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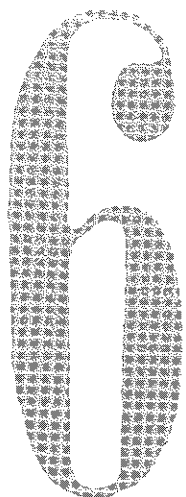
SEX, VIOLENCE, AND AMERICAN MODERNITY

LISA DUGGAN

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Durham and London

2000



DOCTORS OF DESIRE

There are many women with perverted sexual instincts and a psychosensory insanity who, at each menstrual epoch, become possessed with a strong homicidal impulse, and those nearest and dearest are often the ones to suffer death at their hands, or perhaps anyone who may at the time displease them.

Edward C. Mann, Medical Superintendent,
Sunnyside Sanitarium, 1893¹

The developing newspaper narratives of lesbian love murder interacted extensively with the emerging literature of scientific sexology from the 1890s through the first two decades of the twentieth century. Both forms of publication expanded throughout the nineteenth century in Anglo-Europe and the United States, and shared some central structures and features: a precariously professionalizing authorship (in medicine and journalism), a proliferation of varieties (of specialties and news formats), and local and regional client/reader constituencies increasingly imagined as national. But the two literatures of news and sexology also differed substantially, in ways that shaped the nature of their interactions.

The mass circulation press expanded most rapidly and dramatically in U.S. cities, while the literature of sexology appeared first in continental Europe and Great Britain, especially Germany, in a climate of competitive nationalism at the turn of the century. Uneven borrowings across these geographic

boundaries produced concepts of sexuality and new sexual “types” sometimes perceived as nationally distinctive. The formulations and descriptions of these concepts and types also diverged in language, depending on venue of publication, following rules of decorum considered appropriate for particular publics. The newspapers circulated to an imagined “general” public, while scientific medical texts reached a narrower audience of professionals, plus some proportion of the educated, elite public. The contrast between these venues was especially marked in discussions of women’s sexuality.

News reports and sexology texts also differed in their relative emphasis on distinct yet overlapping genres of storytelling—the sensational crime report, and the scientific case history. The lesbian love murder and the lynching narrative, produced primarily as sensational news reports, did not appear with all their elements of plot, character, and conflict in the scientific and medical literatures. But they did draw substantially from “scientific” notions of race, gender, and sexuality, and they in turn contributed distinctively American “types” to Anglo-European sexology’s panoply of sexual deviants.

Anglo-European sexology emerged during the mid-nineteenth century from a complex field of scientific, medical, and popular writing about global and historical human populations. Following several centuries of global colonization and economic imperialism, the nineteenth-century human sciences concentrated resources on the project of classifying and rank-ordering the “races” of people found around the spacial field of the globe. From eighteenth-century comparative anatomy, through nineteenth-century evolutionary biology, paleontology, and anthropology, biological medicine, alienism, neurology, and psychiatry, to turn-of-the-century genetics and eugenics, succeeding cohorts of scientific professionals devoted their lives’ work to this project.²

These myriad professional specialties proposed multiple and conflicting definitions of “race” and paradigms for classification and comparison. Yet they also generally had in common the methods of collapsing space into time and analogizing individual bodies to populations. Relying on a master discourse of “evolution” after mid-century, the scientific professionals regarded human races and classes as analogous to animal species. They mapped populations onto a teleological vector of development from primitive to civilized. Populations from differing geographical locations were identified as having reached specific, measurable points on the vector, as were differing economic, ethnic, or racialized groups coexisting in a single location. Indi-

viduals from within a given group could also be placed on the vector of development, moving from the most primitive point during fetal life to the point characteristic of the individual's group over the course of a lifetime. Groups and individuals might progress, as the overall story of evolution proposed, become arrested prematurely and fail to reach potential individual or group maturity, or degenerate and slide backward to a more primitive condition. This procedure allowed "lower" class Europeans to be compared and ranked in relation to contemporary Africans or ancient Greeks, as space and time, economic change, and physical differences were merged onto a vector of development.

The key term development allowed economic domination achieved across space and over time to be interpreted as the naturalized progress of the species, led by superior classes from more evolved races. The mechanism that moved the story of development forward was *heredity*, another key term in the master discourse of sociobiological evolution that allowed the transmission of economic inequality to appear as a natural process, linked to species progress. Groups and individuals inherited their place in human hierarchies through the intergenerational transmission of resources and capacities. The struggles and achievements of biological ancestors might be passed on, contained in the germ plasm of the organism.

The master discourse of evolution, and the key terms of development and heredity, centrally concerned overlapping hierarchies of race, class, nation, ethnicity, and religion evaluated through measures of mental abilities, body configurations (especially skull shape), political formations, and cultural productions. Gender and sexuality were key markers at all points on the developmental vector and for all measures. Gender differentiation was observed to increase from the primitive state of hermaphroditic organisms to the most highly differentiated gender binary of the civilized classes of nineteenth-century Anglo-Europe. Along with this differentiation, an increasing capacity for the finer feelings of romance marked the more civilized populations—as opposed to the senseless protoplasmic hunger or indifferent if repetitive mating habits of the primitive.³

This overarching schema embraced widely varying theories of race and civilization throughout the nineteenth century—theories with flexible, contested and changing political valences. The most politically progressive versions featured a neo-Lamarckian stress on environment and pointed to possibilities for change over time that might ameliorate social inequalities. The more reactionary versions emphasized the relatively fixed biological innate-

ness of inequalities or pointed to the need to prevent degeneration by use of coercive restrictions on the lower orders.⁴

