



The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England (Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture)

By Valerie Traub



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Valerie Traub analyzes the representation of female-female love, desire, and eroticism in a range of early modern discourses, including poetry, drama, visual arts, pornography, and medicine. Contrary to the silence ascribed to lesbianism in the Renaissance, Traub argues that the early modern period witnessed an unprecedented proliferation of representations of such desire. As a contribution to the history of sexuality and to feminist and queer theory, the book addresses current theoretical preoccupations through the lens of historical inquiry.



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Review

"Traub's compellingly argued study contributes significantly to early modern scholarship not only on sexuality, but also on gender, anatomical science, marriage and the family, poetic and dramatic texts, classical mythology, women writers and royal icongraphy ... [S]he has undeniably given us a wealth of knowledge about its history and a model of scholarship for interpreting its significance that cannot be ignored." Seventeenth-Century News

"More than an 'attempt,' this achievement will be foundational for the next generation of lesbian/queer/gay scholarship, ranging well beyond early modernism. The book's richness cannot be abstracted in a short review.... Her revelation and delightful readings of numerous textual sites is a second pleasure, and her sweeping historical lens, with keen attention to discursive and epistemological shifts, fault lines, and crises, is a third. Essential." Choice

"...engagingly written...Traub's erudite and complex book is a major contribution not only to early modern criticism but also to the history of sexuality in the early modern West." Journal of the History of Sexuality

"One of the most significant books to be published in 2001 is Valerie Traub's. [Her] book not only brilliantly locates a lost history of female-female eroticism, it also narrates a history that almost entirely changes our sense of the development of heterosexuality during the seventeenth entury." Studies in English Literature

"One of the most significant books to be published in 2001...A tour de force of theoretically informed inquiry, this is cultural history at its most powerful and elegant - completely rewriting the history of sexuality in the seventeenth century." Recent Sudies in the English Renaissance (UK)

"Professor Traub's scholarship is prodigious, her critical acumen impressive. We will be recalling with pleasure for years to come the stories she has brought to our attention; for her capacious study provides a rich and welcome store of material for future argument and debate." Renaissance Quarterly

"The history of all sexual deviance is, by the nature of the subject, difficult to trace, but Ms. Traub does a dazzling job and the text has fine pictorial as well as literary illustrations. How did lesbians then 'do it'--and how do they 'do it' now? She tells what she knows. This book presents both a kind of genesis (though Sappho much predated the Early Modern and surely she was not the first) and a sort of genealogy of certain sexual activities.... The author comments on the 'eerie familiarity' of certain past practices.... This serious contribution to sexual history is written in the style of modern feminists but is readable and worth reading by all." Bibliotheque d'Humanisme et Renaissance

"...an impressively thorough study...An intervention in several different discursive strands, The Renaissance of Lesbianism will appeal to scholars in English and continental cultural, literary, historical, and art historical studies. This is a book that uses what has come before as a starting point rather than a guidebook, and that successfully avoids being constrained by dominant critical ideologies. Traub's work is packed and eloquent, and each chapter provides a delightful surprise for the reader in search of innovative close readings."

Sixteenth Century Journal

"[Traub's] book is extremely learned as well as dignified and persuasive...This book ought to improve your

vision." Bibliotheque d'Humanisme et Renaissance

"This theoretically imaginative and informed monograph is a must-read for anyone interested in early modern gender or social history. Scholars of drama will benefit from the analyses of theatrical texts that constitute a third of Traub's material but may find themselves most enlightened by her rejuvenation of the common currency of feminist studies--concepts such as friendship, chastity, and transvestism." Essays in Theatre Lisa Celovsky, Suffolk University

About the Author

Valerie Traub is Professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, and author of numerous works on gay/lesbian studies, including the book Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama and coeditor of Feminist Readings in Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects.

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