

GENDER RELATIONS IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND



SEMINAR
STUDIES

Laura Gowing

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Gender Relations in Early Modern England

Laura Gowing



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History is narrative constructed by historians from traces left by the past. Historical enquiry is often driven by contemporary issues and, in consequence, historical narratives are constantly reconsidered, reconstructed and reshaped. The fact that different historians have different perspectives on issues means that there is also often controversy and no universally agreed version of past events. *Seminar Studies* was designed to bridge the gap between current research and debate, and the broad, popular general surveys that often date rapidly.

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Clive Emsley and Gordon Martel
Series Editors

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Chronology

- 1509 Accession of Henry VIII
- 1527 Divorce crisis begins
- 1533 Act against Buggery
- 1536 Dissolution of Monasteries
- 1538 Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages begins
- 1547 Accession of Edward VI
- 1553 Accession of Mary I
- 1563 Statute of Artificers
- 1569 Northern Rebellion
- 1576 Poor Law, including provisions for punishing bastard bearers
- 1585 Accession of Elizabeth I
- 1587 Execution of Mary Queen of Scots
- 1588 Spanish Armada defeated
- 1594 Bad harvests begin
- 1598 First edition of Robert Cleaver's *Godly Form of Household Government*
- 1601 Elizabethan Poor Law
- 1603 Accession of James VI of Scotland and I of England, married to Anne of Denmark
- 1611 Publication of King James Bible
- 1617–29 Buckingham's ascendancy
 - 1623 Infanticide Act
 - 1625 Accession of Charles I, married to Henrietta Maria
- 1629–40 Charles I's personal rule
 - 1640 Long Parliament starts

- 1641 Rebellion of Ulster Catholics
- 1642 Civil War breaks out; disestablishment of Church of England and abolition of church courts
- 1642–6 First Civil War
- 1648–9 Second Civil War; execution of Charles I
 - 1650 Adultery made capital offence
 - 1651 Parliamentary Victory
 - 1653 Commonwealth: Oliver Cromwell Lord Protector, married to Elizabeth Cromwell
 - 1658 Death of Oliver Cromwell
 - 1660 Restoration of Charles II, married to Catherine of Braganza
- 1679–81 Exclusion Crisis
 - 1685 Accession of James II, married to 1. Anne Hyde 2. Mary of Modena
 - 1688 Warming Pan Scandal
 - 1688 Glorious Revolution
 - 1689 Coronation of William III and Mary II
 - 1694 Death of Mary II; William ruled alone
 - 1702 Accession of Anne

Who's who

Mary Astell (1666–1731): writer of feminist and other tracts, Anglican and Tory, single, educated at home, daughter of a Newcastle coal merchant.

Elizabeth Barton (c.1506–34): called the 'Nun of Kent'; Benedictine nun and visionary, previously a farm servant; prophesied that Henry VIII's proposed divorce from Katherine of Aragon would be the end of his reign; eventually executed.

Margaret Cavendish (1623–73): aristocrat writer and scientist; royalist; married William Cavendish; wrote poetry, natural philosophy, science fiction and memoir.

Elizabeth Cellier (fl. 1668–88): known as the Popish Midwife, she was implicated in 1679 in the 'Meal Tub Plot' against the future James II and acquitted on trial for treason. Her published self-defence led to another trial and the pillory. She later published a plan for a corporation of midwives.

Sarah Churchill, née Jenyns, Duchess of Marlborough (1660–1744): Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Anne; married Edward Churchill; Whig.

Lady Anne Clifford (1590–1676): Baroness, diarist, involved in extensive lawsuit over her inheritance; educated by tutor; married Richard Sackville and Edward Herbert.

Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634): Lord Chief Justice under James I; jurist, MP, defender of the common law; married Bridget Paston.

Nicholas Culpeper (1616–54): herbalist and astrologer; radical, parliamentarian; married Alice Field.

Moll Cutpurse (Mary Frith) (1584–1659): infamous thief, the subject of plays and stories.

Sir Simonds D'Ewes (1602–50): diarist, antiquary, high sheriff of Suffolk; married Anne Clopton.

Joyce Jeffries (c.1570–1650): moneylender, diarist; single.

William Laud (1573–1645): Archbishop of Canterbury 1633–45, architect and enforcer of Charles I's religious policies.

Abigail Masham, née Hill, Lady Masham (1670–1734): favourite of Queen Anne, whose household she joined in 1700; Tory; married Samuel Masham.

Samuel Pepys (1633–1703): diarist, naval administrator and MP; married Elizabeth de St Michel.

John Pym (1584–1643): leader of the Long Parliament; married Anne Hooke.

Glossary

£, s., d.: Pounds, shillings, pence. 12 d. = 1 shilling; 20 shillings = £1.

Assizes: Periodic criminal courts for the most serious offences.

Bridewell: London: Converted from a palace to a prison and poorhouse in 1566.

Benefit of clergy: A legal fiction by which, after 1575, a felon capable of reading a verse from the Bible could be excused hanging.

Charivari: Ritual of community censure, often involving 'rough music' with pots and pans.

Church courts: Courts enforcing canon law via litigation or disciplinary prosecutions, overseen by bishop.

Churchwardens: Elected unpaid lay officials of each parish, responsible for law and order in the church, poor relief and church maintenance.

Constable: Unpaid parish official, working at the orders of justices of the peace.

Coverture: The common law doctrine whereby a married woman's legal identity was subsumed under that of her husband.

Curse of Ham: Noah's curse on Ham's sons after Ham 'saw his father's nakedness'; used as a justification for slavery, with Black Africans interpreted as Ham's descendants.

Feme sole: Legal status of single woman.

Groat: Four pence.

Hearth tax: Imposed in 1662, at a rate of 2s. per hearth per year.

Homily: Printed sermons provided to be read to congregations.

Jury of matrons: Women appointed to search female felons for the proof of pregnancy, in which case execution would be delayed.

Mosaic law: Laws attributed to Moses, set out in the first five books of the Old Testament.

Proper goods of a wife: Paraphernalia.

Protestation Oaths: Oaths of allegiance to the Commonwealth.

Puritans: Protestants advocating greater purity of doctrine and worship.

Quakers: The Religious Society of Friends, founded late 1640s by George Fox, in the conviction that individual relationships with Christ could bypass the mediation of church and clergy.

Quarter sessions: Criminal courts held quarterly for lesser offences.

Ranters: Heretical sect of the Revolutionary period, seen as a threat to social order.

Recusancy: Refusal to attend church services.

Savin: Also known as pennyroyal, a herbal abortifacient.

Societies for the Reformation of Manners: Began in London in 1691, mobilising associations of gentlemen, tradesmen, constables and informers to prosecute vice.

Terms: Menstrual periods.

Tories: Opponents of Exclusion; monarchists; supporters of the Church of England.

Whigs: Originally those supporting the Exclusion of the Duke of York, eventually James II, from the throne in 1679–81.

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Part 1

ANALYSIS

