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Lewis C. Seifert and Rebecca M. Wilkin, eds., *Men and Women Making Friends in Early Modern France*. Farnham, UK and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2015. x + 305 pp. Table, figures, bibliography, and index. £70.00 (hb). ISBN 978-1-4724-5409-6.

Review by Gary Ferguson, University of Virginia.

Reviewing the existing scholarship on the history of friendship (Brian McGuire, Alan Bray, Michel Foucault, et al.), the editors of the present collection acknowledge a particular debt to Ullrich Langer's 1994 book, *Perfect Friendship: Studies in Literature and Moral Philosophy from Boccaccio to Corneille*, with its emphasis on friendship's "imaginative experimentation" (p. 4). Similarly, for Seifert and Wilkin, friendship in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in France is marked by an "extraordinary dynamism" (p. 2) and "creative power": "the activity of friendship ... both embodies normative interaction and reshapes it" (p. 6). The most original and fruitful of their aims is to direct attention to the period's "experimentation in cross-gender friendships" (p. 9), a very welcome ambition given the topic's relative neglect and undoubtedly rich potential. Such friendships are set in the context of a number of discourses and social practices: the medieval tradition of courtly love and its seventeenth-century avatars--*honnêteté* and *galanterie*--that structured relations in the salons; the ideal of the "companionate marriage," promoted by both Protestant and Catholic reformers; and the tradition of spiritual friendships between a confessor or spiritual director and a female penitent, which drew inspiration and legitimation from a number of notable early Christian models.

In a highly original study, George Hoffmann considers not only what Montaigne wrote about friendship, but also the sharply contrasting picture that emerges from an examination of the essayist's practice of it in his own life. A review of the very pragmatic reasons that likely drew Montaigne to La Boétie and vice versa and the limited amount of time they actually spent together raises the question of the *use* of the sublime, hyperbolic relationship famously described in "De l'amitié." The answer, for Hoffmann, is the holding at arm's length of members of Montaigne's circle of extended family members and close associates who might have had a claim on him, as well as the possibility of taking advantage of what Mark Granovetter has called "weak ties." The friendships Montaigne actually cultivated in later life were with men many years his junior, whom he mentored, and with women, notably Marie de Gournay, who would turn the *Essays* into an institution.

The relation between literary text and social interaction is also the focus of Michelle Miller's essay on Clément Marot and his service friendship with King François I. Marot--who, in the context of abjuring heresy in order to return from exile at the court of Renée de France in Ferrara, was himself beaten under royal authority--seeks to ingratiate himself and strengthen ties with the king by representing beatings in his poems of critics and rivals, notably François Sagon, whom he figures as their common enemy. The noble personage authorizing the beating is not François, however, who would risk appearing petty and vindictive, but Renée, in whose kitchen it had many times been imagined by those present. Friendship here retains a social aspect and participates in--rather than being effaced by--the "civilizing process," which itself accommodates the violence of "correction."

Todd Reeser analyzes Symphorien Champier's *Nef des dames vertueuses* (1503), a text that was both a pro-woman intervention in the *querelle des femmes* and played a major role in the importation of Ficinian neo-Platonism into France. Accomplishing these two goals required considerable revision of Ficino, in particular the erasure of all same-sex eroticism in favor of marriage-based heterosexuality. From this perspective the reworking in book four of the story of the love of two friends, Gisippus and Titus, adapted from Boccaccio's *Decameron* via a Latin translation by Filippo Beroaldo the Elder, might appear strange. Reeser argues perceptively that Champier's aim is to accommodate male-male love in the form of an orderly homosociality contained within a larger heterosexual model of gender relations. A second story from Ficino, that of Lucilia, offers Champier a vehicle for allegorizing his practice of sexual rewriting.

Neo-Platonism continues to be the focus of the next two chapters, the first of which, by Marc Schachter, discusses two translations of ancient dialogues on friendship--Plato's *Lysis* by Bonaventure des Périers and Lucian's *Toxaris* by Jacques de Rozières--dedicated to women, respectively, Marguerite de Navarre and her niece, Marguerite de France. Schachter notes that unlike the dedications of similar translations to male patrons, those found here do not deploy the rhetoric of the male friendship tradition--a consequence no doubt of considerations of social status but also of gender. Instead, they "depict relationships based ... on proximity or consanguinity and on Christian faith" (p. 101). In addition, Des Périers modifies the text of the *Lysis* to reflect Marguerite de Navarre's evangelical Christian beliefs. Friendship thus finds its ultimate expression in the "parfaicte Amytié" of union with God.

Katherine Crawford also signals the difficulties humanists experienced in confronting the homoerotics of the Platonic friendship tradition. Reviewing a number of strategies adopted by successive vulgarizers and translators of several dialogues, including the *Lysis* (Symphorien Champier, Bonaventure des Périers, Blaise de Vigenère, Louis Le Roy, Jean de Serres), she also notes that "Plato proffered a more exteriorized, social ethics of friendship that could speak to political circumstances and social structures" (p. 121). In line with her previous work, Crawford then reads Henri III's relations with his *mignons* as an attempt to use *philia* as a vehicle for channeling royal favor that an increasing number of his opponents read simply as (sodomitical) *eros*.

