



Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance: Mediums, Spiritualists and Mesmerists in Performance

Amy Lehman

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Spiritualists in the nineteenth century spoke of the "Borderland," a shadowy threshold where the living communed with the dead, and where those in the material realm could receive comfort or advice from another world. The skilled performances of mostly female actors and performers made the "Borderland" a theatre, of sorts, in which dramas of revelation and recognition were produced in the forms of seances, trances, and spiritualist lectures. This book examines some of the most fascinating American and British actresses of the Victorian era, whose performances fairly mesmerized their audiences of amused skeptics and ardent believers. It also focuses on the transformative possibilities of the spiritualist theatre, revealing how the performances allowed Victorian women to speak, act, and create outside the boundaries of their restricted social and psychological roles.

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