



# Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500-1800

*Anthony Fletcher*

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During the early modern period, men and women in England lived their lives within a social and gender framework inherited from biblical times. Patriarchy - the social and cultural dominance of the male - has long been a feature of western civilization, and this work attempts to provide a portrait of the origins and operation of the system over a long stretch of the English past. This book argues for a dynamic rather than a static view of patriarchy. It reveals that, in Tudor and Stuart England, while men sought to reinforce the system that underpinned their authority in both public and private life, increasing anxiety about the validity of the thinking upon which it rested led to a complex but significant revision of the intellectual structures that enshrined the subordination of women. The work draws on a range of sources - literary as well as historical - to explore the mechanisms through which men and women interpreted and understood their social world and their interrelationships. It opens with an account of the dilemmas posed for men by women's allegedly vibrant sexuality and verbal assertiveness. The central chapters explore and contextualize the varied experiences of men and women in their homes, their communities and their occupations. The final chapters argue that, over these three centuries, the gender system was gradually transformed as men detached it from its biblical foundations and began to inculcate identities on something like their modern ideological basis.

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