



# The Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture

*Bruce R. Smith*

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From Shakespeare's "green-eyed monster" to the "green thought in a green shade" in Andrew Marvell's "The Garden," the color green was curiously prominent and resonant in English culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Among other things, green was the most common color of household goods, the recommended wall color against which to view paintings, the hue that was supposed to appear in alchemical processes at the moment base metal turned to gold, and the color most frequently associated with human passions of all sorts. A unique cultural history, *The Key of Green* considers the significance of the color in the literature, visual arts, and popular culture of early modern England.

Contending that color is a matter of both sensation and emotion, Bruce R. Smith examines Renaissance material culture—including tapestries, clothing, and stonework, among others—as well as music, theater, philosophy, and nature through the lens of sense perception and aesthetic pleasure. At the same time, Smith offers a highly sophisticated meditation on the nature of consciousness, perception, and emotion that will resonate with students and scholars of the early modern period and beyond. Like the key to a map, *The Key of Green* provides a guide for looking, listening, reading, and thinking that restores the aesthetic considerations to criticism that have been missing for too long.

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