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Philippa Lewis, *Intimacy and Distance: Conflicting Cultures in Nineteenth-Century France*. Cambridge: Legenda, 2017. Xii + 187 pp. Bibliography and index. \$99.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-78188-513-0.

Review by Jessica Tanner, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

In *Intimacy and Distance: Conflicting Cultures in Nineteenth-Century France*, Philippa Lewis argues that traditional understandings of nineteenth-century French culture as dominated by distance and detachment have obscured the equally prominent place of intimacy in post-revolutionary society. Departing from the work of historians of emotions like William Reddy, who view intimacy as a remnant of the eighteenth-century paradigm of sensibility that was increasingly excluded from public life, Lewis joins scholars Brigitte Diaz and José-Luis Diaz in recognizing the persistence of intimacy throughout the nineteenth century as “a compelling part of the collective cultural consciousness” (p. 7).^[1]

Focusing on the July Monarchy and the Second Empire, Lewis’s study “takes intimacy seriously as a historically constructed concept worthy of consideration in its own right and on its own terms” (p. 12). During these years, Lewis contends, the personal, philosophical, and literary cultivation of intimacy as a subjective or intersubjective ideal was increasingly vexed by the negative stereotyping of the *intime*, forcing authors to find new ways to imagine and express intimacy in light of “conflicting behavioural, ideological, and aesthetic demands” (p. 156). Rather than a dominant affect or mode of engagement, detachment was thus “a reaction to the self-conscious culture of intimacy which existed in tension with it” (p. 159).

Lewis’s primary interest is literature, which she argues “became an increasingly important cultural space for intimacy in the nineteenth century” (p. 1). In seeking to establish the “intimate” as a distinctive literary mode, *Intimacy and Distance* is methodologically aligned with earlier work by Naomi Schor, Margaret Cohen, and Maurice Samuels.^[2] Focusing on Sainte-Beuve, Fromentin, Guérin, Barbey d’Aureville, Flaubert, and especially Baudelaire, Lewis traces the discourse of intimacy across generations, from earlier writers who embraced and popularized intimacy to later ones who approached it with more ambivalence, and across genres, from those that explicitly engaged its rhetoric (*poésie intime*; the *roman intime*; the *journal intime*) to those where the conventions of intimate writing were at odds with generic codes favoring detachment (travel writing; art criticism; literary criticism). Standing “at the crossroads of Romanticism and post-Romanticism,” Baudelaire appears in each of the book’s chapters, serving as an exemplum due to his profound ambivalence toward intimacy and the range of literary strategies he used to reconcile the desire for intimacy with cultural codes forbidding its public expression (p. 11).

The book opens with an introduction that presents Lewis’s argument and provides an overview of twentieth-century psychoanalytic and sociological understandings of intimacy, referencing a diverse range of thinkers including Jürgen Habermas, Richard Sennett, Lauren Berlant, Julia Kristeva, and Melanie Klein. Lewis’s ambitious first chapter offers a deeper introduction to her work and its contexts, tracing definitions of intimacy over time and seeking to identify the political, social, and cultural factors that caused that term and its correlates to be deployed with “unprecedented frequency” in nineteenth-

century France (p. 15). By the 1830s, Lewis shows, the enduring influence of eighteenth-century discourses of sensibility and of bourgeois, nationalist, and religious ideologies produced a climate where intimacy was both “idealized” and “demonized,” where it was “increasingly *meaningful*, and increasingly—but not unreservedly—desirable” (p. 21). Anxieties about political and social change were often negotiated in “intimate” terms, surfacing in debates about the value and form of interpersonal relationships and the shape of the family and the nation. The final section of the chapter addresses the literary culture of the July Monarchy, when the *intime* came to name a genre of texts that both represented and engendered intimacy. Basing her characterization of the *roman intime* and *poésie intime* primarily on the critical and poetic work of Sainte-Beuve, Lewis contends that intimate literature not only had distinctive textual traits—and thus should be distinguished from adjacent genres like the sentimental novel or the *roman personnel*—but also (along with its paratexts) encouraged sympathetic reading practices that envisioned the text itself as a site of reciprocity and interpersonal encounter (pp. 31-37).

