

reexamine, on a broader scale, some of the themes dealt with in regionally specific works, and suggests further avenues of study as well.

This book will serve as an excellent guide to anyone who is interested in the history of sexuality, the history of childhood, and the social, cultural, and political history of Spanish America. Undergraduate students as well as more advanced scholars will benefit from Twinam's conclusions about the way birth status and social identities were constructed, the way that Spanish policies and colonial realities related to each other, and the way different regions of the Spanish empire contributed to the character of the whole. Her conclusions about the relationship between public and private, illegitimacy and honor, and sexuality and social status advance the field of Spanish-American history.

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Invisible Relations: Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of Enlightenment. By ELIZABETH SUSAN WAHL. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999. Pp. 358. \$49.50 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper).

In this book, Elizabeth Wahl explores the representation of female same-sex desire in French as well as English texts, with the result that she develops a wider range of categories and a richer set of relations than a strictly English set of textual references will allow. The resulting comparative study points up telling differences between English and French culture that have significance for students of the history of early modern sexuality. As she says in chapter 1, “French sources, in particular, offer evidence of a rich, if often fragmentary, awareness of lesbianism that had begun to permeate Western European culture during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly through the interconnections of legal, gynecological, and erotic discourse” (p. 19). She explains further how “from a juridical perspective, sexual relations between women could be viewed as sodomitical” (p. 22) within French law, thereby avoiding the paradoxical situation in England, where female same-sex relations are “legally invisible” (p. 23), neither socially acceptable nor mentioned in laws against sodomy.

This book will be welcomed by historians, by English and French literary specialists, and by interdisciplinary specialists in the history of sexuality. Wahl reopens the question of female intimacy with an amazing sensitivity to the complexities of same-sex desire—her opening chapter theorizes the question of female-female bonds with great subtlety—and sets a high standard for original historical research, even in areas where we

thought most of the work had been done. What more needed to be said about “female friendship” after the books by Faderman, Donoghue, and Ballaster?¹ Wahl shows us that there was a great deal more close and careful reading to do, more theoretical speculation to employ, and more good historical research to call into play. The result is an important step toward a fuller understanding of how female relations functioned within a dominant culture that virtually ignored them. This book looks at female monstrosity, female caricature, female friendship, and even pornographic depictions of female relations in order to tell a rich and varied story about how women related to one another in elitist literary forms throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The first chapters of *Invisible Relations* discuss legal and medical accounts of female-female transgression—especially tribadism, clitoral hypertrophy, and hermaphroditism—which are more frequent in French than in English sources. These accounts of female excess are complemented by a study of tribadism in French libertine literature and a few English texts. Wahl sees a connection between the medical fascination with bodily irregularity and the emergence of the trope of female-female desire in seventeenth-century literature. In some of the French texts, she suggests, the “libertine poets deploy representations of lesbian relations within the secure boundaries of a heterosexual teleology” (p. 61). This is true, for instance, of Pontus de Tyard’s “Élegie pour une dame enamourée d’une autre dame,” which “evokes the idea of love between women within a form that frames this amour as one never to be consummated and so already regretted because it is foredoomed to failure” (p. 61). While this might literally be true, and while this work and others that Wahl discusses in this section may link female-female desire to disease and infirmity, the cultural implications of this fascination for readers as well as writers would still be worth explaining more directly than Wahl does here. Consider, for instance, the case of Isaac Berserade, who expresses a libertine tension “between an almost sympathetic tolerance of tribade sexuality and a repressive insistence that female-female desire be recast within a narrative of heterosexual conversion” (p. 63). I think that lesbian and gay readers today have learned ways to read that resist the heteronormative force of the marriage plot in various narrative situations, and I wonder whether early modern readers might have found, for instance, the “pleasures of the wedding night” that Iphnis and Ianthe share in Berserade’s version of the

¹See, for instance, Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: Morrow, 1981); Emma Donoghue, *Passions between Women: British Lesbian Culture 1668–1801* (London: Scarlett Press, 1993); and Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Ovidian myth more than ample compensation for the rather predictable gender transformations that allow a male-female coupling at the end of the tale. In other words, I think that Wahl is only partly right to say that the narrative form forecloses female-female possibilities.

