



# **Embodying Ambiguity: Androgyny and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Keller (Kritik: German Literary Theory and Cultural Studies Series)**

*By Catriona MacLeod*

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Embodying Ambiguity traces the shifts in the representation of the androgyny myth in the literature and aesthetics of the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century. Catriona MacLeod examines important pedagogic implications of the androgyny ideal for Classical, Romantic, and Realist texts, beginning with Aristophane's narrative of the origin of human sexuality in Plato's *Symposium* and including the hermaphroditic androgyny proposed by Winckelmann and the heterosexual complementary model found in Schiller and Schlegel.

Conceptually grounded in psychoanalytic and feminist theory, *Embodying Ambiguity* explores the role of sexually ambiguous female characters within patterns of male maturation, including Goethe's classic novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. MacLeod contrasts the hermaphroditic sculptures prominent in Winckelmann's works with the androgynous women that appear in the narratives of *Bildungsroman*, a genre preoccupied with psychological and moral maturation and bourgeois socialization.

This study shows how crises of sexual ambiguity in late Romantic texts tend to be resolved by transforming androgynous figures into inanimate, ultrafeminine statues. It includes discussions about Eichendorff's Marmorbild and Ahnung und Gegenwart and Heine's Florentinische Nächte. Finally, MacLeod explores Realist responses to androgyny, from Stifter's nostalgic citation of the marble statue in Der Nachsommer to Keller's parodic treatment, in works like Das

Sinngedicht, of a myth of sexual unity, untenable in an age of science.

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Catriona Macleod is an assistant professor of German at Yale University

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