

VICTORIA C. WOODHULL, “AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE.’ A SPEECH ON THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL FREEDOM DELIVERED IN STEINWAY HALL,” NEW YORK, NY (20 NOVEMBER 1871)

E. Brooke Phipps
University of Maryland

Abstract: Victoria C. Woodhull’s 1871 speech at the Steinway Hall represented a defining moment for the woman suffrage movement of the nineteenth century. Her pointed critique of the institution of marriage illuminates a debate about the gendered nature of the social contract in America. The legacy of her political career, and her observations about gender inequalities, still reverberate across gendered politics today.

Keywords: Suffrage, Spiritualist Movement, Radicalism, Victorian-Era, Gender Politics, Self-Sovereignty, Social Contract

On a rainy November evening in 1871, 3,000 people crowded into the Steinway Hall of New York City for a lecture by free love’s “bolder advocate,” Victoria C. Woodhull.¹ Woodhull already had gained fame as a powerhouse speaker in the New York financial and suffrage circles. Streamers in bright red and gold and banners reading “Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!” set the stage for what would surely be a memorable night.² Theodore Tilton, Woodhull’s friend and biographer, gave a brief speech of introduction where he observed: “I am about to introduce a lady to you who is earnest in the cause she defends It may be she is a fanatic. But I would rather be a fanatic than such a coward as to deny to any one the sacred right of free speech.”³ As the press reported, Woodhull was initially met with applause and positive cheers as she began her speech on the principles of social freedom.⁴ Yet the applause soon gave way to an outburst from Woodhull’s own sister, who yelled out her objection to the doctrine of free love. Attendees, aroused by the familial drama, jeered, taunted, and applauded as Woodhull struggled to keep speaking. Eventually the police were called, and Tilton attempted to no avail to quiet the crowd. Later in the speech, Woodhull addressed her critics directly: “Yes I am a Free Lover. I have an *inalienable constitutional* and *natural* right to love whom I may, to love *as long* or *as short* a period as I can; to *change* that love *every day* if I please” (82).⁵ In response, the audience booed and hissed, forcing Woodhull to abbreviate her speech and leave the stage as Tilton called a premature end to the event.⁶

Woodhull’s speech provoked such dramatic scorn because of its radical vision for what social freedom should look like in a post-Civil War America. From the moment she broke onto the national scene of the woman suffrage movement in the late 1860s, Woodhull was marginalized from the mainstream of the movement because of her advocacy of free love. As a political, social, and religious radical, Woodhull’s controversial views were on full display in her infamous Steinway Hall speech, also known by the title “And the Truth Shall Make You Free: Speech on the Principles of Social Freedom.”⁷ The press coverage surrounding the speech focused primarily on two key factors: Woodhull’s ardent advocacy of a free love philosophy, and the dramatic interruption of the speech by Woodhull’s own sister, Utica Booker.⁸ I seek to show how this speech also serves as a historical marker for the tensions in the woman suffrage

E. Brooke Phipps: ebhipps@umd.edu

Last Updated: November 2020

Voices of Democracy, ISSN #1932-9539. Available at <http://www.voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/>.

movement and U.S. political culture more broadly—a tension that divided progressives through the remainder of the nineteenth century. I will also show how this speech offered a gendered critique of the social contract that has persisted as a significant theme in feminist discourse throughout the country's history.

To fully understand the significance of Victoria Woodhull's Steinway Hall speech, we must turn to the historical narrative of U.S. liberalism and its various permutations across the nineteenth century. I accordingly develop a historical narrative that weaves together three ideological strands that form the core of Woodhull's radical vision for social freedom. First, I provide an overview of the historical impact of John Locke's social contract on liberalism and its uptake within U.S. politics. This conception of a liberal social contract leads to the second relevant political theory—the assertion of self-sovereignty as seen in the U.S. abolition, suffrage, and spiritualist movements. Third, I demonstrate how liberalism and self-sovereignty informed the radicalized free love doctrine espoused by Woodhull in 1871. Woodhull's Steinway Hall speech demonstrates how progressive movements of the nineteenth century sought to co-opt the logics of Lockean liberalism shaping the American social contract. Tracing the lineage of these ideas not only informs our understanding of the complex politics of the 1870s, but it also allows us to recognize the echoes that still reverberate in U.S. politics today.

Liberalism and Locke in America

John Locke's articulation of the social contract emerged from the British political theory movement led by the Whigs. Algernon Sidney, James Tyrrell, and Locke developed a philosophy that grounded political power in acts of "consent."⁹ Locke asserted that "consent" made a person "a subject of that government," and it was through that *willing* subjection to the "community" that one enjoyed particular rights.¹⁰ Locke's valorizing of choice was grounded in a religious morality that connected law, God, nature, and reason into a set of intrinsic rights afforded by humans. The human capability of reason was a divine gift that afforded certain liberties.¹¹ Locke explained, "The freedom then of man, and liberty of acting according to his own will, is grounded on his having reason which is able to instruct him in that law he is to govern himself by, and make him know how far he is left to the freedom of his own will."¹² In other words, the capacity for reason allowed humans to invent governments that protected their liberty in exchange for their consent to defer to the will of the community.¹³ This revolutionary conception of the social contract nullified the political authority of monarchies. In the process, it challenged the practice of allocating political and social power according to birth and divine designations. Locke's vision of governance was truly transformative, and by the late eighteenth century, this version of the social contract had come to heavily influence Western systems of government.

Locke's influence in the United States can be seen throughout the writings of the founders as they drafted the governing doctrines of the new nation. The founders of the United States witnessed Britain's flagrant political and social abuses of the colonies. They were drawn to Locke's conception of an individual's right to preserve his own "life, liberty, and estate" and to "judge" the "breaches of the law" that might threaten those rights.¹⁴ These principles were codified in the Declaration of Independence, where the writers declared: "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,

that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”¹⁵ These principles were also viewed as revolutionary because they elevated the power of the people over their leaders.¹⁶ Locke’s “radicalism” would remain influential in U.S. political thought throughout the nation’s history.

