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0521630649 - The Limits of Eroticism in Post-Petrarchan Narrative: Conditional Pleasure
from Spenser to Marvell

Dorothy Stephens

Frontmatter

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Although theories of exploitation and subversion have radically changed our understanding of gender in Renaissance literature, to favor only those theories is to risk ignoring productive exchanges between “masculine” and “feminine” in Renaissance culture. “Appropriation” is too simple a term to describe these exchanges – as when Petrarchan lovers flirt dangerously with potentially destructive femininity. Edmund Spenser revises this Petrarchan phenomenon, constructing poetic flirtations whose participants are figures of speech, readers, or narrative voices. His plots allow such exchanges to occur only through conditional speech, but this very conditionality powerfully shapes his work. Seventeenth-century works – including a comedy by Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley and “Upon Appleton House” by Andrew Marvell – suggest that the Civil War and the upsurge of female writers necessitated a reformulation of conditional erotics.

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The limits of eroticism in post- Petrarchan narrative

Conditional pleasure from Spenser to Marvell

Dorothy Stephens

University of Arkansas



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For Paul Alpers

Quae tibi, quae tali reddam pro carmine dona?

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Acknowledgments

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My editors have prevented many embarrassments and taught me

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