

Veridical Readings by Two Psychic Mediums, Concerning a Single Proposed Case of Reincarnation

By Stephen Sakellarios, ©2021 (revised 4/10/24)

Abstract:

In this paper I will conduct a point-for-point analysis of the statements made by two different psychic mediums who were asked to connect the author with his 19th-century wife, which yielded a number of accurate statements that could subsequently be verified in the deep historical record. These facts could not have been previously known by either psychic via any normal means, unless one wishes to invoke blatant fraud on the part of the psychics; and in some cases, they could not even have been known by myself at the time. Although there was a certain percentage of “misses,” the sheer number of “hits,” as well as their specificity, strongly suggests that both mediums were obtaining this accurate information by paranormal means. This also stands as an example of how psychic mediums might be used as one prong of a three-pronged approach in the reincarnation research of the future.

In 2010, the year after I began formally researching a possible past-life match between myself and obscure 19th-century American author Mathew Franklin Whittier, I arranged for two psychic readings; the first in March, and the second in December. The ostensible purpose was to contact Mathew’s first wife, Abby Poyen Whittier, whom I believed had been trying to contact me, being still in the astral realm since her death in 1841. Many years earlier, I had used the services of the first psychic, Candace Zellner, both for a personal reading, and for the purposes of reincarnation research. The subject in the research reading, conducted in 1998, was Jeff Keene, a reincarnation subject who had flown from Connecticut to Atlanta, Georgia to be interviewed for my documentary, “In Another Life: Reincarnation in America.” My idea—years before this was commonly done—was to videotape a live session, and to see whether any veridical information surfaced. I would neither stop the camera, nor edit the footage. My hope was that she would mention Keene’s claimed past life as Southern Civil War general John B. Gordon. She did not (although she did use the phrase, “like a general”); but instead, she described a scene involving Keene behind enemy lines in France. That description closely matched a past-life memory which Keene had previously recorded, and which he had shared with me prior to the reading. I had given Ms. Zellner no information about him, nor had I revealed my purpose in requesting the reading. She had obtained only his name and birth information, directly from him, at the outset. There were other veridical elements; but the point is that when I requested a reading in 2010, I was already convinced of her abilities by reason of her previous proven performance.

As it happened, she initially refused to read me, because, she said, “You have an attached spirit, and looking at you is like looking at a fun-house mirror—all distorted.” However, after I explained to her that I was researching a past life, and that I was trying to contact my wife from that lifetime, she agreed. This in itself is somewhat evidential because, again, I had not divulged to her the reason for the reading.

When Ms. Zellner called me at the appointed time of 2:00 o'clock on the afternoon of March 10, 2010, she said that she had almost called me an hour early, because for that entire time she had been "bombarded with images." The clear inference was that Abby was very eager to communicate with me. I had previously sent Ms. Zellner two images—an engraving of Mathew Franklin Whittier in his mid-40's (sans any identifying information); and the second page of a letter written by Abby to Mathew's sister in 1836. Ms. Zellner informed me that she had not received the second image due to computer difficulties, which she said she frequently struggled with. Quite possibly, the second image, having been obtained from a library, was at a higher resolution and hence was a larger digital file. (The first one may have been a screen capture, from the website where I had first encountered it.) I did not give her any other information.

In the course of the reading, Ms. Zellner made a number of statements concerning both of these historical persons, Mathew Franklin Whittier and Abby Poyen Whittier. At this point, in 2010, my own knowledge of their personal history was limited. Both were obscure historical figures. Relatively little was known about Mathew, and what was known, primarily through the official John Greenleaf Whittier legacy, was both truncated and distorted. Almost nothing was readily available about Abby, except her marriage and death dates (and even these weren't always accurate), plus a brief mention in the Whittier legacy that she was "attractive." She appears in this legacy as Mathew's first wife; and again as the daughter of the cousin of Count Vipart, the husband of Mary Ingalls, who was the "Countess" of Whittier's poem by the same name. Therefore, Ms. Zellner had no normal way of knowing very much about Mathew, and no normal way of knowing anything at all about Abby. Furthermore, because the readily-available historical information about Mathew was inaccurate, had she researched the subject her remarks would have reflected that bias. In March of 2010, I, myself, did not know much of the material which surfaced in the reading. I was, however, able to verify a significant portion of it over the course of fifteen years of research into the deep historical record.

On December 15, 2010, I had a second psychic reading—for the same purpose—with Joseph Shiel. I chose Shiel because he was a psychic artist, and because he was certified by the Lily Dale psychic community in New York. I didn't notice on his website, at that time, that he worked out of a Spiritualist church in Swampscott, Mass.—only about 29 miles south of Mathew and Abby's birthplace, East Haverhill, Mass. The significance of this will become apparent.

Shiel was calling on a cell phone from a motel room at the Boston airport. The call was dropped at least five times in the opening of the session, to the point that Shiel suggested giving up and refunding my money. I persisted, and finally the call went through, only dropping once more in the course of the hour-long session. When we first spoke, he remarked, "Oh, you're the one with the unusual request." I had indicated that I wanted to contact my past-life wife from the 19th century. This is significant inasmuch as it argues against Shiel having done any prior internet research on my claims (i.e., since he had forgotten it). In fact, I asked him about this after the reading, and he rather testily replied that he didn't have time in his busy schedule to research anybody. I also obtained a personal testimony of his ethics, from a psychic who knew him through the Lily Dale community. The last I checked, I found no negative online reviews about his work. Therefore, I consider it extremely unlikely that he was so radically dishonest as to research my case beforehand. We will see the significance of *this* when we examine the ending of the reading.

My use of psychic mediums was only one prong of my research approach. I also used two hypnotic past-life regression sessions, but primarily, my method consisted of exposing myself to new elements of Mathew Franklin Whittier's history, and then documenting my subjective reactions. Those reactions included feelings and emotions, recognition of images, and, in a few instances, cognitive memories. In a paper entitled "Reading Previous Lives,"¹ reincarnation researcher Titus Rivas described my use of psychics, but quoted a relatively weak example from my website. In that example, I reported that Ms. Zellner had described Mathew and Abby going on picnics; and then I had a flashback memory of being on one of those picnics. One particular detail I remembered, concerning the construction of the basket, was somewhat unusual, but I was eventually able to find an example (the handle in this design is situated on top of the lid, being held only by a peg-and-loop on the front, such that if the peg falls out the top swings open).

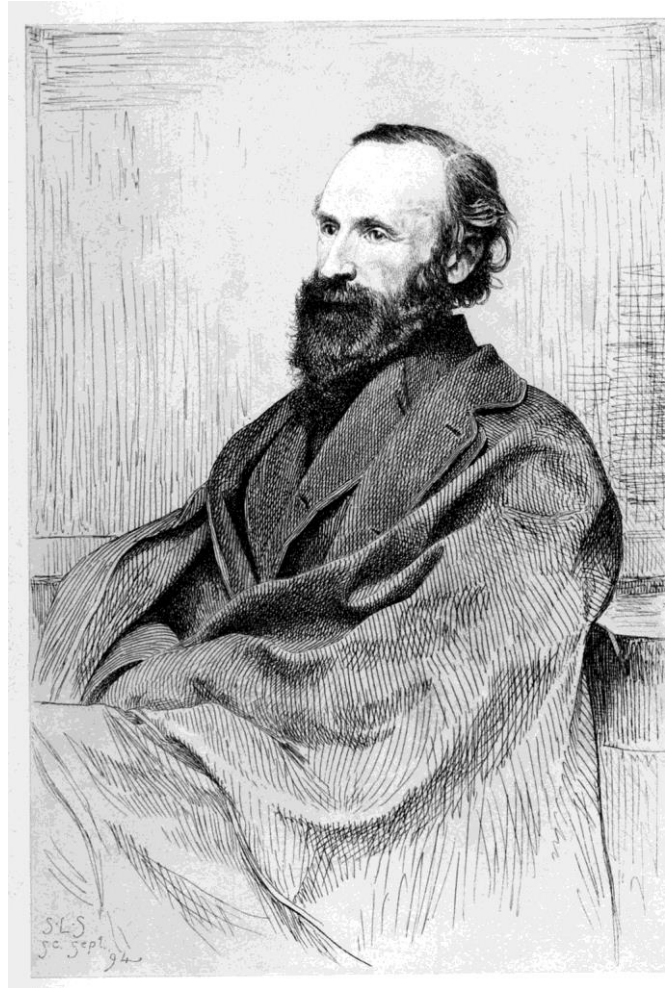
This is not really any evidence for Ms. Zellner's reading, at all, inasmuch as she only said that Mathew and Abby went on picnics—a very generic reference. It does provide *some* evidence for my flashback memory, inasmuch as the basket design I remembered is rare.

