the séance, access to spiritual food was almost as orgiastic and diffuse as the spiritual leadership was. This is not to say that there were no rules, or that the séance was like Woodstock, but instead that many Victorians imagined even the most sedate of Eucharistic experiences as a "taste of the heavenly bliss" of the afterlife.⁹ Nor was this heavenly bliss always simply an intellectual or affective metaphor for the erotic. John Maynard's research on

religion and sexuality has shown that the Victorians grappled very earnestly with questions of physical sexuality and, moreover, that Charles Kingsley, religious leader of the Muscular Christianity movement, and his wife actually used “communion” as metaphor for physical sexuality.¹⁰ Certainly their metaphor was not unique among Victorians or unique to Victorians. As several food studies scholars have argued, “One of the most significant domains of meaning embodied in food centers on the relation between the sexes, their gender definitions, and their sexuality. In many cultures... [f]ood and sex are metaphorically overlapping. Eating may represent copulation, and food may represent sexuality.”¹¹

Women, Food, and Power

It is not simply the eroticism I am interested in here, however, nor the supplanting of traditional religious hierarchies. I wish to draw out the yoking of the domestic and the disruptive in the séance, especially in terms of spiritual authority and the body, because that pairing provided a prime channel through which women might move. Particularly significant to me is the primary role women already played in the domestic space and with regard to food, and the means this provided to make the disruptive aspects of Spiritualism functional for them. In making this argument I will be building upon my previous work in *Altered States*. Here, I contended that the séance provided women with a modified social context in which to operate, an “altered state” of mind and social codes that permitted them to engage in behavior—with the authorization of the spirits—that would have been intolerable elsewhere, such as speaking with authority on religious and political matters, actively shaping their own futures, traveling and working on their own. In this essay, I want to draw out themes I did not touch upon in that project. First, because the home was a woman’s province, her landscape for management and

authority, it didn't undermine her femininity to assert authority here. Though some of the faithful encountered Spiritualism in public forums, the "domestic" séance formed the backbone of Spiritualistic practice. Home séances provided a way for the curious, new believers, and the devout to explore Spiritualism or to develop their mediumship. As Catherine Berry, a significant nineteenth-century Spiritualist and promoter of the movement noted, "My knowledge of Spiritualism, has, for the most part, been gained by experiences in my own house. I have devoted years to the investigation of the subject, and have spared no expense in securing the aid of the most powerful mediums."¹² Woman, in Coventry Patmore's famous Victorian dictum, was the "angel in the house." She was the domestic goddess, and she had the freedom to assert spiritual authority in the home, though women were almost totally absent from positions of leadership in the church.¹³ This was simply not true in Spiritualism. In fact, while this was a complex and often vexed process, introducing the séance into this space was one way that Spiritualism, in Alex Owen's terms, "validated the female authoritative voice."¹⁴

The presence of food in the séance also operated to solidify women's authority. Not only has food preparation in the home been linked to notions of "spiritual health,"¹⁵ but food was simply a women's responsibility and this placed them at the head of the table for this aspect of spiritual leadership. While professional food preparation might have been managed by men, "Domestic cookery was" in the Victorian period, like today, "primarily the preserve of females, whether paid women cooks or housewives cooking for their own families."¹⁶ In fact, the management of food—from planning, to preparation, to distribution, as Andrea Broomfield has explained, was a wholly gendered process.¹⁷ So central was food to the Victorian woman's life that over 900 pages (well over 80%) of the best selling *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management* were devoted to the preparation and management of food. Food, apparently, was

far and away a woman's chief duty. As Isabella Beeton herself described it, "the influence of [food preparation] is immense upon the happiness of a household."¹⁸ In fact, food management, as food studies has taught us, was always "deployed as a means of gender distinction:"¹⁹ "we may be what we eat," but eating and feeding also "produces who we are."²⁰ For women, this meant food management for the household. This does not suggest, however, that we can simply read women's management of food as oppressive. Arlene Voski Avakian and Barbara Haber have argued that feminist interrogations of food can "help us understand how women reproduce, resist, and rebel against gender constructions as they are practiced and contested in various sites, as well as illuminate the contexts in which these struggles are located."²¹ With this backdrop, we can turn to the séance to explore the incorporation of food, an inclusion that again elevated food's spiritual importance. We can turn to the dinner table—where the séances often took place—to examine the relationship of food to real women's bodies and senses of self.

Making Food, Making Spiritualism

While most séances took place in the home, Spiritualism had its public venues as well, and women's production and service of food played a key role there. The Spiritualist newspapers chronicled the food offered in the local forums, and the significance of women in that process. Accounts detail the "bevy of smiling ladies with white aprons and tucked up sleeves, [who were] cutting cake and other good things for the guests." They indicate not only how many attended (400, in this case), they also record how many took tea (200).²² When events are described as "well appointed," there is no question that the author is referring to the food. At these public soirees, designed to introduce people to Spiritualism and serve as a community bonding place for Spiritualists, food was key. In fact, the preparation of food in this forum

echoed the comforts of the home space, provided a site for people to “take tea” and to come with ease to “the gifts of Spiritualism.” In fact, there is no question that Spiritualists saw this feeding of the masses as one of the key factors in welcoming new devotees to the movement. In Lancashire, the minutes of a soiree noted, “A few joined in the dancing which followed [the spiritual manifestations], but *many more* in the dessert, cake, and coffee, which brought the proceedings to a close” [emphasis added]. What is perhaps most striking about this description, however, is the author’s final summation: “The gathering was not only successful but highly useful to the Movement in its present state.”²³ Clearly, the food was a key part of what made it so “useful,” and it was the “bevy of smiling ladies” who made these things happen.

