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Abstract

Review of Katie Sutton. *Sex between Body and Mind: Psychoanalysis and Sexology in the German-speaking World, 1890s-1930s*. U of Michigan P, 2019. 347 pp.

Keywords

book review, sexology, psychoanalysis, Hirschfeld, Freud, fin de siecle

Katie Sutton. *Sex between Body and Mind: Psychoanalysis and Sexology in the German-speaking World, 1890s-1930s*. U of Michigan P, 2019. 347 pp.

This ambitious monograph, *Sex between Body and Mind*, sets out to reframe understandings of the study of human sexuality in fin-de-siècle German-speaking and central Europe as a history of the interplay between multiple disciplines, particularly between the fields of psychoanalysis and sexological-medical research. As the twentieth century progressed, these two areas of inquiry became increasingly bifurcated, but Katie Sutton demonstrates that they began as two complementary, though sometimes competing, currents in medical science at the turn of the twentieth century. The author contends that it was precisely the points of interface between these two areas of study before psychology and medicine grew into separate disciplines that shaped modern understandings of the self as pertains to sexuality. In the process, this study also seeks to build on the Foucauldian account of sexuality as an account that offers liberatory potential, as opposed to the perceived gloom and doom that critics have sometimes lobbed at Michel Foucault's indictment of institutional regimes. In the process, Sutton takes care to avoid mapping early-twentieth century sexual nomenclature directly onto contemporary understandings of sexual and gender identity.

This intricately and solidly researched book utilizes resources such as correspondence between researchers, meeting minutes of professional societies, personal papers, medical journal articles, and other era-contemporary materials to reveal not only the degree of personal and professional interaction between representatives of psychoanalysis and sexology, but also funny, sometimes juicy anecdotes of personal and professional rivalries between figures like Sigmund Freud, Magnus Hirschfeld, Albert Moll, and Richard von Krafft-Ebing. The snark is real. While moments like these prove compelling and even amusing to the reader in and of themselves, they also serve to demonstrate the day-to-day nature of interactions between well-known figures. Moreover, these instances in Sutton's account also reveal the painstaking, wide-ranging, and oftentimes highly original archival research that went into this book.

An area where this study particularly shines is in its in-depth coverage of feminist reformers—most notably Helene Stöcker—but also less familiar figures of the interwar period. These women worked to reorient the almost exclusively male field of sex research and its, to say the least, flawed conclusions regarding women's sexuality. Specifically, the author focuses on these feminists' contributions to a course correction in understandings of female homosexuality and so-called frigidity, both of which had been categorized as dysfunctions by Freud and other male researchers. For instance, Sutton directs the reader through several researchers' accounts of frigidity, especially those of Helene Deutsch and Karen Horney. She shows how, despite critiques of these studies that point to their

tendency towards conservative framing of women's roles, that these two researchers nevertheless opened the door to a socio-cultural (read: largely male) locus of women's potential lack of interest in heterosexual sex.

Further chapters cover debates on childhood sexuality, trajectories of sexologic and psychoanalytic contributions in the treatment of men exposed to the industrialized violence of World War I, and early models of transvestism and homosexuality, particularly how these models informed contemporary understandings of queer and trans identities. An implied thread throughout the later chapters delivers on the promise of an emancipatory flipside to Foucault's seemingly bleak critiques of the impulse towards categorization: the power of self-naming. The ability to name oneself as a member of a group alleviates the sense of being the only person in the world with these perceptions and longings.

Early-career researchers wishing to get a foothold on the state of both psychoanalytic research and sexology at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as the often productive dovetailing of the two, will find a rich resource in Sutton's study. More established researchers will no doubt also find new information to undergird their own work, in addition to refreshing perspectives and a convincing reframing of early sex research.

The onset of National Socialism marks the historical boundary that concludes the body of Sutton's study, in parallel with the Nazi clampdown on both sexology and psychoanalysis that, in the case of sexology at least, resulted in a cataclysm from which that field of inquiry never really recovered. At least for this reader, Sutton's book reawakens a longing speculation on the alternate history of sexuality that might have ensued in the later twentieth century if, for instance, Hirschfeld's work collecting decades of sex research in the Institute for Sexual Science had not been ransacked and burned in 1933 at Josef Goebbels's behest. Would debates about whether people are "born this way" still be considered relevant? Would so-called conversion therapy have finally been banned in the U.S. and other countries if the work of researchers like Hirschfeld and his adjacent contemporaries in psychoanalysis could have continued to flourish and interact? We will, of course, never know. Still, Sutton's book offers a deep and illuminating examination of what the coalescence of these related bodies of knowledge looked like at the turn of the twentieth century, and thus, what might have been.

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