However, it's unfortunate that this example is made to stand for my entire study, because even if I constrain myself to these two psychic readings, some of the evidence which emerged from them is *much* stronger.

In what follows we will examine some of the stronger examples, taken from both readings. Here I must introduce a caveat: if I were to provide all of the historical evidence, we would have a lengthy book instead of a paper! I will allude to some of it, and provide a few concrete representative examples. All of that evidence is provided in my two e-books, "Mathew Franklin Whittier in his own words," and "Mathew Franklin Whittier in his own world." For the record, I should clarify that in 2017, when Mr. Rivas published his article, both my first book and my website were still relatively incomplete. I continued to revise them both for several years, because during this period, a virtual avalanche of new evidence was discovered.

Ms. Zellner's first remarks (taken from my real-time notes, since the session was not audio recorded), were:

Nobility, stature, status. Wife not right religion, family against. Loved her dearly. Family or families feuded, rejected him. "You can come but she can't"—because of religion or status.



Now, Ms. Zellner had in front of her the engraving of Mathew Franklin Whittier which you see above, sans any other identifying information. Mathew is arguably noble-looking, so it would be fair to suggest that she took her clues about “nobility, stature, and status” from that cue. However, what she says immediately afterwards would have to be entirely an embellishment, if it were derived from normal sources—and yet it turns out this description was precisely correct. The situation was that Abby, whose father was a marquis, came from an upper class family. Abby, as I was able to prove, was raised Catholic, and French was spoken in her home. Catholics, however, were still something of a persecuted minority in New England, in the 1830’s. Mathew, on the other hand, was raised on a poor Quaker farm. The Whittier’s were anti-slavery, and while Abby herself was also anti-slavery, the Poyen fortune (such as they had been able to take out of Guadeloupe, when they escaped from a slave revolt), had come from their family plantation. There is quite a bit of evidence that Abby’s father actively attempted to block the marriage, such that the couple eventually had to elope; and there is some evidence that Mathew’s mother did not approve of Abby, either. In short, if Ms. Zellner’s opening remarks were merely imaginative, they were nonetheless eerily accurate. However, she made one historical error—it was *Abby* who was of noble birth, not Mathew.

We must keep in mind, here, the dynamics of mediumship as explained by the mediums, themselves. They receive a series of quick impressions, which they must then interpret.

Sometimes these images or feelings are, apparently, given not by the spirit entity they are attempting to communicate with, but by the medium's "team" of helpers on the other side; and those impressions are taken from the medium's own personal associations. For example, an image of Elvis might mean, in the medium's personal universe, the period of the 1950's; or a fir tree might represent, for him or her, the state of Maine. Where errors enter in, my study of mediumship suggests that they represent *errors in interpretation*, not in the initial impressions, themselves. So in this example, the medium may have received an impression of nobility or aristocracy—and having the engraving of Mathew Franklin Whittier in front of her, she may have simply assumed that *he* was the one of noble birth. This does not represent a failure of the psychic conveyance of information, but rather a failure of the medium to correctly process that information. The best mediums are the most facile at correct interpretations, and hence appear to be more accurate. This does not necessarily mean they are "more psychic," per se.

The next statement from Ms. Zellner which I have in my notes (written in first-person) is: "I could be Matthew—confirmed, she's certain." She, of course, knew or assumed that I had sent her an image of the person I believed I had been in the 19th century. The use of the name "Matthew"² was for my notes, only—as best I can recall, I did not refer to him by name in the session (and definitely not by *last* name!). In fact, I was very careful to give Ms. Zellner as little information as possible, even by way of confirmations like "yes" and "no," during the first half of the session. Now, the *weight* of this particular statement may be gauged by how many veridical statements she made during the course of the reading. If she made a great many "hits," then this confirmation as to my identity with Mathew Franklin Whittier early in the reading carries a corresponding weight. Once again, keep in mind that the number of "misses" is logically irrelevant, so long as the percentage of "hits" is above chance. Which is to say, we are measuring against chance, not against misses. If a glass is half full and half empty, the empty portion is irrelevant for the purpose of *proving that there is water in the glass*.

There was some discussion, again, about Ms. Zellner's perception of me: "...like a fun-house mirror, distorted, because of both lives running parallel. More like a parallel universe, overlaid. Warped in time?"

I then asked if Abby was contacting me now, and it was confirmed that she did so "off and on."

Next, my notes say:

I was Matthew, confirmed. Was meant to be (marriage). Was some trouble in the marriage, mostly caused by influences and pressures from outside, still loved each other. I don't have any fear of crossing over, Abby says. Her energy gets low. Because of how she died—weak, voice hardly audible. Laying on rail bed with thin mattress. At home. One child died in fire? her death of disease—tuberculosis?

This was indeed a very close, simpatico relationship. However, both had a tendency to jealousy, which caused problems. Abby's obituary tells us that she died of "consumption," which is generally interpreted as tuberculosis. Their eight-month-old daughter, Sarah, died of unknown causes two weeks before Abby's death on March 27, 1841 (technically, perhaps, the evening of March 26th). I found two pieces of evidence suggesting that after Sarah's death, Abby became

unresponsive and gave up the will to live, perhaps refusing food. I have master's-level training in counseling, specializing in the field of death and dying. In my opinion, this behavior suggests a sudden tragedy for which Abby felt responsible; and under the circumstances, fire would be one of the most likely scenarios. This, for example, is how Henry Wadsworth's second wife died. Without further corroborating evidence, however, we can't rule out that this simply seemed like a plausible scenario to the medium.

Abby was taken back to her father's house roughly a week before her death. Therefore, Mathew would have personally witnessed her decline, but not her death per se. However, that is not specifically stated by Ms. Zellner in the reading. *If* the couple had put Sarah in the care of some other family, and if her clothing had caught fire (again, not uncommon in that era), this would have crushed Abby's spirit to the point that she might have given up fighting her illness.

There was some discussion about my present-day contacts with Abby in spirit, and about who my researcher at the time might have been in that past life. Then we have the following, as the reading continues:

The books we were studying were based on reincarnation. Black market books. had to hide them. Abby putting book under her dress if someone approached. Like-mindedness between us, in complete agreement. Abby talks poetically. Her education came after her school, largely from Matthew, reading books together. We were ahead of our time.

This is remarkably accurate and specific, but there is an inherent contradiction. Despite the medium's assertion that Mathew was the teacher, note that it is *Abby* who is reading the books to *Mathew*, in the medium's scenario, inasmuch as it is she who hides the books under her dress. Once again, such an error can occur when the medium, already having certain preconceptions, overlays that interpretation onto the symbols that he or she is receiving. In this case, we have already seen that Ms. Zellner assumed Mathew was the one with "nobility and status." Therefore, if she received an impression of "teaching," it would make sense to her that *he* was the teacher. In actuality, I learned that Mathew had very much desired a higher education when he was a boy of 12, but that his father had denied him. Mathew then ran away from home, returning, apparently, for a period of time, and then permanently striking out on his own at age 14. Meanwhile, Abby, who was four years younger but a literary prodigy in her own right, agreed to tutor him, drawing from her privately tutored education. She gave him—largely by correspondence—the equivalent of a college liberal education. However, mixed in with her curriculum she attempted to pass her extensive knowledge of mysticism on to her skeptical pupil. There is a great deal of supporting evidence for this in both Abby's writing, and in Mathew's. There is also evidence that Abby attempted to teach Mathew about reincarnation, specifically as found in the teachings of Pythagoras, but that Mathew initially used it as fodder for his humorous writings. Being a somewhat more traditional Christian, he denied it until many years after Abby's death, in the 1850's. He first embraced the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which do not include reincarnation; and thereafter he became a Spiritualist, which movement also did not typically accept it. However, there are clues indicating that by 1850 he was beginning to consider "pre-existence" of the soul; and by 1857 he appears to have believed that he was the reincarnation of a "high Jewish priest"—perhaps something he, himself, had been told in a psychic reading. Certainly, there is plenty of evidence for Mathew's own enthusiastic advocacy

of Spiritualism, as well as evidence that he *did* obtain readings and attend séances (in at least one instance, as a paranormal researcher).

