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978-0-521-63007-8 - Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship

Ilona Bell

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## ELIZABETHAN WOMEN AND THE POETRY OF COURTSHIP

This book offers an original study of lyric form and social custom in the Elizabethan age. Ilona Bell explores the tendency of Elizabethan love poems not only to represent an amorous thought, but to conduct the courtship itself. Where recent studies have focused on courtiership, patronage and preferment at court, her focus is on love poetry, amorous courtship, and relations between Elizabethan men and women. The book examines the ways in which the tropes and rhetoric of love poetry were used to court Elizabethan women (not only at court and in the great houses, but in society at large) and how the women responded to being wooed, in prose, poetry and speech. Bringing together canonical male poets and recently discovered women writers, Ilona Bell investigates a range of texts addressed to, written by, read, heard or transformed by Elizabethan women, and charts the beginnings of an early modern female lyric tradition.

Ilona Bell is Professor of English Literature at Williams College in Massachusetts. She has held a number of research fellowships, and published essays and reviews on Renaissance literature in a wide range of periodicals.

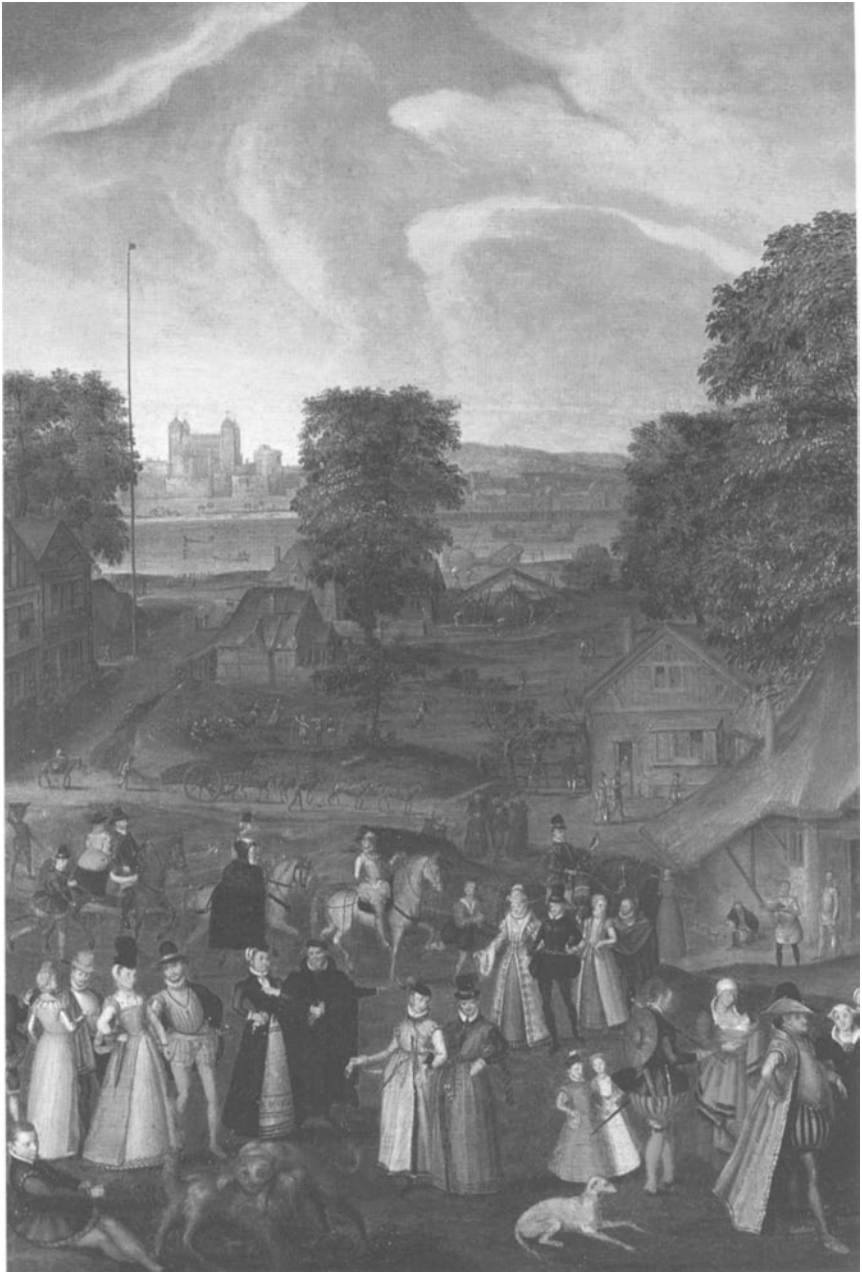
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A Marriage Feast at Bermondsey by Joris Hoefnagel, 1570.

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*To Bob –*

*Let us love nobly, and live, and add again*

*Years and years unto years, till we attain*

*To write threescore.*

John Donne, “The Anniversarie”

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But if – fie of such a but! – you be born so near the dull-making  
cataract of Nilus, that you cannot hear the planet-like music of  
poetry; if you have so earth-creeping a mind that it cannot lift itself  
up to look to the sky of poetry . . . thus much curse I must send you  
in behalf of all poets: that while you live you live in love, and never  
get favour, for lacking skill of a sonnet.                      Sidney, *Defence of Poesy*



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This project began as an essay on the role of the lady in Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*, and a fascination with Elizabeth I's love language. Trying to understand the lives not only of Anne More Donne and Elizabeth Tudor but of all Elizabethan women proved so arduous and extensive an undertaking that Donne's poetry and Elizabeth's politics were relegated to the margins. And so I conclude this book haunted by the feeling that "Thou has not done."

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- AS* *Astrophil and Stella* Philip Sidney in *Poems*, William A. Ringler, Jr, (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962)
- SS* *Shakespeare's Sonnets* *The Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans et al. (eds.) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974)
- Am* *Amoretti* Edmund Spenser, *The Amoretti*, Edwin Greenlaw et al. (eds.) *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition*. 10 volumes (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932–49), vol. viii pp. 193–232.
- Rom.* *Romeo and Juliet* *The Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans et al. (eds.) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974)
- AYL* *As You Like It* *The Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans et al. (eds.) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974)
- TT* *The Temple* Herbert George, *The Works of George Herbert*, F. E. Hutchinson (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970)
- RS* *Rime Sparse* Francesco Petrarca, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics*, Robert Durling (trans. and ed.) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976)
- DP* Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* From *The Countesse Pembrokes Arcadia* (London, 1598)
- AEP* *The Arte of English Poesie* George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (eds.) (Cambridge University Press, 1936)
- PS* Poems and Sonnets Sidney, Sir Philip, 'Poems and Sonnets of Sundrie Other Noble men and Gentlemen.' Syr P. S. his Astrophel and Stella. To the end of wh. are added Sundry other rare sonnets of divers gentlemen. J3v–L2v.