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Salem Press Announces the New Addition to Critical Insights Series; *Critical Insights: LGBTQ Literature*

Edited by Robert C. Evans, an I.B. Young Professor of English at Auburn University at Montgomery, *Critical Insights: LGBTQ Literature* presents a genre of literature that is produced by (or especially relevant to) lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender persons, “queers,” intersexuals, and/or asexual people and this title focuses primarily on American literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Such literature has long existed and has sometimes even existed openly, especially in ancient Greece and Rome. Only very recently, however, has study of such literature become widespread and prominent. Writing that was, for many centuries, often ignored, shunned, banned, or even destroyed is now freely produced and freely discussed. This book mostly emphasizes authors who have composed in English or who (like Cavafy) have enormously influenced English-language writers.

The volume opens with **Critical Contexts**, and begins with a survey by Margaret Sonser Breen, of LGBTQ literature from 1890-1969. After indicating that her chapter could easily have begun with the ancients, Breen explains why she chose instead to concentrate on mostly modern literature. She notes that by “the end of the nineteenth century...a modern understanding of sexuality and gender as identity categories was in place in Europe and the United States.” In the second chapter, Breen continues where she left off, highlighting many recent primary texts in numerous genres. She notes that the “last decades of the twentieth century saw an upsurge in the range of LGBTQ texts, subject matter, sites of literary production, and targeted readerships. In contrast to veiled or indirect references to same-sex desire or the themes of homophobia-whether internalized or culturally pervasive-that marked much of earlier twentieth-century artistic production, literature of this later period is characterized by pride, recovery work, and a politics of visibility.” Surveying academic scholarship is the main purpose of Sarah Fredericks’ “Overview of Contemporary Guides to LGBTQ Literature.” In an exceptionally helpful and thorough “guide to guides,” Fredericks indicates the contents and reception of important reference works. Editor, Robert C. Evans’ ensuring essay then discusses the approach of literary theory as known as “critical pluralism,” which sees different ways of reading literature as different kinds of tools-each useful in its own way, but none necessarily “superior” to another. Finally, Kirk Curnutt, a distinguished scholar of twentieth-century American literature, compares and contrasts the responses of Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein to World War I. He connects their differing responses to war to their sexual differences.

The book's second major section, which consists of **Critical Readings** of particular texts, is organized chronologically. Thus John Havard's essay discusses one of the earliest canonical American writers, James Fenimore Cooper. Focusing on *Jack Tier*, one of Cooper's lesser-known works, Havard surveys Cooper's use of cross-dressing characters in various works, noting that whereas “Cooper's earlier cross-dressing heroines impersonate men in order to aid or to attach themselves to admirable male love interests,” in “*Jack Tier* Cooper reverses this pattern...by giving Jack a central, exemplary role.” Herman Melville is the subject of the next essay, by Brian Yothers (a major Melville scholar). Yothers argues that “Melville cannot be definitively identified with homosexuality or bisexuality based on the evidence we

have available to us now...Equally, however, he cannot be identified exclusively as a heterosexual with any certainty, and the fact that this is so often taken to be the default option is, as many gay, lesbian, and queer critics would remind us a major part of the problem..” Deric G. Sallas next discusses the homoerotic elements in many of Rockwell Kent’s drawings for his landmark illustrated edition of Melville’s *Moby Dick*. Robert C. Evan’s subsequent essay examines a whole new collection of previously untranslated and little-known poems by the great Greek poet C.P. Cavafy. Cavafy is one of the most important and influential of all modern “gay” poets. English writer, E.M. Forster was a friend of Cavafy and in his essay, he discusses openly “gay” novel *Maurice*, which remained unpublished for decades. Other Critical Reading essay topics include:

- “*The Queer Collaboration: Angelina Weld Grimke and the Birth Control Movement*” and “*To Croon-Weird sweet melodies*”: *The Fugitive Erotic in the Poetry of Mae V. Cowdery* both by Lorna Raven Wheeler
- *Djuna Barnes: Uncollected Writings of Gender and Cross-Dressing* by Robert C. Evans & Sarah Fredericks
- Robert C. Evans also has essays on *The Homoerotic Poetry of Wilfred Owen: Survey and Assessment* and *The Homosocial, Homoerotic Poetry of Robert Francis*
- *Gloria Anzaldua’s Ecocritical Vision: A Spiritual Journey* by Cordelia E. Barrera
- *The Stray Greatness of Vikram Seth: Sexuality and Form in “The Golden Gate and Beyond”* by Brian Yothers
- The final chapter closes with Michelle Ann Abate’s *Trans/Forming Girlhood: Transgenderism, the Tomboy Formula, and Gender Identity Disorder in Sharon Dennis Wyeth’s “Tomboy Trouble”*

Each essay in *Critical Insights: LGBTQ Literature* is 2,500 to 5,000 words in length, and all essays conclude with a list of “Works Cited,” along with endnotes. Finally, the volume’s appendixes offer a section of useful reference resources including additional works in the LGBTQ Literature Genre, an annotated bibliography for readers seeking to study more about this subject, about the editor, contributors, and a subject index.

The *Critical Insights* Series distills the best of both classic and current literary criticism of the world’s most-studied literature. Edited and written by some of academia’s most distinguished literary scholars, *Critical Insights: LGBTQ Literature* provides authoritative, in-depth scholarship that students and researchers will rely on for years. This volume is destined to become a valuable purchase for all.

Free Online with Print Purchase

In addition, *Critical Insights: LGBTQ Literature* comes with complimentary online access via <http://online.salempress.com>. A single purchase of the printed version is all it takes to gain access to this important title on the web.

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