Wahl argues that “in France the very ambivalence of both men and women’s attitudes toward marriage and the extramarital relations that operated under the rubric of *galanterie* illuminated a set of ideological fissures within a society that relied upon women’s ‘compulsory sexuality’ in order to ensure the reproduction of the state” (p. 75); but that female-female desire remained invisible nonetheless. One reason for this is that the women themselves, in private writing and correspondence, “consistently and publicly rejected ‘love’ in favor of an idealized relation of intellects or souls” (p. 107). Later English representations of such relations, as in Delarivier Manley’s representation of “the new cabal” in *The New Atalantis* (1709), allude more openly to sexual misconduct so that the women in question can be seen as monstrous in political as well as social terms. Wahl feels that by this time, it had become easier “to undermine idealized representations of female intimacy and raise the specter of female homosexuality as an underlying truth concealed by a veneer of ‘tender friendship’” (p. 121). Yet in *The New Atalantis*, Manley “cannot entirely relinquish her fascination with the Cabal’s fantasy of egalitarian female community, free from the socio-sexual constraints and hierarchies of male-dominated society” (p. 127). And if this is true for Manley, it is true for an entire range of works that emerged in England in the early to middle years of the eighteenth century, works by Katherine Philips, Mary Astell, Jane Barker, Sarah Fielding, and, preeminently, Sarah Scott.

Of these writers, Wahl discusses the first two extensively. In a long chapter on Philips’s poetry, a chapter that offers new scholarly evidence for Philips’s devotion to female-female bonds, Wahl shows how “the matchless Orinda” “inverts the traditional sexual and social hierarchies that constrained women by imagining a world of friendship that would be ‘nobler than Kindred or than Marriage band because more free’” (p. 157; the quotation is from Philips’s poem, “A Friend”). Nevertheless, Wahl argues, against critics that see a “lesbian” sensibility in Philips, that “it is not so easy to define Philips as a ‘lesbian’ figure without risking a considerable degree of historical anachronism, particularly since the modern connotations of this term inevitably suggest a conceptual opposition between homosexuality and heterosexuality” (p. 161). But historians of lesbian sexuality, such as Emma Donoghue, Susan S. Lanser, and David Robinson, have made it clear both that the term lesbian emerges from this very period, with clear connotations of same-sex sexual behavior as well as various personal and social behaviors, and

that the term can nonetheless be used without insisting on a binary economy.² Wahl deploras “the critical inability to find a specific seveneenth-century vocabulary of female intimacy to describe Philips’s imagined world of female friendship” (p. 162); I think it would be more helpful to allow a term like “lesbian” its full richness of expressive potential.

Invisible Relations fills out an important chapter in the history of sexuality. I would place it among a handful of books on this topic that have begun to change our understanding of female-female desire in early modern culture. This book marshals a great deal of scholarship in a huge apparatus of footnotes and bibliography to establish itself as a serious study. Even more important, it actively engages with the work of scholars in both English and French literary, cultural, and historical studies, in order to expand on that work and build a critical consensus. This is surely preferable to those studies, especially in this field, that tend to dismiss everything that has come before. This is a work that historians of sexuality will be turning to again and again. Its author never settles for easy answers and is always ready to look ever more closely at the texts examined. It is a challenging study, but also an inspiring one.

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Making Sexual History. By JEFFREY WEEKS. Cambridge, England: Polity Press, and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000. Pp. x + 256. \$59.95 (cloth); \$24.95 (paper).

Jeffrey Weeks has been a major contributor to the development of lesbian and gay studies and to the larger fields of the history and sociology of sexuality. *Making Sexual History*, a collection of eleven previously published pieces and an original concluding essay, presents a broad overview of the substantial range and depth of his research in these fields over nearly twenty-five years. With clarity, wisdom, and commitment, the various essays work harmoniously to develop Weeks’s insistence that “[w]e are the makers of sexual history, in our everyday lives, in our life experiments, in the tangle between desire, responsibility, contingency and opportunity” (p. vii). His ability to span multiple differences in the often contentious debates on sexuality and to discern deep historical and social significance in them reveals his craft as an engaged scholar.

²In addition to Donoghue, *Passions between Women*, see Susan S. Lanser, “Befriending the Body: Female Intimacies as Class Acts,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32 (1998–99): 179–98.