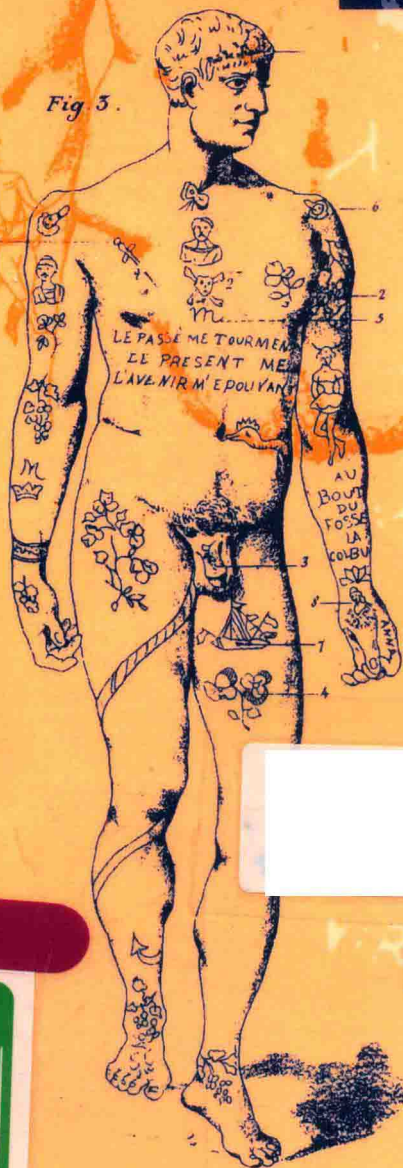


LABELLING BODIES
AND DESIRES

Fig. 3.



EDITED BY

LUCY BLAND AND LAURA DOAN

书馆

Sexology in Culture

Labelling Bodies and Desires

Edited by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan

Polity Press

This collection © Polity Press 1998

Chapter 4 © 1994 University of Chicago Press. First published as "Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body" in the *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5.2 (October 1994): 243–66, University of Chicago Press. First published in 1998 by Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Editorial office:

Polity Press
65 Bridge Street
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Marketing and production:

Blackwell Publishers Ltd
108 Cowley Road
Oxford OX4 1JF, UK

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purposes of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Except in the United States of America, this book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

ISBN 0-7456-1982-7

ISBN 0-7456-1983-5 (pbk)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Typeset in 10 on 11½ pt Sabon
by Ace Filmsetting Ltd, Frome, Somerset
Printed in Great Britain by MPG Books, Bodmin, Cornwall

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Sexology in Culture

Contributors

Lucy Bland is Senior Lecturer in Women's Studies at the University of North London. She is author of *Banishing the Beast* (Penguin and New Press, 1995). She is co-editor, with Laura Doan, of *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science* (Polity Press, 1998), a companion volume to this present collection. She is currently working on sexuality and race in interwar Britain.

Joseph Bristow is Professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles. His recent books include *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885* (Open University Press, 1995) and *Sexuality* (Routledge, 1997). At present, he is completing a full-length study, provisionally titled 'The Sex of Victorian Poetry', and a collection of essays on Englishness and perversity.

Carolyn Burdett is Senior Lecturer in the School of Literary and Media Studies at the University of North London. She teaches in the field of nineteenth-century literature, culture and science, and feminist theory. Her book *Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism: Evolution, Sexuality and the Nation* is forthcoming from Macmillan.

Jane Caplan is Marjorie Walter Goodhart Professor of European History at Bryn Mawr College. Her article "'Speaking Scars': The Tattoo in Popular Practice and Medico-Legal Debate in 19th-century Europe" appeared in *History Workshop Journal* (Autumn 1997). She is currently editing two books of essays, on the history of the tattoo in the West since antiquity,

and (with John Torpey) on the history of identity documents.

