

The Kissing Party

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Abstract

The Kissing Party is a book of lyric poems that interrogate the tradition of love poetry and attempt to refigure and revivify the work of writers like Marvell, Donne, Carew, and the continental and English sonneteers. Some poems reinvent theories of longing like Socrates' notion, in the *Phaedrus*, of a winged charioteer guided by two unruly horses; others try to picture the solitude that frequently accompanies contemporary desire—in pornography, voyeurism, masturbation—through an Ovidian lens.

Appended to the book of poems is a twenty-five page scholarly investigation into the work of a writer with similar motives, Mary Cowden Clarke. Clarke's *Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* creates alternative lives, prior to the plays, for fifteen of Shakespeare's heroines, and this dissertation argues that Clarke's work should be understood as primarily adaptive, rather than critical, in nature.