



A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition

Dr. Gregory Woods

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While many books have been written about gay writing, this is an account of male gay literature, across cultures, languages, and from ancient times to the present. Working within the widest definitions of what constitutes gay literature, it includes chapters on the significant periods of cultural history (the Greek and Roman civilizations, the Middle Ages, the European Renaissance, the American Renaissance and the 20th century), on major writers (Marlowe, Shakespeare, Proust, Wilde) and on common themes (boyhood, mourning, masturbation). A work of reference as well as a history of a tradition, it covers a large field in terms of time (from Homer to Edmund White), literary status (from cultural icons like Virgil and Dante to popular novelists like Clive Barker and Dashiell Hammett), and location (from Mishima's Tokyo and Abu Nuwas' Baghdada to David Leavitt's New York). The book also deals with representations of male-male love by writers who were not themselves homosexual or bisexual men. It also addresses gaps, such as the lack of a substantial literature of the gay holocaust and the dearth of gay writing in post-colonial African poetry. In the breadth of its scope, the book confronts trends in Anglo-American gay studies, both by insisting on the internationalism of homosexual culture and by reasserting a continuity of homo-erotic traditions between the ancient world and the present. Furthermore, by declining to focus only on the most obvious authors and texts, Woods succeeds in both widening the gay canon and reminding us of the large variety of gay works within the mainstream. What emerges is a gay male literature that is far from peripheral to the world's major cultural traditions. This work celebrates the complexity of the literature that gay men write, read, and offer to the broadest market.

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