



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

Gary Ferguson

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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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