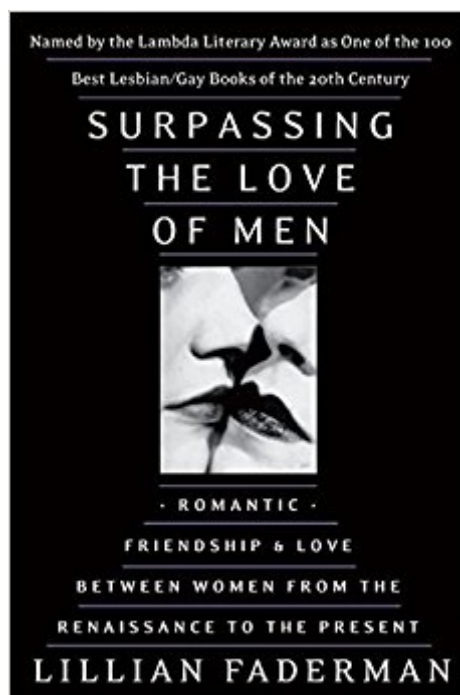




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# **Surpassing The Love Of Men: Romantic Friendship And Love Between Women From The Renaissance To The Present**



## Synopsis

A classic of its kind, this fascinating cultural history draws on everything from private correspondence to pornography to explore five hundred years of friendship and love between women. *Surpassing the Love of Men* throws a new light on shifting theories of female sexuality and the changing status of women over the centuries.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

First published in 1981, this feminist classic began modestly as an academic essay on Emily Dickinson's love poems and letters to her future sister-in-law, Sue Gilbert. In her original introduction, Faderman recalled her surprise at finding these records of an erotic attachment between women that showed no evidence of guilt, anxiety, or the need for secrecy. Yet 60 or 70 years after they were written, the original letters had been bowdlerized by a niece of Dickinson's, who clearly found them too shocking for publication. Why, Faderman wondered, was passionate love between women, once almost universally applauded in the Western world, now almost universally condemned? She learned that the love between Dickinson and Gilbert had many precedents, and that it was only in the late 19th century that medical literature and antifeminism combined to rank women who loved women "somewhere," as she puts it bluntly, "between necrophiliacs and those who had sex with chickens." For this new edition, Faderman explains that she has resisted the urge to update her text, hoping that her exploration of romantic friendship, from French libertine literature through the dawn of feminism through the lesbian panic of the 1920s will

still serve as "solace and ammunition" for those hoping to find "a usable past." --Regina Marler

Lillian Faderman is a professor of English at California State University, Fresno, author of several books, and the winner of the 1992 Lambda Literary Editor's Choice Award and the Lambda Literary Award for Best Lesbian/Gay Anthology. She lives in Fresno, California.

Recently I was asked for a list of books for "an adult who is just beginning to explore whether or not they may be bi or lesbian". As someone who went through this many, many years ago and has written extensively on this topic, Faderman's book was one of the first that came to mind. As individuals exploring our own sexuality - regardless of what that is - gaining historical context and perspective is a critical part of self-discovery. This is not the only book I'd recommend and it has a scholarly aspect which borders on clinical for a woman (or man or other) on the road to self-discovery. I cannot count how many copies of this book I have purchased over the years, highlighting various passages which held out special meaning or purpose for me, and passed on to others. In the end, we all have our own paths and Ms. Faderman's book manages to cross most of them. For those on a personal path, or those looking to understand the concerns and needs of a loved one trying to understand their place as a lesbian and bisexual in today's world, this is an excellent text for reading and gaining historical perspective. Bravo to Ms. Faderman for not 'updating' a historical text but letting her original research prevail.

great book containing important social history

Best. Book. EVER. Especially if you're a lesbian or interested in lesbian history.

Interesting and informative, *Surpassing the Love of Men* is a long anthology of romantic friendships from the 16th century until the 1980s, when the book was written. Although this book is interesting, it is not exactly a page turner. The focus is a bit repetitive and reads somewhat like a textbook. However, I do not regret buying this book and I am still reading it, about five chapters in.

I'm surprised there's only one other review for this book! It's absolutely fascinating, and should be on the list of anyone interested in not only women's issues, but human relationships in general. It will definitely make you think, but it is not a difficult read, and Faderman covers an impressively vast array of sources. I'll be recommending this one to everybody.

Package came quickly and I was pleased with how much care was taken in packaging. Can't wait to start reading it!

Lillian Faderman presents in this foundational volume her invaluable research into the history of lesbianism, starting with the 16th century. She examines the cultural, political, and literary context of women who preferred the intimate company of other women, and makes their stories compelling. She describes the sweep of history and the effects of different societal developments on how women perceived themselves and presented themselves to the world. She explains how the emergence of psychology and sexology changed how same-sex affairs were understood and how they became more defined for better and for worse. One of the strengths of this volume may not be uniformly popular. For those seeking an historical overview or a historical study alone, Faderman's emphasis on literary developments with a great many references to individual poems, stories, and tracts may be more in that realm than some are seeking. Yet none of these literary references are superfluous, and they enrich this history for the better. First published in 1981, *Surpassing the Love of Men* continues to be an essential resource for scholars in queer history and anyone interested in a greater understanding of one of the fundamental developments in the human experience. Michael Helquist, *MARIE EQUI: Radical Politics and Outlaw Passions*

The author forcefully insists on the real passion between the women that she studies; this becomes to me repetitive and distracting. However, given the historical context of this book, in which a "lesbian recovery" of history was less accepted, I see the purpose of her tactics. In any case, the author draws together a wealth of evidence that makes for fascinating and provocative reading, even if she does lean a bit too much on literary examples as proof of what attitudes were "really." She makes a strong case, though. Recommended.

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