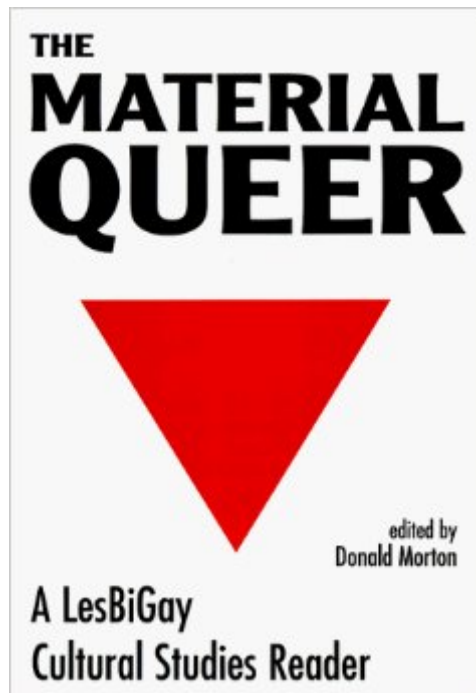


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The Material Queer: A Lesbian and Gay Cultural Studies Reader (Queer Critique)



Synopsis

This pathbreaking anthology turns first to the historical tradition in homosexual theory, from Plato to Freud, and then explores the (post)modern canon: Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, Barthes, Irigaray, and Butler. It then situates classic and (post)modern discourses in a dialectical relation to historical materialist theories that go beyond the ethics of desire to relate sexuality to global social struggles. Offering such surprising intellectual conjunctures as those between Heraclitus, Hegel, and Engels; Freud and Volosinov; Lacan and Kollontai; Derrida and Dennis Altman; queer theorists and the Socialist Worker Collective, the volume disrupts the status quo in sexuality studies. Rather than reinforcing (post)structuralist orthodoxies about the difference of/in sexualities, *The Material Queer* provides sustained materialist interventions in today's dominant theories, which, while calling for social progress, actually obscure the most effective line of resistance against sexual and other forms of oppression and exploitation. That effective line is a historical materialist analysis aimed at establishing a posthomophobic society in which sexuality is not deployed to justify differences of class that are actually produced in the social relations of production.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is controversial, to say the least. Perusing the table of contents reveals that many of the essays Morton wanted to include were denied permission to reprint. Be that as it may, this volume is nonetheless useful. It documents a growing movement within queer studies, that of Queer

Materialism. Queer Materialism, while not always Marxist, nonetheless takes its cue from dialectical materialism. Gender and sexuality are regarded here as dependent on the means of production. Here the unstable and shifting ground of queer sexual identity is posited as a function of late capitalism, a situation of quickly flowing and networking capital, which seeks profit outside of "traditional" gender and sexual boundaries. Thus we see the growing economic importance of gay consumers and workers in capitalism, outpacing and destroying the cold-war hegemony of conservative ethical and religious morals. At the same time, this points to the stormy reception queer theory has received in lesbian and gay studies. Some have argued that this deconstruction of sexual orientation and gender serves the political interests of the right-wing, preserving male and heterosexist hegemony while undermining women's voices and progressive politics. Queer theory, like bisexuality, can pose a "crisis of meaning" for many who wish to carve out a safe and protective space for lesbians and gays. As Lesbian and Gay studies have often relied on sexual orientation/sexual identity as a fundamental category, queer theory attempts to destabilize this "bedrock," revealing the power structures and discursive limits within. Because of its emphasis on capitalism (from a Marxist perspective to be sure) and its deconstructive tactics, queer theory is thus attacked from the left and the right.

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