Locke’s vision of consent was of course limited and failed to fully address the role of women or people of color in the social contract. He did maintain that there were many types of power and social relations within human societies.¹⁷ His theory rested on the idea of a free person, but in the U.S. vision, that identity was limited to white, educated, land-owning men. While issues of gender and sex were not Locke’s focus, scholars dispute how Locke handled gender issues. Melissa Butler’s reading of Locke contends he used the Book of Genesis as a case study to argue that women possessed the same natural, innate rights as men. According to Butler, Locke acknowledged the unfair and limited status placed on women after the biblical fall of humankind. Further, she claims he believed these gender hierarchies would be overturned eventually by Enlightenment advances in science that mitigated biological difference and rewarded individual effort.¹⁸ Carole Pateman, on the other hand, makes the case that Locke’s view of the relationship between the individual and state was inherently “patriarchal” because it is modeled off the “relationship of the loving father to his son.”¹⁹ This problematic conceit prohibited women from participating in the social contract regardless of any claim to innate rights.²⁰ She asserts that Locke held that patriarchal supremacy was necessary to forge the social contract. It was, according to Pateman, the theory “upon which ‘modern patriarchy’ is grounded.”²¹

Thus, the relationship between the social contract and the subordination of women remains in dispute. This tension between self-sovereignty and patriarchy animated many of the societal ruptures of the nineteenth century. Understanding Locke’s position helps illuminate how his influence on the articulation of self-sovereignty in the 1800s led to both the rise and subsequent fracturing of the progressive movements of the time. The convergence of abolitionist, suffragist, and spiritualist views of self-sovereignty within nineteenth-century society produced a complex radicalism that Victoria Woodhull brought to the public arena.

The Emergence of Radicalism(s) in the Nineteenth Century

The progressive movements of nineteenth-century America focused on the rights, both legal and spiritual, of the individual. Victoria Woodhull’s radicalized beliefs resulted from the intermingling of three key movements focused on these rights: suffrage, abolitionism, and spiritualism. To provide historical context for Woodhull’s speech, we need to understand the socio-political culture that created, and then ultimately rejected, Woodhull’s radicalized free love philosophy.

The U.S. Suffrage Movement

In the United States, the nineteenth-century suffrage movement was inspired by Locke’s philosophies regarding “individualism” and “innate rights.”²² In 1848, the first official gathering of woman suffrage supporters convened in Seneca Falls, New York. To mark the occasion, organizer Elizabeth Cady Stanton read her new creation, the “Declaration of Sentiments.” Drawing on the language of the founders, Stanton made a crucial change to her declaration,

stating: “We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.”²³ The use of the Declaration of Independence as a model for the hallmark declaration of women’s rights demonstrates the lineage of political thought between the founding of the country and the fight for woman suffrage in the United States.

At the time of the “Declaration of Sentiments,” the limitations of women as political subjects in the United States were far-reaching. Among the most egregious were limitations on property rights. While an unmarried white woman might be able to hold property, this right was relinquished upon her marriage. Under the doctrine known as “coverture,” a woman’s legal rights and obligations were subsumed by those of her husband upon marriage, stripping her of her status as an independent person.²⁴ In effect, the husband became the sole owner of both her body and her property. A married white woman could run a business with her husband, but she would have no legal rights to the profits.²⁵ A wife could not own land, or set aside funds for the education of her own children (or herself, for that matter), because “the very being or legal existence of the woman” was “suspended” upon marriage.”²⁶

If a woman should desire to separate from her husband, her ability to do so depended on the state where she resided. For example, in New York, the only grounds for a divorce was adultery by either party. Divorce under this law meant that the adulterer could not remarry, but the innocent party could, should they find another partner. New York also allowed for legal separation or limited divorce on the grounds of abandonment, desertion, or cruel and inhuman treatment, in which case neither party could remarry.²⁷ If a woman were to leave her home by her own choice, however, the Victorian ideal of womanhood held her guilty of abandoning morality and the homestead.²⁸ Even in the case of a husband committing adultery, wives were often blamed for not policing their husband’s actions more effectively. Considering the legal repercussions, the social stigma, and the subsequent economic insecurity of divorce, women rarely initiated the process for fear of losing their livelihoods and harming their children. With the lack of legal or economic means to establish an identity independent of her husband, most women utilized different methods of establishing their identity as political actors. For many of these women, involvement in the suffrage cause provided that sense of independence.

Abolitionism in the United States

The U.S. abolitionist movement heavily influenced the suffrage movement. Within the abolition movement, women began to establish their identities independent from their husbands. Angelina Grimké, one of the most famous female abolitionists, inserted herself into the political arena during a contentious time in America’s “Golden Age of Oratory.”²⁹ At the time, it was considered inappropriate, even immoral, for women to insert themselves into the political sphere.³⁰ Political speech required men to “stoop very low,” cultivating “good will” from their audiences through flattery and vulgarity.³¹ This negative conception of political oratory directly conflicted with the nineteenth-century belief that a woman’s role was to safeguard the morality of her family, serving as the guardian of virtue.³² The very act of speaking to a “promiscuous” audience, or one that included both men and women, was itself seen as a violation of standards that protected women from the immorality of the public sphere.³³

As early as the 1830s, Grimké gained notoriety not only for speaking to promiscuous audiences but for her vision of women exercising moral agency in the public arena.³⁴ Other abolitionist women likewise exerted their moral agency through various means of public address. Anti-slavery petitions targeting state governments offered one such opportunity for abolitionist women. As the petitions were passed from abolitionist to abolitionist, many women chose to sign with their own names, defying the cultural expectation that a man should sign political or legal documents on behalf of both himself and his wife. Susan Zaeske observes that women in the abolition movement came to understand themselves as autonomous individuals and as political subjects through the act of signing these petitions.³⁵

Spiritualism's Rise in the United States

An awakening of the political self among women was likewise seen in the renewed interest in spiritualism during the 1800s. In colonial America, women had generally been regarded as physically and spiritually weaker than their male counterparts. However, by the early nineteenth century, as attitudes towards death and dying shifted, believers had begun to incorporate supernatural encounters into their faith testimonies.³⁶ Drawing from this growing acceptance of the supernatural, spiritualism emerged as a response to a crisis of faith in the mid-nineteenth century. As Elizabeth Lowry has written: "Many Americans had become disillusioned with Puritanical values and with strict Calvinist doctrine that denied emotion, espoused an excess of self-control and self-denial, and seemed to condemn pleasure. They wanted an outlet for their feelings."³⁷ There was a clamor for a more emotionally-driven faith experience, as seen in the Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century. These revivals brought forth a cultural interest in spiritualism and eventually gave birth to the spiritualist movement.

This more emotive faith experience coincided with scientific and technological advancements like the railroad. Increased mobility transformed society's conception of time and space, and the economic boom of U.S. industrialization was eroding agriculture's dominance.³⁸ The political and economic shifts in the Western world disrupted the traditional relationships among society, science, and faith institutions. As Lowry explains, "the scientific method seemed to constitute a new religion in and of itself."³⁹ By advocating science as God's hand in nature, the spiritualists sought a reconciliation between religious practices and Darwinism.⁴⁰ The goal of Spiritualism was ultimately to facilitate a convergence of "scientific" evidence, lived experience, and religious truth.

