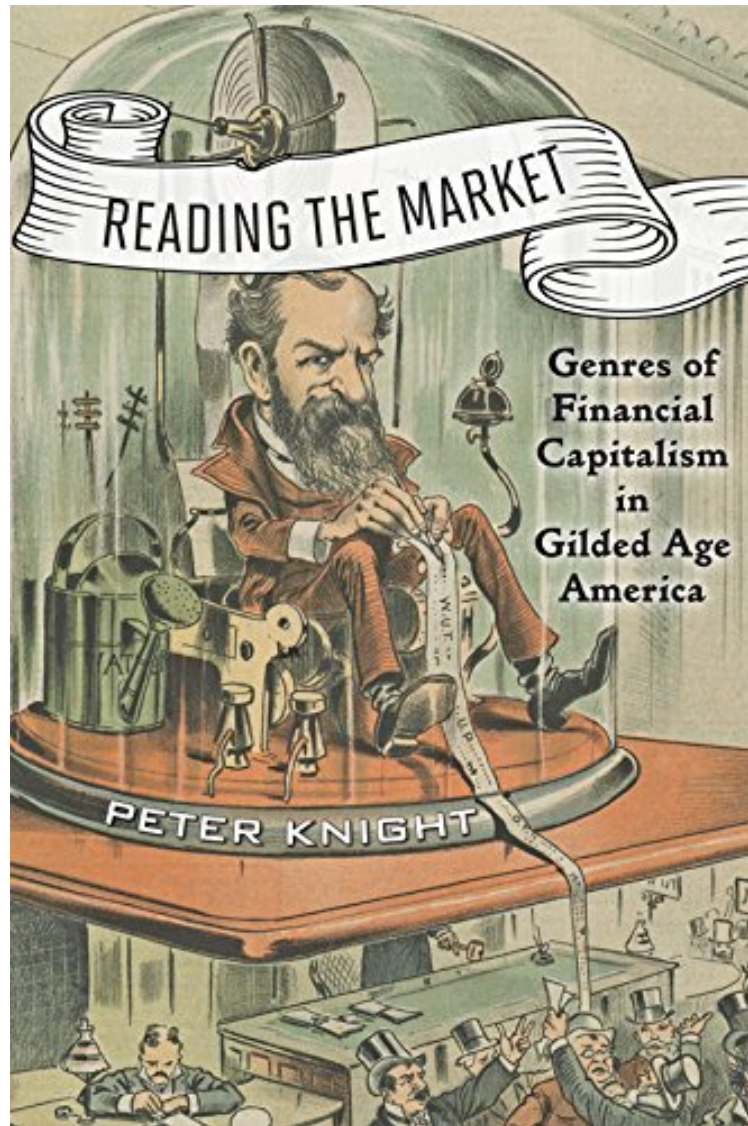


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## Reading the Market (New Studies in American Intellectual and Cultural History)

*Peter Knight*

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Americans pay famously close attention to "the market," obsessively watching trends, patterns, and swings and

looking for clues in every fluctuation. In *Reading the Market*, Peter Knight explores the Gilded Age origins and development of this peculiar interest. He tracks the historic shift in market operations from local to national while examining how present-day ideas about the nature of markets are tied to past genres of financial representation. Drawing on the late nineteenth-century explosion of art, literature, and media, which sought to dramatize the workings of the stock market for a wide audience, Knight shows how ordinary Americans became both emotionally and financially invested in the market. He analyzes popular investment manuals, brokers' newsletters, newspaper columns, magazine articles, illustrations, and cartoons. He also introduces readers to fiction featuring financial tricksters, which was characterized by themes of personal trust and insider information. The book reveals how the popular culture of the period shaped the very idea of the market as a self-regulating mechanism by making the impersonal abstractions of high finance personal and concrete. From the rise of ticker-tape technology to the development of conspiracy theories, *Reading the Market* argues that commentary on the Stock Exchange between 1870 and 1915 changed how Americans understood finance—and explains what our pervasive interest in Wall Street says about us now.

"Offers a vivid picture and unique insight and perspective on the significance of the emerging new financial genre and the impact that it was having and would continue to have on the extraordinary American emotional and financial interest in Wall Street and the stock markets. Highly recommended." (Choice) "This intriguing book illuminates much about markets and, particularly, about the 'culture of the market' as financial capitalism began its will to power in America." (Civil War Book ) "Reading the Market offers many evidentiary and analytical gems... A provocative and well-written study, this book also adds new dimension to our understanding of the literatures and popular culture of American finance. Knight's model literary analysis should provide ample material for students of American studies and cultural history, and could easily be incorporated into advanced undergraduate and graduate-level coursework." (H-Net s) "Compelling, subtle, and deft, *Reading the Market* is at its best when it applies careful literary analysis to new financial genres. An essential contribution to the cultural history of capitalism, the social studies of finance, and Gilded Age and Progressive Era historiography." (Jonathan Levy, University of Chicago, author of *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America*) About the Author Peter Knight is a professor of American studies at the University of Manchester. He is the author of *Conspiracy Culture: From Kennedy to The X Files* and *The Kennedy Assassination* and the coeditor of *Show Me the Money: The Image of Finance, 1700 to the Present*.