The focus on the details and the anxiety over proper food preparation echoes the demand placed on women evidenced in the range of household management books like *Mrs. Beeton’s*. So central were women to this process that, even when servants actually engaged in the physical preparation, the hostess was still ultimately socially responsible for the success and failure.²⁴ In another public Spiritualist event in Marylebone, for example, the author raves, “such lemonade, such cake, such oranges ... such dancing!” He quickly makes a complaint, however, that the oranges “should have been cut across the end, not in a line with the pith, as it does not sever the juice bags”²⁵ While we might think of this as a wholly irrelevant and even obnoxious detail to print in a newspaper with nationwide distribution, what is striking about it is the way it reveals the significance of food to the Spiritualist cause. Not just a jab at the “smiling ladies in white aprons,” it underscores their role as food managers and the importance of food preparation. Even in more intimate events, such as a literary club formed by Spiritualists, food and drink were crucial and hotly debated. The club was formed “on the condition that no alcoholic liquors should be allowed. When, however, the rough winter months set in, this privation was deemed

rather severe; some malcontents expressed doubts as to the wisdom of these restrictions, thinking that tea, coffee, lemonade, sugar-water and gruel would not do for a man, however spiritual his ambitions might be.”²⁶ While the author may have been evoking the generic “man,” women certainly would not have been at liberty to demand alcohol from others, especially when there were men in the group. Just as clear, however, is the fact that women were the gatekeepers. Their approval was required for the alcohol to be permitted. Quite simply, women managed the table.

It would be a mistake to read this responsibility for food as simply repression or powerlessness. Elizabeth Langland has persuasively argued in *Nobody's Angels* that, in general, women's management of “domestic practices” had an enormous impact on a “community's political life.”²⁷ Moreover, the Spiritualist faithful were wholly conscious of the role that food played in their Spiritual practice and the role that women played in foodways. Not just the highlight of the soirees, food was a meaty spiritual consideration. They deliberated over food practices in public forums and in their newspapers. As James Gregory has noted in his excellent study *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, many Spiritualists were progressives and idealists, who wanted their life practices to “reflect core spiritualist beliefs about the ‘sanctity of life, the growth and dignity of the physical frame enclosing the immortal soul.’”²⁸ Vegetarianism and teetotalism flourished in the movement. James Burns editor of one of the movement's chief organs, *The Medium and Daybreak*, toured and lectured on vegetarianism and ran many pro-vegetarian articles in the paper. Spiritualists often felt moved to experiment with their diets as a result of such prodding or because of spiritual messages or insights. Dr. T. L. Nichols, who gave many Spiritualist lectures, described some of his “experiments” with diet in *The Medium and Daybreak*. Nichols gave up meat and alcohol and reported that he “felt better, and clearer, and

brighter than usual.” “Pure blood,” which was produced by pure eating, he argued, “would give perfect health.”²⁹ Chandos Leigh Hunt Wallace, a spiritually-inspired medical practitioner and health adviser, strongly advocated a vegetarian diet. “By far the greatest portion of the human race are vegetarians,” she noted; “some because it is part of their religion, some because they are too poor to procure flesh-meat, and a few through a *natural* abhorrence to both the idea and the taste. A minor but *rapidly-increasing* portion, however, eat neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, nor drink intoxicants, because they have discovered that such things are not only *quite unnecessary*, but also positively destructive to their moral, mental, and physical welfare.”³⁰

What neither Gregory nor others writing on the link between Spiritualism and vegetarianism have noted, however, is the role women played in the execution of this genuinely significant spiritual scheme, as well as the control this permitted women to assert over the bodies of those around her. Hunt Wallace wrote her own 365-day cookbook, complete with an in-season meal planner, four courses per meal, and no duplication of recipes. In this book, she addresses herself directly to the mistress (as did most household books, like *Mrs. Beeton's*). In this way, Hunt Wallace acknowledged the role women played in instituting spiritual food reform in the household. Her book, she explained, was designed to share information and educate, but also “to be a blessing to many ladies ... who wish to be saved the daily trouble of working out the problem of ‘what shall we have for dinner to-morrow.’ Knowing how the want of such work has been long and keenly felt, its production has been purely a labour of love.”³¹ So clearly was the diet of the family a woman’s province that James Burnes began a column in his newspaper for his wife Amy, so she might address women directly regarding the concerns that fell under the women’s authority, including their role as hostesses and their supervision of household diet, including alcohol and “flesh-meat.” Vegetarianism (and other Spiritualist dietary concerns) were

not purely philosophical, however. For Spiritualists, and for medical authorities of the day, what an individual ingested had an enormous impact on his or her spiritual and physical well-being.

Food of the Body and Spirit

A firm believer in the power of food, Hunt Wallace argued that modern medicine never cured anyone, but that almost any disease could be cured by food, primarily fresh fruit and other healthful foods,³² all of which would fall under the auspices of women's household management. Famous medium Elizabeth d'Esperance and her spirit guide agreed. When "Humner" wanted d'Esperance to do service work in the community, particularly for poor children, he argued that

Medicines [often] set up another disease, in many cases, as harmful as the one to be cured. His methods of remedy were chiefly, a more natural way of living, simple diet, fresh air, physical exercise, and a knowledge of right and wrong . . . 'Give the children food,' he would write sometimes, 'and let the drugs alone.' So that the medicines carried into some of the courts and alleys of the slums were more frequently in the shape of oat-meal, bread, fruit and similar comestibles, than in unpalatable mixtures from the chemists.³³

In fact, d'Esperance collected funds to distribute food to children, believing it to be both their physical and spiritual cure. Moreover, Spiritualists weren't the only ones who believed in the role of food as a spiritual and physical healer. Sir Henry Thompson, a medical force in the nineteenth century and court physican across Europe, wrote extensively on *Food and Feeding*, and he too made these connections. The "relations, not only between food and a healthy population," he wrote, "but between food and virtue, between the process of digestion and the state of mind which results from it, have occupied a subordinate place in the practical arrangements of life."³⁴ He, like Hunt Wallace (though without the same vigor), encouraged vegetarianism and complained that the English ate far too much meat.³⁵

