Module 8

1875-1877

Emma Hardinge Britten, Occultist
1875-1877: Emma Hardinge Britten, Occultist

- October 1875

New York Herald Tribune
October 2, 1875
Page 8

Publishers' Weekly
October 9, 1875
p. 558
Our enemies profit to this day by our mistakes...
The cycle of “Adepts,” used as sledgehammers to break the theosophical heads with, began twelve years ago with Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten’s “Louis” of Art Magic and Ghost-Land [sic], and now ends with the “Adept” and “Author” of The Light of Egypt....

HPB, The Key to Theosophy (1889)
1875-1877: Emma Hardinge Britten, Occultist

- That there was a rivalry between HPB and EHB is certain -- from EHB’s perspective at least

- I believe Art Magic was a product of that rivalry

- It is a curious fact that HPB was singularly gentle, kind and complementary toward EHB, at least in public and in print, throughout her life

- And it is a curious fact that EHB waited until HPB was dead to savage her

- Neither Judge nor Olcott had much respect for Emma, in spite of Serapis’ plea to Olcott....

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I pray thee, Brother mine, to take necessary steps to adjourn the meeting untill (sic) Saturday which will be. Sister (that is, HPB) has a labour to perform. Be friendly to the English seer Emma for she is a noble woman and her soul hath many gems hidden within it. Begin not without our Sister. Unto the regions of Light I send for thee my prayer.
1875-1877: Emma Hardinge Britten, Occultist

- **Art Magic** (1876)

- Extremely odd circumstances of publication, even given the subject matter and historical period

- The first textbook of the (first) Theosophical Society?

- A race against HPB?

- The second work (in terms of publication history) by the author of *Ghost Land*?

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"By magnetism the imponderable, all-pervading life element termed Astral fluid is communicated from one body to another. By psychology the power of one mind subjugates and controls that of another, and it is in these two spheres of operation that all the marvels of magic transpire."

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An European gentleman, now sojournung in the United States of America for a brief season, gives notice to all thinkers interested in spiritual existence, or occult science, that having spent 40 years in the practical and theoretical study of art magic, partly acquired in the East and West Indies, Egypt and Arabia, and partly studied out from rare and almost unattainable works in France, Germany, Bohemia, the British dominions, &c., he is now prepared to share the fruit of his labours and researches with a few interested and worthy students, and for this purpose he will publish a work under conditions which he cannot change or transgress; these are:

1st.—The work in question cannot become a marketable commodity, but may be exchanged for a ratio of the cost of publication.

2nd.—The work may be published for limited distribution in any country where a sufficient number of students are found to ensure the cost of publication.

3rd.—The requisite number of subscribers being obtained, a protective copyright is to prevent any further publication.

4th.—The work is not to be published or sold by any professional firm, nor submitted for review to professional critics.

5th.—After the requisite number of copies are drawn off to defray the expense of publication, the types, plates, vignettes, &c., are to be cancelled utterly.

These are the five conditions under which the publisher feels compelled to issue his work, and without the limitations of which it will never se the light. To these he adds the following stipulations of his own:—

He will give no name, token of identity, nor personal response of any kind to enquirers.

He will publish only through a friend. The friend selected has accepted the office of medium for the work, and is Emma Hardinge-Britten.
1875-1877: Emma Hardinge Britten, Occultist

- **Art Magic** (1876) -- a melange of disguised material from other sources

- Knit together with an overriding metaphor: magnetism and psychology are the twin pillars of the temple of Spiritism -- the (Masonic) temple of Spiritism

- The book bears some structural resemblance to Melville’s *Moby-Dick* (1851) -- it begins as one book (anthropology and history of religions), but ends as quite a different book (practical occultism)

- Nevertheless, the book is a bellwether in the renaissance of western occultism, and widely....mined...by succeeding generations of occultists, including the HBofL
1875-1877: Emma Hardinge Britten, Occultist

- **Art Magic** is in the hands of its US subscribers in January (?) of 1876, and its European subscribers in April, after which Emma and William return to Boston (and begin advertising their galvanic medical practice again)

- And **Ghost Land** (the first of two promised volumes) arrives, hot on its heels, in November of 1876

- GL is now more than just a collection of provocative stories about various occult practices -- it represents the bona fides of the author of **Art Magic**.

- Louis de B______, the protagonist of **Ghost Land**, is the author of **Art Magic**.
1875-1877: Emma Hardinge Britten, Occultist

- Who was Louis De B_____?

- Who wrote Ghost Land?

- Marie, Countess of Caithness is on her honeymoon with her second husband, Earl Caithness, his daughter, and her son, the Duc de Medina Pomar, in the US, from October 1872 until April of 1873.

- MCC meets with both Elizabeth J. French and Emma during this visit, and Emma’s acquaintance with her may date back to the late 1860s in London...

- If Emma had a collaborator, was it the young Duc?

- And was the young Duc just a cut-out for Caithness herself?

“I knew it only represented our poor sufferer as he then was, not as he generally appears, still he entreated me to send it as it was for his Madonna (emphasis original) -- as he calls you -- because he had made such a great exertion to have it taken, and only for you.”

EHB to MCC, discussing a drawing of Louis e B____, as transcribed in HSO’s Old Diary Leaves.
In January of 1877, Emma begins a series of lectures based on *Art Magic*, in Boston; they run from January through March and are well-attended and spirited. Emma does not always defend the positions taken by the author of *Art Magic*.

In May, the Theosophical Society buries Baron de Palm, and Emma participates (and Olcott is disgusted with her, I think).

In September, Emma and William are in Cleveland, and then Salt Lake City, “on her way to California”.

They take ship for Sydney, Australia on the steamer City of Sydney in late January 1878, and arrive there on February 15..... to almost instant controversy.