

AWFULLY DEVOTED WOMEN

Cameron Duder
Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010

REVIEWED BY DANIELLE COOPER

Awfully Devoted Women examines lesbian history in Canada from 1900-1965. The book is neatly divided between two distinct temporal periods, with an underlying goal to render visible previously ignored groups of same-sex desiring women. The first part, "Awfully Devoted Odd Women," focuses on upper-middle class women in the early twentieth century. Drawing from five collections of personal papers, Duder examines how women who desired other women located others like themselves in an era prior to lesbian visibility. Duder convincingly argues that these relationships are locatable within the history of same-sex relationships because: they existed outside of heteronormative bounds, had erotic undertones, and represented long-lasting partnerships. His choice to devote considerable content to "physical sexuality" as a way to move beyond tired debates about proving "genital sexuality" is particularly provocative. Duder also effectively situates his research within the larger debate surrounding romantic friendship. Most notably, his source material suggests that romantic friendship underwent a period of transition, but still persisted into the twentieth century, incorporating distinctly erotic subject matter and the newer medicalized discourse on sexuality.

The second part, "Lesbian Lives After the Second World War," draws on 32 semi-structured interviews of women who experienced same-sex desire between 1950 and 1965. This section's focus is a deliberate departure from the emphasis on working class butch/femme bar cul-

ture and the homophile movement that dominates mid-twentieth-century lesbian histories. In order to do so, Duder draws on interviews of lower middle-class women from the period just prior to homophile organizing in Canada. Due to their lower middle-class status, these women were either unaware or unwilling to participate in working class bar culture. Themes addressed include: childhood experiences, information about sexuality imparted as children and young adults, same-sex sexual practices and relationships, and community. In doing so, Duder not only addresses a previously underrepresented group of same-sex desiring women, but also challenges common conceptions that this generation was more sexually aware than their predecessors. Duder's informants reveal that for lower middle-class women in the mid-twentieth century, same-sex desire remained a largely unknown topic with experience acquired primarily through personal experimentation.

Awfully Devoted Women includes discussion from two distinct class groups and time periods while operating under the premise that these discussions share the underlying argument that women's same-sex desire included erotic and physical elements in eras lacking lesbian identity and an accessible lesbian community. Although this argument is dutifully addressed throughout book, it remains an insufficient justification for the book's sharply divided focus. The book's artificial division is exacerbated by the differences in source material drawn upon in each section (archival documents versus interviews), which results in distinctly different narrative structures and topics addressed.

Awfully Devoted Women's appeal ultimately remains in the details: a reader can easily get lost in the first-hand accounts, the tender excerpts from love letters and twentieth-century photographs (particularly of the dreamy Dr. Freida Fraser). Un-

fortunately, these details do not add up because Duder situates the book within a number of the major debates within lesbian historiography with mixed success. For example, he argues against lesbian history's tendency to be too abstract, and by extension, that focusing on bodily contact is important because "lesbian history is about real people with real bodies and real desires." Yet, his explicit refusal to engage with lesbian identity debates significantly weakens his choice to use the term "lesbian" to describe women who did not self-identify as such.

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SEX SLAVES AND DISCOURSE MASTERS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF TRAFFICKING

Jo Doezema
New York: Zed Books, 2010

REVIEWED BY ELYA M. DURISIN AND EMILY VANDER MEULEN

"What is trafficking in women?" asks Jo Doezema in the opening line of her new book, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking*, a question that becomes the central thesis of her pioneering new text. In it, Doezema proceeds to challenge much of what we have been told about trafficking in women. With an analysis that employs the concepts of myth and consent, her text draws a genealogical relationship between historical debates on white slavery and what she argues is its