The culture wars were a defining feature of American life and politics throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but as Andrew Hartman shows in this richly analytical history, their roots lay further back, in the tumult of the 1960s—and their significance is much greater than generally assumed. Far more than a mere sideshow or shouting match, the culture wars, Hartman argues, were the very public face of America's struggle over the unprecedented social changes of the period, as the cluster of social norms that had long governed American life began to give way to a new openness to different ideas, identities, and articulations of what it meant to be an American. The hot-button issues like abortion, affirmative action, art, censorship, feminism, and homosexuality that dominated politics in the period were symptoms of the larger struggle, as conservative Americans slowly began to acknowledge—if initially through rejection—many fundamental transformations of American life.