Naturally, all this focus on food and its spiritual weight gave added significance to the role of women both in the culture and in Spiritualism. Even lofty medical tracts on diet found themselves dancing between audiences, since women were the ones who would ultimately be responsible for food management in the home. In practice, it was clear, they recognized the role of women as the arbiters of moral and physical health. No wonder food was thought to have a particularly significant effect on mediums and mediumship, as they served as the channels to the spirit world. W.J. Colville, among others, lectured on the role of food for mediums. The level of detail in his recommendations parallels the concern expressed about the “juice bags” of the soiree oranges—nearly comic to a reader encountering it today, but an index of its significance. “Concerning diet,” Colville offered, “we state that all fruits have a most distinct effect upon the minds of mediumistic persons. We would say to all mediums, you cannot do better than partake of fruits freely; apples, pears, and grapes, and all those fruits which are not designated as stone fruits are beneficial in all cases.”³⁶ While the instructions might just be given to mediums alone—say, in a meeting of professional or private mediums—his insights are offered instead to a general audience precisely because it was the hostesses in the home who would have supplied the food and drink to a medium staying in their midst. Later in life, one of the century’s most famous mediums, Florence Cook, described the mastery the woman of the household had over her food intake. Her diet, food and drink, was completely dependent upon them.³⁷ Women’s responsibility for this provision points to the unspoken expectation that women had charge of this crucial aspect of mediumship.

Moreover, Colville provided precise directions to avoid a serious *food-failure* that could interfere with mediumship: “You should only partake, on the day of the circle, two meals previously; if the circle is held in the evening, the first about nine o’clock a.m. comprised principally, if not

entirely, of bread and fruit. Some fruit we do not recommend as being of the highest use to weakly persons, but it is good for those who are strong.” For dinner, he notes,

Supposing the circle were held at eight o’clock in the evening, we would recommend that you should take your second meal at four or five o’clock, consisting of [f]arinaceous food and fruit; better leave the coarser kinds of vegetables out of the question, beans and lentils, which convey that nutriment which some persons distinctly require, may be eaten freely before the circle. Never partake of eggs, and it is not desirable you should partake of butter and milk freely, though some persons appear to need these things moderately. We should recommend pure vegetable oil to those who require fatty substances.

Of course, this is related to digestion in the mind, as well. “If you came to receive and digest truth in your mind, then you will receive only that which is beneficial for you.” While the minutiae here might seem absurd, these remarkably detailed warnings were in earnest.

So crucial was food intake to the spiritual landscape of the séance that the complete breakdown of spiritual contact might be attributed to the medium’s diet. After a particularly disastrous séance with a Miss Lawrence, *The Spiritualist* speculated that it was food that had caused things to go deeply awry. Indeed, she had cried out in pain and it had made her “utter sentiments for which she had no sympathy”—one can only imagine what kind of shocking remarks she must have made to leave the room so aghast. The sitters consulted the spirits separately from the medium to discover what had plagued her. Their “reply was that she was free from anything of the kind before she came to London, because previously she lived a simple life, subsisting almost entirely upon vegetable food, and never touching flesh—a kind of diet which it is not an uncommon thing for spirits to cause their mediums to adopt. They added that when she came to town she began to eat flesh food, and that was the chief reason why she had become subject for the time to the occasional power of spirits of a lower order.”³⁸ Such a caveat indicates the power of a hostess to administer spiritually sound choices for those who enter her domestic circle—or not to do so, depending upon her wishes.

The spirits of another popular medium, Catherine Wood, claimed that even incidental physical contact with people who imbibed unhealthy substances could undermine the well-being of the medium and the success of the séance, which extended a woman's food authority even more broadly. Wood's spirit guide Pocka explained that séance "conditions were bad; that in coming to the séance some drunken men had jostled against the medium ... [and] their influence would prevent any manifestations taking place that evening." Moreover, because of this random contact, when being placed in the materialization cabinet and bound for test conditions, "the medium had been controlled by a spirit who had committed suicide by poison, and that she had been injuriously affected by the control; that the cage must be opened and the medium released at once, taken home under control and put to bed."³⁹ More than just a handy excuse for a failed séance, this focus on the dangers unhealthy foods and drinks indicates how they become spiritually, as well as physically, toxic, and how they affect the lives of people beyond ingestion.⁴⁰ Women had been crucial in the temperance crusades across the United States and Europe, and it is no surprise that their message filtered into food and drink management in séances as well. "Banish the drink from your midst;" devout Spiritualist Alfred Smedley warned, "do what you can to prevent its victims from being sent prematurely, or at all, into the 'land of souls'; then will your hours of spirit-communion be secure against such unwelcome visitation."⁴¹ In the later years of her mediumship, Elizabeth d'Esperance also insisted that her sitters avoid alcohol and tobacco for up to six months prior to a séance because their ingestion might damage the spiritual energy and thus the phenomenon of the séance.⁴² Imagine the kind of authority that dictated the diet of dozens of people for six months in advance of meeting them! Only with pure food, she argued, could you be a "fit candidate for communion with those passed on to the world of spirit."⁴³

Ultimately, all of these spiritually crucial food practices were in the hands of women. While men of a household would certainly have weight in expressing preferences, which a woman would be bound to respect, the management of household food was always conducted under her auspices. Men, in fact, must express any concerns through the avenue of the mistress of the house, not to the servants directly, and along with her responsibility for managing the world of food came power. Women chose what food would be served in the home and at the hall. Women made decisions about what was safe for mediumship or séances. The fact that the Women's Christian Temperance Crusade found a happy branch in Spiritualism was a sign of women's authority in the séance, an emblem of their ability to manage the lives and bodies of those in the movement. We cannot wonder, then, that women in the séance regularly called upon the spirits to bring them food, and that the place of food in the séance gave them an additional metaphoric voice and layer of authority.

