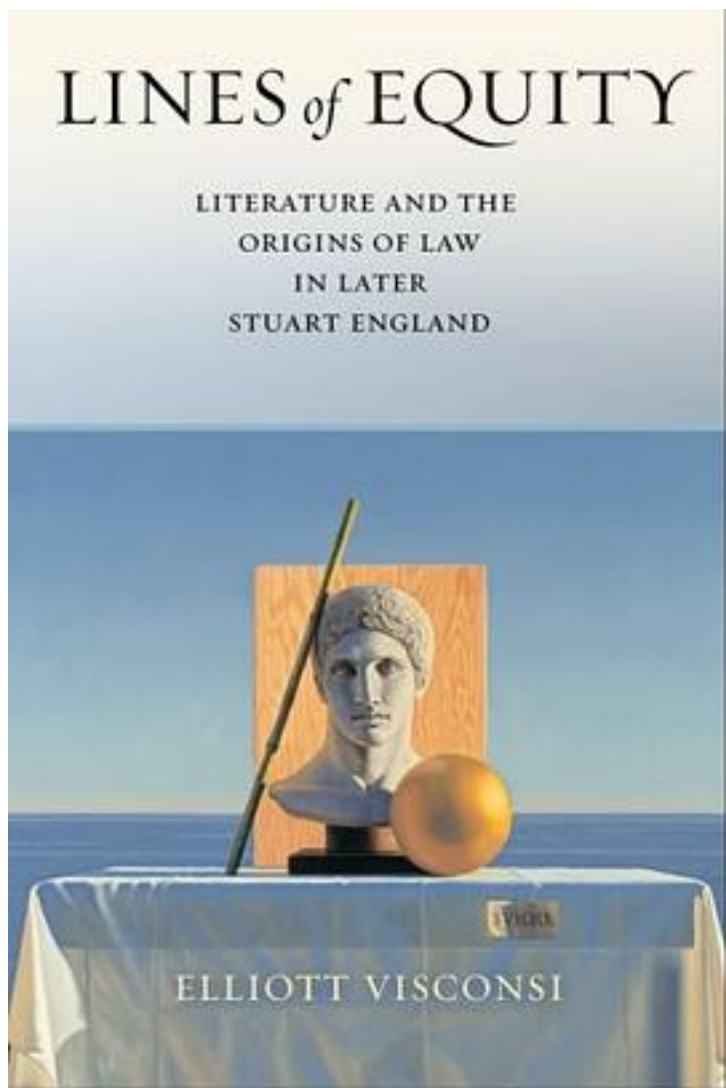


Lines of Equity



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The late seventeenth century was a period of major crises in science, politics, and economics in England. Confronted by a public that seemed to be sunk in barbarism and violence, English writers including John Milton, John Dryden, and Aphra Behn imagined serious literature as an instrument for change. In *Lines of Equity*, Elliott Visconsi reveals how these writers fictionalized the original utterance of laws, the foundation of states, and the many vivid contemporary transitions from archaic savagery to civil modernity.

In their writings, they considered the nature of government, the extent of the rule of law, and the duties of sovereign and subject. They asked their audience to think like kings and judges: through the literary education of the individual conscience, the barbarous tendencies of the English people might be effectively banished. Visconsi calls this fictionalizing program "imaginative originalism," and demonstrates the often unintended consequences of this literary enterprise.

By inviting the English people to practice equity as a habit of thought, a work such as Milton's *Paradise Lost* helped bring into being a mode of individual conduct—the rights-bearing deliberative subject—at the heart of political liberalism. Visconsi offers an original view of this transitional moment that will appeal to anyone interested in the cultural history of law and citizenship, the idea of legal origins in the early modern period, and the literary history of later Stuart England.

作者介绍:

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