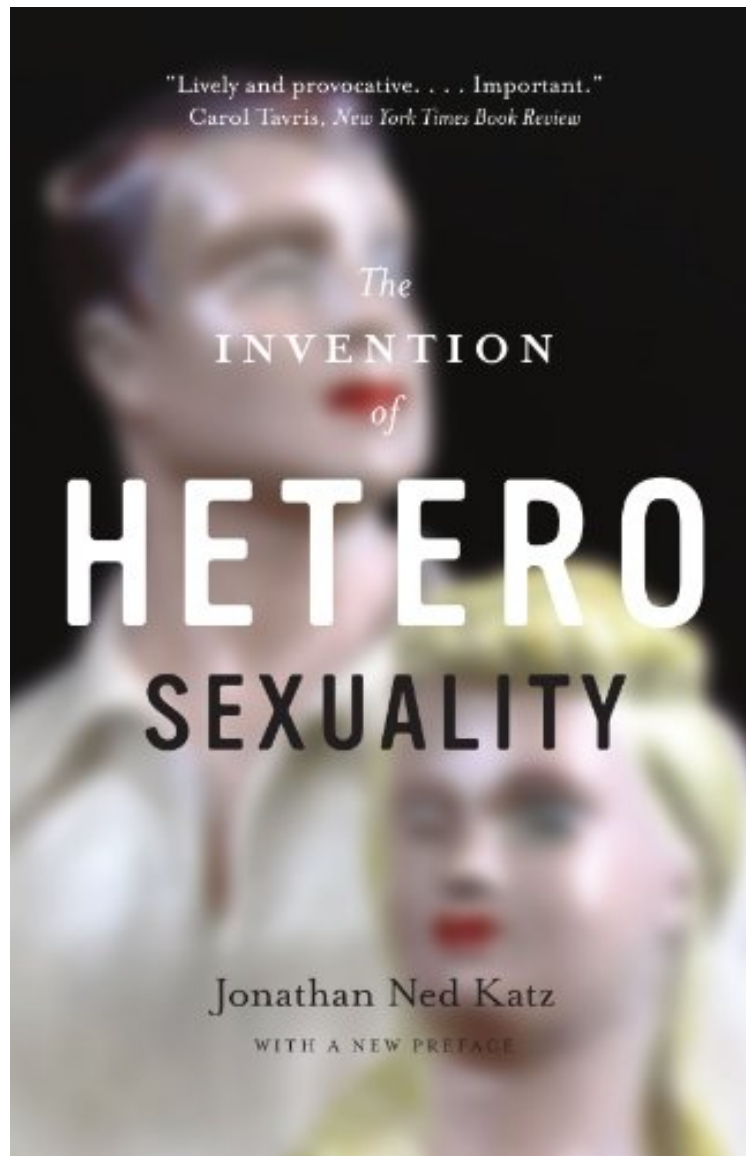


(Mobile book) The Invention of Heterosexuality

The Invention of Heterosexuality

Jonathan Ned Katz

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Jonathan Ned Katz : The Invention of Heterosexuality before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Invention of Heterosexuality:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Inverting the Inverters By Nick Nicholas, MSW With the explicit invention of the homosexual by medicalizing that status in 1869, the term requires a normative value to express the point from which the deviation occurs. Thus, the creation and elaboration upon the homosexual was simultaneously the creation and elaboration upon the heterosexual. Much scholarly work has gone into describing the social