Like intimacy itself, intimate literary genres were feminized and thus most often depreciated. In chapter two, Lewis demonstrates that male writers had to negotiate this “negative stereotyping” in their writing by developing textual strategies that would allow them to engage but disavow intimacy in their works (p. 41). She situates this “double bind” in the context of post-Revolutionary models of masculinity, which endeavored to consolidate male authority and collective identity by promoting modesty, honor, restraint, and emotional discipline—and by shaming the overt sentimentality that the previous century had valorized (pp. 45-47). Lewis argues that the language of embarrassment allows Baudelaire and Fromentin to reconcile the private desire for intimacy with the public requirement of dignified *pudeur* by textually taming their sentimental disclosures. Tracing the evolution of Baudelaire’s verse poem “Confession” over its three iterations (in a letter to Apollonie Sabatier, in the *Revue des deux mondes*, and finally in *Les Fleurs du mal*), Lewis suggests that the poet (influenced by Sainte-Beuve) initially embraces the “imaginative and emotional consolations” of intimate confession in his private correspondence but progressively distances himself from that mode by attributing it to his female interlocutor once the poem is made public (p. 56). Fromentin similarly preserves a place for sentimentality by making the protagonist of his novel *Dominique* an “embarrassed ‘man of feeling,’” inscribing the distancing rhetoric of shame within the plot itself (p. 64).

Irony likewise serves to “mediate sentimental susceptibility while simultaneously emphasizing it,” as Lewis affirms in her analysis of the *journal intime* in chapter three (p. 66). Though the *journal intime* is the most conventionally intimate literary form Lewis considers, she convincingly shows that the diaries of Eugénie de Guérin and Barbey d’Aurevilly manifest a prospective awareness of their public audience and a fundamental ambivalence toward textually mediated intimacy. By making use of irony’s capacity for doubling, distanciation, and self-effacement, these authors sustain the sincerity of life-writing, but only at a protective remove. Lewis locates a similar strategic dissimulation in Baudelaire’s prose poem “À une heure du matin,” justifying the poem’s inclusion in the chapter by citing the “formal, rhetorical, and affective affinities” it shares with the *journal intime* (p. 67). In some of the book’s strongest and most nuanced pages, Lewis complicates previous interpretations of the poem as an authentic, unmediated glimpse into Baudelaire’s life, demonstrating that the poem satirizes the diaristic form it imitates through a contextualized reading of the poem as it first appeared on the front page of *La Presse*.^[3] Irony is however “not necessarily opposed to emotion,” Lewis posits; it generates an interpretive indeterminacy that leaves open the possibility of an intimate connection with the reader (p. 88).

The nature of connections forged across cultures is the subject of chapter four, which explores the negotiation of the “improvised intimacy” of travel encounters in Flaubert’s *Voyage en Égypte*, Baudelaire’s *La Belgique deshabillée*, and Fromentin’s *Un été dans le Sahara* (p. 93). In keeping with the codes of period etiquette manuals warning against the perils of overfamiliarity during travel, Lewis argues, Flaubert and Baudelaire use humor to satirize the false, degraded, or trite intimacy of intercultural encounters, implicitly revealing their idealization of other, more genuine models of intimacy. The theme of false intimacy surfaces more explicitly in the plot of Fromentin’s travel narrative, as the narrator’s desire for a friendship that would allow for his integration into Algerian society is persistently frustrated. Lewis

suggests that Fromentin compensates for the diegesis's failed colonial intimacy by couching it in epistolary form, locating a more hospitable "other" in the French friend to whom he addresses the narrative.

Chapter five translates this interrogation of intercultural intimacy to the realm of visual art and art criticism, examining the *intime* as a semantically mobile aesthetic category in Baudelaire's *Salons* of 1846 and 1859 and *Exposition universelle—1855*. Lewis shows that intimacy operates on two scales in Baudelaire's art criticism: as an aesthetic category of paintings devoted to the details of domestic life (intimist art or the *genre intime*), which Baudelaire approaches with characteristic ambivalence, and as a "mode of critical engagement," an imaginative encounter between critic and artwork (p. 137). In the increasingly international art market of the Second Empire, Lewis argues, intimacy denotes for Baudelaire an idealized, twofold process of critical acclimatization: an imaginative detachment or *dépaysement* that serves as a precondition for new attachments, for the intimate engagement with other cultures through art.

