

BOYDELL & BREWER

Spring 2022

COMING OUT

KYLE FRACKMAN

Summary

Examines the creation, context, and significance of the first and only East German feature film about homosexuality.

Key Points

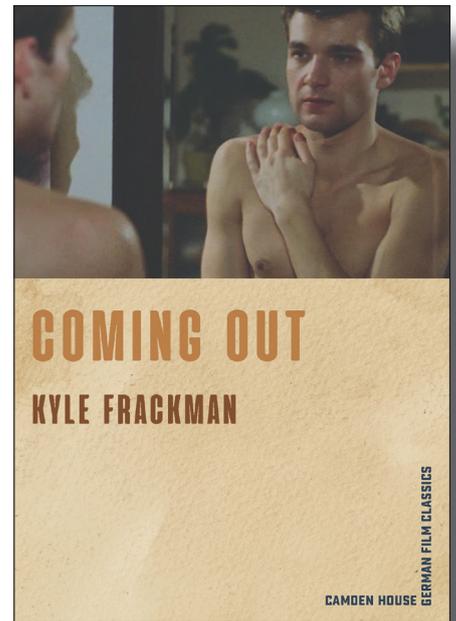
- Treats a classic film that is a monumental landmark in the acceptance of gay culture in Germany
- Reveals much about East German culture and society at its end
- Of lasting importance and popularity in both queer circles and more broadly

Description

It took forty years for East Germany's state-run studios, DEFA, to produce a feature film about homosexuality: *Coming Out*. The film's story seems radically ordinary today: a young teacher, Philipp, is gay but cannot accept the truth about his sexuality. He starts a relationship with a fellow teacher, Tanja, but falls in love with a man he meets, Matthias, whose confidence in his own self-understanding is alluring for him as well as a challenge. Acclaimed director Heiner Carow created a film that shows the difficulties, both internalized and external, that queer people faced in East Germany. In a quirk of history, *Coming Out* premiered in German theaters on November 9, 1989, the very night on which the Berlin Wall was opened, which meant the film was initially overshadowed, to say the least, by the earthshaking political events. Yet it remains a popular film and is regularly screened around the world, including prominently at queer film festivals. Kyle Frackman's book examines the film in both the late East German context of its creation and the international context of its reception.

The Author

KYLE FRACKMAN is Associate Professor of German & Scandinavian Studies at the University of British Columbia.



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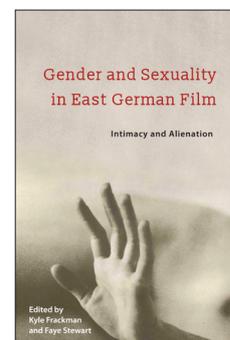
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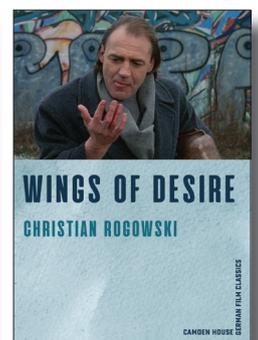
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Acceptance

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Notes



Above, Fig. 12: Philipp's news of his romance with Tanja puzzles his mother, with whom he has a difficult relationship.



Left, Fig. 17: Matthias as a sad clown, evoking Pierrot and his unrequited love.



Right, Fig. 34: Philipp's confident "Yes" points to a brighter future in which he acknowledges his identity and finds acceptance in society.