



# Female Intimacies in Seventeenth-Century French Literature (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World)

*Marianne Legault*

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Examining literary discourses on female friendship and intimacy in seventeenth-century France, this study takes as its premise the view that, unlike men, women have been denied for centuries the possibility of same sex friendship. The author explores the effect of this homosocial and homoprivileged heritage on the deployment and constructions of female friendship and homoerotic relationships as thematic narratives in works by male and female writers in seventeenth-century France. The book consists of three parts: the first surveys the history of male thinkers' denial of female friendship, concluding with a synopsis of the cultural representations of female same-sex practices. The second analyzes female intimacy and homoeroticism as imagined, appropriated and finally repudiated by Honoré d'Urfé's pastoral novel, *L'Astrée*, and Isaac de Benserade's seemingly lesbian-friendly comedy, *Iphis et Iante*. The third turns to unprecedented depictions of female intimate and homoerotic bonds in Madeleine de Scudéry's novel *Mathilde* and Charlotte-Rose de Caumont de La Force's fairy tale *Plus Belle que Fée*. This study reveals a female literary genealogy of intimacies between women in seventeenth-century France, and adds to the research in lesbian and queer studies, fields in which pre-eighteenth-century French literary texts are rare.

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