A less ambivalent attachment—friendship—characterized the relationship between nineteenth-century literary critics and the writers and protagonists of the works they studied, Lewis maintains in chapter six, which analyzes the "rhetoric of friendship" in Sainte-Beuve's biographical literary criticism (p. 140). Lewis defends Sainte-Beuve against Proust's and others' accusations of overfamiliarity and "critical confusion;" in her "more generous" reading, the language of intimacy in the critic's literary portraits serves strategically to recruit and retain readers by creating affective bonds (p. 141). Focusing almost exclusively on Sainte-Beuve, this is the book's shortest and weakest chapter, lacking the literary-historical contextualization needed to support framing his criticism alone as evidence of "the pertinence and potency of intimacy as a model for literary criticism in nineteenth-century France" (p. 140).

The chapter is more effective as a pretext for the book's evocative conclusion, which traces the evolution of literary intimacy from the Second Empire through the twenty-first century. If Baudelaire's own biographical criticism refashions Sainte-Beuve's "amour" as "admiration," privileging an idealized, intellectualized order of intimacy over other forms, Lewis argues, Nadar's 1911 biography of Baudelaire anticipates the twentieth century's progressive sexualization of intimacy by reporting suggestive details from the poet's private life (p. 159). Drawing upon Rita Felski's recent call for literary critics to reject the "hermeneutics of suspicion" in favor of a model of reading as attachment, Lewis closes with a tantalizingly brief discussion of how nineteenth-century discourses of intimacy might help us to imagine new ways to "conceptualise the uses and effects of literature in the present" by recasting the relationship between writers and readers (p. 164).

Intimacy and Distance is a thoughtful, impressively documented, and well-argued book that redresses the critical neglect of intimacy's role in shaping the political, social, and literary contexts of nineteenth-century France. Its relatively minor weaknesses are primarily methodological, relating to the consistency of Lewis's critical perspective and her choices as to which topics and texts the book includes and excludes.

While all books must draw their lines somewhere, Lewis at times too readily dismisses pertinent lines of inquiry. This is perhaps most obvious in the book's exclusion of women writers: though Lewis devotes a section of chapter three to Eugénie de Guérin and a few paragraphs of chapter six to Olympe Audouard's literary portrait of Jules Janin, she focuses almost exclusively on the work of male authors, citing the latter's "more marked" ambivalence toward intimacy due to the term's gendered connotations (p. 10). And yet, women writers complicated that idealized intimacy associated with femininity by making their private selves public in their writing. A more sustained consideration of the strategies women writers used to negotiate public intimacy would have made Lewis's identification of the *intime's* changing meanings and roles in nineteenth-century French society more convincing. A deeper engagement with the nuances of gendered intimacies would likewise be welcome in the case of homosociality, which Lewis evokes in her discussion of Fromentin's *Dominique* in chapter two ("Fromentin can avoid entering into the details, and

potential ambiguities, of homosociality”) (p. 63). Despite noting in the conclusion that Baudelaire’s idealized form of intimacy “is only possible [...] between men,” Lewis never defines homosociality nor addresses the implications of previous work on same-sex sociability for the study of intimacy in nineteenth-century France (p. 158).^[4]