Concerning Mathew and Abby being “like-minded,” this was hardly correct in their early relationship, where the paranormal was concerned, since Mathew would evidently actually tease Abby and argue with her about these topics. However, it was most certainly true in other respects; and by the time they married, he had come around on the paranormal, as well.

As regards the description that Abby “talks poetically,” I was not privy to Ms. Zellner’s own perceptions of Abby at the time; but I *did* learn that Abby, herself, was a child prodigy in poetry. It’s quite possible that this is what Abby was attempting to convey.

Now, the skeptic will suggest that Ms. Zellner was depicting Mathew and Abby studying “black-market metaphysical books” merely because she thought the characterization would please me. Indeed, this is plausible (and it may be the cause of her insertion of “reincarnation” as one of their study subjects)—but now we have two distinctly accurate portrayals: the first concerns their respective families’ objections to their marriage, and the second concerns their particular interest in mysticism as a general topic. We also have a third, which is the fact that they had a mentoring relationship. And, we have the accurate statement that Abby died of tuberculosis, which makes four. *All* of these things were fairly common in 19th-century America, but not necessarily *all four together*.

This means that we are now reaching the threshold of evidence beyond chance; which is to say, a glass with real water in it.

Next in my notes, we have:

Both were working on it, but it went wrong, and we were shunned. A court scene, like a witch trial—not physical punishment, but severe verbal. Lawyers.

Indeed, Mathew and Abby, in their teens, seem to have shared a common agenda for social reform and public education on many topics, albeit not the paranormal. I have no evidence of Abby being subjected to a court trial. However, there *is* evidence suggesting that when she was a girl of 12 years old, she was tricked into giving a palm reading for one of a pair of sisters. Apparently it was a set-up, and she was humiliated and shunned by the entire community. Only Mathew, and her oldest sister, may have stood up for her. Mathew, who was living in Boston at the time, wrote a series of three satirical sketches about “The Slander Club,” ostensibly to cheer her up by ridiculing her persecutors. All this happened long before their marriage. A similar situation developed, however, after they married in 1836. After eloping to nearby Dover, New Hampshire, (a cotton mill town) they wrote a series of rebuttal letters to the local newspaper, defending abolition. As a result, it appears that in late 1837 they were forced to leave. Even in Amesbury, where Mathew’s family had previously relocated after selling the family farm, they continued to be persecuted, while Mathew published a small newspaper and taught an evening penmanship class for the local millworkers. I can extrapolate that they may have advocated shorter hours for the mill girls, who then were turned against the couple by the mill owners. I

have evidence indicating that Abby was persecuted as a witch by the local girls, while both were likely persecuted for their anti-slavery views.

We can see that this depiction by Ms. Zellner was largely confirmed by the deep historical record. None of this information was known to me at the time of the reading, no less to her. Thus, it was not available from any normal source like the internet, nor via telepathy.

Continuing with my notes:

Died of tuberculosis? Was swift. Like a plague. I was with her and held her hand. She was the comforting one. She stayed in spirit, visited. Mathew believed it while it was happening, but sobbed afterwards and perhaps questioned whether he was going mad.

Again, the reference to tuberculosis. However, tuberculosis progresses slowly. That said, it appears that Abby convalesced several months in her family's native Guadeloupe, under the care of her first cousin, Mesmerist Charles Poyen. Poyen later went on to study medicine in Paris, but succumbed to tuberculosis, himself. Mathew, in a eulogy, infers that Charles stayed with them, for a time, in Portland, Maine. Abby returned to that city after several months' convalescence to give birth to their second child, Sarah, in July of 1840. Apparently, she had recovered her health—but then went downhill rapidly during the following winter of 1840/41, finally dying in March. Therefore, even though tuberculosis has a long incubation period and typically a lengthy progression, Abby's *relapse* may have progressed fairly quickly.

There are many clear indications, in Mathew's published writings (and especially in his poetry), that Abby would visit him in dreams after her death. There is one poem describing an incident in which he felt her presence, and then received a visitation dream that evening. There are, however, no descriptions of her becoming visible, in the way that Ms. Zellner seems to be depicting. In the February 7, 1852 "Carpet-Bag," Mathew takes on the persona of a reporter signing as "A. Trunk," reporting on a panorama of the Crystal Palace (at the London World's Fair). After setting the scene, as the panorama begins to roll before the audience's eyes, he is confronted with the depiction of a statue of the "Nymph of Lurleibergh" (spelled elsewhere "Lurleiberg") which vividly reminds him of Abby during the two weeks before her death, after the death of their daughter, Sarah:

But turning from the pomp of power,
Which well may claim a brighter hour,
My muse, being out of sorts to-day,
Will better sing a pensive lay,
 To cheer a lovelorn maiden's bower;
And in your next I'll try a stave
About the transept and the nave,
And then run on through each division,
 (*Divisions* where no discord reigned!)
And wind up all the *Exhibition*
 With what our gallant clipper gained.

In one side scene, withdrawn from sight,
The “Nymph of Lurleibergh” is sitting,
I think you’ll find her on the right,
She holds a lute, and not her knitting,
And in her wild, dejected air
I seemed to read a fixed despair,
That blinded me to all the glare
Of pomp and pride that glistened there.

Some memory of the past came o’er me,
And days long vanished rose before me;
I thought—no matter what I thought—
Such dreams as mine are lightly wrought,
And, lightly made, as lightly shivered;
And now it seemed as if in truth
A beam of light that gleamed and quivered
Upon the silvery tide of youth
Came back to cheer, and not in vain,
A spirit dulled with voiceless pain;
And as I pressed my couch at night,
Her image hovering round me seemed,
And at the first of morning light
I jotted down the things I dreamed,
And once again to slumber sunk,
With chattering teeth, your friend,

A. Trunk.



Here, you will recognize the evidence, mentioned earlier, suggesting that Abby may have refused to communicate or eat after Sarah's death. Ironically, Abby, who had the deeper faith and the stronger background in spiritual studies, would have been the "comforting one," in the sense of being resigned to her own death. Keep in mind that Ms. Zellner had no way of knowing any of this; and I was giving her nothing substantial, in my responses, on which to build a fantasy portrait. If she continued to be essentially accurate, but was going entirely on her imagination, she was exceedingly lucky.

Ms. Zellner continues:

Abby couldn't contact me until I was past age 46. I may pass at age 60, or perhaps 61. She will be the one meeting me on the other side. Important to get the work done before then. This is the time when we can get the information out.

It makes sense to me that Abby might not be permitted to contact me (and apparently there *is* the issue of permissions, in the interface between dwellers in the astral realm and people on earth), until I was 46. For one thing, I may not have been mature enough to handle it before that time; and secondly, for many years I was embroiled in a series of unhealthy relationships. It was only

in my mid-50's, shortly before this reading took place, that I made the decision to hand the entire question of finding my soul-mate over to my spiritual master, Meher Baba; or as they say, to "let go and let God." But there is also the practical consideration that once you publicly state you are in an active relationship with a partner in the astral world, your personal credibility—and hence, your ability to find employment—is potentially jeopardized.

As I revise this paper, in April of 2024, I am 70 years old and in reasonably good health. However, the year after the reading, my mother, in her 90's, became my sole responsibility during her last illness; and as I had promised, I took care of her at home. Being a sole caretaker is extremely stressful, and it could have easily cost me my own life over that six-year period. Furthermore, there were a number of hidden health issues I discovered later on, which if not corrected could have become serious. Perhaps Ms. Zellner sensed this around the corner for me. If, as some psychics and students of the paranormal have suggested, there are "exit points" in a person's life when they may or may not die, Ms. Zellner could have been accurately perceiving one of mine. Or, I may have simply been given an "extension," which phenomenon is frequently mentioned in the literature and in personal accounts.

