Heaven's Interpreters

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Introduction


8. For a detailed explanation of the post-Protestant secular, see Fessenden, Culture and Redemption, 1–12.


22. Ibid., 8.


29. In the 2012 General Social Survey (GSS), a record number of Americans—20 percent—reported that they belonged to “no religion.” But only 3 percent of survey respondents said that they did not believe in God. While the former number has risen steadily over the last two decades, the latter has barely budged since the GSS began tracking religious affiliation in 1972. I discuss these trends in some detail in the conclusion to this book. Michael Hout, Claude S. Fischer, and Mark A. Chaves, “More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Key Finding from the 2012 General Social Survey,” Institute for the Study of Societal Issues, March 7, 2013, https://sociology.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/faculty/fischer/Hout%20et%20al_No%20Relig%20Pref%202012_Release%20Mar%202013.pdf. See also Kevin M.
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33. Ibid., 15.


36. As Michael Warner has explained, this definition of secularity (“the conditions that structure even the religious once religiosity has become one option among others”) must be carefully distinguished from “political secularism,” which is a “project for regulating religion” by, for instance, outlawing the public display of religious symbols. Michael Warner, “Was Antebellum America Secular?” *Immanent Frame*, October 2, 2012, para. 23, http://tif.ssrc.org/2012/10/02/was-antebellum-america-secular/.


44. Kaufmann, “Religious, the Secular,” 607.


While much of this scholarship has approached nineteenth-century religious life by examining the various forms of Protestantism that dominated both public discourse and private worship, many scholars have turned their attention to Catholicism—and anti-Catholicism—in the nineteenth-century United States. I discuss this work in my fourth chapter. Other important scholarship has brought greater critical attention to non-Christian religions in the nineteenth-century United States. Timothy Marr’s The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) examines figurations of Islam in the United States between the Revolution and the Civil War. Toni Wall Jaudon and Kelly Wisecup have brought obeah into view as a New World religion in Jaudon, “Obeah’s Sensations: Rethinking Religion at the Transna-


56. 1 Corinthians 14:34; Genesis 9:25. All quotations from the Bible are from the King James Version.


60. Traister, *Female Piety*, 60.

63. Dillon, Gender of Freedom, 19.

1. “My Resolve Is the Feminine of My Father’s Oath”

5. Ibid., 63.
7. William Ellery Channing, Sermon Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Jared Sparks, to the Pastoral Care of the First Independent Church in Baltimore, May 5, 1819 (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1819), 27.


13. Although Sedgwick's critics and biographers have generally made note of her changing religious commitments, they are more likely to characterize her as a popularizer of liberal Christianity than a perceptive participant in American religious discourse. This attitude marks the work of the Sedgwick biographers Edward Halsey Foster and Jane Giles and of the literary historian Carolyn Karcher. See Jane Giles, “Catharine Maria Sedgwick: An American Literary Biography” (PhD dissertation, City University of New York, 1984); Edward Halsey Foster, *Catharine Maria Sedgwick* (New York: Twayne, 1974); and Carolyn L. Karcher, “Introduction,” in Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie or, Early Times in the Massachusetts* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), xv.


26. Ibid., 33.


34. Ibid., 22–24.

35. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” On the myth of the vanishing Indian in early America, see Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White
Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1972); Richard Slotkin, Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860 (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973); and, more recently, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Dina Gilio-Whitaker, “All the Real Indians Died Off” and 20 Other Myths about Native Americans (Boston: Beacon, 2016); and Paul Jentz, Seven Myths of Native American History (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2018).


42. Bloch, Political Language, 15.

43. Shirley Samuels reads the appearance of sacrifice in Hope Leslie and Hobomok as a substitute for discussions of contract in which women’s bodies figure as both

44. In highlighting Hope Leslie’s critique of atonement theology, I am disagreeing with the critic Dan McKanan, who classes Sedgwick among a group of liberal authors who, in his view, affirmed atonement logic rather than undermining it. See Dan McKanan, Identifying the Image of God: Radical Christians and Nonviolent Power in the Antebellum United States (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11–45.


48. William Ware, Address, Delivered Nov. 24, 1825, on the Occasion of Laying the Foundation Stone of the Second Unitarian Church in New York, By the Rev. Wm. Ware, Pastor of the First Church (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Newcastle Unitarian Tract Society, 1825), 2.