Eating Spirits

At some séances, food literally fell from the sky. Requesting food of spirits became a common proof of their presence and emerged as a trope for success in the Spiritualist press. With the lights low and the sitters arranged in a séance circle holding hands, fruit would cascade from the ceiling. At one séance, after sitters made some requests of the spirits that the hostess found ridiculous (for a fox and an elephant), she chastised the company and advised them that “fruits and flowers are best to have brought.” Her command was duly executed, “and all around asked accordingly—an apple, a pear, grapes, &c.”⁴⁴ On another occasion, the spirits brought bunches of grapes, mushrooms, filberts, and branches of a mulberry tree.⁴⁵ Such delicacies were not only “spiritually pure” foods, but also a crucial part of a well-laid table, as directed by any of

the leading housekeeping handbooks of the day. Mrs. Beeton recommended flowers as a table centerpiece—even in December and January—and every good hostess produced them regardless of how difficult they might be to come by (though usually not through spirit manifestation). On another occasion, the hostess notes that “flowers and ferns [came down] in great variety, followed by eight pears and seven apples. We were now desired to leave the room in order to enjoy the fruits he [‘Peter,’ the spirit] had brought. Tea being on the table, some partook of that and some of the fruit.”⁴⁶ While a latent erotic quality in this moment—the group sharing the heavenly fruit—may be subtle here, it wasn’t so understated in every séance, and I will flesh those other examples out below. What is most significant here is that the spirits not only spoke women’s language of food, but that food and eating became a means of crossing from the spiritual into the material in the séance and that this extended women’s authority to this process.

Unsurprisingly, mediums weren’t the only ones who were eating at séances; the spirits partook as well, and their cultured tastes served to elevate women’s role again. Stephen Mennell’s work on Victorian meal planning has shown that French cookery was considered to be far superior to traditional English food, and if one praised the food prepared by a hostess, one would be praising her as well, since she executed the choice of foods and style.⁴⁷ Take, for example, a séance in which Charles Malkin reported that the spirits miraculously provided a fancy “table,” straight out of *Mrs. Beeton’s*, with “the table-cloth spread on the floor, decorated with the cruet-stand, knives and forks, fox and good board, the table-mats, cups and saucers, bottle of cayenne pepper, bottle of sauce.”⁴⁸ Elite food management was key in many séances conducted by Spiritualist devotee and writer, Catherine Berry. Berry described one séance in a letter to the Spiritualist press in which a spirit slid back “a vacant chair [at the table], and, in answer to whether [the spirit] would have some dinner, said ‘Yes.’ I then asked it to select what

it would take, when it chose *croquets des pommes de terre* (a French way of dressing potatoes...) I was desired to put this on a chair either in a tablespoon or on a plate. I placed it in a tablespoon, thinking that a plate might be broken. In a few seconds I was told it was eaten, and looking, found the half of it gone, with the marks showing the teeth."⁴⁹ Her mastery of the French table actually had the power to bring the spirits into the material world.

At this same séance, the spirits “took” a number of objects that expressed their culinary and social sophistication, including a “liqueur bottle with a silver stopper, also a small china teapot.” One might be tempted to speculate that a clever housemaid was getting the best of spiritually benighted hostess (who, for her part, hoped that other Spiritualists might find these missing precious objects transported to their homes by the spirits and return them to her), and this wasn’t the only less-than-flattering read of that particular séance. *Punch* offered the more pedestrian, but equally irreverent, suggestion that the spiritual potatoes might have simply been feeding Berry’s cat.⁵⁰ She retorted in her book that cats prefer game meat to potatoes and don’t eat from spoons. Though the eater of the food and the taker of the objects, for non-Spiritualists at least, might be less spirit and more profit-oriented, what was significant for Berry and other Spiritualists (including her large reading audience), was what the bite out of the potato meant. It demonstrated to them that the spirits were real, present, and able to manipulate the world around them, that food had been an avenue to crossing from the ephemeral to the material. It also demonstrated that Berry’s table was pleasing to the spirit world—powerful praise for a woman, indeed.

It should be no surprise, given the kind of spiritual acclaim Berry was receiving for her *croquets des pommes de terre*—a form of praise Broomfield tells us that would have been akin to praising her virtue and character—that many of her séances crossed over into dinner. In one,

John King, a spirit guide who famously graced the séances of mediums all over the country, was offered wine, chicken, tongue, beef, and jelly—all of which were apparently readily available at the séance, which must have featured a groaning sideboard. Though King refused comestibles in this case, he accepted a glass of ale, which pleased his palate very much. The glass “was placed under the table by the servant, in full sight of all present, and the party proceeded to supper with the ale glass under the table. No one moved. When the servant returned to the supper-room, Mrs. Berry asked the spirit, ‘John, have you drunk the ale?’ ‘Yes,’ was the reply.” Below the table they found the empty glass, with no sign that the drink had been spilled out, but instead every drop had been drunk.⁵¹ In other instances, the spirits proposed glasses of wine be placed under the table in similar fashion. So delighted was Berry with the spirit’s reception of her wine cellar that this practice became routine. Berry and her séance circle habitually left “the darkened room and [sat] down to supper, and, as usual upon these occasions ... asked the spirits if they would take wine with us, which they accepted. A glass of wine was poured out” and drunk by the spirits.⁵²

These moments are more than simply tributes to Berry’s table. Here, Berry marks the spiritual moment by offering wine to the spirits, which they inevitably receive. This inversion of communion practice suggests not only the kind of power that comes with feeding, but it serves as a metaphor for the kind of spiritual power that women gained in the séance room. In fact, Berry organized, authorized, and managed what must have amounted to hundreds of séances in her home throughout the 1870s, and she was considered a chief figure in the movement for her work. Here was a woman who lived without the direction of a man, but instead with the direction of the “spirits.” She was the spiritual arbiter. She became a voice of authority in Spiritualist circles and is remembered even today in Spiritualist communities. Alex Owen’s work and my own in

Spiritualism have indicated that Spiritualism lent itself to boundary crossing for women. In Spiritualism, women might provide the spiritual leadership, not just as a passive vessel of moral good, but as vocal administrators of theology and practice. In fact, because women were perceived to be ideal mediums, their voices were deeply significant in the revelation of Spiritualist truths, even if the “spirits were speaking through them.” In this way, Spiritualism and mediumship “made possible a different way of conceiving of the relationships between men and women and of ... reconfigure[ing] bodily and feminine subjectivity.”⁵³ Naturally, rethinking women’s subject position in the spiritual world called into question their place in the material world as well. This reconsideration of roles and identities was particularly true in full-form materialization.