Admittedly, the reference to "getting the work done" seems entirely generic and predictable. However, unless Ms. Zellner had studied my website prior to the reading, she had no normal way of knowing that I was actively working on a project of any kind, no less one which involved "getting the information out."

My notes continue:

"36"—at first thought 36 years old, but then, maybe 1836 as death time.

Mathew and Abby eloped on August 2, 1836.³ That I didn't get the reference, gives you some idea of how little normal sources played into these results. Not only did Ms. Zellner not know that the couple she was describing married in 1836, but I had forgotten it, myself, when I was taking the notes. If such a reference seems entirely arbitrary, remember that this is a past-life *wife* bringing up romantic references. (And as a typical oaf of a husband, I missed it.)

As a result of Abby's death, his heart wasn't in it after that. He didn't show his emotion, depression. Abby was his soul mate. They had overcome great obstacles to be together, her death was unexpected. He never thought he'd live so long without her. Became withdrawn, eccentric.

I can show, through the poetry Mathew wrote in tribute to Abby, that all of this was precisely correct. All of it except, perhaps, that her death was "unexpected." She had recovered from "consumption" when she returned from Guadeloupe. Some people *did* seem to recover from the disease permanently; and Mathew no-doubt hoped Abby was among them. What would have been "unexpected" was her relapse and rapid decline. Also, as mentioned there is evidence suggesting that after the death of their daughter (again, from unknown causes), Abby let herself go. This, also, would have been unexpected. There is some evidence suggesting that a similar scenario occurred after the death of their first child, in the fall of 1838, but that Mathew was able

to pull her out of it. This time, however, if Sarah had died in a fire and Abby felt responsible, he might not have been successful.

That Mathew became eccentric and isolated, may be seen from a poem he published in the April 15, 1843 edition of the Portland (Maine) "Transcript," a weekly literary newspaper to which he frequently contributed. Abby's family funeral apparently took place in mid-April, 1841. Mathew seems to have attended a later service arranged just for him, ostensibly because there was still animosity between himself and Abby's father. Still, he would sometimes publish poignantly relevant pieces on the date of her official funeral. In the introduction to the following poem, "The Great Cat Owl," Mathew tells us candidly that it has been written in imitation of another poet's work, which had earlier appeared in that same newspaper. Mathew's poem reads:

An eccentric fowl
Is the great Cat Owl;
Where the sun ne'er shone,
He loveth to brood
All sullen and lone.
Whoop, hurrah! for the Cat Owl grey,
He loves the night, but hates the day.

O! heavy and grave
Is his solemn stave—
A musical bird
Is the Owl I ween,
When his voice is heard
From his cover green.
Whoop, hurrah, for the Cat Owl grey,
He loves the night but hates the day.

When at close of day
He hunts for prey,
More dread to the coop
Than Reynard's prowl
Is the mighty swoop
Of the fierce grey Owl.
Whoop, hurrah! for the Cat Owl grey,
He loves the night, but hates the day.

Though never a word
From his beak is heard,
Yet he thinks the more,
Which is just as good,
For his thoughts don't bore
As his talking would.
Whoop, hurrah! for the Cat Owl grey,
He loves the night, but hates the day.

Huzza for the Owl!
The great pattern fowl,
The wise and the brave,
The roost-robber grave,
Long life unto him!
Whoop, hurrah! for the Cat Owl grey,
He loves the night, but hates the day.

Poins.

The signature, “Poins,” was one which Mathew used for this newspaper in the early-to-mid 1840’s, and which can be 100% verified for his pen. The picture Mathew paints of himself is of a grieving social reformer, who exposes injustice from behind a veil of anonymity—in other words, a sort of literary Zorro. Socially, while he can be quite entertaining, he permits very few to know him in any real depth. In other words, Ms. Zellner’s depiction was precisely on-target. If she were merely creating an imaginary person, she would now be moving well beyond the realm of “chance.” Certainly, one would never get this impression from the readily-available historical record. There are, as said, a number of Mathew’s grief poems and tribute poems concerning Abby which I could also point to, by way of confirming Ms. Zellner’s depiction—both in terms of their being “soul mates,” and also concerning his reaction after her passing.

In the second number of the series by “A. Trunk,” having assimilated the shock of his spirit contact with Abby, he resumes their shared fight against injustice:

And once again I seize the pen
To teach the erring sons of men,
And drag a mighty knave to view,
(The reader need not look so blue,
I mean not *him*, I mean not *you*!)

Continuing with my notes:

Something about Matthew estranged from his own lineage, not spoken about. Candace felt it was on the East Coast—NY, Washington, Virginia. Abby wanted Candace to address her as Abigail—formal. Showed wearing pearls.

The first statement is absolutely correct. It is indeed not spoken about *in the official Whittier legacy*, but the very sparseness of references to Mathew in John Greenleaf Whittier’s published correspondence speaks volumes. In the Feb. 5, 1899 Boston “Herald,” is a retrospective about Mathew written by a reporter named Charles O. Stickney, who had visited him at his workplace, the Boston Custom House, in the guise of a fan. He closes his article as follows:

When about taking my leave I remarked that I had heard more or less discussion as to his relationship with the poet, and though I well knew just what it was I wished to carry from him an “official” statement thereunto. His answer was characteristic of the man.

“The only relationship existing between John Greenleaf Whittier and myself,” he said in solemn deliberate tones, “is we both had the same father and the same mother.”

Note that we are now moving beyond the realm of chance—which is to say, there is definitely “water” in this “glass.”

At the time of the reading, I knew that Mathew was born in Eastern Massachusetts. However, I later learned that he spent many years living and working in New York City, beginning at age 12 when he first ran away from home. So far as I know he did not live in Washington or Virginia, although he did freelance as a reporter in Washington D.C.

At this point, my notes indicate that I told Ms. Zellner who the historical persons were that she was giving information about. Therefore, I do not consider the remainder of the reading evidential. However, we will examine two more statements briefly:

Abby asked about the five children. I corrected Candace, were only two, then remembered that Matthew had five total. Abby had found me, but can’t locate them, wanted very much to know what became of them.

This I really can’t comment on, except to say that Mathew entered a marriage presumably arranged by his mother a year after Abby’s death, by which he had three more children, all of whom lived into adulthood. Therefore, if all of Mathew’s children are included in the total, five is the correct number. One would imagine that if a person in the astral realm can find a former spouse, they can find anyone they wish to. I am unaware of any teachings which touch upon this issue of the limitations to the psychic abilities of an astral dweller, except, as said, concerning the issue of permissions.

Abby cries. Remembers sitting on a swing for two, under a tree by a river, romantic. Matthew reading black market book to her. Black market books hard to get. Metaphysical. Drew them together. Both new they would come together again. Both understood reincarnation.

This is the last statement we will analyze from this reading, and it gets mixed marks. The first sentence, “Abby cries,” confused me for a long time. Did Ms. Zellner mean to say, that Abby was crying in the middle of the reading, as she communicated? That’s how I interpreted it when I wrote it down, but it seemed implausible. Later, I understood it differently. Mathew and Abby’s courtship was very difficult. Her father tried his utmost to separate them, and her brother, John, appears to have been his father’s assistant in this unpleasant endeavor. It was a heart-wrenching experience for her—and just as she may have been depicting herself as a poet to Ms. Zellner by “talking poetically,” here she may have been conveying this stressful time in her life, by showing herself crying.

Indeed, it appears from one of Abby’s poems that she and Mathew would “sit up” together on a rise behind her family home, gazing at the nearby Merrimack River in East Haverhill; or, they may have done so in Newburyport, Mass., where Abby attended class. Indeed, they used to read

to each other; and indeed, she attempted to share metaphysical teachings with him. However, here the reading deviates from historical fact. At the time this would have happened—or at least, for the first several years—Mathew was skeptical to the point of actually poking fun at the occult subjects Abby was attempting to share with him, as for example astrology and prescient dreams. Rather than drawing them together, initially, it created friction, as Mathew would forcefully argue against these things, and she would experience a crisis of self-questioning. Later on in their relationship, however, it was as Ms. Zellner describes. So one might speculate that, as Abby conveyed these images, she preferred to depict the later phase.