Laura Doan is Professor of English at the State University of New York, Geneseo. She has edited *The Lesbian Postmodern* (Columbia University Press, 1994), and co-edited with Lucy Bland *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science* (Polity Press, 1998). She is currently working on *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture*.

Rita Felski is Professor of English at the University of Virginia. She is the author of *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* (1989) and *The Gender of Modernity*, (1995), both published by Harvard University Press, and of a forthcoming collection of essays entitled *Doing Time*.

Judy Greenway is Senior Lecturer in the Cultural Studies Department at the University of East London, where her teaching includes utopian studies and lesbian and gay cultures. She is currently researching and writing on anarchism, gender and sexuality in Britain from 1880, and working towards a book on practical utopianism.

Lesley A. Hall is Senior Assistant Archivist at the Contemporary Medical Archives Centre, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London. Her publications include *Hidden Anxieties: Male Sexuality 1900–1950* (Polity Press, 1991), and (with Roy Porter) *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650–1950* (Yale University Press, 1995), and numerous articles and reviews. She is currently co-editing two volumes on sexual cultures in Europe, and working on a biography of Stella Browne.

Alison Oram is Principal Lecturer in Women's Studies at Nene University College, Northampton. A historian, she has published works on women's politicization, citizenship and sexuality in the context of twentieth-century feminism, and on lesbian history. Recent publications include *Women Teachers and Feminist Politics 1900–39* (Manchester University Press, 1996). She is currently working on a sourcebook of British lesbian history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for Routledge (forthcoming).

Jay Prosser is Lecturer in English and American Studies at the University of Leicester. His book, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, is published by Columbia University Press (1998).

Suzanne Raitt is Associate Professor of English and Women's Studies at

the University of Michigan. She is author of *Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf* (Oxford University Press, 1993) and a number of articles on modernist women writers. She is currently working on a book on May Sinclair.

Siobhan B. Somerville is Assistant Professor of English and Women's Studies at Purdue University. Her forthcoming book, to be published by Duke University Press, explores the intersections of racial and sexual discourses in fiction, film and sexology in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American culture. Her work has also appeared in journals such as *American Literature* and the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*.

Merl Storr lectures in Sociology at the University of East London. She has published a number of articles on sexuality and sexual identity. She is co-editor of *The Bisexual Imaginary* (Cassell, 1997) and editor of a *Bisexuality Reader* (Routledge, forthcoming). Her current research is on the interface between sexuality and economics.

Chris Waters is Associate Professor of History at Williams College. He is author of *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture, 1884–1914* (Manchester University Press and Stanford University Press, 1990) and co-editor of *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945–1964* (forthcoming). He is currently at work on a book-length study of the development of Freudian thought pertaining to homosexuality in twentieth-century Britain.

Editors' Note

Many of the writings of individual sexologists or other primary materials which are referred to in the following chapters appear in a companion volume, *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science* edited by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

Contents

List of Contributors	vii
Editors' Note	x
Introduction Rita Felski	1
 Part I A Dangerous New Science	 9
1 <i>Transformations: Subjects, Categories and Cures in Krafft-Ebing's Sexology</i> Merl Storr	11
2 <i>It's What You Do With It That Counts: Interpretations of Otto Weininger</i> Judy Greenway	27
3 <i>The Hidden Romance of Sexual Science: Eugenics, the Nation and the Making of Modern Feminism</i> Carolyn Burdett	44
4 <i>Scientific Racism and the Invention of the Homosexual Body</i> Siobhan B. Somerville	60
 Part II Labelling Bodies	 77
5 <i>Symonds's History, Ellis's Heredity: Sexual Inversion</i> Joseph Bristow	79
6 <i>'Educating the Eye': The Tattooed Prostitute</i> Jane Caplan	100
7 <i>Transsexuals and the Transsexologists: Inversion and the Emergence of Transsexual Subjectivity</i> Jay Prosser	116

