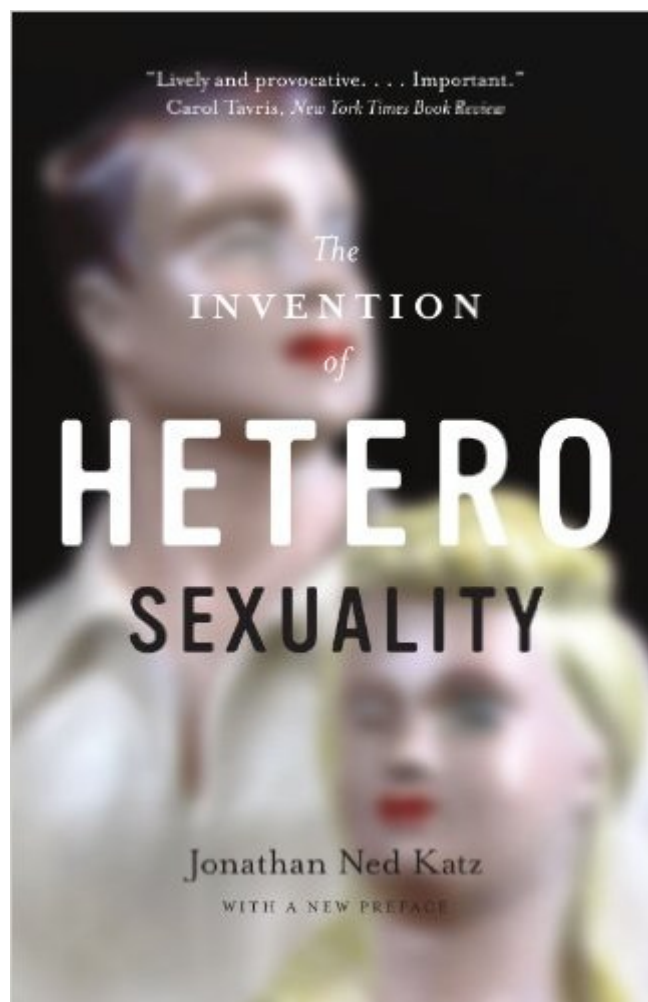


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The Invention Of Heterosexuality



Synopsis

“Heterosexuality,” assumed to denote a universal sexual and cultural norm, has been largely exempt from critical scrutiny. In this boldly original work, Jonathan Ned Katz challenges the common notion that the distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality has been a timeless one. Building on the history of medical terminology, he reveals that as late as 1923, the term “heterosexuality” referred to a “morbid sexual passion,” and that its current usage emerged to legitimate men and women having sex for pleasure. Drawing on the works of Sigmund Freud, James Baldwin, Betty Friedan, and Michel Foucault, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* considers the effects of heterosexuality’s recently forged primacy on both scientific literature and popular culture. “Lively and provocative.” —Carol Tavris, *New York Times Book Review* “A valuable primer . . . misses no significant twists in sexual politics.” —Gary Indiana, *Village Voice Literary Supplement* “One of the most important—if not outright subversive” works to emerge from gay and lesbian studies in years.” —Mark Thompson, *The Advocate*

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As readers of this book will know, it advances the extraordinary claim that heterosexuality was something time-bound and invented—a development coinciding with the purported invention of homosexuality in the latter part of the 19th century. Relying on research provided by the contemporary German scholar Manfred Herzer, Katz begins by pointing out, correctly, that the word “heterosexual” was first employed (as far as we know) in a private letter written by K. M. Kertbeny to

another scholar, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs. In this letter, dated May 6, 1868, Kerbeny set forth four terms to designate particular forms of sexual expression: 1) monosexual; 2) homosexual; 3) heterosexual; and 4) heterogenit. (Monosexual seems to have referred to masturbation, while heterogenit applied to human sexual acts with animals.) In his publication of the following year, however, Kerbeny chose to replace "heterosexual" with "normalsexual." "Normalsexualität," normal sexuality, was the activity of the majority of human beings. Standing over against the minority preference, that is, Homosexualität. In this way, Kerbeny introduced a judgmental coloration that was absent, or at least less prominent in the earlier coinage. Since only a few persons could have known about these private speculations, Kerbeny did not truly introduce the term "heterosexual" to the German-speaking public--at least not in any meaningful sense. That task was undertaken by the popularizer Gustav Jaeger in 1880, author of the book *Die Entdeckung der Seele*. It was Jaeger, later famous for a line of clothing, who consolidated the contrast between heterosexual and homosexual, subsequently adopted by Richard von Krafft-Ebing and many others. (Katz fails to mention Jaeger.)

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