I see there is one more of Ms. Zellner's statements I would wish to mention. I had asked her (which amounts to a prompt) whether Abby might have died from a plague which came from a ship. That was speculation on my part at the time, which now I think may have been mistaken. There is indeed evidence that Abby did charity work with Irish immigrants; and that Mathew was concerned for her safety. However, there is also evidence suggesting that she contracted tuberculosis by tending one of Mathew's relatives. If the former, it might be construed as having originally come "off a ship." But look at the second portion of this statement:

Plague did come from ship, hence Matthew's guilt. Women shunned Abby as well. Many of them gossiped behind her back. "Got the devil."

There is a great deal of evidence, in Mathew's writings, that he suffered from "survivor's guilt," which is pretty-much universal. But as best I can recall, the statement concerning Abby being shunned was *not* prompted by anything I said during the reading up to that point. Ms. Zellner would have had no way of knowing this detail, and yet I was able to prove, by circumstantial evidence, that it was quite correct. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, one of Abby's own stories has her protagonist tempted into giving a palm reading for one of two sisters, and then getting in trouble for it. If I am not mistaken, this was veiled autobiography. Secondly, we see the following brief announcement, reprinted from Mathew's 1838 newspaper, the Salisbury "Monitor," with commentary from the two editors who carried it—one from Louisville, and the other from New Orleans. The original text read:

The young ladies in our town amuse themselves by throwing stones at their neighbors' windows in the night. Their mamas ought to tie their little thumbs together with a cotton thread.—*Salisbury Monitor*.

The Louisville editor comments:

The young ladies of Salisbury, according to the Monitor of that place, amuse themselves nightly by breaking their neighbors' windows. Pope says—"Tis woman's part to ease man of his *pains*." Probably the Salisbury girls read it "*panes*."

But the more conservative editor of the New Orleans "Times-Picayune" says darkly:

You must be a hideous, ugly neighbor, Mr. Monitor, that the girls should find it necessary to pelt you with dawnsicks. For our part, we are rather in the predicament of the Newburgh man—obliged to club off the sweet creatures to keep them from killing

us with kindness.

Knowing the couple's situation, the context is clear. Mathew and Abby are living in the cheap housing set apart for the millworkers, who are mostly young women. These women have been turned against the couple by the mill owners. They are gathering outside the house at dusk, before Mathew arrives home from the printing office, throwing rocks through the windows and shouting curses and accusations, while poor Abby sits huddled inside holding her infant son Joseph, perchance covering his ears so that he doesn't hear the horrible things they are saying about his mother—and praying that they don't set the house on fire.

In support of this interpretation, is a story which Mathew wrote ostensibly lampooning amateurish contributions to literary newspapers; but in actuality, telling of this same period in their lives. The young wife frets that her husband is late returning home for dinner; but when he finally arrives, he explains that he was only detained by “bores” (one of Mathew’s pet humorous topics). Abby would have had good reason to be concerned, in early 1838, inasmuch as abolitionist Rev. Elijah Lovejoy had been murdered in his Illinois printing office by a pro-slavery mob the previous year.

Wife.—The evening wears apace; the clock hath struck
The mystic number seven; yet he comes not.
The coach which ever stopped to leave him here
Hath passed, and still another hath gone by;
And now I wait the next, to greet my lord,
Who surely must be in it.—

Hark! a noise.

One of the Omnibi approaches—stops—
And now, and now! I soon shall clasp my love
Within these loving arms!
[Enter Editor.] Art come my dear?
Oh, I have waited long, and feared that harm
Had fallen on you who didst ever come,
Ere this, to break the spell of loneliness
That falls upon me when thou art away.

Editor.—I was—alas! my wife, my own fine wife!
Beset with *boreds* and could not come till now.
'S death! How my blood doth boil along my veins
To think how we are subject to their spells.
They creep into our sanctum, sit them down
With adamant front and bully us
Into the advocacy of their schemes
To raise them to the posts they're aiming at,
To fill their pockets with the gold which we
Must ever lack. Or, they assume an air
Humble, insinuating, like the toad
That squat at our first mother's ear and lied

Her out of innocence and her bright home
In Eden. Oh, that I could touch them with
Ithuriel's spear, that turned the lying toad
Into the grinning demon!

There are many evidential references in this mock-play which identify the unsigned piece as Mathew's work, and which deeply inform one concerning his personality and his relationship with Abby. We will, however, move on now to the second psychic reading, given by Joseph Shiel on December 15, 2010.

First of all, Mr. Shiel was a psychic artist, and therefore we must examine the two drawings he made during the course of the reading. The first concerns a black couple whom Abby was befriending and, at one notable point, defending with a rifle!



No indication of such a relationship emerged in my study of the deep historical record. However, there is copious evidence indicating that Abby, herself, was strongly anti-slavery, and that her sympathies were clearly aligned with the less fortunate. I had an early past-life memory impression of her visiting poor people, even before I learned that “poor visiting” was a typical church activity for religious upper-class young women. Abby’s charity clients are represented in several of her short stories (discovered several years later). Given the power of her anti-slavery writings, contributed in collaboration with Mathew to the Dover “Enquirer” during the first year

and a half of their marriage, it would not be entirely out-of-character for her to have defended her black friends in this manner, if their lives were in danger. Note that Mr. Shiel was, presumably, unaware of the reading that Ms. Zellner had given nine months earlier, and thus would not have any idea that she had described Abby being subjected to a trial with lawyers. What *does* emerge from the deep historical record, is that both Mathew and Abby were not only ahead of their time (as both psychics indicated), but that they were rebels in their community, each in their own way. This would have been one of the things that drew them together. Note, for example, Mathew's semi-autobiographical, symbolic portrayal, in 1857, writing as his flagship character "Ethan Spike" of a chaperoned town picnic in his native "Hornby":

Wal, to begin agin, them two, though they had several or more to help em, what with the swingin, kissin, an the winkin an blinkin had their hands full. But the most tryin thing, that gin their anxious souls the most trouble, was the orful goins on of Jim Sprague and a gal whos kin on to visit to Dea. Ben Libby's. She actooaly tuk Jim's arm rite afore the hull craowd, an walked right off, jist as though't twas all right an accordin to statoote! No wonder that Liddy fainted an fell right daown kerwhack, or that Mrs. Cap'n turned green raound the gills, or that all godly, law-abidin folks went into a gineral state of astonishment.

Walking "right off" is symbolic for Mathew and Abby separating themselves from society—and we see society's reactions. These reactions may seem like comical exaggeration in response to the young couple of the story—but they were in literal proportion as regards Mathew and Abby, themselves. Note that it is specifically Abby who leads Mathew off, in this metaphor.

The second and last drawing by Mr. Shiel was of Abby, herself. In this case we can make a direct comparison with Abby's historical portrait—a miniature which was (as I have determined from a great many pieces of evidence) painted of her by Mathew's first cousin, Ruth Whittier Shute, probably in January of 1837, in Dover, when she was 20 years old:



I would not consider Mr. Shiel's drawing an extremely accurate likeness, but I would say that the similarity is probably beyond chance. The historical miniature had not been discovered at the time of this reading with Joseph Shiel, nor could it possibly have been seen by him prior to the reading. Note in particular that the woman in the drawn portrait appears to be in her 30's or even 40's, whereas Abby died at age 24. Unless Abby had some particular reason to present herself to Mr. Shiel in middle age, I can think of no reason why he would have age-progressed the drawing. I did get the sense, however, from one of his comments, that he didn't entirely trust his own abilities, and would sometimes second-guess them. It is possible that he re-worked the drawing after his initial impressions, to fit with some intellectual conclusion or other. Certainly, the mouth looks to me as though he extended it sideways.

Now, at risk of making this paper too long, let us go through each of Joseph Shiel's statements in order, comparing them to the deep historical record. Once again, no audio recording was made of the session. After discussing the drawings as he was rendering them (I received both by mail some days later), Mr. Shiel continued:

Black woman proud. Other woman's picture is a classic picture, taken on purpose, like a studio picture. Walking from left to right. Try to speak to her telepathically. In very long dress, light, not dark, flower dress with lace pulled in at waist. Hair falls to side but pulled back. Pull of hair (pulls?) to side, long. Gets an "R"--Randall. Last or first? Randall. Sweet. Intelligent. Woman before her time. Quick. Sass to her answers. Calls it like she sees it. Doesn't bowl people over, give them rope, then levels with logic and sense of humor. Very intelligent. Dry wit.

