

Maria Sticco, Publicist
e-mail: mes5@pitt.edu
tel: (412) 383-2493 fax: (412) 383-2466

3400 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15260
tel: (412) 383-2456 fax: (412) 383-2466
www.upress.pitt.edu

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Poet has 'appetite' for masculinity, relationships, and popular culture

PITTSBURGH—*Appetite*, the new poetry collection from Aaron Smith, explores the American mythologies of masculinity and film, as the poet investigates our fascinations with the body, gender, and entertainment. Smith's verse is critically observant, darkly funny, angry, and, sometimes heartbreaking.

Whether cataloging shirtless men in films and bad television, lyricizing the anxieties of childhood, or redrawing the lines of cultural membership, *Appetite* attacks its subjects with wit, candor, and compassionate intensity. These poems announce their presence with a style that is as beautifully wrought as it is provocative.

In *Appetite*, Smith obliterates the usual American hierarchies: the disposable is as valuable as the traditional, pop culture is on the same level as the sacred, and the pleasurable simultaneity of past and present are found in high art and the tabloid. Smith's work engages our contemporary moment and how we want to think of ourselves, while nodding to rich poetic, cultural, and personal histories.

"Aaron Smith has inherited, from the openly gay poets of the New York school, a commitment to telling it like it is," said David Trinidad. "Smith's lack of pretense is enhanced by his anger at the intolerance of heteronormality and religiosity. Like Frank O'Hara, Smith knows the true gods are at the movies. Shirtless male celebrities—for this poet, there's no better paradise."—David Trinidad

Smith is the author of *Blue on Blue Ground*, winner of the Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize, and the chapbook *Men in Groups*. His work has appeared in a number of literary magazines, including *Ploughshares* and *Prairie Schooner*. A native of Joliet, Illinois, Smith resides in Buckhannon, West Virginia, where he is assistant professor of English at West Virginia Wesleyan College.

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