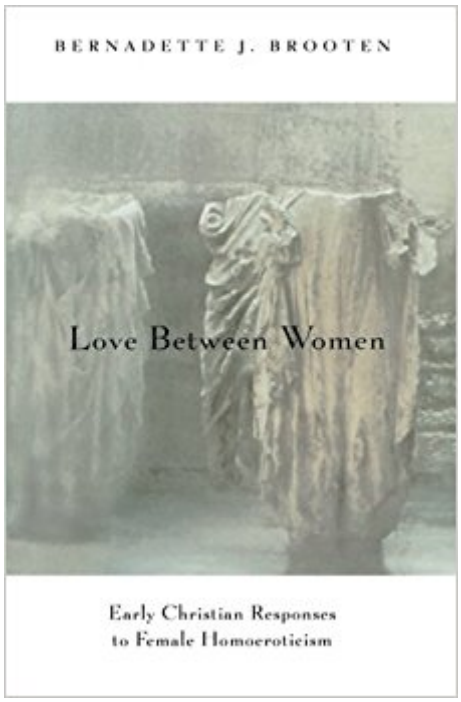
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Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses To Female Homoeroticism (The Chicago Series On Sexuality, History, And Society)



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Synopsis

Love Between Women examines female homoeroticism and the role of women in the ancient Roman world. Employing an unparalleled range of cultural sources, Brooten finds evidence of marriages between women and establishes that condemnations of female homoerotic practices were based on widespread awareness of love between women."An extraordinary accomplishment. . . . A definitive source for all future discussion of homoeroticism and the Bible."Ã¢â ¬â •Mary Rose D'Angelo, Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review"[Brooten's] convincing analysis . . . not only profoundly reshapes our understanding of the past, but it should also shape the way in which that past, particularly the early Christian texts with their immense normative weight, will be used for the future."Ã¢â ¬â •Anne L. Clark, Journal of Lesbian Studies"Love Between Women gives contemporary debates on sexuality a carefully delineated past. It boldly insists upon a different future, one informed by history but not tyrannized by it."Ã¢â ¬â •Susan Ackerman, Lambda Book Report"Fascinating, provocative and lucid. . . . Brooten has made a fundamental contribution to women's and gender studies, gay and lesbian studies, and classics."Ã¢â ¬â •Elizabeth A. Castelli, Women's Review of BooksWinner of the Lambda Literary Award for Best Lesbian Studies Book, 1997

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The last two decades have produced an enormous amount of literature about the role of male homosexuality in the classical and early Christian world--but almost nothing about lesbianism.

Bernadette Brooten’s Love Between Women remedies that oversight with a vengeance. Brooten’s extraordinarily well-researched and breathtakingly argued book proves that female homoeroticism was well-established and thriving 2,000 years ago. Equally as important are her analyses of 19th century and contemporary scholars who have re-closeted lesbianism through ignorance and prejudice. Love Between Women is a breakthrough book that radically changes how we think about history and sexuality. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Bernadette J. Brooten examines female homoeroticism and the role of women in the ancient Roman world. Employing an unparalleled range of cultural sources, from magical spells and medical texts to astrological horoscopes, Brooten finds evidence of marriages between women and discusses the surgical procedure of clitoridectomy as a method of controlling female homoeroticism. She incontrovertibly establishes the fact that condemnations of female homoerotic practices were based on widespread awareness of sexual love between women. Culling significant information from her sources to illuminate the lives and beliefs of myriad ancient Mediterranean peoples, she gives a tour, at once delightful and distressing, of Roman-world attitudes. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This book, as one can tell from the title, explores "early Christian responses to" what Brooten calls "female homoeroticism." By "female homoeroticism" Brooten means women who were somehow sexually involved with other women, either in longer-term relationships, or simply in a sexual way independent of any long-term relationship. One of the most important things to say about this book is that it examines texts and brings together a large amount of research and analysis that has never been brought together before and, in that sense, it is ground breaking. Her work on Romans 1:26 is, I believe, some of the best out there. It is an important book for those interested in how female/female sexual interaction might have been understood in the time of early Christianity. This is not a book that most "everyday" readers might want to read from cover-to-cover. It is an academic book, and should be of interested to scholars of early Christianity/biblical scholars and those interested the history of sexuality. That said, "everyday" folks who might be interested in this could read parts of the book and find it very interesting and enlightening, while skipping over the translations of obscure documents or inscriptions and such. Although another reviewer noted that this shows that Christianity has been "anti-gay" from the beginning, I’m afraid that is not really what this book does. An important part of this book argues that what we today understand as "gay" or "lesbian" does not closely resemble what females being sexually involved with other females or

males being sexually involved with other males looked like thousands of years ago. Brooten does show, however, that females being sexually involved with other females in antiquity was often looked down upon, although the reasons for that are different than the reasons lesbians are often discriminated against today. I would like to have seen Brooten differentiate between "love" between women and "sexual relationships" between women -- she seems to operate under the assumption that these automatically or almost always come together. I also would have preferred that she change the wording in her closing which suggests that "the idea of homosexuality" existed in antiquity. While she makes good arguments that particular sexual preferences and inclinations toward certain kinds of people existed in antiquity, to say that "homosexuality" or "the idea of homosexuality" existed in antiquity is to be too casual with the use of the 19th/20th/21st century construct of homosexuality. As for the review that gave this book only one star -- this book was reviewed in, at the least, a somewhat positive light in nearly all the academic journals which reviewed it. While there are, as with almost all books, some weaknesses, to give it just one star is to absurd. At the least, this book does some exciting and never-before-done work which is always valuable, even if it isn't perfect.

The roots of Salem and certain trials? Purchased more as a talisman to wield in the faces of those who are Christian by proclamation but only intolerant, small-minded people in practice. The book is History, the way it should be told.

Brooten is my favourite lesbian scholar, she is very honest, which I respect, unlike other other pro-gay scholars. 1996 Academic treatment. Brooten gives a very useful annotated bibliography on Rom 1:26ff and NT and homosexuality generally. Also she has a detailed commentary on Rom 1:18-32 (p 215-302). She does rely too much on the misogyny argument, but that is not what Paul is talking about, even if that is what the Hellenistic society believed. If one looks at 1 Cor 7:3-4, Paul is not misogynistic; he is quite egalitarian for a man and a woman within the marriage bed. Even Paul allows sexual freedom for a man and a woman within the marriage bed.

According to John Boswell's book, Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality, the Christian tradition was not anti-gay until the late middle ages. Professor Brooten's book makes us revisit that argument and rethink the hegemony of Boswell's thesis in gay circles. Her critique of Boswell's reading of Romans 1 is telling and accurate.Brooten's book is a very tight and carefully argued presentation of Christian tradition as anti-gay and (especially) anti-lesbian from the outset. The

wider context of this argument is fascinating. It includes translations of spells and other original material never seen before. No one interested in gay or lesbian history can neglect this study!

I have recently found this book and I could not put it down, it is a treasure for anyone wanting to understand lesbian history. Her arguments against scholars focusing only on relationships between men in early Christianity are completely valid though they've clearly brought some ire as several reviewers feel the need to insist that various lesbophobic writers are 'actually egalitarian!' and other such garbage.The only criticism I have is that Brooten didn't address gender despite the fact that her source materials contained a wealth of interesting comments about how gender was constructed.

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