

[PDF] Ghost Hunters: William James And The Search For Scientific Proof Of Life After Death

Deborah Blum - pdf download free book

Books Details:

Title: Ghost Hunters: William James

Author: Deborah Blum

Released: 2006-08-03

Language:

Pages: 384

ISBN: 1594200904

ISBN13: 978-1594200908

ASIN: 1594200904



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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Starred Review. In a compelling tale with resonance for today, Blum evokes a surprising sympathy for her band of tough-minded intellectuals—among them philosophers, psychologists, even two future Nobelists—who, around the turn of the 20th century, pursued the paranormal in an attempt to bridge the gap between faith and science at a time when religion was besieged by the theory of evolution and a new scientific outlook. Foremost in the Society for Psychical Research in America was the brilliant philosopher and psychologist William James, who

like the others, risked his reputation in this unorthodox pursuit. Blum unearths the history of their research, their passionate friendships and debates, as well as their private doubts about the meaning of their work. Much of the society's efforts were devoted to exposing charlatans, but even the most dogged of the members, Richard Hodgson, was baffled by Boston's Leonora Piper, a reluctant medium of rare gifts. As Hodgson obsessively studies this medium, the story grows weirder and weirder, but Blum, who was nominated for an *L.A. Times* Book Award for *Love at Goon Park*, tells it straight, never overdramatizing the strange events. She achieves deep poignancy at moments that in less gifted hands could have seemed most laughable. The result is a moving portrait of a fascinating group of people and a first-rate slice of cultural history. (Aug. 7)

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From Deborah Blum, a Pulitzer Prize-winning science writer and professor of science journalism at the University of Wisconsin, tackles a chapter from our past that doubly intrigues—through the search for the afterlife and the number of famous thinkers associated with it. Critics point out that, despite her compelling narrative and her evenhanded history, Blum comes up short in her examination of the reasons behind spiritualism's rise in popularity. She never wavers, however, in her ability to draw in readers with stories of famous mediums and their ability to deceive. The result is an entertaining look at the ubiquitous séances and spirit-summonings that make a study of spiritualism a worthwhile curiosity to readers more than a century later.

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