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Idioms of Uncertainty: Goethe and the Essay (Paperback)

By Peter J. Burgard

Pennsylvania State University Press, United States, 2005. Paperback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book ***** Print on Demand *****.Goethe's essays have been culled for their literary, aesthetic, and scientific content, by the textuality and their location at the nexus of genre and literary history have not received the critical attention they deserve. In *Idioms of Uncertainty*, Peter Burgard analyzes the rhetorical strategies, structure, and style of pivotal essays and relates them to the essay traditions as represented by Montaigne and Johnson. By formulating the critique of systematic philosophy inherent in the essays and by investigating their participation in the principal aesthetic dialogue of the age--the Laocoon debate, which spanned nearly half a century--Burgard situates them in the context of eighteenth-century critical discourse. Furthermore, by disclosing the connection between the anti-systematic, dialogic impetus of Goethe's essayism and the theme of community in his literary works, *Idioms of Uncertainty* both draws out the broader social implications of the essay and shows how the analysis of Goethe's work in the genre can illuminate his entire oeuvre. In the course of the study Burgard articulates a theory of the essay as a genre by drawing on twentieth-century theoretical perspectives...



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