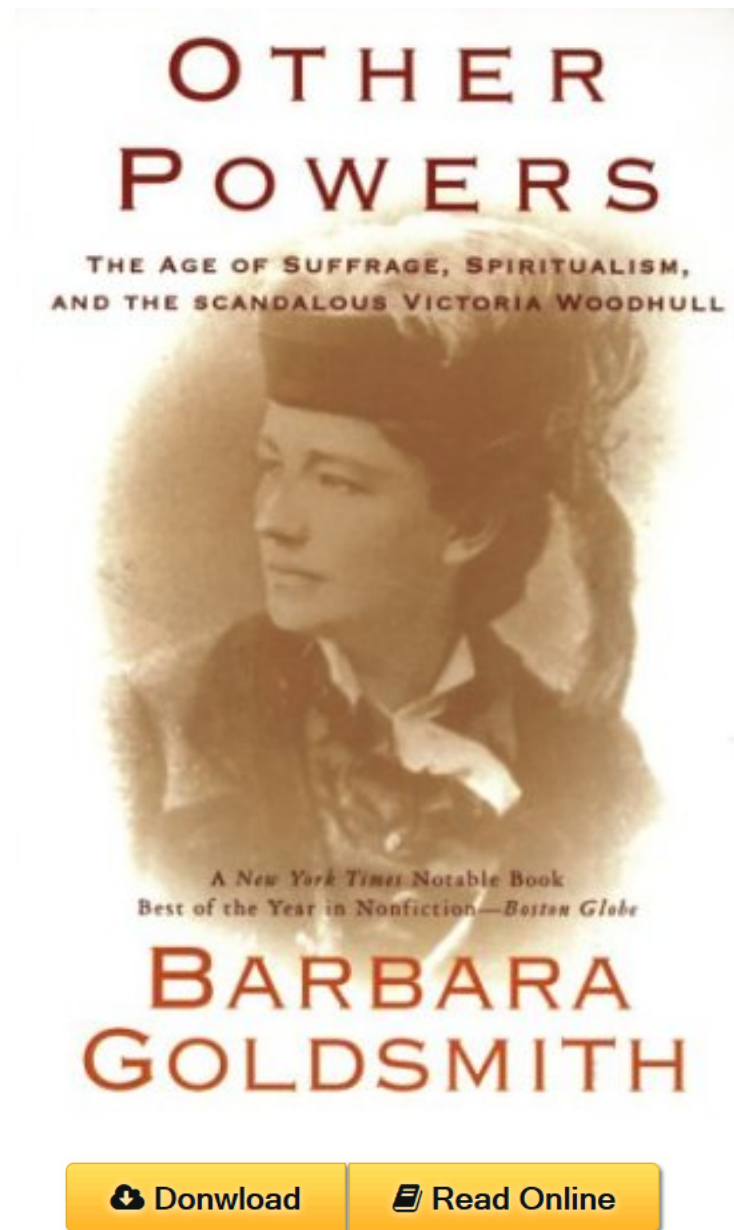


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Other Powers: the Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull

Barbara Goldsmith

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Barbara Goldsmith : Other Powers: the Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Other Powers: the Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. One of the best books I've ever read.By TerrieThis is the most

fascinating non-fiction book I have ever read. It gives you a full picture of the women and men around them who started the women's suffrage movement in the US. Seriously - you need to own this and send copies to all the women in your life. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. *Spiritualism, Suffrage, and Sex* By Alicia Crumpton What more could you ask for than a story interlacing spiritualism, suffrage, and sex?! Goldsmith masterfully tells us the story of Victoria Woodhull. Gone is the need to present a pristine sugary view of a woman who lived from 1838 to 1927. I laughed at times thinking - wow! I bet this gal turned some people on their head! LOL Goldsmith is such a good writer, in her introduction she described some of the surprises she noticed as she researched this book. For example, "Perhaps the most startling discovery was the extent to which spiritualism and the inception of woman's rights were intertwined" (p. xiii). In describing Woodhull, Goldsmith noted: "[she] pictured herself as 'the evangel' but she was, in fact, a woman before her time. Her views on marriage and divorce and the sexual equality she called 'free love' are relevant today" (p. xv). Later Woodhull was described as "She was. . . the spirituality, the 'high priestess' of free love, the crusading editor, the San Francisco actress and part time prostitute, the founder of the first stock brokerage firm for women, the disciple of Karl Marx, the blackmailer, the presidential candidate, the sinner, and the saint" (p. 7). This book is the story of Virginia Woodhull - a woman who defined life by her own terms and lived it according to her moral compass. A wonderful biography! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. *History Came Alive For Me* By musicforever I never particularly like American History as it was taught when I was growing up (memorizing lots of names of men, battles, and dates) - it was boring and didn't make a lot of sense to me. But this book brought that whole period of the 1800s alive because it's dealing with what drives history - the kind of spirituality and inquiry that flooded the country then, with women's lives and their push for equality, as well as nitty gritty information on the intertwining of the lives of power players at that time. Who knew there were so many politicians consulting mediums, or the degree of sexual and utopian-living experimentation going on. It's clear to me that the 1960s-70s were a resonant echo of what was begun then. So well written.

