



The Thought Reader Craze: Victorian Science at the Enchanted Boundary

Barry H. Wiley

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Beginning in 1870, the hunger for scientific discovery in Great Britain drove prominent scientists, philosophers and others to promote the legitimacy of telepathy. At the same time, mind-reading as a form of entertainment gained increasing popularity as persuasive performers like John Randall Brown, W.I. Bishop, and Stuart C. Cumberland convinced reporters that they truly could read the thoughts of others. The widely publicized, sometimes bizarre, interactions between scientists and these charlatans ushered in the Thought Reader Craze, a period that lasted through about 1910 and saw entertainers make and lose fortunes and scientists make and lose reputations. This volume explores this unusual cultural phenomenon, showing how it was aided through the years by public scientific pronouncements, astonishing performances by the thought readers, and the rapidly changing industrial society.

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