Because women were seen as the spiritual center of the family, they gained an elevated status in the spiritualism movement, especially given the affiliation between mediumship and femininity.⁴¹ Considering the limitations placed on Victorian-era women, female mediums were able to assert themselves in séances while still adhering to the social expectation of humility in public.⁴² The blurring of public and private boundaries in spiritualist practice gave women new roles within religious America. As their prominence increased, women were recognized as political, social, and spiritual equals within the movement. In fact, spiritualists led the way in advocating for changes in the relationship between men and women, particularly involving marital relations.⁴³ Spiritualists adopted a radical individualist stance on gender relations in both societal roles and institutionalized politics.⁴⁴

Spiritualists espoused a form of individualism even more radical than that espoused by the abolition and suffrage movements. Embracing the notion of “self-sovereignty,” many embraced the philosophy of anarchist Josiah Warren, whose radical individualism became “the political currency of the American reform movement.”⁴⁵ Social movements concerned with upending religious and social traditions were commonly drawn to Warren’s radicalism. In Warren’s conception of individuality, people learned to be “mentally discriminating, dividing, separating, or disconnecting persons, things, and events, according to their individual peculiarities.”⁴⁶ Warren relied on the language of scientific inquiry that spiritualists sought to incorporate into their faith lives, casting individualism as an ontology and a science. Warren imagined the day when “everyone shall feel secure from any external power rising above him and controlling his person, time, or property, or involving him in responsibilities contrary to his own individual inclination.”⁴⁷ Warren’s writings contributed to a concept of self-sovereignty that held that individuals had intrinsic value and should exercise absolute control over their own bodies.

Glimmers of this notion of self-sovereignty were visible in both the suffrage and abolitionist movements. The suffrage activists argued for enfranchisement of women on the grounds of innate rights. Abolitionists claimed that no person should own another. However, a contingent of believers among the spiritualists radicalized the notion of self-sovereignty. In the spiritualist critique of marriage, for example, they asserted that a marriage without ongoing consent, framed as “love” or “*spiritual affinity*,” ceased to be a marriage at all. The doctrine of free love was born from these assumptions.

Radical for the Radicals: Free Love in the Nineteenth Century

A self-sovereign person was imbued with a right to bodily consent, complicating the legal assumptions of marriage in the 1800s. Rooted in British common law, the legal stance on marital rape remained: a “husband cannot be guilty of a rape committed by himself upon his lawful wife, for by their mutual matrimonial consent and contract the wife hath given up herself in this kind to her husband which she cannot retract.”⁴⁸ The phrasing, “the wife hath given up herself,” reified the concept of “coverture” in Victorian conceptions of “womanhood.” Spiritualists were concerned with marital rape, and they defied societal conventions by insisting on the frank discussion of personal and sexual relations.⁴⁹ The issue of the sexual contract between (hetero)sexual men and women defined the relations between the genders in both the home and public spheres.⁵⁰ The goal of the spiritualists was to remove the taboo of discussing sexuality in public so as to promote greater transparency between men and women, and to position sexual virtue as an issue of female agency. This openness inspired the radical free love movement that boldly defied the Victorian ideals of the nineteenth century.⁵¹

Identifying a cohesive free love movement in the 1800s proved difficult for two reasons. First, as a religious movement, the spiritualists adopted an anti-institutional stance and rejected formal organization, making it difficult to accurately identify its followers.⁵² Second, the historical term “free love” was complex due to the incendiary use of the term by outsiders meant to discredit those who claimed it as an identity.⁵³ News coverage of the free love movement in the 1850s and 1860s demonstrates the term’s range of meaning, from a legitimate religious philosophy to a coded label for “prostitution” or other sexual deviances in

the Victorian era.⁵⁴ This range of meaning shaped how Woodhull and other spiritualists deployed the concept of free love.

Theorizing Free Love

Long before Victoria Woodhull proclaimed herself a “free lover” from the podium in New York, the role of sex and marriage had drawn significant scrutiny. In the 1850s, the radical preacher Humphrey Noyes identified religious commitment as a parallel experience to sexual love, and the two had often been conflated in the U.S. revival movement.⁵⁵ Writing in the 1880s, Andrew Jackson Davis, one of the pioneers of the free love movement, disavowed the “visible assumptions of masculine superiority to the feminine.”⁵⁶ Davis emphasized the importance of “female elevation, and consequent liberty” in the “social re-organization” of sexual relations, family governance, public life participation, and spiritual affinity.⁵⁷ However, the originators of the free love movement drew a careful line between affection and sensual attraction in an effort to distinguish themselves from hedonists. For one, they emphasized a “spiritual union” that moved beyond carnal desire.⁵⁸ The spiritual “affinity” argument within the philosophy of free love was summed up in the writings of Charles S. Woodruff, who grounded deep religious significance in sexuality with his writing, *Legalized Prostitution; Or, Marriage as It Is and Marriage as It Should Be, Philosophically Considered*, published in 1862.⁵⁹ In his book, widely circulated in spiritualist circles, Woodruff argued that love should be established between equal “male and female power[s]” drawn together because “Love was before creation.”⁶⁰ Woodruff expressed deep concern regarding the influence of economic needs on marriage, stating, “many alliances are contracted by the power of wealth alone, the soul, with its high, pure, affectional feelings being bartered for gold, and all its divine longings entirely set aside. . . .”⁶¹ In his estimation, the necessity for women to marry for fiscal survival, and the pressure for men to marry women of means for the sake of societal advancement, had distorted the purpose and meaning behind marriage from that of love to that of a financial transaction.

Taking up Woodruff, spiritualists saw the direct connections between economics and sexual subjugation as a lingering vestige of a patriarchal social contract. Free lovers took these realities into account, drawing parallels between black slavery and what they regarded as “sex slavery” in the home.⁶² This led to the two main facets of radical free love advocacy: first, as Sears has noted, the liberation of women from sexual slavery through the support of “birth control.”⁶³ Second, the condemnation of the gendered double standard surrounding the issue of prostitution.⁶⁴ Woodhull, arguably one of the most radical of the free lovers and certainly the most famous at the time of her Steinway Hall speech, espoused these two beliefs in both her speeches and publications.⁶⁵ As a movement, the willingness for the free lovers to discuss such progressive views on prostitution was groundbreaking and sensationalized.⁶⁶ However, by the 1870s, the free love movement had become so controversial that many of its supporters in the suffrage and other socially progressive communities began to distance themselves from free love’s philosophies and followers.⁶⁷

Woodhull Versus the Social Contract of Marriage

Understanding the lineage of liberalism and the overlap among the abolitionist, suffragist, and spiritualist movements helps place the free love movement within its historical context. Free lovers emerged as a radical sub-movement, taking the concept of self-sovereignty to its extreme in disrupting religious, political, and social traditions through a revolutionary equality of the sexes that reimagined the institution of (hetero)sexual marriage. Understanding this transition of ideas across U.S. history renders Victoria Woodhull's oratory both sensational and visionary, a momentous critique of a gendered issue that pervades politics beyond her specific nineteenth century context. In the following analysis, I situate the speech at Steinway Hall within its political and media context in 1871, drawing out her critique of the Lockean social contract, and assessing her lasting impact on U.S. politics. I ultimately show how her Steinway Hall lecture, "And the Truth Shall Set You Free," merits a place in U.S. oratorical history.

