



Gender, Sexuality, and Material Objects in English Renaissance Verse (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World)

Pamela S, Dr Hammons

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An important contribution to recent critical discussions about gender, sexuality, and material culture in Renaissance England, this study analyzes female- and male-authored lyrics to illuminate how gender and sexuality inflected sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets' conceptualization of relations among people and things, human and non-human subjects and objects. Pamela S. Hammons examines lyrics from both manuscript and print collections—including the verse of authors ranging from Robert Herrick, John Donne, and Ben Jonson to Margaret Cavendish, Lucy Hutchinson, and Aemilia Lanyer—and situates them in relation to legal theories, autobiographies, biographies, plays, and epics. Her approach fills a crucial gap in the conversation, which has focused upon drama and male-authored works, by foregrounding the significance of the lyric and women's writing.

Hammons exposes the poetic strategies sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English women used to assert themselves as subjects of property and economic agents—in relation to material items ranging from personal property to real estate—despite the dominant patriarchal ideology insisting they were ideally temporary, passive vehicles for men's wealth. The study details how women imagined their multiple, complex interactions with the material world: the author shows that how a woman poet represents herself in relation to material objects is a flexible fiction she can mobilize for diverse purposes.

Because this book analyzes men's and women's poems together, it isolates important gendered differences in how the poets envision human subjects' use, control, possession, and ownership of things and the influences, effects, and power of things over humans. It also adds to the increasing evidence for the pervasiveness of patriarchal anxieties associated with female economic agency in a culture in which women were often treated as objects.

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