Robert Schneider offers a compelling overview of seventeenth-century Paris's many private literary and cultural associations (salons, academies, patronage circles, etc.), the subgroups within them, and the ways in which they were simultaneously distinct and overlapping--as is seen in the multiple affiliations of men such as Guillaume Colletet and Michel de Marolles. Out of coteries like that of Valentin Conrart, Richelieu would draw the core members of the *Académie française*, though some of the century's major writers maintained their independence (Descartes, Corneille, Guez de Balzac). While women played important roles, they seldom did so on an equal footing with men. Marie de Gournay was exceptional in establishing a public identity as a writer who was not a salonnière or attached to a particular salon. Of those who entered the exclusively masculine *Académie*, moreover, some were undoubtedly happy to escape "the taint of female sociability and the embarrassing judgment of women" (p. 159).

The relationship of Descartes with Elisabeth of Bohemia and their epistolary negotiation of gender and social status are interestingly illuminated by Rebecca Wilkin. While the philosopher had recourse to a nongendered, neo-Stoic rhetoric of noble souls and abstract virtues, the princess associated her correspondent with the figure of the doctor in order to involve both her mind (metaphorically sick) and body (female and subject to physical ailments). Elisabeth's "rhetoric of femininity" (p. 179) allows her both to create a sense of equality (compensating for her social superiority) and maintain the difference of her own (more materialist and skeptical) philosophical convictions. Thus, in her letters, "the feeble-minded, feeble-bodied woman shares the page with the skeptical, learnedly ignorant peer who prods her dogmatist friend to work harder to get his story straight" (p. 182).

The nuns of Port-Royal, and notably the abbess Angélique Arnauld, also deployed discourses of friendship, as Daniella Kostroun shows in an analysis of three critical episodes. First, during her early attempts to leave the order, Angélique presents the Benedictine rule as an obstacle to her ability to form proper relationships within and beyond the monastery. She recounts her subsequent meeting with her soul-mate, the abbé de Saint-Cyran, in terms that recall some of the topoi typical of nuns' narratives of spiritual friendship (as categorized by Jodi Bilinkoff).<sup>[1]</sup> Other topoi, however, along with any erotic language, are absent, and the resulting "connection" that Angélique describes is with her female community. Finally, friendship tropes inform the nuns' presentation of themselves as united against tyranny throughout the conflict known as the formulary crisis, that led to the abbey's eventual suppression in 1709.

Port-Royal was also the site for the marquise de Sablé's retirement, following the death of her husband, and where she held her salon. For Lewis Seifert, the spatial configuration of Sablé's apartment, one side of which opened onto the street, the other into the monastic enclosure, expresses materially the balance she strove to achieve in her life and friendships between the religious and the secular, as she adapted both spiritual and *galant* models to her purpose. Notably, in letters to male friends Sablé succeeded in establishing a form of exchange based on intellectual discussion and commentary of each other's writings, and with La Rochefoucauld, in particular, she maintained a relationship of collaboration and critique. Sablé thus played a role the author of *Les Maximes* did not acknowledge in a work that, on the contrary, would ultimately include a number of misogynous passages.

In the final essay, Peter Shoemaker examines the concept of *confidence/confiance*—self-disclosure or the sharing of secrets. Related to but distinct from sincerity, and fundamental to friendship, *confidence* lies perhaps closest to the practice of the *dépôt*, making the confidant a kind of human strongbox. Gender is an important factor in this nexus since women, traditionally excluded from friendship, were also considered "leaky," i.e., incapable of discretion (p. 257). Shoemaker shows how women writers worked to challenge this view, including Marguerite de Navarre (*L'Heptaméron*) in the sixteenth century and, in a more optimistic vein, Madeleine de Scudéry ("Histoire de Sapho" in *Artamène*) in the seventeenth century. Ultimately, for Shoemaker (drawing on the work of Thomas Pavel), *confidence* describes the ethics of early modern narrative itself, which seeks "to engage readers not as anonymous consumers or as impersonal critics, but rather in *personal terms*" (p. 265).

The project of bringing together a collection of essays focusing on cross-gender friendships makes for an innovative and stimulating addition to existing scholarship, and almost all of the chapters engage with and illuminate fruitfully some aspect of the topic. One of the purposes of a volume like this is surely to point to possibilities for future research and in this the editors and contributors will also no doubt be successful. Without stating so explicitly, the introduction intimates that the seventeenth century saw a significant evolution in relation to the sixteenth regarding the possibilities and conditions for friendships between women and men (and certainly the essays on the earlier period, with the exception of that of Hoffmann, focus less on the cases of particular individuals). This may well be so, but calls for further elucidation, and the sixteenth century would also offer notable examples of women with male friends: Marguerite de Navarre, Marguerite de Valois, or Anne de Marquets, to name only a few. What happens, moreover, as the seventeenth century moves into the eighteenth? This volume constitutes an enlightening foray into territory inviting further exploration and offers a point of reference and a framework for those wishing to do so.

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Lewis C. Seifert and Rebecca M. Wilkin, "Introduction: Men and Women Making Friends in Early Modern France"

George Hoffmann, "Was Montaigne a Good Friend?"

Michelle Miller, "The Power to Correct: Beating Men in Service Friendship"

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Lewis C. Seifert, "The Marquise de Sablé and Her Friends: Men and Women Between the Convent and the World"

Peter Shoemaker, "From My Lips to Yours: Friendship, Confidentiality, and Gender in Early Modern France"

#### NOTE

[1] Jodi Bilinkoff, *Related Lives: Confessors and their Female Penitents, 1540-1750* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

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