The Road to Steinway Hall

According to Theodore Tilton, Woodhull's friend and personal biographer, the free love activist faced considerable opposition in her road to societal prominence.⁶⁸ Born into poverty, she received only three years of formal education and experienced physical (and possibly sexual) abuse at the hands of her father.⁶⁹ As a teenager, Victoria married a doctor named Canning Woodhull.⁷⁰ She divorced him after he attempted to deliver Victoria Woodhull's second child while drunk, nearly killing her and the baby in the process.⁷¹ She then married a second time to Civil War Colonel James Harvey Blood in 1866, but they divorced two years later to protest the "confinement of marriage laws."⁷² Blood continued to live with Woodhull, even after she moved to New York City with her sister Tennessee Claflin in 1868.⁷³ It was in New York City that Victoria Woodhull would eventually find her voice as an advocate for women's rights and free love.

Victoria Woodhull's speech at Steinway Hall brought together the different strands of her life and career. This speech illuminates the tensions within the U.S. women suffrage movement at the time due to the sensationalized press coverage of its free love advocates. By 1871, Victoria Woodhull and her sister Tennessee had become well-known in New York City for forming a relationship with business mogul Cornelius Vanderbilt and opening the first known brokerage firm run by women.⁷⁴ Garnering headlines for their business acumen, the sisters then opened their own publishing house to circulate their periodical, *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*.⁷⁵ Woodhull earned clout through her rising influence and reputation in New York, which attracted the attention of the New York suffragists, who also admired her skills as an orator.

The ratification of the 15th Amendment in 1870 inspired woman suffragists to step up their efforts to win enfranchisement for themselves. In celebration of the amendment, Woodhull announced her intent to run for president, reflecting her growing political confidence.⁷⁶ The following year, on January 11, 1871, Woodhull became the first woman to address a U.S. House committee. She previously had written "The Memorial of Victoria C. Woodhull," in which she addressed the Senate and House in support of the women's vote.⁷⁷ Woodhull was first of a delegation of women to speak to the House Judiciary Committee's

hearings on suffrage, and “judging from the expressions of the committee after the meeting adjourned” reporters concluded that “there is no doubt she made a very favorable impression.”⁷⁸ That moment in the spotlight cemented Woodhull’s status as a leader in the national suffrage movement of the 1870s.

However, political radicalism also fractured the suffrage movement during this same period.⁷⁹ Pro-suffrage women were openly debating free love, prostitution, and other issues within their organizations, and Woodhull’s radical positions threatened to sabotage her political career.⁸⁰ In particular, free love had been at the center of two big national news stories around the time of the Steinway Speech. The first, known as the Richardson-McFarland affair, involved a man, Daniel McFarland, who had shot his divorced wife’s lover, the well-known journalist and war correspondent, Albert D. Richardson.⁸¹ The second was the Fair-Crittenden case, in which Laura Fair murdered her lover, Alexander Crittenden, because she felt he belonged more to her than to his legal wife. Laura Fair’s trial began five months before Woodhull delivered her speech.⁸² In both cases, commentators blamed the free love doctrine for the sexual promiscuity and resulting violence. These two high-profile crimes, along with the tensions within the suffrage movement, help account for why Woodhull faced such a hostile audience in Steinway Hall. Her political activism—her passionate advocacy and radicalism—further enflamed the rhetorical moment. As she took to the podium that evening in November, she nevertheless set her sights on what she saw as the root cause of gender inequality in the U.S.: institutionalized marriage.

“And the truth shall make you free,” Woodhull’s Speech at Steinway Hall

What counts as the most authentic text of Woodhull’s speech is debatable. After the event, Woodhull printed the full text of her prepared remarks in her publication, *Woodhull & Claflin Weekly*.⁸³ This is the speech text available through the Library of Congress, but the transcription does not include any mention of Utica’s interruption or the fact that Woodhull failed to deliver the entire speech as prepared. I cross-referenced several news reports to help determine which parts of the speech were actually delivered in the Steinway Hall.⁸⁴ Based on these accounts, I concluded that Woodhull made it about halfway through her prepared remarks before the first interruption. Press reports are not clear on how much more of the speech she was able to deliver over the ruckus of the crowd. Yet most of her reported remarks ended with this statement: “Yes, I am a Free Lover. I have an inalienable, constitutional, and natural right to love whom I may . . .” (82). Although this statement came some time after the audience’s first outburst, I opted to end my text of the speech at the point where she delivered this statement, then apparently left the stage because of the reaction it stirred.

Over the course of the speech she did manage to deliver, Woodhull built a case for recasting the social contract and relations between men and women. Clearly influenced by her spiritualist and suffragist allegiances, she articulated how freedom should operate in a just society. As Woodhull argued, “Religious freedom does, in a measure, exist in this country, but not yet perfectly; . . . if Religious and Political freedom exist, *perfected*, Social freedom is at that very moment guaranteed, since Social freedom is the fruit of that condition” (3). By illuminating the connection between religious, political, and social freedoms, Woodhull was able to make the case for individual liberty. As a spiritualist, she would have been familiar with Warren’s writings regarding discrete notions of “individuality.”⁸⁵ By crafting her argument as one

predicated on uniting all these freedoms, Woodhull could more clearly establish the flaws with the social contract as it then stood in American society.

Woodhull leveraged these freedoms to argue that women needed to fight for self-sovereignty in the 1800s. To do so, she drew upon historical memories of the American Revolution. She argued: “[M]en do not seem to comprehend that they are now pursuing toward women the same despotic course that King George pursued toward the American colonies” (7). She equated disenfranchisement, *couverture*, and other institutionalized forms of subjugation to the British rule of American colonies. These forms of subjugation ignored the key tenant of Lockean governance, “consent.”⁸⁶ For the United States to finally rid itself of tyranny, it needed to respect women’s self-sovereignty. All Americans should have the right to vote, to own property, and to fully exercise their right to consent to governance. After reading in full a set of feminist resolutions “launched upon the public by Paulina Wright Davis at Apollo Hall, May 12, 1871,” Woodhull explained: “No living soul, who does not desire to have control over, or ownership in, another person, can have any *valid* objection to *anything* expressed in these resolutions” (13).

Up to this point in the speech, Woodhull’s arguments about freedom and self-sovereignty may not have struck her audience as radical because she grounded her argument in the founders’ principles—principles that had long been used to make the case for abolition and suffrage. She continued in this vein for several minutes after reading Davis’ resolutions, reflecting in general on the rights and obligations of both the government and the people under the Constitution and the system of government created by the founders.

