



Shocking Bodies: Life, Death & Electricity in Victorian England

Iwan Rhys Morus

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From electric corsets to questioning the existence of God, the story of the profound effects electricity had upon the lives and the worldview of the Victorians

Although electricity was known about by the ancient Egyptians, it was not until the Victorian era that its potential really began to be realized. Luigi Galvani's discovery of bioelectricity opened up a whole new world of possibilities, in which it could cure sickness, restore sexual potency, and even raise the dead. This book explores how the Victorians thought about electricity, and how they tried to use it to answer the fundamental questions about life and death. It discusses the beliefs they came into being about electricity—some believed that it was life, which brought into question the existence of the soul, and of God, and provided arguments in favor of political Radicalism. Doctors prescribed electrical therapy and the masses were offered electric belts or corsets, at a price, that were claimed to have amazing restorative properties. This is the story of how electricity emerged during the 19th century as a powerful new tool for making sense of the world.

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