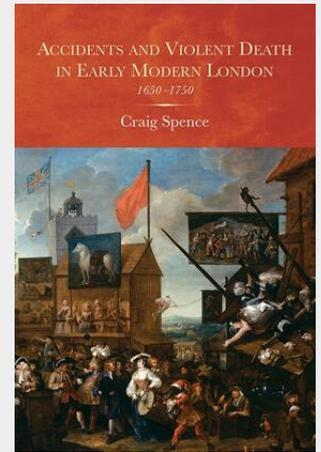


Spence

## Accidents and Violent Death in Early Modern London

1650-1750

Between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth century more than 15,000 Londoners suffered sudden violent deaths. In the early modern period, accidental and 'disorderly' deaths - from drowning, falls, stabbing, shooting, fires, explosions, suffocation, and animals and vehicles, among others - were a regular feature of urban life. Between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries more than 15,000 Londoners suffered sudden violent deaths. While this figure includes around 3,000 who were murdered or committed suicide, the vast majority of fatalities resulted from accidents. In the early modern period, accidental and 'disorderly' deaths - from drowning, falls, stabbing, shooting, fires, explosions, suffocation, animals and vehicles, among other causes - were a regular feature of urban life and left a significant mark in the archival records of the period. This book provides the first substantive critical study of the early modern accident, revealing and chronicling the lives - and deaths - of hundreds of otherwise unknown Londoners. Drawing on the weekly London Bills of Mortality, parish burial registers, newspapers and other related documents, it examines accidents and other forms of violent death in the city with a view to understanding who among its residents encountered such events, how the bureaucracy recorded and elaborated their circumstances and why they did so, and what practical responses might follow. Through a systematic review of the character of accidents, medical and social interventions, and changing attitudes toward the regulation of hazards across the metropolis, it establishes the historical significance of the accident and shows how, as the eighteenth century progressed, providential explanations gave way to a more rational viewpoint that saw certain accident events as threats to be managed rather than misfortunes to be explained. Additionally, the book explores how knowledge of such incidents was transformed to become a recurring cultural trope in oral, textual and visual narratives of metropolitan life, thereby opening a window to the way in which sudden death and violent injury was understood by early modern mentalities. CRAIG SPENCE is Senior Lecturer in History at Bishop Grosseteste University.



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