Woodhull veered into more controversial territory soon after she began reflecting on Locke’s notion of a social contract. Acknowledging that America’s “theory of government” rested on the idea of a social contract, she asked: “Why should the social relations of the sexes be made subject to a different theory” (29)? This rhetorical question signaled the beginning of her attempt to show that laws discriminating against women violated the social contract, including laws that prohibited free love and prostitution. Woodhull suggested that marriage itself was problematic, as it had been used to “preserve sway and to hold the people in subjection to what has been considered a standard of moral purity” (35). The failure of those laws, she suggested, was evident in the problem of prostitution—one of those topics that, by their very mention, made Woodhull’s speech so controversial.

Woodhull objected to the societal double standard that treated women as “prostitutes” but failed to account for the “*hundreds of thousands of men* who should, for like reasons, also be denominated prostitutes, since what will change a woman into a prostitute must also necessarily change a man into the same” (35). Woodhull lamented the hypocrisy of this gendered bias against women: “This condition, called prostitution, seems to be the *great evil* at which religion and public morality hurl their *special* weapons of condemnation, as the sum total of all diabolism; since for a woman to be a prostitute is to deny her not only all Christian, but all humanitarian rights” (36). Using prostitution as the most obvious example of the gendered bias in America’s social contract, she went on to a broader argument about how women’s rights were restricted in both public and private life.

Woodhull treated the contract of marriage as the ultimate act of subjugation masquerading as moral purity. Woodhull made the point that marriage, the most important nineteenth-century social contract between men and women, and the ultimate source of a

woman's religious, political, and social subjugation, had to be reimagined if America hoped to achieve true equality. It is here where Woodhull voiced a position that had splintered the country for decades: how should marriage between men and women operate in a truly equal society? She argued: "All the relations between the sexes that are recognized as legitimate are denominated marriage. . . . True marriage must in reality consist entirely either of law or love, since there can be no compromise between the law of nature and the statute law by which the former shall yield to the latter" (46). Woodhull thus established the supremacy of *natural* law over man's law when it came to marriage. According to her, natural law was "as high above human law as perfection is high above imperfection" (50). To be "married by nature" was to be "united by God" (51).

Woodhull's radical solution was to reject *all* laws related to marriage and divorce, since they inevitably conflicted with the natural law that legitimized a contract between a man and woman. Woodhull surmised, "It must be concluded then, if individuals have the Constitutional right to pursue happiness in their *own* way, that all compelling laws of marriage and divorce are despotic, being *remnants* of the barbaric ages in which they were originated and *utterly unfitted* for an age so *advanced* upon that, and so *enlightened* in the general principles of freedom and equality, as is this" (52). If any of her listeners in Steinway Hall came to hear something outrageous, this argument certainly delivered. Woodhull's condemnation of institutionalized marriage flew in the face of established Victorian-era gender ideals, which considered the patriarchal, heterosexual family to be the pinnacle of spiritual and societal virtue. Woodhull continued, "The proper sphere of government in regard to the relations of the s[e]xes, is to enact such laws as in the present conditions of society are necessary to *protect each* individual in the *free* exercise of his or her *right* to love, and also to protect each individual from the forced interference of every other person, that would compel him or her to submit to *any action* which is against their wish and will" (55). Put another way, Woodhull believed that government should protect, not limit, a person's right to free love. The role of government was to insure, not infringe upon, one's self-sovereignty. This bold argument left the audience divided, and newspapers reported that both "hisses and applause" forced Woodhull to pause around this point in her speech.⁸⁷ The *Chicago Tribune* even reported that "a number arose and left the hall," apparently in disapproval of Woodhull's radical claim.⁸⁸ Woodhull had targeted one of the most important permutations of the existing social contract in America—one rooted in prevailing notions of womanly virtue. For a woman to do this in the 1870s, in front of a promiscuous audience, was nothing short of revolutionary.

Apparently undeterred by the negative reactions, Woodhull then returned to the issue of prostitution. In effect declaring that attempts to regulate prostitution were fruitless, she stated, "*there is* prostitution, and *all* the law that a *thousand* State Assemblies may pass cannot make it otherwise" (59). It was at this point that Woodhull's younger sister, Utica Booker, began interrupting the speech, challenging Woodhull's claims about both prostitution and free love.⁸⁹ Although it is unclear from the news reports exactly what Utica said, her interruptions gained momentum with the crowd, drawing out raucous cheers, applause, and hissing.

Amidst this chaos, Woodhull proceeded with her speech, reiterating her arguments about the law's inability to regulate morality in the relations between the genders. Trying to reassure her audience that she valued moral purity, she clarified, "I honor and worship that purity which exists in the soul of every noble man or woman, while I pity the woman who is

virtuous simply because a law compels her” (71). And, again she reiterated her view that marriage ultimately depended on natural law, not man’s law, concluding that “marriage should have love as a basis, if love depart marriage also departs” (73). Invoking the Lockean notion of a social contract, she continued to insist that marriage had to be predicated on the consent of the individuals involved.⁹⁰ If this mutual consent were compromised by either party, the government’s ability to uphold the legitimacy of the union ceased. In the spiritualist view of marriage, it was “love,” or the mutual consent of a man and a woman, that defined a legitimate marriage contract, not the law.⁹¹ By this logic, marriages not grounded in love represented illegitimate contracts and could be considered a form of prostitution.

By bringing the same logic about the social contract to the issues of marriage and prostitution, Woodhull targeted the very core of the American political and moral ideology. Laws that failed to protect women in the same ways that men were protected reflected a gender bias in the social contract. Although her views were rooted in the same Lockean notion of the social contract that the founders had relied upon, the reactions from her audience spoke to the fact that many thought she took the logic of the social contract too far. In the view of many of his listeners in Steinway Hall, Woodhull’s views were outrageous, even revolutionary.

In the end, the dissidents in the audience won out. The event became so rowdy that the police were called to quell the riotous assembly. It was somewhere amid this chaos that Utica was ushered away, and Woodhull was able to conclude with the most famous lines from the speech:

And to those who denounce me for this I reply: “Yes I am a Free Lover. I have an *inalienable constitutional and natural* right to love whom I may, to love *as long* or *as short* a period as I can; to *change* that love *every day* if I please, and with *that* right neither *you* nor any *law* you can frame have *any* right to interfere. And as I have the *further* right to demand a free and unrestricted exercise of that right, and it is *your duty* not only to *accord* it, but as a community, to see that I am protected in it. I trust that I am fully understood, for I mean *just* that, and nothing less! (82)

Apparently, Woodhall had planned to say more. Yet doubling down on both the language of “free love” and her criticism of the biases in the existing social contract, this concluding declaration—“Yes I am a Free Lover”—became her political legacy.