Holding hands, something in hand, stroll by, attractive.

In garden, warm summer day. Flowers. Would love flowers. Certain flower pointing to—honeysuckle. [At this point I think I mentioned our photography together, that she liked to photograph flowers]

I can't comment on the description of Abby's appearance, except to say that the dress Abby wears in the miniature portrait was probably borrowed to attend a funeral, and not her everyday attire. Note that the air of formality seems consistent with Ms. Zellner's description of Abby "speaking poetically" and wanting to be addressed as "Abigail." I have gotten the distinct impression, from Mathew and Abby's respective writings, that Mathew was the more laid-back jokester, while Abby was the straight-laced one, who took her musical studies and her spirituality seriously. We see, for example, this description of "little Mary"—a character representing Abby—who as a child had prepared a difficult solo for her church choir, only to have it ruined by a tone-deaf deacon who insisted on joining in:

In the meantime the congregation assembled, and the worship proceeded in the usual way. At length came the anthem. It even went beyond expectation. A long "rest" immediately preceded the solo. It was no *rest* for poor "little Mary." It was the most anxious minute she had ever passed. She arose blushing and trembling. Her agitation gave a tremor to her voice, which added to the pathos of the music. It was beautiful.

Now, Deacon Goodman always made it a rule when any accident had detained him until after worship had commenced, to come in very softly. How different from the fashionable flourish? All were intent on the solo.

None heard and but few saw Deacon Goodman enter his pew, and take up the sheet on which the words of the anthem were printed.

Unlike that of many singers, the articulation of "little Mary" was perfect. The Deacon soon found the piece; and to the astonishment of the congregation, indignation of the choir, and the perfect horror of "little Mary," he "struck in," and accompanied her through the *solo*. Accompanied!! "Oft in the stilly-night," accompanied by *Captain Braggs Battery*, would give some notion of it. Poor little Mary was sick a fortnight.

The name "Randall" has not come up in my study. However, Abby, who was born "Abigail Weld Poyen," presumably being named after the local doctor's wife, Abigail Weld, had changed her middle name by the time she married Mathew to "Abby Rochemont Poyen." The name "Rochemont" comes from her French father's extended family name. It could be theorized that Mr. Shiel, whose psychic hearing was imperfect, heard a name beginning with "R" which he approximated as the more familiar-sounding "Randall," adding his impression that it might not have been a first name. It is typical, in mediumistic readings, that the initial consonant and perhaps the beginning of the name is all the medium can catch; and that they have to extrapolate the remainder. For example, a medium may say "I get a name that starts with the "K" sound—Katherine, Katrina, Kelly, something like that."

Now we have a detailed description of Abby's personality. Although some of it may be considered generic, I would say that, taken together as a whole, it is quite specific; and moreover, it aligns precisely with the deep historical record. Abby's high intelligence is mentioned by Mr. Shiel no less than four times during the course of this reading, and this was, indeed, one of

Abby's most prominent traits. It appears, to me, that she was really in the "genius" range. If Mathew was exceptionally bright, she was "off the charts."

I had a distinct past-life memory, as follows:

Mathew and Abby have invited one of his business associates—a man he doesn't know very well—for dinner. Abby serves the meal and keeps quiet, as per her accepted social role. But after dinner, he begins lecturing her on some matter of politics or society as though talking down to a child. She listens with her large eyes wide open, as though taking it all in submissively—but Mathew is rubbing his hands under the table, in anticipation. He knows that Abby, his "secret weapon," is about to cut the man down to size. Perhaps this guest is pro-slavery, in which case he is really in trouble!

*He finally comes to the end of his discourse, and once he falls silent, Abby quickly destroys his position with a few pithy comments. Surprised and enraged, he screams, as he grabs his hat and storms out of the house, "You'd better **curb your bitch!**" (Meaning, a female dog.)*

There are at least a couple examples of this habit of Abby's, in the historical record. In one of her own stories, entitled "Master Palmer," there is a young sister and brother named Charles and Jane—symbolizing, no doubt, Mathew and Abby as friends in their youth. Charles, having been unfairly punished by his father, has run away from home. Jane, who is treated more gently and who has ready access to her father, tries to explain to him about her brother's behavior, and his own part in it:

The petted Jane, unlike her brother, entered boldly and going close to him put her arm fearlessly about her father's neck.

"Dear papa, do you know where Charley is?"

"No, my dear little one; I fear Charley is a very naughty boy, and will make our hearts all sad."

"Oh, but, papa, don't we know what will make him good?"

"What, child?"

"Love, papa; he is always good to me, and oh, you don't know how much I love him; Charles says you put him down in school when he don't deserve it, papa, and don't treat him so kindly as you do the other boys, and—"

Hush, hush! not another word of that, Jane. Charles is my own son, and if I kept him in the highest places, other boys would think themselves put down, and their fathers would accuse me of partiality, and then I should lose their countenance; and then, perhaps, their influence might forfeit me my place; and then, then, my little darling Jane, what should we all do for bread to eat and a roof to cover us?"

For a moment Jane seemed lost in thought. “And that is what you call *policy*, isn’t it, father? Well, it seems to me like acting what isn’t *truth*. But now you are at home, father, do let Constant and me go and look for him.”

“No, Jane; if Charles is guilty of playing truant he must not be coaxed home.”

“Oh, father! but why not try coaxing once? you know you never do; who knows but it is just the thing to do him good? Why, if you hadn’t always been good to me, there is no telling what a wicked, vengeful thing I should have been.”

“But Charles is a boy, my little daughter, and such treatment as you receive would only make him silly and girlish. He must learn self-reliance, and not lean always on his father’s love.”

“But you said yesterday, father, that it was wicked to seem to rely upon ourselves; that we were leaning upon our Heavenly Father’s love every moment of our lives.”

“Ah, Jane, remember I am but an earthly parent, and *my* support may be withdrawn from him at any moment.”

“Yes, but then it seems to me men are not so very independent of one another, after all,” persisted Miss Jane, determined to carry the point. “Now, don’t be angry, father, but haven’t I heard you say that your happiness depended—oh, you could not tell how much—on those about you? Why may not Charles grow up to be like you?”

“You don’t understand my meaning, Jane; you’re a mere child; run away to your play, run.”

I discovered this excerpt after I had the memory of Mathew and Abby at the dinner table with the guest.

Mr. Shiel continued:

Would have been good with animals. Knew how to shoe a horse, but would have someone do it for her. Wanted to know everything as a child. Animals important, good, patient with them [I remember the psychic said, “like a ‘horse whisperer’”].

Liked animals more than people, who could be cruel and stupid, didn’t deal well with ignorance. Intelligent, well before her time. Stroll over and over.

I know, from the record, that Abby was deeply responsive to the spiritual beauty and wisdom inherent in Nature, and that she spent much time in it alone. One of her poems depicts her, as a child, having been wandering in the surrounding countryside the entire day looking for the faeries which her mother had told her about. She describes experiencing God manifesting in and through Nature, though she failed to spy any of the “little people.” One gets the clear impression from this and other sources that Abby was eccentric and something of a rebel, even though she

was refined in her demeanor. After all, she appears to have renounced her family's wealth—which had been earned through slavery—and to have married a poor farmer's son, because of his nobility of character. Clearly, she was a social reformer who championed the less fortunate, as that theme is reflected in her short stories (published posthumously by Mathew). As for animals, there are a great many references indicating Mathew's compassion for the suffering of animals; but I can think of only two examples in Abby's own writing. Both would embroil us in an authorship dispute, but for the sake of example I will choose the less controversial. This is a tribute to a mocking bird, which was reworked and falsely claimed by her classroom teacher, Albert Pike. The original poem, written when Abby was 14 years old, is entitled "Ode to the Mocking Bird":

O bird, who dwellest in the lonely woods,
Far from all cities—where men dream of life,
Walking with blinded eyes, and dull care broods
Upon their withered hearts, and angry strife
Flaps her broad wings before the eyes of men,
And gnaws upon their souls, and avarice halts
Out from his gold and misery-piled den,
And grasps men's souls, with yellow, shriveled hands,
And shrinks them up, and filthy gods exalt
To proud dominion, worse than pagan lands
Have ever bowed before—
(And, clutching handfuls up of glittering ore,
He makes of it—oh wonder! Strong, firm bands,
To bind them to his sordid service and cursed lore.)