The treatment of Orientalism in chapter four is similarly cursory: preemptively noting that “both Flaubert’s and Fromentin’s works are complicit with the ideological and cultural structures of Orientalism,” Lewis counters that “this is not a reason to avoid the works” (p. 94).^[5] It seems to me that the salient question is not whether Orientalist-complicit travel narratives merit study, but rather how that complicity conditions their representation and valuation of intimacy. Though Lewis engages briefly with Ann Laura Stoler’s work on “colonial intimacies” later in the chapter, an explicit identification of the “structures of Orientalism” at work in these texts would have allowed for a more nuanced account of how they shape the textual encounters in question.^[6] Finally, given Lewis’s insistence in both the introduction and the conclusion that the association of intimacy with sexuality is the primary distinction between historical and contemporary definitions of the term, the lack of any reference to Foucault’s foundational work on nineteenth-century discourses of sexuality is puzzling.^[7] A contextualization of the epistemic shift Lewis identifies in figurations of intimacy in the “post-Revolutionary” and “pre-Freudian” decades she studies—of what the “intimate” could and could not say, of who could give the *intime* public voice and in what form and conditions—within Foucault’s discursive history would have nuanced Lewis’s argument while revealing the broader stakes of the literary, social, and political genealogy she traces.

Intimacy and Distance is not a “theoretical” study, and I do not mean to suggest that it should be. My point is rather that these detours untaken might have been more fruitful than some of the theoretical avenues Lewis does pursue, such as the contemporary psychoanalytic conceptions of intimacy she discusses in the introduction and conclusion. On the rare occasions where Lewis calls upon these analytical paradigms in the body of the book, they feel out of place: for instance, in a reference to the “earliest bond of intimacy foregrounded in Object Relations theory, the bond with the mother” in the context of cosmopolitan art criticism in chapter four, the only such reference outside the book’s introduction (p. 136). While Lewis’s point is well-taken—that the “new union with the external world” in Baudelaire’s art criticism marks a distancing from the “souvenirs natals’ of the ‘boudoir maternel’”—her general lack of engagement with that mode of analysis makes her framing disorienting to the reader (p. 136). There is a tension here between Lewis’s avowed aim to “counteract [the] anachronistic approach” of scholars who examine Romantic intimacy through contemporary philosophical lenses and her own selective use of such work, as she omits theories that are methodologically consistent with her historicist reading in favor of those that understand intimacy in ahistorical terms (p. 9). It is to Lewis’s credit that her implicit and explicit affirmations that she “do[es] not mean to suggest that psychoanalytic readings of the nineteenth century are untenable” seem unnecessary; the book itself provides ample evidence to support her contention that her historically-specific inquiry into intimacy offers different insights than more desituated approaches (p. 162).

Intimacy and Distance is nonetheless a very well-researched and engaging contribution to the literary history of nineteenth-century France, the social and cultural history of emotions, Baudelaire studies, and historical masculinity studies. By deprivileging distance as the primary spatial and affective metaphor for understanding post-revolutionary French society and restoring intimacy to its rightful place on the cultural and literary landscape, Lewis successfully complicates one of the foundational paradigms of nineteenth-century French studies, making her book a compelling read for all scholars in the field.

NOTES

[1] Brigitte Diaz and José-Luis Diaz, “Le Siècle de l’intime,” in Anne Coudreuse and Françoise Simonet-

Tenant, eds., *Pour une histoire de l'intime et de ses variations* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), pp. 117-46.

[2] Naomi Schor, *George Sand and Idealism* (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1993); Margaret Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); Maurice Samuels, *The Spectacular Past: Popular History and the Novel in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004).

[3] Lewis's strategy here is aligned with Jann Matlock's approach in her article on Zola's *La Curée*, where she reestablishes the "reading context" of the novel in the daily press from the time of its publication during the Commune. "Everyday Ghosts: *La Curée* in the Shadow of the Commune," *Romanic Review* 102:3-4 (2011): 321-47.

[4] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1985) and Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[5] Lewis also mentions in a note later in the chapter that "[c]ritics are divided over whether Fromentin's work perpetuates or subverts Orientalist conventions" (p. 116n34).

[6] Ann Laura Stoler, "Intimidations of Empire: Predicaments of the Tactile and the Unseen," in Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

[7] Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité 1: La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976). Though Lewis's bibliography includes entries for Foucault's *Le Souci de soi* (the third volume of *Histoire de la sexualité*) and for *The Foucault Reader* (edited by Paul Rabinow), Foucault's name does not appear in the index, nor (I believe) in the text itself.

Jessica Tanner
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
jltanner@email.unc.edu

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