construction of homosexuals and homosexuality, and here is an act of sublime academic irony by the gay historian Jonathan Katz as he turns the central object of study on its head and examines how the constructors are themselves constructed. Moreover, he shows how this construction of heterosexuality influences the construction of homosexuality. Unsurprisingly, Katz finds that a contamination in the heterosexual hegemonic attitudes towards homosexuality exists. The two concepts did not follow parallel paths, however, and Katz uses Foucauldian methods to chart the gender history of heterosexuality. This is indeed a subversive text. Although this is a resolutely academic work with a host of supporting citations for his audacious arguments, the book is written in a highly accessible style which makes the book inviting for the non-academic reader. I think this is an especially important book for queer writers and intellectuals to read. For an academic book this was particularly fascinating reading; several times I even gasped at the inspiring brilliance of the insights I gained from the book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Looking at sexuality from a different lens By Peter J. Neiger Overall, I enjoyed Katz's analysis, but it was a bit tough to get through. His overall thesis, that heterosexuality is seen as a universal norm based on an objective biological determinism, and that has allowed it to escape criticism or analysis, is pretty solid. As is his analysis of heterosexuality as primarily a social construct that has only really been around for 150 years or so. Unfortunately, this book falls in the "books that could have been a blog post" category. Though, considering it was written in 1995 I guess that could be forgiven. One of the strengths of the book was also a weakness. Katz cited and quoted a significant number of great essays and books on the subject and provided his own commentary, because of that I have an ever-growing list of books to read on the subject. But, that made many chapters feel like long book reports. It was almost overly academic. There were many sections that I underlined and wrote furiously in the margins, which is usually a good sign, but there were also entire chapters that I found very little of value in. It was good, though, and enlightening, but it could have been shorter and still expanded beyond an analysis of just western sexual relationships post-1800's. Sexuality was viewed very differently in Ancient Greece (for example) and expanding into other cultures would have been beneficial. Ironically, one of Katz's consistent criticisms of other's works is that they failed to directly confront the issue of heterosexuality, but in a way Katz did that as well by limiting his analysis to a small point in time (but maybe that was the point, that heterosexuality really has only existed in a small point in time). 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By SJSW22 Excellent condition, great price!

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*

From *Publishers Weekly* Katz (*Gay American History*) argues that heterosexuality is a social construct rather than a natural, unambiguous given. He notes that the terms heterosexual and homosexual were coined in 1868 by German sex-law reformer Karl Maria Kertbeny and did not gain wide currency until the early 20th century. Katz contends that heterosexuality as a universal, presumed, normative ideal was invented by men, such as Kertbeny, Sigmund Freud and German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing. Prior to the late 19th century, he maintains, the social universe was not polarized into "hetero" and "homo." The examples he cites in support of his thesis—ancient Greece, the new England colonies (1607-1740) and the U.S. between 1820 and 1850—do not substantiate Katz's claims. Nevertheless, this often provocative work challenges rigid notions of gender identity, building on the ideas of French historian Michel Foucault and on feminist critiques of heterosexuality by Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, Adrienne Rich and others. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* Although we take for granted that heterosexuality is and has always been the sexual norm, historian Katz reexamines the constructions of sexual identity and postulates that heterosexuality has a history that has heretofore never been analyzed and that "such privileging of the norm accedes to its domination." Tracing the first appearance of the terms heterosexual and homosexual in 1868 in Germany, the author of *Gay American History* (LJ 12/15/76) analyzes the changes in usage in dictionaries, medical journals, and a wide variety of other published sources. Carefully building his argument using Richard von Krafft-Ebing's and Sigmund Freud's seminal theories in the creation of heterosexuality, he goes on to challenge such influential figures as Alfred Charles Kinsey, Betty Friedan, and Michel Foucault. This provocatively original research, recalling similar problematizations of race, gender, and other seemingly immutable, ahistorical constructs, is complemented by Gore Vidal's foreword and Lisa Duggan's afterword. For informed readers. James E. Van Buskirk, *San Francisco P.L.* Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist* Katz's thoughtful, scholarly book

examines the words heterosexual and homosexual both of which are scarcely 100 years old--and presents heterosexuality as a historical social convention rather than as a natural, eternal given. In arguing that these categorical terms are historical and thus changeable, Katz reminds us that until very recently, sex was considered mostly functional, urgently needed for procreation in order to populate fledgling American settlements. He then scrutinizes Freud's influence as a sex theorist who changed the image of woman from her nineteenth-century idealization as the "angel in the house" to one in which lack of erotic response constituted mental illness. Moving beyond Freud, he takes us through the twentieth century, stressing the conservatism of the 1940s and 1950s before coming eventually to the churning 1990s, when a theatrical review titled *Heterosexuals in Crisis* summarizes the "general sense of a different-sex erotic emergency." Along the way, he cites such sex theorists as Kate Millett, Ti-Grace Atkinson, and Michel Foucault, weaving them into his controversial, readable discourse. Whitney Scott