49. Catharine Maria Sedgwick, letter to Susan Channing, September 25, 1821, reprinted in Dewey, Life and Letters, 144.

50. Henry Ware Jr., Discourses on the Offices and Character of Jesus Christ (Boston: David Reed, 1826), 86.


52. Page numbers for The Linwoods are cited parenthetically in the text and refer to the following edition: Catharine Maria Sedgwick, The Linwoods, or “Sixty Years Since” in America, ed. Maria Karafilis (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2002).


60. In emphasizing the rejection of ritual forms in *The Linwoods*, I am obviously in conversation with the recent work of Michelle Sizemore, who has argued convincingly that the eruptions of popular sovereignty seen in the wake of the American Revolution are best categorized not as the working out of the people’s rational deliberative will but as “ritual acts [that] invest participants and objects with sacred aura, . . . conjurings of the people as a transcendent principle or force.” See Sizemore, *American Enchantment: Rituals of the People in the Post-Revolutionary World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 11. In historicizing the meaning of ritual within the particular context of theological debates between Trinitarians and Unitarians in the early nineteenth century, I am not contradicting Sizemore’s argument so much as clarifying how the rejection of a particularly violent ritual—vicarious sacrifice for salvational means—could make way for the broader participation of women and people of color in the enchanted public sphere that she eloquently describes.


2. “Unsheathe the Sword of a Strong, Unbending Will”


5. Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Mary Hollis. An Original Tale* (Concord, NH: Mead and Butters, 1834).


7. I am grateful to Melissa Homestead for her extensive scholarship on Sedgwick and for kindly providing me with copies of two unpublished conference papers on the relationship between *Mary Hollis* and *A New-England Tale* that helped guide my thinking as I wrote this chapter.


20. First published in 1678, The Pilgrim’s Progress, as Gregory Jackson has noted, was the most significant homiletic text in circulation in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century United States and “the most influential heuristic for helping readers not simply to profess but to live their faith.” Jackson, Word and Its Witness, 104–5. See also Stokes, Altar at Home, 14–15.

21. Calvinism traces its roots to the early Reformed theologian John Calvin of Geneva; Arminianism is named for its first expounder, Calvin’s sixteenth-century contemporary Jacobus Arminius (the Latinized name of Jakob Hermanszoon) of Leiden. The two theologies arose in opposition to one another; the Synod of Dort, called in
1618–1619 by the Dutch Reformed Church, affirmed predestinarian theology and specifically condemned the Arminian assertion that “God decreed to save all believers and that Christ died for all people, so that grace sufficient for faith was given to all.” Holifield, *Theology in America*, 37.


28. For an example of a strong and intellectually gifted nineteenth-century woman struggling with Calvinist conversion theology for years before finally receiving evidence of election, see Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), esp. 28–58.


35. According to Sara Frear, Evans joined St. Francis Street Methodist Church in Mobile, Alabama, in 1848 along with her mother and father and remained a member there until her death in 1909. In a series of letters written (probably in 1858 and 1859) to her friend Walter Clopton Harriss, a Methodist minister, Evans described religious struggles that would inform her depiction of Beulah Benton. See Sarah S. Frear, “‘You My Brother Will Be Glad with Me’: The Letters of Augusta Jane Evans to Walter Clop-
42. “Art. II.,” 28.
44. Holifield, Theology in America, 9.
46. Edwards, Careful and Strict Enquiry.
47. Gura, Jonathan Edwards, 193–194, emphasis in original.
49. An Essay on the Freedom of Will in God and in Creatures (London: Printed for J. Roberts, 1732), 8–9. This book was widely attributed to Isaac Watts, a respected English Puritan minister, hymnodist, and theologian. Edwards’s preface to his Careful and Strict Enquiry expresses disbelief at this attribution, since he had trouble ascribing the Arminian doctrines outlined in the Essay to such an eminent Calvinist divine.
51. Francis Asbury was an itinerant English preacher who arrived in the colonies in 1771 after John Wesley called for missionaries to spread the gospel in North America. When American Methodism officially split from British Methodism at the “Christmas Conference” of 1784, Asbury became the first bishop of the new Methodist Episcopal Church. Ahlstrom, Religious History, 371–73.
54. Baym, Woman’s Fiction, 180.
55. Stokes, Altar at Home, 132.
56. Nineteenth-century editions of The Wide, Wide World only hinted at John and Ellen’s eventual marriage; Warner’s final chapter, in which John and Ellen return to America as a married couple, arrived at the publishers too late to be included. I discuss it here because Warner’s original ending reflects the novel’s doctrinal intentions. See the “Note on the Text” in the Feminist Press edition of The Wide, Wide World, 8.
57. Noble, Masochistic Pleasures, 94–125.
61. Tracy Fessenden has described the literary-historical processes “by which religion disappears from critical inquiry by being dismissed as epiphenomenal.” Fessenden, Culture and Redemption, 12.
62. Douglas, Feminization of American Culture. David Reynolds has noted that since many nineteenth-century writers subscribed to the liberal Protestant belief that “Calvinism [was] a repressive system which not only thwarted human effort but created a timid languor and listlessness,” the effort to liberalize Calvinism through fiction could be considered heroic and full of masculine interest. David S. Reynolds, Faith in Fiction: The Emergence of Religious Literature in America (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 109.
64. One reason the doctrinal diversity of woman’s fiction has been difficult to recognize is that many of the most influential critical works on sentimental fiction have studied only women writers who were raised in Calvinist traditions (including Harriet Beecher Stowe, Emily Dickinson, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps) so that what critics have termed a generally “Christian,” “Protestant,” or “evangelical” sentimental mode is more accurately labeled a specifically Calvinist form of the sentimental. See, as examples, Tompkins, Sensational Designs; Noble, Masochistic Pleasures; and Kete, Sentimental Collaborations.
69. Martin Marty, Protestantism in the United States: Righteous Empire, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1986), vii. Despite increasing awareness among religious historians that it is difficult to define evangelicalism “transhistorically,” media accounts
and popular histories continue to read backward from the current use of the term, projecting it anachronistically onto earlier eras. Frances FitzGerald’s *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017) is a recent example. See L. Fisher, “Evangelicals and Unevangelicals,” 186.


75. Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption,* 94.

3. “I Have Sinned against God and Myself”

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15. Hartman, Scenes of Subjection, 112.

16. ‘And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:15.


18. For the story of Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus, see Acts 26.


20. Andrews, Sisters of the Spirit, 11. In her study of nineteenth- and twentieth-century conversion narratives, Virginia Lieson Brereton lists a number of published “guides for would-be converts” that provided models and instruction for the Christian life and that came to shape the generic conventions of the spiritual autobiography. See Brereton, From Sin to Salvation, 10–11.

21. For the Calvinist, as I discussed in my last chapter, this realizing sense of grace would arrive as conviction of one’s divine election. For the Arminian, it would be experienced as the acceptance of God’s gift of forgiveness.


23. Jean Fagan Yellin’s biography of Jacobs describes how Harriet spent the spring and summer of 1849 “read[ing] her way through the abolitionists’ library” while her
brother, the reading room’s official manager, was away lecturing for the antislavery cause. Though the advertisement that John S. Jacobs ran in the *North Star* in 1849 listed only ten works available at the reading room, there were likely many more options for visitors. See Jean Fagan Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2004), 102–3; and Yellin, ed., *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 1:141. While I have been unable to locate any source listing texts available at the Rochester Anti-Slavery Office, Elizabeth McHenry asserts that African American literary societies and reading rooms often offered white-authored classical and literary texts in addition to abolitionist literature and that they usually subscribed to such periodicals as the *Colored American Magazine*, the *Liberator*, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, and, of course, Frederick Douglass’s *North Star*. See Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

My sense that Jacobs may have had access to spiritual autobiographies by Truth and Lee is an extrapolation from the fact that, of the few texts published by African American women before the Civil War, these had relatively large print runs. Jarena Lee published two editions of her narrative, one in 1836 and another in 1846 with additional material added. Sojourner Truth’s narrative, dictated to Olive Gilbert, sold well enough that she was able to purchase a home for herself. Because I cannot positively state that Jacobs read these texts, I can make no claims for direct influence, but the form of the spiritual autobiography was pervasive in nineteenth-century Protestant culture, both black and white.


32. In 1667 the Virginia General Assembly, after witnessing several cases in which a slave’s conversion had been used as an argument for manumission, enacted a law declaring that the “conferring of baptisme doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or Freedome.” For discussions of the law’s passage, see Warren M. Billings, “The Cases of Fernando and Elizabeth Key: A Note on the Status of Blacks
33. As Jared Hickman has shown, the idea that slavery was antithetical to Christianity was not self-evident to most slaveholders, and defining slaveholding as antichristian was in fact an immense undertaking accomplished by black and white abolitionists over hundreds of years. Jared Hickman, “Globalization and the Gods, or the Political Theology of ‘Race,’” *Early American Literature* 45, no. 1 (2010): 163, http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/eal.0.0090.

34. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Peter 5:8.

35. “God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation one who fears him, and works righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34–35); “For He has made of one blood all the nations of the world to dwell on the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26); and “There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, male or female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). See Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 11.


37. Ibid., 17, 27.

38. The doctrine of Christian universalism—that Christ died for all people and that all souls are eligible for salvation—is not to be confused with the belief held by the Protestant denomination known as Universalists, which is the doctrine of universal salvation: that all souls eventually will be saved. On the Universalists, see Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 481–83.


43. Denise Buell and Jared Hickman have warned that placing too much emphasis on the doctrine of Christian universalism when discussing race and racism can lead to simplistic assertions that Christianity, properly practiced, provides an easy antidote to racist oppression and violence. See D. Buell, *Why This New Race*, 10–13; and Hickman, “Globalization and the Gods,” 162–63. Such assertions can then be used to diminish or dismiss what Jon Butler has called the “African spiritual holocaust”—the decimation of African religions that accompanied enslavement. See Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea,*
129–63; and Albert J. Raboteau, African American Religion (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). While I acknowledge these concerns, I discuss the doctrine of Christian universalism in this chapter because it provided the theological warrant for much nineteenth-century antislavery activism and writing, including Jacobs’s Incidents.


48. The New England Primer: To Which is Added, the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly of Divines (Concord, NH: Rufus Merrill, 1850), 27, 28.

49. Hobson, Mount of Vision, 8.

50. Romans 3:23.


60. Painter, “Introduction,” xii.
62. Ibid., 97.
63. Stephanie Li remarks that “the acclaim accorded to Douglass’s 1845 Narrative has caused a troubling conflation between freedom and flight” that “reflects a significant male bias in discussions of slave resistance.” See Stephanie Li, *Something Akin to Freedom: The Choice of Bondage in Narratives by African American Women* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 11. Harriette Mullen argues that Jacobs’s narrative eschews the “rhetorical conflation of literacy, freedom, and manhood, which reinforces rather than challenges the symbolic emasculation of the male slave and the silencing of the female slave.” Mullen, “Runaway Tongue: Resistant Orality in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, *Our Nig*, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, and *Beloved*,” in Samuels, *Culture of Sentiment*, 250.
64. “For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, 40.
65. Ibid.
66. Douglass’s second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), grants more narrative space and personal agency to the women who populated his early life. Douglass’s mother, whose absence is conspicuous in the Narrative, appears in *Bondage* in a famous scene in which she defends her small son from a fellow servant and then gifts him a “sweet cake.” Whereas the Narrative emphasizes the horror of Aunt Hester’s beating, in Bondage the renamed Esther is beaten by her lecherous master for, like Jacobs, refusing to renounce an honest and virtuous sentiment. And in the story of Sophia Auld, Bondage again details the powerful effect that slaveholding had on her originally benign temperament but also dwells on her innate resistance and on the difficulty of her conversion to slaveholding. Though the facts of each anecdote are roughly the same, Bondage acknowledges these women’s agency in their own lives. Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, in Frederick Douglass, *Autobiographies*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Library of America, 1996), 175, 222.
69. Ibid., 9.


5. Jackson notes that literary critics who have failed to differentiate homiletic realism from high realism “have tended to dismiss the homiletic novel as romance or, worse, sentimentalism.” By claiming an antisentimental genealogy for homiletic realism, Jackson works to cleanse authors like Stead and Sheldon of the taint of feminization. Jackson, *Word and Its Witness*, 6–10.


14. See, as examples, C. Foster, Rungless Ladder; and L. Buell, “Calvinism Romanticized.” These and other scholars reduce Stowe’s theology to a version of the Halfway Covenant agreed to by her Puritan ancestors, with the slight alteration that salvation is passed down matrilineally rather than patrilineally.


21. Holifield, Theology in America, 140.


32. Tompkins, Sensational Designs, 125.


37. Merish, Sentimental Materialism, 5, 11, emphasis in original.

38. C. Wilson, “Tempests and Teapots,” 577.


41. C. Taylor, Secular Age, 28.

42. As I noted in the introduction, this is Molly McGarry’s literal translation of Max Weber’s term Entzauberung, usually translated as “disenchantment.” See McGarry, Ghosts of Futures Past, 13.