The Aftermath of the Steinway Hall Address

Press coverage of Victoria Woodhull’s Steinway Hall speech primarily focused on the sensational aspects of the lecture: the hostile crowd, the dramatic interruption by Utica Booker, and the flamboyant final declaration in support of free love. A day after the speech, the *New York Times* described the lecture as “an attack on the marriage system,” focusing on the core of Woodhull’s critique of marriage.⁹² Other news outlets focused on the drama of the evening’s proceedings. On November 24, 1871, the *Baltimore Sun* reported that Woodhull shouted at the crowd “angrily” until the police arrived and ran the story under the headline, “A Free-Love Rumpus.”⁹³ The press coverage from *The Sun* detailed how Woodhull spoke to a hostile audience, noting that “foes of Free Love were evidently in the majority” and that shouts of “Shame!” ultimately pushed her off the stage.⁹⁴ The *Hartford Daily Courant* previewed their

reprint of *The Sun's* coverage with this brazen commentary: "We print the following in order to let the free lovers completely unmask themselves, and that there shall be no further excuse for any simple souls being deluded by the notorious woman who is the exponent of social demoralization."⁹⁵ After the Steinway Hall address, Woodhull became notorious as an enemy of true American ideals. The consequences for her position on free love and her sensational way of expressing her politics would destroy her public reputation in just a few short years.

In 1872, Thomas Nast characterized Woodhull as "(Mrs.) Satan" in *Harper's Weekly*.⁹⁶ In the illustration, Woodhull was depicted with devil horns and wings, carrying a sign that read, "Be Saved By Free Love." A woman carrying a drunken husband on her back and several children was depicted telling her: "I'd rather travel the hardest path of matrimony than follow your footsteps." This caricature would continue to follow Woodhull for the remainder of her public life. Despite her infamy, however, she was nominated as the presidential candidate for the Equal Rights Party in 1872.⁹⁷ Prior to Election Day, Woodhull was arrested under obscenity charges for publishing the details of Henry Ward Beecher's affair in the *Woodhull & Claflin Weekly*, preventing her from voting even for herself in the election.⁹⁸ The subsequent trial would grab headlines for years, and in 1876 Woodhull moved to Britain to live out the remainder of her life in relative obscurity after renouncing many of her political stances and affiliations.

Victoria Woodhull's legacy as both a suffragist and a free love radical continued well past her political activity. As of this writing, we are nearly one hundred and fifty years removed from Woodhull's political career, but her memory re-emerges whenever women take the stage in U.S. politics. Hillary Clinton, Kamala Harris, and Elizabeth Warren have all been compared to Woodhull,⁹⁹ and scholars continue to invoke Woodhull's memory, both by recalling her contributions to early feminism and by reflecting on her continuing relevance. As Barbara Goldsmith has argued, "the work Victoria Woodhull had done on behalf of women would have a lasting effect no matter how she recanted her views or how quickly she became a mere footnote to women's history."¹⁰⁰ Contemporary scholars note that Woodhull's suffrage advocacy, as well as her demonization in the press, both have important lessons to teach us about the role of gender in U.S. political history.¹⁰¹ Although she remains somewhat on the fringes of feminist historiography because of her claims of clairvoyance, her public scandals, her radical divisiveness, and the fact she recanted her political beliefs later in life, Woodhull is nevertheless recognized as a significant voice in the increasingly polarized suffrage movement of the late nineteenth century.¹⁰² And as Lisa Maria Hogeland argued in 1999, that voice has continuing relevance to ongoing debates among feminist scholars and activists: "Organized feminism today is no less divided, and it is not surprising that already existing political fissures around issues of sexuality get used against us by our enemies. It is also not surprising that Victoria Woodhull is being recovered, as feminists face media distortions of our analyses of sexuality." As Hogeland, noted, Woodhull was a trailblazing figure in the history of feminism in the United States, and her example has become even more relevant today than it was in the so-called "second wave" of feminism. As Hogeland concluded: "In our allegedly postfeminist historical moment . . . we need our tendentious histories and our multiplicitous heroines more than ever."¹⁰³

Author's Note: E. Brooke Phipps is a doctoral student at The University of Maryland. She wishes to thank Shawn Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan for their generous and careful reading of this essay, and Skye de Saint-Félix for her editing and revision assistance.

Notes

¹ Victoria C. Woodhull, *"And the Truth Shall Make You Free." A Speech on the Principles of Social Freedom, Delivered in Steinway Hall, Nov. 20, 1871, by Victoria C. Woodhull* (Woodhull, Claflin & Co., Publishers, 1871); "Uproar in Steinway Hall," *The Sun*, November 21, 1871; "The Principle of Social Freedom, Involving Free Love, Marriage, Divorce, &c. - Lecture by Victoria C. Woodhull," *New York Times*, November 21, 1871; "Mrs. Woodhull's Lecture: She Glories in Her Free-Love Doctrines-Is Rebuked by Her Sister-A Stormy Scene-An Audience That Would Not Be Convinced," *Chicago Tribune*, November 24, 1871.

² Barbara Goldsmith, *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 298–304.

³ "Uproar in Steinway Hall." *The Sun*.

⁴ "Uproar in Steinway Hall," *The Sun*.

⁵ All passages from Woodhull's November 20, 1871 speech are cited with reference to paragraph numbers in the printed text that accompanies this essay on the VOD website.

⁶ "Mrs. Woodhull's Lecture: She Glories in Her Free-Love Doctrines-Is Rebuked by Her Sister-A Stormy Scene-An Audience That Would Not Be Convinced," *Chicago Tribune*, November 24, 1871; "Uproar in Steinway Hall," *The Sun*; "A Free-Love Rumpus: Scene Between Two Sisters," *Baltimore Sun*, November 22, 1871.

⁷ Woodhull, *"And the Truth Shall Make You Free." A Speech on the Principles of Social Freedom, Delivered in Steinway Hall, Nov. 20, 1871, by Victoria C. Woodhull*

⁸ Local New York papers reporting the event included, "Mrs. Woodhull's Lecture: She Glories in Her Free-Love Doctrines-Is Rebuked by Her Sister-A Stormy Scene-An Audience That Would Not Be Convinced," *New York Daily Tribune*, November 21, 1871; "Uproar in Steinway Hall," *The Sun*, November 21, 1871; Just a few short days after the lecture, other presses picked up the story, taking the sensation across the country, "Free Love Expounded By Mrs. Woodhull," *Hartford Daily Courant*, November 22, 1871; "Mrs. Woodhull's Lecture: She Glories in Her Free-Love Doctrines-Is Rebuked by Her Sister-A Stormy Scene-An Audience That Would Not Be Convinced," *Chicago Tribune*, November 24, 1871; "Lecture on Free Love: Mrs. Victoria Woodhull in a Storm of Hisses and Applause- An Audience That Would Not Be Convinced," *Donaldsonville Chief*, December 2, 1871.