Part III	Constructing Desires	133
8	<i>Feminist Reconfigurations of Heterosexuality in the 1920's</i> Lesley A. Hall	135
9	<i>Sex, Love and the Homosexual Body in Early Sexology</i> Suzanne Raitt	150
10	<i>Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud and the State: Discourses of Homosexual Identity in Interwar Britain</i> Chris Waters	165
Part IV	Cultural Perversions	181
11	<i>Trial by Sexology?: Maud Allan, Salome and the 'Cult of the Clitoris' Case</i> Lucy Bland	183
12	<i>'Acts of Female Indecency': Sexology's Intervention in Legislating Lesbianism</i> Laura Doan	199
13	<i>'Sex is an Accident': Feminism, Science and the Radical Sexual Theory of Urania, 1915-40</i> Alison Oram	214
	Index	231

Introduction

Rita Felski

To speak of sexology is surely to invoke an obsolete science and a vanished world. The term brings to mind sepia-tinted images of earnest Victorian scholars labouring over lists of sexual perversions with the taxonomical zeal of an entomologist examining insects. Who would claim to be a sexologist nowadays? One of the effects of the Freudian revolution was to erect a seemingly impenetrable barrier between the modern view of sexuality as an enigmatic and often labile psychic field rooted in unconscious desires, and the work of nineteenth-century sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis, with its emphasis on the physiological and congenital roots of human erotic preferences. The awkward circumlocutions, the passages of dry Latin prose, the strange, defunct, neologisms – ‘invert’, ‘Urning,’ ‘eonism’ – all seem to confirm the anachronism of sexology, its remoteness from our current interests and concerns.

One of the achievements of Michel Foucault was to dissolve this barrier between a Victorian and a post-Freudian culture by revealing the essential continuity between them. We share with the Victorians, Foucault argues, the conviction that sexuality holds the key to our identity. While the nineteenth century was punitive of many forms of sexual expression and our own time prides itself on its more permissive and tolerant attitudes, the two eras are united in the belief that sexual identity constitutes the truth of the self. The Victorians, in spite of their famous *pudeur*, were in fact constantly talking about sex. In Foucault’s powerful revision of cultural history, sexuality was redefined as a central category of modernity, a key to understanding the way in which individuals have come to view themselves as modern subjects.¹

In one sense, the point may seem obvious. Sexuality has long served as a touchstone for individuals anxious to diagnose the decadent or progressive nature of the modern age. From flappers to women in mini-skirts, from moral panic about female cyclists to moral panic about teenage sexuality, from images of inverts to images of people with AIDS, hopes, anxieties and fantasies about sex have informed cultural attitudes towards the pleasures and dangers of modern life. Indeed, sex has often been identified as a distinctively modern problem by those harbouring nostalgic fantasies of an earlier, more innocent era. Yet paradoxically, sex has also been seen as a primitive, atavistic need, fundamentally at odds with the necessary constraints and deferred gratifications of modernity. This view was to receive powerful support from Freud's conception of an eternal, tragic struggle between our innermost drives and the requirements of civilization, between the opposed demands of the pleasure principle and the reality principle. Thus while sexual desires could be unnaturally stimulated by such modern inventions as the cinema, or new forms of transportation, or the dangerous proximity of bodies in modern cities, sexuality itself was deemed ahistorical and asocial, an archaic impulse welling up from the dark realms of the unconscious.

For Foucault, however, this way of thinking about sex is itself distinctively modern. The Freudian view of sex was to be understood not as an explanation but rather as a symptom, yet another example of modern society's preoccupation with the sexual and its compulsive creation of discourses about sex. Viewed in this light, Freud's status as a pioneering genius in the field of psychoanalysis suffered a significant setback. Rather than the founding father of a radical new field, Freud became simply one more contributor, albeit a highly influential one, to a long history of scientific discourses about sex that had begun with the sexologists. It was they, in fact, who had coined many of the analytical terms – homosexuality, heterosexuality, sadism, masochism – still in use today. Nineteenth-century theories of bodies, emotions and desires came to acquire new importance in understanding modernity's preoccupation with the sexual.

