In this innovative study, Sarah Tarlow shows how the archaeology of this period manifests a widespread and cross-cutting ethic of Improvement, one of the most current concepts of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain. Theoretically informed and drawn from primary and secondary sources in a range of disciplines, the author considers agriculture and the rural environment, towns and buildings such as working-class housing and institutions of reform. From bleach baths to window glass, rubbish pits to tea wares, the material culture of the period reflects a particular set of values and aspirations. Tarlow examines the philosophical and historical background to the notion of Improvement and demonstrates how this concept is a useful lens through which to examine the material culture of later historical Britain.

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The Archaeology of Improvement in Britain, 1750–1850

Sarah Tarlow

University of Leicester
TO RACHEL, ADAM AND GREGORY
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