



# Before Intimacy: Asocial Sexuality in Early Modern England

*Daniel Juan Gil*

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Before the eighteenth-century rise of the ideology of intimacy, sexuality was defined not by social affiliations but by bodies. In *Before Intimacy*, Daniel Juan Gil examines sixteenth-century English literary concepts of sexuality that frame erotic ties as neither bound by social customs nor transgressive of them, but rather as “loopholes” in people’s experiences and associations.

Engaging the poems of Wyatt, Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*, Spenser’s *Amoretti* and *The Faerie Queene*, and Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* and the *Sonnets*, Gil demonstrates how sexuality was conceived as a relationship system inhabited by men and women interchangeably—set apart from the “norm” and not institutionalized in a private or domestic realm. Going beyond the sodomy-as-transgression analytic, he asserts the existence of socially inconsequential sexual bonds while recognizing the pleasurable effects of violating the supposed traditional modes of bonding and ideals of universal humanity and social hierarchy.

Celebrating the ability of corporeal emotions to interpret connections between people who share nothing in terms of societal structure, *Before Intimacy* shows how these works of early modern literature provide a discourse of sexuality that strives to understand status differences in erotic contexts and thereby question key assumptions of modernity.

Daniel Juan Gil is assistant professor of English at TCU.



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