Spiritualism and Esoteric Knowledge

Magic, superstition, the occult sciences and esoteric knowledge appear regularly in the history of ideas alongside more established academic disciplines such as philosophy, natural history and theology. Particularly fascinating are periods of rapid scientific advances such as the Renaissance or the nineteenth century which also see a burgeoning of interest in the paranormal among the educated elite. This series provides primary texts and secondary sources for social historians and cultural anthropologists working in these areas, and all who wish for a wider understanding of the diverse intellectual and spiritual movements that formed a backdrop to the academic and political achievements of their day. It ranges from works on Babylonian and Jewish magic in the ancient world, through studies of sixteenth-century topics such as Cornelius Agrippa and the rapid spread of Rosicrucianism, to nineteenth-century publications by Sir Walter Scott and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Subjects include astrology, mesmerism, spiritualism, theosophy, clairvoyance, and ghost-seeing, as described both by their adherents and by sceptics.

A Key to Physic and the Occult Sciences

Physician, astrologer and occult philosopher, Ebenezer Sibly (1751–99) wrote popular works of medical theory and advice, including Culpeper’s English Physician (1789) and this companion volume of 1795. A synthesis of theology, natural philosophy and medical science, the book argues for a microcosmic understanding of the human body as a composite of the four essential elements. An ambitious work, it bears witness to an important era in the development of modern medicine, as Sibly looks to combine an older hermetic tradition with new Enlightenment-era insights into the physical universe. In the final section of the work, Sibly touts his remedies, Lunar Tincture and Solar Tincture, developed to act upon female and male ailments, respectively. Composed from the ‘pabulum of the universe’, these medicines, Sibly claims, cure everything from gunshot wounds to dog bites.
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