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Sommario/riassunto	"I do not say you are it, but you look it, and you pose at it, which is just as bad," Lord Queensbury challenged Oscar Wilde in the courtroom-which erupted in laughter-accusing Wilde of posing as a sodomite. What was so terrible about posing as a sodomite, and why was Queensbury's horror greeted with such amusement? In Oscar Wilde Prefigured, Dominic Janes suggests that what divided the two sides in this case was not so much the question of whether Wilde was or was not a sodomite, but whether or not it mattered that people could appear to be sodomites. For many, intimations of sodomy were simply a part of the amusing spectacle of sophisticated life. Oscar Wilde

Prefigured is a study of the prehistory of this "queer moment" in 1895. Janes explores the complex ways in which men who desired sex with men in Britain had expressed such interests through clothing, style, and deportment since the mid-eighteenth century. He supplements the well-established narrative of the inscription of sodomitical acts into a homosexual label and identity at the end of the nineteenth century by teasing out the means by which same-sex desires could be signaled through visual display in Georgian and Victorian Britain. Wilde, it turns out, is not the starting point for public queer figuration. He is the pivot by which Georgian figures and twentieth-century camp stereotypes meet. Drawing on the mutually reinforcing phenomena of dandyism and caricature of alleged effeminates, Janes examines a wide range of images drawn from theater, fashion, and the popular press to reveal new dimensions of identity politics, gender performance, and queer culture.

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