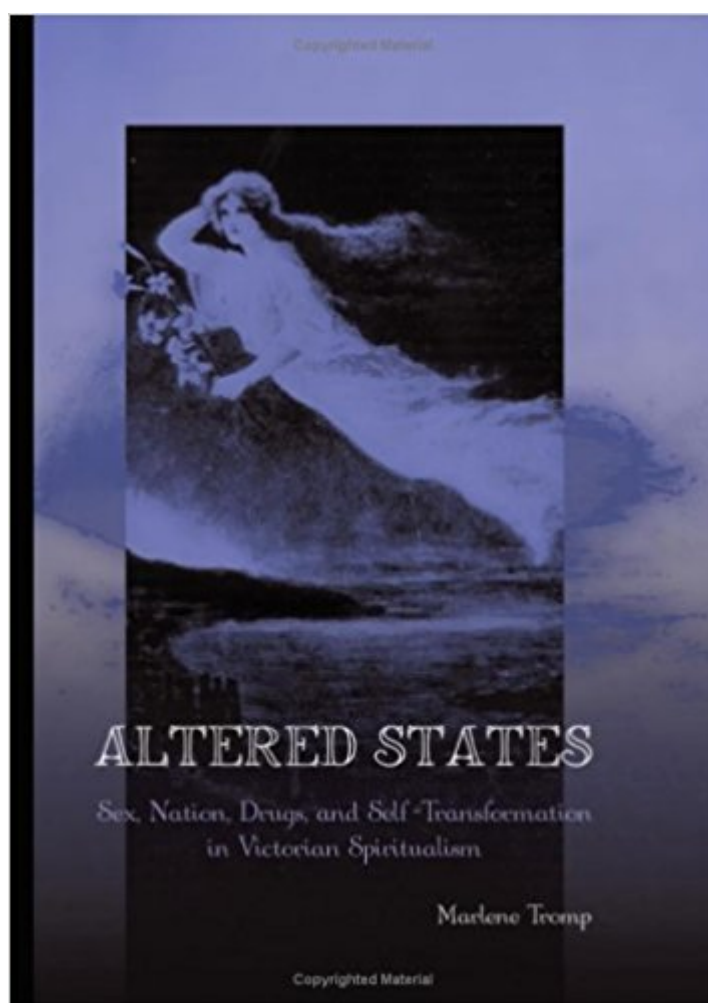


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# Altered States: Sex, Nation, Drugs, And Self-Transformation In Victorian Spiritualism (SUNY Series, Studies In The Long Nineteenth Century)



## Synopsis

Altered States examines the rise of Spiritualism the religion of seances, mediums, and ghostly encounters in the Victorian period and the role it played in undermining both traditional female roles and the rhetoric of imperialism. Focusing on a particular kind of seance event the full-form materialization and the bodies of the young, female mediums who performed it, Marlene Tromp argues that in the altered state of the seance new ways of understanding identity and relationships became possible. This not only demonstrably shaped the thinking of the Spiritualists, but also the popular consciousness of the period. In diaries, letters, newspaper accounts, scientific reports, and popular fiction, Tromp uncovers evidence that the radical views presented in the faith permeated and influenced mainstream Victorian thought."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm no historian, so read my review knowing I'm merely a lay person interested in why all our stereotypes of hauntings and spiritism seem anchored in Victorian tropes. Ms. Tromp has a very well-researched and, for this reader, original set of theories about why the prudish Victorians also generated a society known for mediums (invariably female), seances, and future-readers. She finds the answer not in Freudian interpretations of individual psyches, but in expressions of rebellion to the prevailing social paradigms of class, race, and gender. Her prose is careful and precise yet not stuffy nor laborious. Reading simply as a dude interested in the topic, I found the book stuffed with abundant examples and well-supported reasoning about the spiritually strange practices of the

Victorians. Though Ms. Tromp's target audience is probably other academics, I suggest anyone interested in steampunk culture or gothic moodiness will find a lot to revel in as this book takes them deeper into the death-obsessed Victorian culture, not merely for spectacle, but to better understand.

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