



Straight Writ Queer: Non-Normative Expressions of Heterosexuality in Literature

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The advent of gay and lesbian studies as an academic field opened the door for a new exploration of sexuality in literature. Here, works generally considered heterosexual are re-examined in the light of queer theory. The notion of homosexuality is viewed as a social construction that emerged during the 19th century, with a definitive difference between biological sex and gendered behavior. Heterosexuality is determined by whether sexual performance conforms to society-designated gender roles. From this wider perspective, this book examines literature previously viewed as “straight” in a search for alternative manifestations of desire and performance, relationships that contain an apparent disconnect between gender and desire. With broad coverage of many periods, authors, and genres, the 17 essays identify inherently queer heterosexual practices and critique the idea of heteronormativity, blurring the line between homo- and heterosexuality. Topics discussed include sodomy and chastity; Victorian literature; the relationship between sex, gender and desire; and the instability in literary portrayals of gender and sexuality. George Eliot, George Meredith, Ernest Hemingway, and Rider Haggard are among the many authors discussed.

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