Thou knowest nought of this. Thy home is in
The thick-leaved trees; and there thou hast thy nest,
Where the leaves whisper with a quiet din,
And hardly moving airs may cool thy breast;
And there thou fill'st with many a tune the wood,
Singing unto the giant forest trees,
And waking up the quiet solitude,
Sending about with never-ceasing flow,
A different strain on every changing breeze—
Running about, as leaping waters go,
Through every merry change,
And making men, for thy wild wondrous range,
Stop in their journeying that they may know,
What emulous wild bird pours forth a song so strange.

O thou philosopher! who laughest at
All the troubles of the world; I would that I
Thy happiness could ever imitate,
And far above all cares and troubles fly.
Thou art not drunken with rich wine, but joy
Forever sits upon thy careless heart,

Shaking sweet influence without alloy,
From his light wings upon it. Thou whose throat
Surpasseth in its power all human art,
Who startlest each lone bird with his own note,
As if thou wert his mate—
Oh thou! Whose song is heard, early and late,
Among the moving leaves to run and float,
Teach me the joyful secret of thy happy state.

It cannot be that thou who now dost sing
With such tumultuous melody, while round
Are spirits of the deep wood hovering,
And drinking up with eager ear each sound—
It cannot be that thou dost but conceal
The troubles of thy heart with stormy mirth,
Nor ever at those gushing noises feel
The joy thou tellest. This is but for men,
Who walk about upon the care-filled earth,
And pour out songs with heart-directed pen,
Making the earth admire—
While they with their own songs grow faint and tire,
Yea, droop and languish at the soul, even when
Their words burn most, with their prophetic fire.

Here you see not only Abby's deep appreciation for the bird, but also her dislike of ignorant human beings, just as Mr. Shiel described.

My notes continue:

Somebody else—John around her life.

Abby came from a family of nine children. John, two years younger, became the businessman of the family and seems to have followed in his father's footsteps more than the other two sons. My past-life impressions suggest that John was his father's "right-hand man," and was very protective of Abby in an officious sort of way. In this capacity, he was adamant—and devious—in his efforts to keep Mathew and Abby apart. From various clues, both inner (past-life memory) and literary (Mathew and Abby's published works), it appears that John wrote a letter to Mathew, falsely asserting that Abby didn't want to see him anymore because of his low class status and poor prospects. If this is the "John" whom Mr. Shiel is referring to, the characterization of being "around her life" would have been exactly on-target.

She is feisty—"fight the good fight." Raising her voice to state her mind. Screaming, yelling. See scene yelling at others. Rifle in picture. She knew how to use a rifle, not her nature to be violent. Could use to protect.

Other woman and man have something to do with it—part of the protected. Whether to take up arms to protect.

Now, of all the statements made by Mr. Shiel, this one seemed the most far-fetched. Keep in mind that he had no normal way of knowing whom he was contacting, or reading about. This would be *really* sticking his neck out, in such a reading. It is most certainly not generic! Nor would it be calculated to please the person paying for the reading.

It seemed unlikely to me at the time, as well. That, however, was before I read Mathew and Abby's pro-abolition letters to the 1837 Dover "Enquirer." One of the last of the series ends as follows. Remember that this town, Dover, is presumably run by the owners of its large cotton mill, the Cocheco Mill—who are clearly implicated in Abby's closing:

Finally, abolitionists are represented as *denunciatory*. We believe slave holding to be a great sin against God—we *know* that he abhors *robbery* for burnt offering.—Therefore we denounce slavery as a sin. We *denounce* men stealers, and slave drivers, and buyers, and sellers, as sinners,—we denounce against them not any threats of our own, but the threatenings of God's word. Wo to the oppressor if he forsake not his wicked ways. And wo to *thee*, who, "when thou saveth a thief, then thou consentest with him, and has been partaker with adulterers. Now consider this, ye that forget God lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

This is the way we denounce. We bring the threatenings of God's word to bear upon the sin, and the sinner, and upon all who partake in his sins by upholding him.

We are sorry to be severe but we must do our duty.

Although these letters were a collaborative effort, being jointly signed (by pseudonym), this particular closing would have been written by Abby. *Now* we can better imagine her firing her father's rifle into the air, to warn anyone who might be threatening her friends, the black couple.

Mr. Shiel continues:

All people equal, get into some scraps. Educated. Willing to get dirty, do gardening, shoe the horse. Most women of her class not allowed to do it.

Reading between the lines, and adding in my past-life memory impressions, I get the feeling that Abby rather ran wild—she communed with Nature, where she wrote poetry, sang, and danced free-form. She had no interest in upper-class society, having renounced her father's wealth and position. She also had no interest in the wealthy suitors he attempted to introduce her to; rather, she was secretly in love with her rustic student, Mathew, and foresaw their marriage as soul-mates (i.e., after first civilizing him). Her father wanted to "tame" *her* by sending her away to finishing school, of which Abby was terrified; but her mother, who understood, protected her. All of this—some of it derived from clues discovered *after* the December, 2010 reading—tends to confirm Joseph Shiel's description.

However, note his casual mention, "Most women of her class not allowed to do it." Mr. Shiel *had no normal way of knowing Abby's class*. I had given him no indication whatsoever that her

father was a marquis, or that she was raised in an upper-class French home environment. This is another example of Mr. Shiel sticking his neck out, and it's a direct "hit." There is even a second "hit" contained in this brief passage—the historical record indicates that Abby's father enjoyed trading in horses.

Bright, piercing eyes—green or blue? Not brown. Dress, as walked garden, like an old Renoir painting.

In almost all of Mathew's literary references to Abby, he gives her "azure," or blue, eyes. However, there are indications—including in her portrait—that she had a very fair complexion. There are also a few clues that her eye color was actually *indeterminate*—sometimes green, sometimes blue or other colors. This is consistent with extremely fair skin. In Abby's story about a sort of dwarf idiot-savant named Bobby Lincoln, we read:

Bobby Lincoln...imagine a hunchback, dwarfish shape, bristly elfin locks, eyes, nobody knows what color, sometimes hazel, sometimes gray, sometimes jetty black, and *sometimes*, scandal says--out upon the jade!--sometimes lincoln green.

It is possible that, in addition to identifying with the sister in this story, Abby also identified with Bobby Lincoln, seeing herself as a preternaturally gifted eccentric (Bobby Lincoln was a violin virtuoso). However, the earliest of her stories that I have found—published by Mathew in a newspaper he was editing in 1830—is a tribute to "Mary of the Valley." *This* one is more valuable to us, inasmuch as "Mary" clearly represents Abby's young ideal of womanhood. Therefore, she has almost certainly projected herself into this portrayal:

...an admirer of hers told me, that after several years' acquaintance, he positively could not pronounce with certainty whether her eyes were blue, black or hazel. Indeed, said he, one must have been dead to their expression, who could coolly bethink himself of ascertaining their color. But the color, if known, might easily fade from the recollection—the expression, never.

That this idiosyncratic issue comes up in not one, but two of Abby's own short stories, suggests to me that it was, in fact, autobiographical.

At this point in the reading, Mr. Shiel is speaking as he draws Abby's portrait. I have excerpted those responses to my questions about her contacting me in this life:

Bit of a chin. Nice features. [Smilt?] but nice cheeks, slender neck, lips thin, not bulbous.

Henry. Henry? She's serious about what she believes in but optimistic and joyful, very sure of herself.

Met her here?

30's, 40? Pretty. Kind of person he would like, strong-minded, independent, smart. Can be a challenge, lot of fun. Good partner to/for me.

One may compare the verbal description to the comparative images, above. The only "Henry" who came up in the study, was a three- or four-year-old boy whom Mathew and Abby may have taken places and "adopted" from Mathew's cousin's family, before they, themselves, had children. His portrait—if indeed it was his—was listed at auction by the same seller who was offering Abby's miniature, being manifestly by the same artist. Otherwise, I don't know who "Henry" might have been.

