



Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800 (Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History)

Joanne Bailey

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Based on vivid court records and newspaper advertisements, this 2003 book is a pioneering account of the expectations and experiences of married life among the middle and labouring ranks in the long eighteenth century. Its original methodology draws attention to the material life of marriage, which has long been dominated by theories of emotional shifts or fashionable accounts of spouses' gendered, oppositional lives. Thus it challenges preconceptions about authority in the household, by showing the extent to which husbands depended upon their wives' vital economic activities: household management and child care. Not only did this forge co-dependency between spouses, it undermined men's autonomy. The power balance within marriage is further revised by evidence that the sexual double standard was not rigidly applied in everyday life. The book also shows that ideas about adultery and domestic violence evolved in the eighteenth century, influenced by new models of masculinity and femininity.

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