



## Queer (Re)Readings in the French Renaissance: Homosexuality, Gender, Culture

*By Gary Ferguson*

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### **Queer (Re)Readings in the French Renaissance: Homosexuality, Gender, Culture** By Gary Ferguson

Focusing on multiple aspects of Renaissance culture, and in particular its preoccupation with the reading and rewriting of classical sources, this book examines representations of homosexuality in sixteenth-century France. Analysing a wide range of texts and topics, it presents an assessment of queer theory that is grounded in historical examples, including French translations of Boccaccio's Decameron, the poetry of Ronsard, works in praise of and satirising Henri III and his mignons, Montaigne's Essais, Brantôme's Dames galantes, the figures of the androgyne and the hermaphrodite, and religious discourses and practices of penance and confession. Close comparison with the ancient models on which they drew - the elegy and epic, the works of Plato, Ovid, Lucian, and others - reveals Renaissance writers redeploying an established set of cultural understandings and assumptions at once congruent and at odds with their own society's socio-sexual norms. Throughout this study, emphasis is placed on the coexistence of different models of homosexuality during the Renaissance - homosexual desire was simultaneously universal and individual, neither of these views excluding the other. Insisting equally on points of convergence and difference between Renaissance and modern understandings of homosexuality, this book works towards a historicisation of the concept of queerness.

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'One of the most balanced, well argued, elegantly written, and interesting studies in what is clearly an increasingly important field.' Philip Ford, University of Cambridge, UK and joint editor of *Masculinities in Sixteenth-Century France* '...Recommended.' Choice '... Gary Ferguson's study is rich, informative, and lively.' *Renaissance Quarterly* '...an impressively wide-ranging and daring book certain to spur further study of its vast archive of materials and incite engaged responses to its bold and often brilliant analyses. Indeed, I would go so far as to say it is a groundbreaking book in the consolidation of the field of queer early modern French studies.' *H-France* 'All those working on questions of sexuality in the French Renaissance will find interesting material and clear and balanced argument for them in this volume.' *Modern Language Review* 'Gary Ferguson offers us an admirably researched, clearly argued, and beautifully written book that reveals with judicious nuance a multifaceted picture of homosexual culture in Renaissance France. [...] *Queer (Re)Readings* is a pleasure to read. It delivers a wealth of information and a model for moving through literature toward a deeper understanding of the past.' *Sixteenth Century Journal*

#### **About the Author**

Gary Ferguson is a Professor of French in the Department of Languages and Literatures at the University of Delaware, USA

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