43. Michael Gilmore has argued convincingly for Stowe’s “sacramental aesthetic,” as in Uncle Tom’s Cabin she sought “to create a text of ‘real presence’ that would, as an imitatio Dei, bring to life the letters on the page.” See Gilmore, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin and the American Renaissance: The Sacramental Aesthetic of Harriet Beecher Stowe,” in The Cambridge Companion to Harriet Beecher Stowe, ed. Cindy Weinstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 64. Also writing of Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Ashley Barnes has argued that material objects—both those that appear in the novel, like Little Eva’s lock of hair, and those the novel inspired, such as postcards and even “Tom shows”—are the signs of Stowe’s “exhibitionist style,” which sought to “balanc[e] the appeals of Catholic and Protestant faith.” A. Barnes, “Word Made Exhibition,” 179.


46. See John 17:14–16; John 15:19.
49. Ibid., 14.
58. This bond also transcends the earthly schism of the Protestant Reformation, as *Agnés of Sorrento* rewrites Roman Catholic history as a proto-Protestant genealogy for the American church. See Franchot, *Roads to Rome*, 247–55; and Bailey, “Religious Icons, National Iconography.”
59. For a discussion of other texts in which Stowe invokes the Catholic doctrine of saintly intercession, see Szczesniak, “Canonization of Tom and Eva.”


64. As Nancy F. Sweet has elaborated, there are exceptions to this rule, including Josephine Bunkley’s first-person narrative of leaving a Catholic convent, Miss Bunkley’s Book (1855). See Sweet, “Renegade Religious: Performativity, Female Identity, and the Antebellum Convent-Escape Narrative,” in Wearn, Nineteenth-Century American Women Write Religion, 15–32.


68. According to staff at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center in Hartford, Connecticut, Stowe owned at least six paintings depicting the Madonna and child or the Holy Family, two of which were copies of paintings by Raphael.


82. Jenny Franchot reads Mary’s pondering of the shipwrecked painting as an act of cultural and ethnic appropriation. See Franchot, “Unseemly Commemoration.”

5. “I Have No Disbelief”

1. Harriet Beecher Stowe, letter to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, November 20, 1860, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Transcription courtesy of the E. Bruce Kirkham Collection, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, CT.


7. Recent treatments of Spiritualist fiction have begun to remedy Kerr’s oversight. See Bridget Bennett, *Transatlantic Spiritualism and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); John Kucich, *Ghostly Communion: Cross-Cultural Spiritualism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2004); and Mitzi Schrag, “Rei(g)ning Mediums: Spiritualism and Social Controls in Nineteenth-Century American Literature” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2006). While these texts complicate Kerr’s work, to my knowledge there has been no comprehensive revision of his claims about American Spiritualist fiction.


20. The Spiritualist medium and trance lecturer Cora Hatch was particularly famous for her clairvoyant conversations with Franklin, including her ability to accurately describe Arctic landscapes she had never visited. See Amy Lehman, *Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance: Mediums, Spiritualists and Mesmerists in Performance* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 104–5.


22. For a discussion of the legal and social implications of the term *possession* in Stoddard’s novel, see Stockton, “‘Crusade against Duty.’”


26. Until the mid-nineteenth century many Protestant churches charged pew rental fees that supported the activities of the church. Wealthy families got the best seats in the house, in front near the pulpit, while those who could not afford the fees sat at the back or in the balcony, in the “poor seats.”


28. The planchette is a “piece of wood, heart-shaped and mounted on two castors, with a pencil fixed point downwards in place of a third castor. When a hand is placed on the wood, the pencil moves, and is alleged to write messages from spirits.” *The Hutchinson Dictionary of World Religions* (Abingdon, UK: Helicon Publishing and RM Education, 2005), 443.


30. Like Stoddard, Stowe made this statement late in life; the earliest occurrences of it in print appear in the 1880s, and the story was widely circulated after her death. See Florine Thayer McCray, *The Life-Work of the Author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1889).


32. [A. T. Tracy], “Spiritual Materialism,” *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine of American Literature, Science, and Art*, August 1854, 160. Like most pieces in Putnam’s, “Spiritual Materialism” was printed without attribution, but according to *Poole’s Index of Periodicals* it was written by “A. T. Tracy.”

