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Spring 1998

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Schow, H. Wayne, "Review of *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example* By D. Michael Quinn" (1998). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2019.

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Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example. By D. Michael Quinn. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996. Photographs, appendix, index. x + 477 pp. \$29.95.

That cultural and temporal contexts continually reshape our perception of sexual reality is made abundantly clear in Michael Quinn's revealing contrast between the same-sex dynamics of nineteenth-century America and those currently prevailing. Homosexuality (and consequently heterosexuality) as a concept of intrinsic personal identity has only relatively recently established itself in European and American cultural consciousness. Previously, the focus was simply on sex acts that were or weren't approved. Without "categories to define 'sexuality,'" Quinn asserts, "nineteenth-century Americans . . . responded to homoeroticism in ways that often seem restrained, even tolerant, today."

But homoeroticism was only one strand of a complexly homosocial nineteenth-century American culture in which men and women were far more segregated than today, in which members of the same sex openly embraced, held hands, and kissed, shared beds without raising comment, and expressed affection in language reserved today for heterosexual intimacy. In his rich documentation of these behaviors, Quinn analyzes the homotactile, homoemotional, homoromantic, homopastoral, and homomarital manifestations in the culture and concludes that same-sex intimacy in such ways was normative in nineteenth-century America.

Actually, much evidence of tolerance in Quinn's study relates to prominent Mormons living in the first half of the twentieth century. Quinn justifies this inclusion because these individuals "reached adulthood" before 1900 and thus were formatively influenced by nineteenth-century attitudes.

Why does Quinn focus on "a Mormon example"? In part because Mormons have been exceptional record keepers whose archives (including sermons, letters, and journals of

prominent Latter-Day Saints of both sexes) furnish a wealth of relevant evidence; in part because, although Mormon polygamy put the sect outside the nineteenth-century heterosexual mainstream, Mormon same-sex dynamics followed national patterns and thus substantiate our general understanding. Quinn pointedly avoids viewing the Mormon example in isolation, augmenting his data frequently with relevant developments in the larger American context. Thus, the book should interest both students of Mormon social history and anyone tracing the transition from relative tolerance of homosexual behavior in nineteenth-century America to the succeeding climate of condemnation.

If not absolutely ground-breaking in the overall field of gay and lesbian history, this study nevertheless constitutes an impressive exploration of American social behavior (it will, of course, be eye-opening to many in respect to Mormon social history). The range of Quinn's research is impressively broad. Extensive notes and references, equal to the text in length, demonstrate his painstakingly critical evaluation of sources. Given the potentially tendentious nature of his subject, his balanced presentation of evidence, his care not to claim more than incomplete evidence can support, and his avoidance of ideological hobby horses are commendable.

Not least, Quinn writes from a clear, rational understanding of issues surrounding homosexuality. His terminology and definitions regarding homosexual orientation and behavior are consistently precise and clear. To a discussion that has long been characterized by stridency and ideological prejudice, his attempt to present relevant facts in an enlarged context—dispassionately—is indeed welcome.

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