In the Flesh

As the years went on and phenomena in Spiritualism became more flashy, spirits moved beyond a bite of fancy potato or a glass of wine. Full-form materialization, the flesh and blood embodiment of a ghost, was one of the chief manifestations of the 1870s-90s, and one of the most dazzling things the spirits could do was eat. If a spirit could chew, swallow, and show evidence of teeth, it could prove both its presence and materiality beyond a doubt. Most sitters who came to the séance believed in some form of spirit life, but they longed for evidence of materialization, the physical embodiment of the spirit. If the spirit ate, the sitter could not be experiencing a visual illusion, or some other desired mental projection; it must be, in fact, a flesh and blood being in their presence. As Sir Charles Isham wrote, “If the form were a phantom shape I could understand it. If it were the mere crust or shell of a body it would be conceivable; but it is indubitably a solid and complete human body. It breathes; its cheek may be kissed; an

arm thrown round the waist with consent; it has feet, for they are shown, and they are attached to legs—it may be presumed—for it walks. These are admitted facts. The form is an indisputable reality.”⁵⁴ This material body was considered one of the chief evidences of the spirit world beyond and one of the most highly prized forms of spirit manifestation. It is here that the violations of social norms become most apparent and that women’s acts—as mediums and members of the Spiritualist community—reveal the relationship between spirit, flesh, food, and transgression of norms most intimately.

When spirits ate, the tone of the séance record was triumphant. One sitter noted of séances with a spirit called “Joey” that the materialized spirit took food from the table and ate. In a playful engagement that begins with her pleading that he touch her, the sitter notes,

I teased him very much to shake hands with me, but this he could not do, and another lady begged a piece of his robe, and upon his consenting I gave him my little knife to cut a piece off with; but instead of doing so, he took up an apple, and to our general astonishment commenced cutting and eating it. ‘Have you good teeth, Joey?’ I exclaimed; ‘Look,’ he replied, displaying a set, which if his own showed he was not dosed with mercury in the spirit-world, and if false,—well they have excellent mechanical dentists on the other side.

To the delight of the whole séance room, Joey then begins to chew, “‘See and listen,’ he continued, placing a piece of the apple in his mouth, which every sitter could hear and see was being thoroughly masticated.”⁵⁵ Clearly, this séance wasn’t just about proofs. Metaphorically rich, the engagement between sitter and spirit is charged with sexual transgression. Just as Eve supplied the fruit that Adam ate, so Joey’s meal has been supplied by the hostess, and this scene, with its flirtatious requests for touching that ends in eating an apple implies women’s role in crossing the boundaries set for her by social norms.

Often, food-mediated engagements with spirits are laden with erotic tension that signals the level of social transgression and management of bodily pleasure available to women. In one

séance, Berry was “brought two hot roasted potatoes, so hot that they could not be handled; one of them came in contact with my lips as it alighted, and I exclaimed that it had burnt me.” The hot potatoes, the contact with her lips, and the heat are all suggestive elements of physical intimacy. Her pain does not last, but instead “an orange was [immediately] placed in my hand. A small piece had been bitten from it, the marks of the teeth being visible. With this orange I was made to rub my lip, whereupon the pain passed away. [Then] a large beetroot [was] placed in my hand.” The spirits amend the pain they’ve caused by delivering more food—and food marked with their presence. Moreover (one wonders if this is part of the cure), events culminate in the gift of a large beetroot. In these moments, Alice Ellis writes of Berry’s dinner séances, “everyone felt the touch of spirit-fingers on hair, or face, or hands. Sometimes the touches were indescribably gentle or caressing, at others their mischievousness provoked much laughter....at last Mr. Herne was stripped of his coat and waistcoat, his hands being held by those on his right and left.”⁵⁶ At another séance, a young woman named Mary Ward who lived with Berry wrote, “Mrs. Berry felt a moisture come upon her, and the Rev. Mr. Dickenson had a similar experience. When a light was struck, it was found that a quantity of white froth was on the body of Mrs. Berry's dress, and a large splat on the Rev. Mr. Dickenson's forehead.”⁵⁷ These violations of dining room etiquette—the stripping of clothing, the unidentified white froth—emblemize the ways in which women are able to maintain their social standing and engage in practices that would normally be beyond their social landscape. Moreover, by tapping into these experiences through the channel which food and food management supplied, women can approach transgression, while, paradoxically, remaining in their feminine role.

On other occasions, the spirits sought out food from the hostess. Remarkable in these moments was the ability of the woman of the house to supply pleasing conditions for the spirits.

This becomes even more striking when examining the disruptions of social codes around food. Most debunkers in the nineteenth century (and today) believed that the “spirits” were simply the medium slipping from the bondage of the test conditions and emerging in disguise to impersonate a ghost. What this implies, then, is that the women themselves were making demands, violating a host of norms and all their social training. A remarkable example comes from the Native American spirit Pocka, who exits the materialization cabinet and says, “Me hungry; me want something to eat.” Not satiated, the spirit keeps demanding more food until she finally says, “If me don't have something to eat me die, and you put me in de grave again.”⁵⁸ During Pocka’s clamoring, a form became visible from behind the curtains (evidence for the sitters that the medium has remained behind in the materialization cabinet, rather than masquerading as the ghost—or for skeptics that the medium had a “confederate”). In response to the spirit’s demands, “two plates of cake and bread and butter were brought into the room and quickly eaten by the medium—still under control—she, while doing so, covering the food with her arm, lest any portion of it should be taken from her.”⁵⁹ Though Spiritualists understood the large quantities of food as supplying the energy to produce the materialization, the strange and insatiable demands, alongside the medium’s infantile hoarding of the cake and bread and butter, suggest other readings as well.