I am not certain that the description of Abby as being "very sure of herself" was accurate. I get the impression she had low self-esteem as regards her appearance (hence her identification with "Bobby Lincoln"), believing that Mathew was merely flattering her when he would praise her. On the other hand, I think she was quite sure of her convictions, especially as regards service to others, and her belief in God.

Again, Abby died at age 24. So "30's or 40?" was simply incorrect. However, the remainder of this sentence fits precisely with everything I can glean from all sources, including Mathew's various tributes to her.

Got sick, went (passed) earlier than expected, Stomach pain in abdomen, Childbirth?

This is also incorrect, inasmuch as she did not die in childbirth. However, tuberculosis can affect organs other than the lungs. If it infects the kidneys, it might produce a sensation which Mr. Shiel—feeling it sympathetically—interpreted as "stomach pain in abdomen."

Technically, most people can be said to pass "sooner than expected," but the clear meaning is that she died young.

Children? Babies, she did have children. Carried on name. Boy? Son? Son lived and carried on name. Psychic says he may be putting in his own thoughts at this point.

Mr. Shiel is correct that she had children, but incorrect that they lived, or that a son "lived and carried on (the) name." In fact, even Mathew's son Charles, by his second marriage, didn't carry on the Whittier name, remaining a bachelor. However, we see by Mr. Shiel's own admission that he may be "putting in his own thoughts." Admittedly, it is conceivable that at this point in the conversation, I inadvertently cued Mr. Shiel that something was wrong, by a longer than usual silence.

In any case, if Mr. Shiel was losing his concentration, or losing the connection, he rallied right at the end of the reading:

"M." Keeping getting "M." Matthew, Massuen."

Hearing Mathew's first name, I tried not to betray my excitement. Because the psychic's voice had trailed off on the second word—which I wrote in my notes as "Massuen"—I requested that

he repeat what he had just said. Indeed, he repeated it precisely as he had the first time, trailing off on the second word!

I didn't press him on the matter, but after the reading, looking at where Mathew lived on the map, I noted that the town of "Methuen" lies directly adjacent to his hometown of Haverhill, and also very near to Amesbury Mills, where he and Abby were living after having fled from Dover, New Hampshire. In 1838, living in Amesbury, Mathew and Abby were being persecuted. At his brother's recommendation, he began corresponding with abolitionist Thomas Chandler in Michigan. Finally, he decided to visit Chandler (a round trip of several days in that era), to discuss the possibility of moving his family there. As near as I can tell, when he returned, he found that their 11-month-old son, Joseph, had died in a local scarlet fever outbreak. It so happens—and when I write those three words, I am not conveying any idea of how difficult it was to prove—that Mathew and Abby moved to Methuen, probably at the invitation of his cousin Richard Whittier, who owned a farm there. This would have been a period of convalescence in a place safe from persecution, though Mathew's symbolic story about the experience suggests that the townspeople spread the rumor that they were lazy (because they didn't work).

Now, consider the veridical value of this last statement. Joseph Shiel had not been told Mathew's name. He had no normal way of knowing anything at all about this historical couple, *unless* he had cheated by visiting my website, say, during the phone call. I think this explanation is very unlikely, but I cannot absolutely discount it. *Nonetheless*—and this is why Abby, herself, would have added the reference—*neither Mr. Shiel nor myself had any idea that Mathew and Abby had ever lived in Methuen, Mass.* In fact, I would have to guess that the reason his voice trailed off during this second word, is because he worked out of a Spiritualist church situated only about 32 miles southeast. He would have assumed that he *had* to be making that up! And note that there is only one town in the United States named "Methuen."

Again, at the end of the reading, according to my notes:

Upon my asking, he confirmed that he didn't do any internet research ahead of time, that he does 3-4 readings per day, doesn't have time to research them, and isn't good with computers.

I will not attempt a count of veridical or proved statements occurring in these two readings, because it depends very much on personal interpretation as to what one considers a "hit." A liberal tally might be as high as 15; a very conservative one, perhaps five. I would venture to say, however, that no rational person would put the tally at zero. We have a highly intelligent couple, ahead of their time, with an avid interest in metaphysics, who read aloud to each other and mentor each other (or, one mentors the other). We have one of them from an upper class household; we have the families disapproving of the relationship on the basis of both class and religion. We have Abby dying before her time of a disease (Ms. Zellner said, specifically, *tuberculosis*). Abby is characterized as being something of a rebel with a cause, a champion of the less fortunate—with both a formal side, and an informal side. We have an accurate depiction of Mathew's personality, after Abby's death; and an indication that Abby contacted him from the spirit world (both of which are substantiated in Mathew's published works). And there is more,

but the most startling evidence is Joseph Shiel's final statement—Mathew's first name, coupled (if I heard it correctly) with the name of a town where the couple lived for a month or two. This is a fact that neither Mr. Shiel, nor myself, had any normal way of knowing in Dec. of 2010—*even if he had been cheating by looking at my website during the reading*. And suppose he was *not* cheating, which is by far the more likely scenario? Then this is a very strong hit, indeed.

Not that it is unusual for psychic mediums to accurately give the names of family members. I have seen, in video, a number of the prominent mediums do this in one reading or another. In one memorable reading, Gordon Smith accurately got a first, middle and last name (albeit out of order). It is, however, startling when you experience this first-hand. Of the four names which Mr. Shiel reported, one ("Henry") was at least plausibly connected with Mathew and Abby's life; while two were definitely connected.

Conclusion:

We have seen that details of a past life can indeed be derived through the use of authentic psychic mediums. The details they provide can be corroborated in the historical record beyond any reasonable doubt. Some references may be so specific and idiosyncratic that the skeptical objection of "chance" is defeated on that basis, alone. Even those references which might be deemed generic when taken in isolation, can rise to the level of valid evidence when taken together with other references. Many young women of the 19th century wore lace collars, were exceptionally smart, did charitable work, and defended the underprivileged. Some of them had indeterminate eye color, and a wry sense of humor with "sass" to their answers. Some of them were from the upper classes, and so-on. But not so many of them had *all of these traits at the same time*. And certainly, not so many of them, statistically, had a brother named John "around them," and a sweetheart named Mathew; while I would venture to say that only one such couple lived for any length of time in Methuen, Mass.

Using psychics was hardly the only method I employed in my reincarnation self-study; nor was it even the predominate method. Personally, I was only able to afford two sessions, plus a third which was demonstrably a hoax, and for which I got my money back. That psychic, also advertising herself as a psychic artist, produced a portrait which I later found online, the original of which hangs in a museum! This supposed psychic had literally copied it off the internet, but she hadn't counted on me searching with the same key words she had used, and hence finding the same image.

Ideally, for a properly funded researcher, I would recommend a greater number of readings, with different psychics—perhaps five or six. Even with two psychics, I obtained several cross-correspondences, including the fact that Abby was highly intelligent and ahead of her time. With six genuine psychics, there would likely be more.

Keep in mind that Candace Zellner stated unequivocally that I am the reincarnation of Mathew Franklin Whittier. The more "hits" she made, the more significance this statement carries. Given her track-record in this reading as compared with the deep historical record, I would say it should be taken seriously, especially when combined with the results of my study as a whole.

Footnotes:

1) Rivas, Titus and Dirven, Anny, 2017, “Reading Previous Lives: Is There Evidence for Psychic Knowledge of Former Incarnations of Others?” *The Paranormal Review*, Issue 82, Spring 2017, pp. 20-22.

2) At this early stage of my research, I spelled the name with two “t’s,” “Matthew.” Later, when I obtained a copy of a full signature (appended to Mathew’s first letter to Thomas Chandler), I saw that however the historians spell it, Mathew himself signed as “Mathew.” Accordingly, I began spelling it as he had done. For accuracy’s sake, where I quote my writing from this early period, I retain the spelling I was using at that time.

3) Official records indicate a marriage date of August 4, 1836, but I have extrapolated from various clues that their elopement more likely took place two days earlier—the same evening that they watched Rev. Root deliver an anti-slavery sermon they had ghost-written, in their hometown of Haverhill. That would have been their excuse to be out together in the evening, making it possible to leave town undetected, and hence have a head start of an hour or so before her father came looking for her.