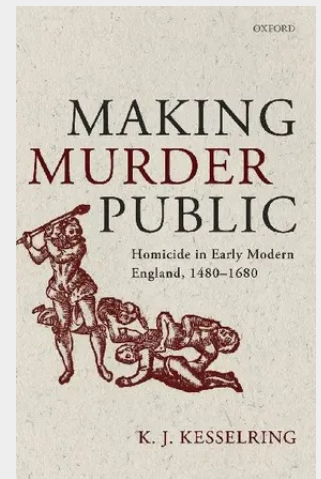


Making Murder Public

Homicide in Early Modern England, 1480-1680

Homicide has a history. In early modern England, that history saw two especially notable developments: one, the emergence in the sixteenth century of a formal distinction between murder and manslaughter, made meaningful through a lighter punishment than death for the latter, and two, a significant reduction in the rates of homicides individuals perpetrated on each other. Making Murder Public explores connections between these two changes. It demonstrates the value in distinguishing between murder and manslaughter, or at least in seeing how that distinction came to matter in a period which also witnessed dramatic drops in the occurrence of homicidal violence. Focused on the 'politics of murder', Making Murder Public examines how homicide became more effectively criminalized between 1480 and 1680, with chapters devoted to coroners' inquests, appeals and private compensation, duels and private vengeance, and print and public punishment. The English had begun moving away from treating homicide as an offence subject to private settlements or vengeance long before other Europeans, at least from the twelfth century. What happened in the early modern period was, in some ways, a continuation of processes long underway, but intensified and refocused by developments from 1480 to 1680. Making Murder Public argues that homicide became fully 'public' in these years, with killings seen to violate a 'king's peace' that people increasingly conflated with or subordinated to the 'public peace' or 'public justice.'

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129,30 €

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Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9780198835622

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-0-19-883562-2

Verlag: OXFORD UNIV PR

Erscheinungstermin: 14.04.2019

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 2019

Produktform: Gebunden

Gewicht: 464 g

Seiten: 196

Format (B x H): 161 x 240 mm