Rejecting codes of polite consumption, both the spirit and her medium greedily consume unacceptable quantities of food and in ways that would be unseemly for women. Taking what *they* want in defiance of social codes indicates the power of women in the séance to violate normative limits on women’s behavior. This process makes it possible for a woman to exercise control over her own body, even when the same choices would have been intolerable elsewhere. Moreover, the scene has an erotic quality, evoking sexual hunger and pleasure, as well as the

resistance to polite boundaries for women. Similarly, another spirit of the same medium engages in a sexually charged encounter in which the spirit takes a man's finger in her mouth to prove her materiality. When asked if she had any teeth, "She at once took hold of my hand and put one of my fingers in her mouth and pressed it between her teeth, which, to the touch, were as perfect as teeth could be, her warm breath being also felt by me whilst my finger was in her mouth."⁶⁰ So striking were many of these scenes that when describing them to a friend, I asked, "Can you imagine that happening in a *Victorian* drawing room?" to which she replied, "Can you imagine that happening in a drawing room *today*?" Nor was this unusual at a seance. "Every time we sat at dinner," Berry records, "we had not only spirit—voices calling to us, but spirit hands touching us."⁶¹

In some of the séances, the food sharing became almost literally a holy communion. At one of Berry's séances, the spirits "prepared a feast," which she was called upon to examine with a candle. Her book contains an elaborate drawing of the placement of oranges and biscuits, in positions that evoke a cathedral sanctuary (where holy sacrament would be prepared and offered) and transept. Berry initially perceives it as simple meal of which she is to partake, and she leaves it, complaining that she doesn't like the taste of oranges. She is later called back, however, to the offering. "In a few minutes they desired me to look again, and I found they had sucked four pieces of the orange, putting the remains on the biscuit, which formed a plate,"⁶² and she invests the scene with more spiritual import. This "feast" is a spiritual feast in which she is specially called to participate, a sign of the spirits' favor and of her significance in this setting. Moreover, the erotic quality of the sucked oranges, suggests—like Christina Rossetti's fruited communion between sisters in "Goblin Market"⁶³—a physical consumption that reflects a holy communion. In a similar incident at one of Catherine Wood's séances, the materialized spirit

Benny was offered an apple by a sitter. He does not consume this apple himself, however. In a blending of the Fall and the healing sacrifice of communion, Benny returns the apple from his mouth to theirs—apparently purified. He does the same with a biscuit. As a sitter describes it, Benny “at once stretched out his hand and took it; he was heard to bite a piece out of it; walking close up to me, he placed the piece in my mouth. In this manner the apple was divided into about six pieces, which were in succession placed in the mouths of as many different persons. A friend gave him a biscuit, which he brought and placed in my mouth.”⁶⁴ At other séances, each sitter was served, in turn, with the wine and food by the spirit, echoing the distribution of communion by the spirits to the faithful.⁶⁵ The violation of space, in the domestic séance rather than the church; the violation of hierarchy, in the absence of clergy; and the violation of gender codes, in the special call to women all signal the ways in which this special communion gave women a new authority.

Ultimately, in many séances, the sharing of the sacrament became quite explicit. After one séance and during supper, Berry

was impressed to have a glass of wine poured out, and a piece of bread put on a plate. We then adjourned to the séance room, and breaking the bread into *several* pieces by impression, I gave the plate to the lady, who put her clasped hands over it, and I took the wine, requesting the lights to be put out. Immediately, a piece of bread was put into each person’s mouth, excepting my piece, which they placed in my hands; they also took the wine from me, putting it to the lips of all, and then returning it to me.⁶⁶

In this spirit-driven communion, which Berry orders, she is singled out as a high priestess, the only one into whose mouth the bread is not directly placed, so she may place it herself. Berry then leads the Lord’s prayer. Though it would have been inconceivable for a woman to be responsible for blessing, managing, and distributing communion in a mainstream church in 1874, Catherine Berry and others were doing so with fair regularity in the séance. Their engagement

with the spirits, often through the world of food, gave them access to a range of behavior, personal and political, that was typically out of their reach.

Food/Feminine Adulterations

I want to make clear, as I close this discussion, that I don't believe women had unlimited freedom in the séance or that Spiritualism or food were simple pathways to gender equality. While Spiritualism and food management often provided a means for women to remain within the bounds of feminine behavior and to transgress social custom, the process was always vexed and complicated. One cannot read the accounts of séances and not recognize that there was a good bit of room for profitable fraud in the darkened room—and that women came in for their share of criticism because of this. Just as there were pressing fears about adulterations in food in the Victorian era, so were there fears about adulterations in Spiritualism. Of course, earnest Spiritualists worried that a medium might be tempted to impersonate a spirit. Catherine Berry fretted that the “demand” for spirit phenomena was greater than the “supply,” “and this has induced deception. ...Let us hope ... there may be no more backslidings.”⁶⁷ Berry still held a favorable perception of mediums, remarking, “I hope the mediums will accept my word when I say that I have no unkind feeling towards them, and that I deeply sympathise with them; at the same time, when *I know* some are committing a deception, my love of truth and honesty, and my duty to those who put faith in me, bid me come forth and speak.”⁶⁸