Barbara Goldsmith's portrait of suffragette Victoria Woodhull and her times was hailed by George Plimpton as "a beautifully written biography of a remarkable woman" and by Gloria Steinem as "more memorable than a dozen histories." A highly readable combination of history and biography, *Other Powers* interviews the stories of some of the most colorful social, political, and religious figures of America's Victorian era with the courageous and notorious life of Victoria Woodhull--psychic, suffragette, publisher, presidential candidate, and self-confessed practitioner of free love. It is set amid the battle for women's suffrage, the Spiritualist movement that swept across the nation in the age of Radical Reconstruction following the Civil War, and the bitter fight that pitted black men against white women in the struggle for the right to vote. Peter Gay found *Other Powers* "Irresistible...this is a biography guaranteed to keep the reader reading." And Gloria Steinem called it "A real-life novel of how one charismatic woman...turned women's suffrage, the church, New York City, and much of the country on its ear."

.com In *Other Powers* Barbara Goldsmith takes a wide-ranging approach to the life of controversial feminist Victoria Woodhull (1838-1927). Goldsmith places her buccaneering subject within the context of 19th-century America's fascination with spiritualism, which enabled an accomplished medium like Woodhull to escape her impoverished origins and amass considerable wealth. Goldsmith also ably delineates the freewheeling Woodhull's uneasy relations with more respectable ladies in the women's suffrage movement and portrays the hatred of sexual hypocrisy that ultimately brought Woodhull's relentless enemies who wrecked her public career. History illuminates biography--and vice versa--in this boundary-defying work. From *Publishers Weekly* Women's rights advocate Victoria Woodhull (1838-1927) was a spiritualist, clairvoyant, faith healer and apostle of free love who maintained that her spirit guide had set her on a mission to create a social revolution. These facts, downplayed by her previous biographers, are at the center of Goldsmith's riveting portrait. Raised by an ignorant, brutalized mother and a tyrannical father who apparently sexually abused her, Ohio-born Victoria Claflin eloped at 15 with Canning Woodhull, a morphine-addicted, alcoholic doctor. A destitute actress and prostitute, she went from rags to riches by becoming a financial adviser, as well as a trance medium, for blustering, sexually insatiable New York railroad tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt. In 1870, Woodhull founded Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly (with her sister, Tennessee Claflin), a newspaper that argued for women's rights, though, in time, her outspoken views on free love would split the women's movement. As Goldsmith (*Little Gloria... Happy at Last*) reveals, Woodhull had her eye on the political prize: in her 1872 presidential campaign against Ulysses S. Grant and Horace Greeley, she blackmailed rival suffragists into supporting her by threatening to publish articles in her newspaper exposing their sexual behavior. Election Day found Woodhull in jail on charges of libel and obscenity for her expose of Brooklyn revivalist preacher Henry Ward Beecher's extramarital affair with the wife of his best friend, newspaper editor Theodore Tilton. She moved to England in 1877, shed her past and married a wealthy British banker. Through Woodhull's life, Goldsmith's colorful, well-researched saga speaks volumes about the oppression of women in Victorian America. Illustrations. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* Victoria Woodhull was a charismatic and notorious figure in the struggle for women's rights in the years following the Civil War. She was the first woman to address Congress and the first woman to run for president.

Goldsmith (Little Gloria...Happy at Last, LJ 6/1/80) has successfully woven together a history of Woodhull's life with the lives of the powerful she touched. Using a wide variety of sources, including letters, diaries, and newspaper accounts, she writes of the use of spiritualism, the private and public struggles between the various players, and the sexual scandals that culminated in the 1876 Tilton v. Beecher trial, when the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher was accused of having had an affair with the wife of his friend Theodore Tilton. This biography is also the fascinating story of an era whose supporting cast includes Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frederick Douglass, Horace Greeley, and Commodore Vanderbilt. Highly recommended. ?Linda McEwan, Elgin Community Coll., Ill. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.