



Men Desiring Men: The Poetry of Same-Sex Identity and Desire in German Classicism (Kritik: German Literary Theory and Cultural Studies Series)

Susan E. Gustafson

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At what point in history did a "homosexual identity" begin to emerge? Many cultural historians have agreed with Foucault that the late 19th century witnessed its birth. Susan E. Gustafson goes beyond the medical, psychoanalytical, and legal discourses that Foucault viewed as the initiators of modern sexual identities to explore the literature and discourse of male-male desire a century earlier, within the tradition of German Classicism. Reading such authors as Goethe, Winckelman, and Moritz, she finds a self-conscious formulation of same-sex desire leading to a sense of identity and community. The book focuses on the ways men who desired one another in the 18th and early 19th centuries expressed their longings and identities in new poetic formulations. Gustafson shows that major figures of German Classicism struggled consciously and systematically in their letters, works on aesthetics, and literary production to create a new language to express their own sense of same-sex desire.

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