Others, like Edward Cox, were far less chary of offending the mediums or other Spiritualists, complaining that the spirits materialized by mediums were “not shadowy shapes, not mere surface presentations,” a fact that troubled him. In the same way that women might be marked as sources of bodily sin and danger, Cox saw the presence of the spirits' bodies not as

reassurance, but as soiled flesh marred by all the non-spiritual elements of the flesh, rendering them far less holy: “They are perfect human bodies performing all the functions of the human body, replete with flesh and bone, having hair and nails, lungs and saliva. They breathe, perspire, emit the odour of perspiration, eat, talk, sing.”⁶⁹ For Cox, the perspiration and the saliva were not to be celebrated, but were abject signs of debased human flesh. After witnessing several debunkers “expose” the mediums and their spirits as one in the same, Cox wrote the spiritualist press that he was convinced of the duplicity being perpetrated in the séance:

There was no mistake. I was witness to the whole, and so were four other spectators.... The medium and the spirit were shown to be the same, beyond all doubt. Many questions lie behind this as to possible trance action and probable unconsciousness on the part of the medium. But it was proved in this instance the form was that of the medium, and not that of an independent spirit, and if it were so [in this case], is it not a strong presumption that the like presentation of the medium's body may be made on other occasions?⁷⁰

A similar threads run through the widespread “food adulterations” literature: a fear of fraud that taints a system and perhaps even those who administer it. Physicians and health advocates expressed serious concerns about lead, copper, heavy metal-laced earth, and alum (and also, less dangerously, fillers like wheat flour) being introduced into food to improve its color, flavor, texture, or volume. These additives caused crippling health problems and even death. The dangers were perceived as a subtle, creeping process of contamination, like that of duplicity in the domestic séance. Arthur Hill Hassall, physician and sanitary reformer, argued the effects of food adulterations were “slowly developed: the substances, although taken perhaps in but minute quantity, gradually and insidiously deteriorate the health ... they accumulate in the system until at length serious consequences are produced.”⁷¹ In fact, just as Edward Cox had warned that scientific intervention was necessary to balance people’s too credulous approach to full form materialization, Dr. Yeo warned that in making “the selection of suitable kinds and

sufficient, but not excessive amounts of food” one could not “trust merely to the sensation of hunger or to the voluntary choice or desires of individuals.” Neither one’s own mind, nor one’s own body could provide safe assurance of healthful food intake or a rational basis for eating properly. Yeo argued that it required, instead, “accurate scientific data,” that would better inform the mind and practice of people.⁷² Scientific prescriptions threatened to seize some measure of food management from women’s hands in order to protect the family. Echoing many concerns about fraud in the séance, Yeo remarks of food adulteration, “It is impossible for a man to be guilty of adulteration and yet be an honest and a moral man”⁷³ which also “begets a loss of confidence”—another evil of adulteration.

The food that was perceived as most vulnerable to adulteration was also seen as “the most perfect:” milk. Milk was regarded, across the board in medical studies of food and health, as the most vital foodstuff, the most nutritionally complete. Many medical practitioners believed that it could supply everything a human body needed, but they also believed it was the most likely to be adulterated.⁷⁴ Above all foods, milk was certainly the most gendered, a sign of domestic nurturance and breastfeeding, a sign of women’s subtle food-related power. Perhaps people feared that a *female* medium, above all, would be most likely to violate the codes—or, at least, if she violated them the threat would be more pressing than if a man did because of what it implied about women’s “nature.” When asked to identify the source of adulteration in food, the specialists wrote, “The great cause which accounts for the larger part of the adulteration which prevails is the desire of increased profit; a second cause is excessive and unfair competition.”⁷⁵ In other words, if one tradesman adulterates and sells for cheaper, the other cannot compete unless he also adulterates. Berry perceived that the same was true in the séance: mediums

wanted to get the best return on the séance and there was too much demand, too much dirty competition.

The threat implied here for the séance was that women were consciously violating codes and customs and seizing power without the spiritual authorization they claimed. This threat may have been even less socially tolerable than permitting women to have the power. Perhaps this was why, in spite of exposure after exposure, mediums continued to thrive into the turn of the century. The anxiety created by the dangers that might lie beneath the vital process of feeding and eating was no less serious than the dangers lying beneath the fear that women might be frauds in the séance. Ultimately, in spite of the anxieties, dinner and the show went on. People still ate, in spite of the danger, and Spiritualists still had séances in which women led the spirits into the room. There is no question that women Spiritualists often had a wider range of movement than their non-Spiritualist sisters. They traveled alone; they saw men without chaperones; they spoke on stages to audiences in the hundreds about politics, theology, and life. Unlike the suffragists who were also in the public forums at the time, Spiritualist women maintained their status as respectable women, as feminine, even when they engaged in the most dramatic and lively contravention of the norms. Critics have only begun to plumb the nuances of this Spiritualist power. Food, as I have argued here, seems to have been one way in which women gained access. Who could tell a woman “no” when she was communing with the spirits?

