



**Ghostly Communion: Cross-Cultural Spiritualism
in Nineteenth-Century American Literature
(Reencounters with Colonialism: New Perspectives
on the Americas)**

John J. Kucich

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In this exceptional book, John J. Kucich reveals through his readings of literary and historical accounts how spiritualism helped shape the terms by which Native American, European, and African cultures interacted in America from the earliest days of contact through the present. Beginning his study with a provocative juxtaposition of the Pueblo Indian Revolt and the Salem Witchcraft trials of the seventeenth century, Kucich examines how both events forged "contact zones" - spaces of intense cultural conflict and negotiation - mediated by spiritualism. Kucich then chronicles how a diverse group of writers used spiritualism to reshape a range of such contact zones. These include Rochester, New York, where Harriet Jacobs adapted the spirit rappings of the Fox Sisters and the abolitionist writings of Frederick Douglass as she crafted her own story of escape from slavery; post-bellum representations of the afterlife by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Mark Twain and the Native Americans who developed the Ghost Dance; turn-of-the-century local color fiction by writers like Sarah Orne Jewett, Charles Chesnutt and Maria Cristina Mena; and the New England reformist circles traced in Henry James's *The Bostonians* and Pauline Hopkins's *Of One Blood*. Kucich's conclusion looks at New Age spiritualism, then considers the implications of a cross-cultural scholarship that draws on a variety of critical methodologies, from border and ethnic studies to feminism to post-colonialism and the public sphere. This study, which brings canonical writers into conversation with lesser-known writers, is relevant to the resurgent interest in religious studies and American cultural studies in general.

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