Foucault's history of the rise of sexual science, however, is intentionally a history without agents. New discourses of sexuality emerged in nineteenth-century Europe, creating such types as the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the homosexual and the Malthusian couple. In turn, we are led to believe, new identities were created by these discourses; individuals recognized themselves in the impersonal, medical descriptions of the sexologists and took on these sexual identities as their own. What is missing from Foucault's version is any substantive account of the messy and complicated interaction, conflict and negotiation between the discourses of sexual science, other aspects of nineteenth-century culture and the experiential realities of human subjects. How influential or marginal a

field was sexology and how much power did sexologists wield? Did they simply impose forms of sexual classification on their patients, or were their findings significantly altered by their interactions with these patients? How much impact did the often inaccessible works of sexology actually have on popular attitudes to sex in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? To what extent were the findings of sexology accepted or rejected in other areas such as art, journalism or the law?

These and other questions are taken up in the chapters that follow, which contribute to the current debate on sexology a much-needed density of historical and cultural detail. This historical richness in turn militates against any hasty conclusions about the social and political meanings of sexology, which could be used to support a variety of different social and ideological agendas. It is surely as unwise to reduce sexology to a repressive disciplinary apparatus for the administration of psyches as it is to underwrite the self-description of sexologists as heroic pioneers aiding the cause of human progress. While the nineteenth century has often been targeted by scholars eager to show their radical credentials by engaging in generalized denunciations of a repressive Western modernity (in turn counterposed to a supposedly more enlightened postmodernism), there is a growing sense of the profound complexities and internal contradictions within the modern era. Undoubtedly, the power and privilege accorded to ideas such as science, reason and progress shaped the parameters of what could be thought at given historical moments, but the interpretation and use of such ideas followed varied and sometimes surprising paths. Nowhere is this more evident than in the field of sexology and its reception.

Thus the focus of the present volume is not simply the work of famous sexologists but the cultural context and impact of such work. The distinction is important: ideas are not transmitted smoothly and seamlessly from the printed page to the social domain, but are often profoundly altered in the process. As Roy Porter and Lesley Hall note, 'the relationship between sexual advice literature and the uses made of it is not self-evident but requires to be historically reconstructed'.² Several chapters in this volume engage in such processes of reconstruction. Lucy Bland and Laura Doan, for example, examine the recourse to sexological ideas about lesbianism in the dual contexts of parliamentary legal debate and a famous libel trial. Judy Greenway considers the reception of Otto Weininger in England, as exemplified in the contradictory responses to his notorious *Sex and Character*. And Chris Waters looks at the uses of sexology in criminological and psychiatric discourses and institutions in interwar Britain. The rationale underlying this volume's British focus brings a much-needed specificity to the discussion of the cultural impact of sexology; a science whose prestige and influence varied markedly in different countries.

While *Sexology in Culture* concentrates on a particular historical period (1890–1940) and national context, it includes a broad range of analytical perspectives. Readers will find examples of most of the approaches associated with the current renaissance of interest in sexology. The most visible of these include feminist and gay and lesbian scholarship, but there is also exciting work being done on the racial dimensions of sexology and on its relevance to contemporary debates about transsexuality and transgenderism. It may be helpful, then, to present a brief overview of the central issues addressed in this recent research.