Endnotes

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- ¹ Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004: 18.
- ² This is true of most classic studies of Victorian religion, but even in newer surveys, like Julie Melnyk's study, which I cite below, Spiritualism is absent.
- ³ Julie Melnyk, *Victorian Religion: Faith and Life in Britain*, Westport, CN: Praeger, 2008: 1.
- ⁴ Marlene Tromp, *Altered States: Sex, Nation, Drugs, and Self-Transformation in Victorian Spiritualism*, Albany New York: SUNY Press, 2006: 50.
- ⁵ William Cowper-Temple (Lord Mount Temple), "Thoughts on religious matters," Personal Journal, Hartley Library, University of Southampton. Highfield, Southampton. BR 51/3.
- ⁶ E.N. Anderson, *Everyone Eats*, New York: NYU Press, 2005: 154, 6.
- ⁷ Carole M. Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power*, New York: Routledge, 1999: 19.
- ⁸ *Ibid*, 9, 11, 15.
- ⁹ Michael Wheeler, *Heaven, Hell, and the Victorians*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994: 142.
- ¹⁰ John Maynard, *Victorian Discourses on Sexuality and Religion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 2009. See especially his discussion of Kingsley.
- ¹¹ Carole M. Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power*, New York: Routledge, 1999: 9.
- ¹² Catherine Berry, *Experiences in Spiritualism*, 2nd Edition, London: James Burns, 1876: 39.
- ¹³ See, for example, Melnyk, 123.
- ¹⁴ Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989: 6.
- ¹⁵ Bob Ashley, Joanne Hollows, Steve Jones, and Ben Taylor, *Food and Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge, 2004: 125.
- ¹⁶ Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985: 200.
- ¹⁷ Andrea Broomfield, *Food and Cooking in Victorian England*, Westport, CN: Praeger, 2007: 30.
- ¹⁸ Isabella Beeton, *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*, London: Chancellor Press, 1982 [1859-61], 39.
- ¹⁹ Bob Ashley, Joanne Hollows, Steve Jones, and Ben Taylor, *Food and Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge, 2004: 55.
- ²⁰ *Ibid*, 59.
- ²¹ Arlene Voski Avakian and Barbara Haber, *From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies: Critical Perspectives on Women and Food*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005: 2.
- ²² "The Lancashire Committee's Soiree at Manchester," *Medium and Daybreak* (Jan 5, 1877): 6.
- ²³ *Ibid*.
- ²⁴ Broomfield, 38.
- ²⁵ C.C. "Soiree at the Marylebone Institution, Quebec Street," *Medium and Daybreak* (Jan 12, 1877): 27.
- ²⁶ Christian Reimers, "The Despotism of Prejudice," *The Spiritualist* (Feb 25, 1876): 96.
- ²⁷ Elizabeth Landland, *Nobody's Angels*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995: 162.
- ²⁸ James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007: 104.
- ²⁹ Dr. T. L. Nichols, "A Dietetic Experiment," *The Medium and Daybreak* (Jan 18, 1878): 43.
- ³⁰ Chandos Leigh Hunt Wallace, *366 Vegetarian Menus and Cook's Guide*, London: Philanthropic Reform Publishing Offices, 1885: v.
- ³¹ *Ibid*.
- ³² Chandos Leigh Hunt Wallace, *Physianthropy, or the Home Cure and Eradication of Disease*, London: Mrs. C.L.H. Wallace, Philanthropic Reform Publishing, 1885.
- ³³ Elizabeth D'Espérance *Shadow Land or Light From the Other Side*, London: George Redway, 1897: 242-243.
- ³⁴ Sir Henry Thompson, *Food and Feeding*, London, Frederick Warne and Co., 1880: 1-2.
- ³⁵ He believed that the further north one went, globally, the more meat should be integral in the human diet and the further south, the less it was necessary because people had access to fresh fruits and vegetables. See page 12-15 in *Food and Feeding*.

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- ³⁶ W.J. Colville, "The Necessary Conditions to be observed for the Development of the Higher Phases of Mediumship: Extracts From an Inspirational Address by Mr Colville." *The Medium and Daybreak* (Nov 30, 1877): 759.
- ³⁷ Tromp, 179.
- ³⁸ "The Mediumship of Miss Lawrence," *The Spiritualist* (Feb 4, 1876): 58.
- ³⁹ Smedley, 99.
- ⁴⁰ In Chapter 5-7 of *Altered States*, "Drunk With Power," "Under the Influence," and "Haunted," I discuss the complex role of alcohol in Spiritualism.
- ⁴¹ Smedley, 99.
- ⁴² Tromp, 189.
- ⁴³ d'Esperance, 406.
- ⁴⁴ Berry, 64.
- ⁴⁵ Berry, 114.
- ⁴⁶ Berry, 126.
- ⁴⁷ Mennell, 211.
- ⁴⁸ Charles Malkin, "Phenomena in the Family Circle," *Medium and Daybreak* (Jan 12, 1877): 23.
- ⁴⁹ Berry, 106.
- ⁵⁰ *Punch* (Feb 9, 1872), cited in Berry, 46.
- ⁵¹ Berry, 46.
- ⁵² Berry, 98.
- ⁵³ Tromp, 47.
- ⁵⁴ Sir Charles Isham, Bart., "A Séance With Miss Showers and Her Materialised Spirit-Forms" *The Medium and Daybreak* (July 10, 1874): 441-42.
- ⁵⁵ Chandos Leight Hunt, "One of Willie Eglinton's Light Seances," *The Medium and Daybreak* (March 16, 1877): 169-170.
- ⁵⁶ Berry, 58.
- ⁵⁷ Berry, 111-112.
- ⁵⁸ Smedley, 110.
- ⁵⁹ Smedley, 112.
- ⁶⁰ Smedley, 117.
- ⁶¹ Berry, 106.
- ⁶² Berry, 103.
- ⁶³ Lizzie calls to Laura, when she is covered with crushed goblin fruits, "Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices / Squeezed from goblin fruits for you, / Goblin pulp and goblin dew./ Eat me, drink me, love me; / Laura, make much of me:/ For your sake I have braved the glen / And had to do with goblin merchant men" (ll 467-474).
- ⁶⁴ Smedley, Alfred. *Some Reminiscences. An Account of Startling Spiritual Manifestations*. London: Office of "Light," 1900: 103.
- ⁶⁵ Malkin, 23.
- ⁶⁶ Berry, 100-101.
- ⁶⁷ Berry, 118.
- ⁶⁸ Berry, 119.
- ⁶⁹ Edward W. Cox, "Mr. Serjeant Cox on Incarnation," *The Medium and Daybreak* (July 10, 1874) 435-436: 435.
- ⁷⁰ Edward W. Cox, "Materialisation," *The Medium and Daybreak* (May 8, 1874): 294.
- ⁷¹ Arthur Hill Hassall, *Adulterations Detected, or Plain Instructions for the Discovery of Fraud in Food and Medicine*, London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1857: 20.
- ⁷² Isaac Burney Yeo, *Food in Health and Disease*, London: Cassell & Co., 1889, 1896: 185.
- ⁷³ Hassall, 22.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 205.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 8.