⁹ Melissa Butler, "Early Liberal Roots of Feminism: John Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy," in *The Selected Political Writings of John Locke*, ed. Paul E. Sigmund (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 74.

¹⁰ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (New York: Hafner, 1947), 182.

¹¹ David Gauthier, "Why Ought One Obey God? Reflections on Hobbes and Locke," in *Morris, Christopher W. The Social Contract Theorists: Critical Essays on Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. Critical Essays on the Classic*, ed. Christopher W. Morris (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 74–76.

¹² Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 151.

¹³ Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History*, 80.

¹⁴ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 163.

- ¹⁵ “Declaration of Independence: A Transcription,” National Archives, November 1, 2015, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.
- ¹⁶ Mark Hulliung, *The Social Contract in America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007).
- ¹⁷ Butler, “Early Liberal Roots of Feminism: John Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy,” 381.
- ¹⁸ Butler, “Early Liberal Roots of Feminism: John Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy,” 384; Melissa Butler, “On Locke,” in *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory*, ed. Carole Pateman and Mary Lyndon Shanley (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 90.
- ¹⁹ Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 1988), 32.
- ²⁰ Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, 24–31.
- ²¹ Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, 2.
- ²² Gauthier, “Why Ought One Obey God? Reflections on Hobbes and Locke,” 74–76.
- ²³ Stanton, Elizabeth Cady. “Declaration of Sentiments,” 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.
- ²⁴ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, vol. 1, 1765, 442–45; Peregrine Bingham, *The Law of Infancy and Coverture*, 2nd American (Burlington: Chauncey Goodrich, 1849).
- ²⁵ Joyce W. Warren, *Women, Money, and the Law: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Gender, and the Courts* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005), 43.
- ²⁶ Bingham, *The Law of Infancy and Coverture*.
- ²⁷ Warren, *Women, Money, and the Law: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Gender, and the Courts*, 244.
- ²⁸ Anne Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 15.
- ²⁹ Stephen H. Browne, *Angelina Grimké: Rhetoric, Identity, and the Radical Imagination* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999), 110–12.
- ³⁰ Browne, *Angelina Grimké: Rhetoric, Identity, and the Radical Imagination*, 114.
- ³¹ Browne, *Angelina Grimké: Rhetoric, Identity, and the Radical Imagination*, 112.
- ³² Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 39.
- ³³ Browne, *Angelina Grimké: Rhetoric, Identity, and the Radical Imagination*, 112–24.
- ³⁴ Browne, *Angelina Grimké: Rhetoric, Identity, and the Radical Imagination*; Katherine Henry, “Angelina Grimké’s Rhetoric of Exposure,” *American Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (1997): 328–55.
- ³⁵ Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, & Women’s Political Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 28.
- ³⁶ Elizabeth Reis, “Immortal Messengers: Angels, Gender, and Power in Early America,” in *Mortal Remains: Death in Early America*, ed. Nancy Isenberg and Andrew Burstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 164.
- ³⁷ Lowry, “Spiritual (R)Evolution and the Turning of Tables: Abolition, Feminism, and the Rhetoric of Social Reform in the Antebellum Public Sphere,” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 9, 2 (2015): 8.
- ³⁸ Cathy Gutierrez, *Plato’s Ghost: Spiritualism in the American Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 49.
- ³⁹ Lowry, “Spiritual (R)Evolution and the Turning of Tables,” 3.
- ⁴⁰ Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 4.
- ⁴¹ *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 23.
- ⁴² Lowry, “Spiritual (R)Evolution and the Turning of Tables,” 11.
- ⁴³ Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 118.
- ⁴⁴ Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 4.
- ⁴⁵ Josiah Warren, *The Practical Anarchist: Writings of Josiah Warren*, ed. Crispin Sartwell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 48.

- ⁴⁶ Josiah Warren, *Equitable Commerce: A New Development of Principles, for the Harmoneous Adjustment and Regulation of the Pecuniary, Intellectual, and Moral Intercourse of Mankind, Proposed As Elements of New Society*, 2nd ed. (Utopia: Amos E. Senter, 1849). 2.
- ⁴⁷ Warren, *Equitable Commerce: A New Development of Principles, for the Harmoneous Adjustment and Regulation of the Pecuniary, Intellectual, and Moral Intercourse of Mankind, Proposed As Elements of New Society* 53.
- ⁴⁸ Sir Matthew Hale, *Historia Placitorum Coronae: The History of the Pleas of the Crown* (R.H. Small, 1847), 628.
- ⁴⁹ Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 118–19.
- ⁵⁰ Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, 17.
- ⁵¹ Hal D. Sears, *The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America* (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), 22.
- ⁵² Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 25.
- ⁵³ Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 127.
- ⁵⁴ "The Free Love Question: The Richardson-McFarland Case before the Woman's Suffrage Association—Startling Opinions and Resolutions," *New York Times*, December 9, 1869; "Spiritualists and the Free Love System," *New York Daily Times*, September 22, 1855; "Free-Love and Spiritualism," *New York Daily Times*, December 5, 1855.
- ⁵⁵ Sears, *The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America*, 3-4.
- ⁵⁶ Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Great Harmonia: Being a Philosophical Revelation of the Natural, Spiritual, and Celestial Universe* (Boston: Colby & Rich, 1880), 184.
- ⁵⁷ Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Great Harmonia: Being a Philosophical Revelation of the Natural, Spiritual, and Celestial Universe*, 186, 186–200.
- ⁵⁸ Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 120.
- ⁵⁹ Charles S. Woodruff, *Legalized Prostitution; Or, Marriage as It Is and Marriage as It Should Be, Philosophically Considered* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1862).
- ⁶⁰ Woodruff, *Legalized Prostitution; Or, Marriage as It Is and Marriage as It Should Be, Philosophically Considered*, 79.
- ⁶¹ Woodruff, *Legalized Prostitution; Or, Marriage as It Is and Marriage as It Should Be, Philosophically Considered*, 89.
- ⁶² Sears, *The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America*, 5.
- ⁶³ Sears, 5.
- ⁶⁴ Sears, *The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America*, 5; Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 129.
- ⁶⁵ Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 136; Amanda Frisken, "Sex in Politics: Victoria Woodhull as an American Public Woman, 1870-1876," *Journal of Women's History* 12, 1 (2000): 90; Goldsmith, *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull*.
- ⁶⁶ Frisken, "Sex in Politics: Victoria Woodhull as an American Public Woman, 1870-1876," 94.
- ⁶⁷ Frisken, "Sex in Politics: Victoria Woodhull as an American Public Woman, 1870-1876," 101.
- ⁶⁸ Theodore Tilton, "Victoria C. Woodhull, A Biographical Sketch: Mr. Tilton's Account of Mrs. Woodhull" (New York: The Golden Age, 1871).
- ⁶⁹ Tilton, "Victoria C. Woodhull, A Biographical Sketch: Mr. Tilton's Account of Mrs. Woodhull".
- ⁷⁰ Tilton, "Victoria C. Woodhull, A Biographical Sketch: Mr. Tilton's Account of Mrs. Woodhull"; Goldsmith, *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull*, 63–65.
- ⁷¹ Goldsmith, *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull*, 71.

