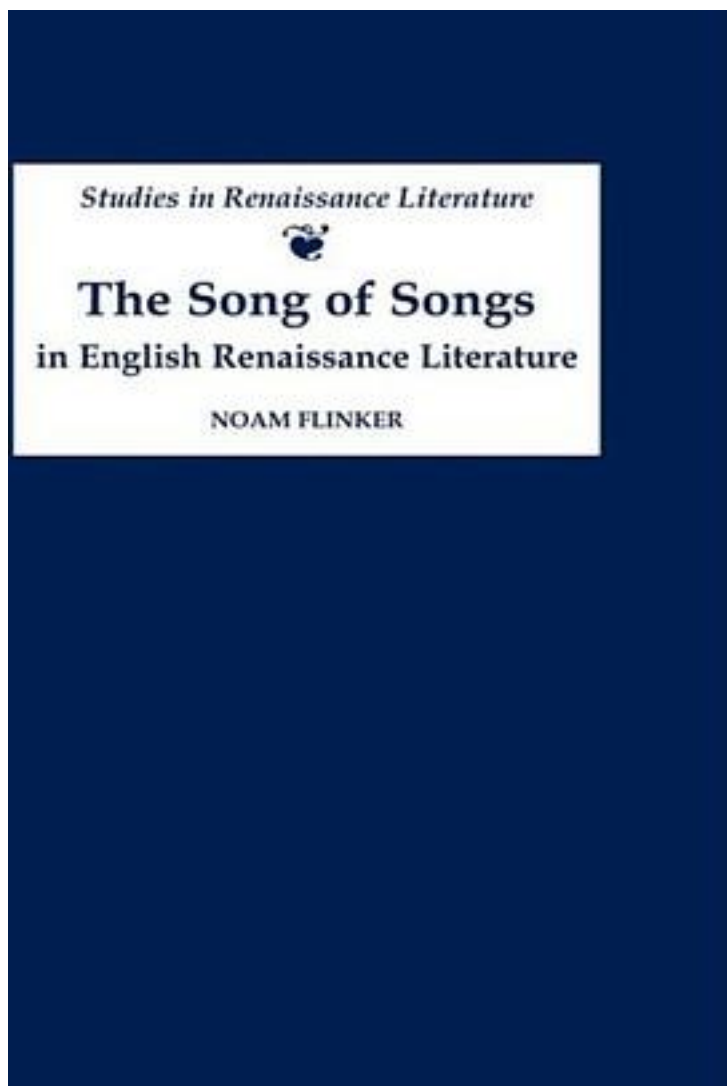


The Song of Songs in English Renaissance Literature



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Many English Renaissance texts offer readings of the Song of Songs, by both well-known authors, such as Shakespeare, and the long neglected (William Baldwin, Robert Aylett, Abiezer Coppe and Lawrence Clarkson). This new study looks at the different traditions they represent, and most notably the balance in the tension of the Song of Songs as oral and written, carnal and spiritual. The introduction presents a historical and theoretical discussion of Canticles, using a Rabbinic model for juxtaposing orality and textuality; the author goes on to argue that from the time of ancient Sumer through medieval England motifs found in the Song of Songs are simultaneously sexual and spiritual just as they are likewise oral and textual. By attempting to recover oral approaches to any text, we encounter a series of forces that act to balance an open, oral, and sexual understanding of the erotic biblical text against a more closed, textual and spiritual reading. This balance is then traced through works by Baldwin, Spenser, Aylett, Coppe, Clarkson and Milton. NOAM FLINKER is currently Chairperson at the Department of English, University of Haifa.

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