



# Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics

*Bruce R. Smith*

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In the most comprehensive study yet of homosexuality in the English Renaissance, Bruce R. Smith examines and rejects the assessments of homosexual acts in moral philosophy, laws, and medical books in favor of a poetics of homosexual desire. Smith isolates six different "myths" from classical literature and discusses each in relation to a particular Renaissance literary genre and to a particular part of the social structure of early modern England. Smith's new Preface places his work in the context of the continuing controversies in gay, lesbian, and bisexual studies.

"The best single analysis of the homoerotic element in Renaissance English literature."—Keith Thomas, *New York Review of Books*

"Smith's lucid and subtle book offer[s] a poetics of homosexual desire. . . . Its scholarship, impressively broad and deftly deployed, aims to further a serious social purpose: the redemptive location of homosexual desire in history and the recuperation for our own time, through an understanding of its discursive embodiments, of that desire's changing imperatives and parameters."—Terence Hawkes, *Times Literary Supplement*

"The great strength of Bruce Smith's book is that it does not sidestep the complex challenge of engaging in the sexual politics of the present while attending to the resistant discourses and practices of Renaissance England. *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England* demonstrates how a commitment to the present opens up our understanding of the past."—Peter Stallybrass, *Shakespeare Quarterly*

"A major contribution to the understanding of homosexuality in Renaissance England and by far the best and most comprehensive account yet offered of the homoeroticism that suffuses Renaissance literature."—Claude J. Summers, *Journal of Homosexuality*

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