⁷² Goldsmith, *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull*, 139.

⁷³ Goldsmith, *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull*, 150.

⁷⁴ "The Queens of Finance," *New York Herald*, January 22, 1870; "The Bewitching Brokers: The Business of Woodhull, Claflin & Co. Increasing - the Firm Engaging but Reticent - A Satisfactory Reply to a Necessary Question - What They Will Do," *New York Herald*, February 13, 1870.

⁷⁵ "Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly.," <https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn92062238/>.

⁷⁶ "The Coming Woman," *New York Herald*, April 2, 1870; Tilton, "Victoria C. Woodhull, A Biographical Sketch: Mr. Tilton's Account of Mrs. Woodhull."

⁷⁷ "The Memorial of Victoria C. Woodhull, to the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress Assembled, Respectfully Showeth [Regarding Women Voting] Victoria C. Woodhull" December 19, 1870, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.12800900/>.

⁷⁸ "A Delegation of Fair Ones Before the House Judiciary Committee," *The New York Herald*, January 12, 1871.

⁷⁹ Goldsmith, *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull*, 273–74.

⁸⁰ Frisken, "Sex in Politics: Victoria Woodhull as an American Public Woman, 1870-1876."

⁸¹ "The Richardson-McFarland Tragedy," *New York Times*, December 5, 1869; "The Free Love Question," *New York Times*.

⁸² "The Fair-Crittenden Tragedy," *New York Times*, April 8, 1871.

⁸³ Woodhull, "'And the Truth Shall Make You Free.' A Speech on the Principles of Social Freedom, Delivered in Steinway Hall, Nov. 20, 1871, by Victoria C. Woodhull."

⁸⁴ "Mrs. Woodhull's Lecture: She Glories in Her Free-Love Doctrines-Is Rebuked by Her Sister-A Stormy Scene-An Audience That Would Not Be Convinced," *Chicago Tribune* ; "Free Love Expounded By Mrs. Woodhull," *Hartford Daily Courant*; "A Free-Love Rumpus: Scene Between Two Sisters," *Baltimore Sun*; "Uproar in Steinway Hall," *The Sun*.

⁸⁵ Warren, *Equitable Commerce: A New Development of Principles, for the Harmoneous Adjustment and Regulation of the Pecuniary, Intellectual, and Moral Intercourse of Mankind, Proposed As Elements of New Society*, 2.

⁸⁶ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*.

⁸⁷ "Mrs. Woodhull's Lecture: She Glories in Her Free-Love Doctrines-Is Rebuked by Her Sister-A Stormy Scene-An Audience That Would Not Be Convinced," *Chicago Tribune*; "Uproar in Steinway Hall," *The Sun*; "Lecture on Free Love: Mrs. Victoria Woodhull in a Storm of Hisses and Applause- An Audience That Would Not Be Convinced," *Donaldsonville Chief*.

⁸⁸ "Mrs. Woodhull's Lecture: She Glories in Her Free-Love Doctrines-Is Rebuked by Her Sister-A Stormy Scene-An Audience That Would Not Be Convinced," *Chicago Tribune*.

⁸⁹ "A Free-Love Rumpus: Scene Between Two Sisters," *Baltimore Sun*; "Uproar in Steinway Hall," *The Sun*; "Mrs. Woodhull's Lecture: She Glories in Her Free-Love Doctrines-Is Rebuked by Her Sister-A Stormy Scene-An Audience That Would Not Be Convinced," *Chicago Tribune*; "Free Love Expounded By Mrs. Woodhull," *Hartford Daily Courant*; "Lecture on Free Love: Mrs. Victoria Woodhull in a Storm of Hisses and Applause- An Audience That Would Not Be Convinced," *Donaldsonville Chief*.

⁹⁰ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*; Butler, "On Locke."

⁹¹ Lowry, "Spiritual (R)Evolution and the Turning of Tables"; Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*.

⁹² "The Principle of Social Freedom, Involving Free Love, Marriage, Divorce, &c. - Lecture by Victoria C. Woodhull," *New York Times*.

⁹³ "A Free-Love Rumpus: Scene Between Two Sisters", *Baltimore Sun*.

⁹⁴ "Uproar in Steinway Hall," *The Sun*.

⁹⁵ "Free Love Expounded By Mrs. Woodhull," *Hartford Daily Courant*.

⁹⁶ Thomas Nast, *Get Thee behind Me, (Mrs.) Satan!*, 1872, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ds.13016>.

⁹⁷ Lois Beechy Underhill, *The Woman Who Ran For President: The Many Lives of Victoria Woodhull* (Bridgehampton: Bridge Works Publishing Co., 1995).

⁹⁸ "THE CLAFLIN FAMILY.; Arrest of Victoria Woodhull, Tennie C. Claflin and Col. Blood--They Are Charged with Publishing an Obscene Newspaper.," *New York Times*, November 3, 1872.

⁹⁹ "Before Hillary Clinton Was 'The Devil,' Victoria Woodhull Was 'Mrs. Satan'," WNYC, August 16, 2016, <https://www.wnyc.org/story/hillary-was-devil-victoria-woodhull-was-mrs-satan/>; "Victoria Woodhull Paved the Way for Hillary Clinton and Other Women," *Denver Post*, June 18, 2016, <https://www.denverpost.com/2016/06/18/victoria-woodhull-hillary-clinton/>; Kayla Epstein, "A Woman Who Ran for President in 1872 Was Compared to Satan and Locked up. It Wasn't for Her Emails.," *Washington Post*, September 11, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/09/11/woman-who-ran-president-was-compared-satan-locked-up-it-wasnt-her-emails/>.

¹⁰⁰ Goldsmith, *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull*, 427.

¹⁰¹ Jason Jones, "Breathing Life into a Public Woman: Victoria Woodhull's Defense of Woman's Suffrage," *Rhetoric Review* 28, 4 (2009): 352–69; Frisken, "Sex in Politics: Victoria Woodhull as an American Public Woman, 1870-1876."

¹⁰² Lisa Maria Hogeland, "Feminism, Sex Scandals, and Historical Lessons," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 16, no. 1 (1999): 94–95.

¹⁰³ Hogeland, "Feminism, Sex Scandals, and Historical Lessons," 98.