



A Lure of Knowledge: Lesbian Sexuality and Theory (Between Men--Between Women)

Judith Roof

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Lesbianism in literature has been dealt with rather indirectly in the past. Editors have led readers to the "artistry" of a work containing lesbianism, emphasizing instead the literary history and historical context of the work rather than the representations of lesbianism. The editor for Colette's *The Pure and the Impure*, for instance, affirms that Colette has a knowledge of a "strange sisterhood," but assures readers she has never strayed from the "normal."

In the groundbreaking *A Lure of Knowledge*, Judith Roof demonstrates that representations of lesbian sexuality occupy specific locations or positions in the arguments, subject matter, and rhetoric of Western European and American literary criticism. She examines the political context of representations: how lesbian sexuality is used as a signifier and why it appears when and where it does.

Roof argues that attempts to depict or explain lesbian sexuality spur anxieties about knowledge and identity. In reaction to and denial of these anxieties, lesbian sexuality is represented in film, literature, theory, and criticism as foreplay, as simulated heterosexuality, as erotic excess, as joking inauthenticity, as artful compromise, or as masculine mask in a specific repertoire of neutralization and evasion. Challenging the heterosexism of film theory and feminist theory, this book analyzes the rhetorical use of lesbian sexuality. Roof explores a range of discourses, from the works of such authors as Anais Nin, Olga Broumas, Julia Kristeva, Jane Rule, Luce Irigaray, and Sigmund Freud, to films such as *Emmanuelle*, *Desert Hearts*, *Entre Nous*, and *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*, to professional tennis.

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