The rediscovery of sexology is largely due to the emergence of the gay rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s and a growing interest in constructing a history and tradition of same-sex desire. The late nineteenth century was clearly a crucial period in the creation of a homosexual identity, as the legal and medical discourses of the period sought to redefine the homosexual as a distinctive kind of person. Sexuality was no longer simply a question of particular acts, but was expressed in appearance, personality and even bodily structure. Sexologists such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, Krafft-Ebing and Ellis were to play an important role in developing new conceptions of same-sex desire. The vocabulary of morality and religion ceded ground to the discourse of science; homosexuality was redefined as an inborn condition, a medical aberration rather than a form of sin.³

The social and political ramifications of the medical model of homosexuality were varied; while it could encourage a pathologization of same-sex desire, it was also used to justify pleas for greater social tolerance towards 'inverts' and campaigns for legal reform. Ellis, furthermore, differed from many of his European counterparts in explicitly rejecting the vocabulary of degeneration, insisting that homosexuality should be seen as a harmless physiological variation rather than a neuropathic taint. *Sexual Inversion* sought to normalize male homosexuality by rendering it acceptable to a wider audience, downplaying its association with effeminacy and anxiously stressing the rarity of anal intercourse as a sexual practice. In his detailed analysis of this work and its collaborative origins, Joseph Bristow's chapter explores the tensions between John Addington Symonds's historical and cultural approach to homosexuality and Ellis's own emphasis on the primacy of heredity and biology.

Of course, the same political and cultural movements that inspired a resurgence of interest in sexology have also brought into being a very different sexual politics. The whole project of normalizing homosexuality has been called into question by several waves of gay, lesbian and queer theory. The case against liberal toleration is perhaps most vehemently made by Leo Bersani in his account of the transgressive, profoundly anti-social implications of male same-sex desire. Furthermore, the sexological belief that heterosexuality is the unproblematic biological norm against

which deviations are to be measured has been called into question by recent accounts of heterosexuality as a historical and cultural invention.⁴

In this regard, some gay theorists have found in the work of Freud a potentially more radical theory of sexuality, as embodied in the idea of polymorphous perversity and Freud's recognition of the social factors shaping the development of human sexuality. Yet, as Chris Waters suggests in this volume, the popular dissemination of Freudian ideas was not necessarily beneficial; against sexology's insistence on the innateness of inversion, Freudianism encouraged a view of the homosexual as a victim of arrested development and hence as potentially amenable to treatment. Suzanne Raitt also compares the legacy of Freud and the sexologists at the former's expense. In spite of their *risqué* reputations, writers such as Ellis and Edward Carpenter emphasized love rather than sex in their descriptions of inversion, presenting an often idealized account of the power of the emotions. By contrast, Freudian theory was to pave the way for a much more reductive account of romantic love as little more than a quasi-pathological symptom.

Feminist responses to sexology have been shaped by feminism's more general critique of male-defined forms of sexuality and the policing of women's bodies and psyches by male medical experts. Questioning the view that discourses of sexual freedom necessarily serve women's interests, female scholars have pointed to the dubious and often misogynistic portrayals of female sexuality in the work of male sexologists. This work in turn fed into a larger nineteenth-century field of 'sexual science' premised upon evolutionary arguments about women's distinctive and inferior biological nature, their sexual passivity and the inescapability of their maternal destiny. Thus the birth of sexology has been identified by scholars such as Sheila Jeffreys as part of the backlash against women's growing autonomy and independence, as exemplified in suffragette campaigns for social and sexual purity.⁵

Lesbian scholars, in particular, have noted the detrimental influence of sexology on attitudes to female same-sex love. Whereas intimacy between women was long held to be a natural expression of female friendship, sexology encouraged a new perception of such relations as morbid and perverse. As lesbianism had never been declared illegal in England, there was no legal advantage for women in the new stress on congenital abnormality. Female sexual pathology, moreover, was almost invariably linked to gender pathology. While Ellis challenged the stereotype of the effeminate homosexual, he concurred with other sexologists in portraying the lesbian as a gruff, often grotesque, mannish figure. Yet this image of the mannish lesbian was also to take on new resonances in the 1920s and 1930s, as it was appropriated and redeployed by women to express their own discomfort with conventional sexual categories.⁶