33. Ibid., 159.

34. Ibid., 160.
35. Ibid., 160. Self-appointed debunkers of Spiritualism often distinguished the unusual physical phenomena of the séance from Spiritualists’ claims to communicate directly with the dead. Accepting table turning while scoffing at spirit communication removed the dangerous power of the medium’s (often female) body from consideration, since table turning could be performed by any group of people without a medium present. See, for instance, Count Agénor Étienne de Gasparin, Science vs. Modern Spiritualism. A Treatise on Turning Tables, the Supernatural in General and Spirits, trans. E. W. Robert (New York: Kiggins & Kellogg, 1857), xviii.


37. Elizabeth Oakes Smith is best known among scholars today as the author of The Western Captive (1842) and The Sinless Child (1843). In her own time, she was a widely published poet, a member of Edgar Allan Poe’s inner circle, an outspoken women’s rights advocate and lecturer, and an author of fiction. See Timothy H. Scherman, “Elizabeth Oakes (Prince) Smith,” in American Women Prose Writers: 1820–1870, ed. Amy E. Hudock and Katharine Rodier (Detroit: Gale, 2001).


39. Elizabeth Oakes Smith, Bertha and Lily; or, The Parsonage of Beech Glen (New York: J. C. Derby, 1854). Quotations are cited parenthetically in the text.


42. Kate Field, Planchette’s Diary (New York: J. S. Redfield, 1868). Quotations are cited parenthetically in the text.

43. Eliza Richards, Gender and the Poetics of Reception in Poe’s Circle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 111.

44. Cox, Body and Soul, 20.

45. Gutierrez, Plato’s Ghost, 141.

46. McGarry, Ghosts of Futures Past, 126–27.


51. McGarry, Ghosts of Futures Past, 126.

52. Emma Hardinge Britten, Nineteenth Century Miracles, or Spirits and Their Work in Every Country of the Earth (1884; repr., New York: Arno, 1976), 192.


**Conclusion**


5. For comparison, Europeans report much lower levels of religious affiliation and practice than Americans do. According to Pew Research Center results reported in 2018, 53 percent of U.S. adults say that religion is “very important in their lives,” while only 10 percent of Brits and Germans do; 36 percent of U.S. adults attend worship services at least weekly, while 8 percent of Brits and 10 percent of Germans do. See Pew Research Center, *The Age Gap in Religion around the World*, Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life, June 13, 2018, https://pewrsr.ch/2t5iqE7.


7. Pew Research Center, *The Gender Gap in Religion around the World*, Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life, March 22, 2016, http://pewrsr.ch/1U5n4Lz. The gender gap is smaller among Muslims than among Christians; Muslim and Orthodox Jewish men are much more likely to attend worship services than women in these traditions (for reasons related to gender norms around worship); and in sub-Saharan Africa the gender gap is almost nonexistent, regardless of religious tradition.


13. Pew’s analysts offered charts showing the voting behavior of the following religious groups: “Protestant/other Christian,” “Catholic,” “Jewish,” “Other faiths,” “Religiously non-affiliated,” and “white, born-again/evangelical Christian.” It is this last
group, the “white, born-again/evangelical Christians,” who voted for Trump by a 65-percentage-point margin. But a footnote to the figure reports that “‘Protestant’ refers to people who described themselves as ‘Protestant,’ ’Mormon,’ or ‘other Christian’ in exit polls” and that “the ‘white, born-again/evangelical Christian’ row includes both Protestants and non-Protestants (e.g., Catholics, Mormons) who self-identify as born-again/evangelical Christians.” Pew Research Center, How the Faithful Voted: A Preliminary 2016 Analysis, Pew Research Center, November 9, 2016, http://pewrsr.ch/2fSNWBY.


15. Pew Research Center, “Racial and Ethnic Composition,” Religious Landscape Study, Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life, 2014, http://pewsr.ch/1cpBNNW. Indeed, in the Pew Center’s exit poll analysis, only Catholics (who are separated into “white” and “Hispanic” categories) and “born-again/evangelical Christians” are distinguished by race or ethnicity.


30. Evans, “Is Abolition ‘Biblical’?”


35. “Meet Our Khateebas,” Women’s Mosque of America, accessed May 29, 2019, https://womensmosque.com/about-2/meet-our-khateebahs/. The Women’s Mosque of America (WMA) was brought to my attention by Tazeen Ali, who has performed ethnographic research at the mosque and whose dissertation addresses American Muslim women’s cultural authority as exercised at the WMA. I am immensely grateful to Ali for sharing with me the text of an unpublished talk she delivered at Virginia Tech on December 6, 2018.


