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Society in Early Modern England

Philip Withington



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The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have traditionally been regarded by historians as a period of intense and formative historical change, so much so that they have often been described as 'early modern' - an epoch separate from 'the medieval' and 'the modern'. Paying particular attention to England, this book reflects on the implications of this categorization for contemporary debates about the nature of modernity and society.

The book traces the forgotten history of the phrase 'early modern' to its coinage as a category of historical analysis by the Victorians and considers when and why words like 'modern' and 'society' were first introduced into English in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In so doing it unpicks the connections between linguistic and social change and how the consequences of those processes still resonate today.

A major contribution to our understanding of European history before 1700 and its resonance for social thought today, the book will interest anybody concerned with the historical antecedents of contemporary culture and the interconnections between the past and the present.

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