Recent feminist research has further complicated the politics of sexology. Without denying sexology's male-dominated structure, scholars note that figures such as Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter held relatively progressive views on women's rights and that sexologists were often marginal figures rather than representatives of an all-powerful medical establishment. Questioning the claim that the interests of suffragettes and sexologists were invariably in conflict, they have examined the various social and political interrelations between these two groups. 'All kinds of feminists in this period,' notes Lucy Bland, 'including those highly critical of male sexuality, drew on sexology. They did so selectively as part of their *own* project: the exploration of what sex meant and could mean for women and men.'⁷ In this volume Lesley Hall provides one example of such selective usage, showing how two well-known women, Marie Stopes and Stella Browne, made different, by no means uncritical appropriations of sexology to articulate what they considered to be women's experiences and concerns. Alison Oram describes an alternative tradition of radical sexual theory associated with the feminist journal *Urania*, whose critiques of gender duality and interest in cross-dressing uncannily foreshadow many contemporary concerns.

Lesbian and gay scholars have frequently assumed that sexual inversion, a key concept of sexology, is more or less synonymous with homosexuality. References to masculine women and to female souls trapped in male bodies have been read as stumbling if inaccurate attempts to talk about same-sex desire at a time when desire was invariably interpreted through the prism of gender, so that women who desired women were presumed to be necessarily masculine and male homosexuals feminine. Such an interpretation, Jay Prosser argues in this volume and in more detail in his book *Second Skins*, is inaccurate and misleading. While the sexological concept of the invert clearly included some types of homosexuality, the term embraced a much wider range of transgender identifications, including clearly recognizable instances of a powerful and ineradicable desire to 'change sex'. The discourse of sexology was to play an important historical role in the recognition of the transsexual subject and the consequent development of medical and surgical aids to gender reassignment. Against social constructionist views of gender as simply an effect of discourse, Prosser's account of transsexuality suggests that at least some forms of gender identification may have a biological and material dimension and a stubborn intractability that contemporary theory has yet to acknowledge.⁸

Finally, there is growing interest amongst cultural critics in the complex interactions between attitudes to gender and sexuality and the new importance accorded to the influential if indeterminate notion of race in the nineteenth century.⁹ Several of the following chapters explore this issue by

examining the connections between discourses of sexual pathology and conceptions of race, nation and the primitive. Siobhan Somerville examines the relations between scientific discourses of race and emerging models of homosexuality in the *fin de siècle*. Both, she argues, drew upon similar interpretative techniques, seeking to transform the body into a legible text by isolating and classifying physiological markers of difference. Carolyn Burdett considers the ways in which the ostensibly empirical, rational discourse of sexual science, specifically eugenics, was powerfully imbricated with a Romantic discourse of the nation indebted to the tradition of German idealism. Finally, Jane Caplan's investigation of the history of the tattooed woman reveals the importance of conceptions of the primitive and exotic to the emerging disciplines of criminology and sexual science.

Part of the fascination of sexology undoubtedly lies in its ambition to provide a comprehensive classification of sexual behaviour. Inevitably, such an attempt could hardly hope to succeed. 'Subjects are never simply coterminous with categories', as Merl Storr reminds us in her investigation of sexology's difficulty in coming to terms with what we would now call bisexuality. Yet our own preoccupation with such investigative projects has intensified rather than decreased, as ever more media attention is devoted to sexual surveys, sexual confessions and other documentary sources of what people do, want to do, or refuse to do in bed. While the domain once covered by sexology has now splintered into various, largely unconnected fields – reproductive biology, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, manuals of sexual advice and sexual techniques – our culture still largely endorses Havelock Ellis's conviction that sex is 'the central problem of life'.¹⁰ *Sexology in Culture* provides an illuminating introduction to some of the major historical sources of that view.

Notes

- 1 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).
- 2 Roy Porter and Lesley Hall, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650–1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 6.
- 3 Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet, 1977).
- 4 Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (New York: Dutton, 1995).
- 5 Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880–1930* (London: Pandora, 1985); Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The*