Social Unrest and Popular Protest in England, 1780-1840

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The study of popular protest and social unrest has burgeoned since the 1960s. Before then only a handful of historians had shown any inclination either for rescuing the masses as historical actors in their own right, or for allowing acts of protest any historical significance or importance. "High politics" with the mob playing a subsidiary walk-on role had, until then, dominated historical writing.

In the years between 1780 and 1840 England experienced considerable change and tensions associated with the so-called Industrial Revolution, urbanisation, population growth and a long-term war with France that lasted for a generation. This book is concerned both with the disturbances and protests generated by these changes and with the debates between social historians who have studied this period. A number of parameters have been imposed on this study: namely, the coverage is restricted to England, and it ends when Chartism makes its appearance in the late 1830s.