

A deeply original work of scholarship. Through fine close readings of primary and secondary texts, the author offers the fullest account we have of the related phenomena of pain, sympathy, and sensation in early modern culture. Michael Schoenfeldt, John R. Knott, Jr., Professor of English, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor In late medieval Catholicism, pain was seen as a way of imitating Christ, and as an avenue to salvation. During the early modern period, Protestant theologians came to reject these assumptions, and attempted to redefine and circumscribe the spiritual meaning of suffering. The rethinking of the meaning of pain during the early modern era is the central theme of this book. The author pays particular attention to how literary writers explored the issue of pain, by placing their work in a broad context of devotional, theological, philosophical and medical texts on suffering. In detailed readings of Alabaster, Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, Lanyer, Spenser, Milton and Montaigne, he shows that early modern culture located the meaning of pain in its capacity to elicit compassion in others - yet the nature of this compassion was also fiercely contested. Dr Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen is Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Leiden.

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