

# Transformations of Love



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The most controversial episode in the life of the seventeenth-century virtuoso and diarist John Evelyn has always been his passionate, complex friendship with the Restoration maid of honour Margaret Blagge, afterwards Mrs Godolphin. His "Life of Mrs Godolphin", written after her early death in childbirth, exalted the friendship and represented her as effectively a saint. They saw their intense friendship as platonic spiritual mentoring. Yet it is sometimes argued that what took place between them was actually a kind of seduction on Evelyn's part; that far from trying to overcome her religious scruples about marriage to a young man she deeply loved, as he afterwards claimed, he secretly encouraged them in order to keep her in his power, and even falsified some documents to conceal this from her husband, whose patronage he sought. Was Evelyn in his way as much a sexual predator as the Restoration rakes he professed to despise, or does the episode provide a window on an unexplored aspect of early modern spirituality? Undoubtedly there was more to the friendship than Evelyn publicly admitted, but it remains a puzzle still to be interpreted. This new study is

based on Evelyn's papers, now fully accessible for the first time, and on important and hitherto unknown correspondence between Margaret Blagge and her future husband. It situates the episode fully within the pre and post-Reformation debates concerning marriage and friendship (the latter seen by some as 'more a sacrament' than marriage) and the long traditions of platonic love and intense friendships between men and women in religious contexts. Its diverse and vividly realized settings include the glamorous, disreputable public household of the Restoration court and the great gardens of the day, at once 'little worlds' in microcosm and recreations of paradise on earth.

作者介绍:

The book, which is an account of the relationship between Pepys' close friend and fellow-diarist John Evelyn and Margaret Godolphin, a maid of honour at the court of Charles II and 31 years Evelyn's junior, has been extremely well received.

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