Sexology, embedded in this larger field of social-scientific endeavor, grew slowly from the mid-nineteenth century, primarily, though not exclusively, as a minor subspecialty within forensic psychiatry. It ranged outward from a small group of asylum superintendents and courtroom consultants, called upon to determine insanity or criminal responsibility, to include university-based medical and biological scientists, neurologists, or psychiatrists in private practice, as well as an increasingly motley crew of social commentators and reformers. The institutional basis for this loosely defined field shifted from its mid-nineteenth-century medicolegal moorings, focused on the evaluation of impoverished and dependent populations, to the private practices and exclusive clinics more likely to support sexologists' undertakings by the end of the century. This shift in material underpinnings multiplied the tensions and contradictions marking the practices and texts of the profession during these decades. The hostility or condescension that characterized depictions of asylum-housed or prison-bound populations was increasingly mixed with the sympathetic, if ambivalent, treatment of voluntary patients from the educated elite.

The figure most identified with the growth, tensions, and changes in the field of sexology from the middle to the end of the nineteenth century is Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902), whose *Psychopathia Sexualis* appeared in twelve German editions from 1886 to 1903. Krafft-Ebing began his career as an assistant physician at an insane asylum and branched out from that post to become one of the first expert witnesses for the Austrian and German courts. He began to collect case histories of asylum inmates and accused criminals from his own experience as well as from newspaper reports. As he continued his career as a neurologist in private practice, a university professor of psychiatry, and a director of an exclusive private clinic, he added patient cases from his own practice as well as those of fellow physicians. His first major publication was a textbook of forensic psychopathology for use in Austria, Germany, and France and published in 1875. He followed this with a textbook on insanity, based on clinical observation, published in 1880.⁵

The immensely successful first edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis* reflected Krafft-Ebing's career trajectory. It was subtitled *A Clinical Forensic Study* and included forty-five case histories from his collection, reported and analyzed in 110 pages addressed primarily to forensic psychiatrists, lawyers, and other interested medical professionals. The tremendous success of this first edi-

tion, and its wide circulation beyond its intended audience, generated substantial response and correspondence from which Krafft-Ebing selected material for subsequent editions. The text ballooned, including 203 cases by the last edition in 1903—cases more extensively detailed than the brief notes of 1886. The book's classification system also shifted and expanded, as the authorities cited ranged more widely.

This expanded last edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis* repeated the evolutionary framework of the first and reiterated the hierarchies of racial progress, stories of development, and mechanisms of heredity characteristic of nineteenth-century Anglo-European science. But within this framework, the text encompassed pervasive analytical tension and contradiction, to the point of incoherence.

In setting out an overall classificatory system for the major perversions—sadism, masochism, fetishism, and antipathetic sexuality, also called contrary sexual instinct—Krafft-Ebing drew on the work of preminent theorist of degeneration Benedict Augustin Morel (1809–1873), leading criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), and pioneering neurologist Karl Westphal (1833–1890) in defining them as neuropathic conditions or psychic atavisms, tainted through a hereditary process of degeneration. In his global survey of the perversions, Krafft-Ebing demonstrated how these diagnostic evaluations were to be differentially applied. In primitive races and lower orders of the European population, perverted behavior might be characteristic of the arrested evolutionary development of the entire group and not an indication of individual pathology. Among the advanced classes of the civilized, however, perversion indicated either pathological degeneration or individually arrested development. The result was a hazy, unstable distinction in the text's analytical framework between vice or immoral perversity, most characteristic of those lowest on the vector of development, and the condition of perversion, which might be found without hint of vice at the higher end of the vector. Krafft-Ebing's text then equivocated as to whether the conditions of perversion might be regarded as diseases to be treated or as unfortunate but natural anomalies to be understood and tolerated.

Krafft-Ebing's ambivalence toward the condition of civilized sexual perverses drew, for its positive valence, on the pioneering theories of Karl Ulrichs (1825–1895) and the extensive research and polemics of Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935).⁶ Ulrichs's writings, published between 1865 and 1879, influenced all twelve editions of *Psychopathia Sexualis* and contributed concepts and arguments to the field of sexology well into the twentieth century. Ulrichs

described a variety of man-manly love and defined its practitioners as Urnings, or members of a third, intermediate sex characterized by male bodies with female psyches. Urnings, including Ulrichs himself, represented non-pathological anomalies of nature whose sexual feelings were not immoral but instead often spiritual and noble. Ulrichs argued that such feelings should not be considered evidence of disease or criminality.

Ulrichs, and later John Addington Symonds (1840–1893) and Edward Carpenter (1844–1928) as well as Hirschfeld,⁷ resisted the pathologizing evolutionary narratives of sexual deviance as arrested or degenerative by countering the vertical vector of development with a horizontal scale of benign variation. And where pathologizing accounts featured metaphors of reversal of the natural gender binary for some perversions, such as antipathic sexuality, contrary sexual instinct, or sexual inversion, Ulrichs and his legatees invoked a kind of gender pluralism through metaphors of intermediacy.

This strategy of resistance did not work equally for all perverses or perversions, however. Embedded in the overall evolutionary schema, the horizontal scale and intermediate types were located across the top. The defense, which rested on claims of virtue, fine romantic feeling, intellectual achievement, and moral worth, was mounted on behalf of Anglo-European men of the civilized classes. Those races, ethnicities, or classes lower on the vector of development were rarely credited with any of the qualities invoked in Ulrichs's defense of the Urning. Even Edward Carpenter, whose romantic utopian theories of natural variation substantially upended the vector of development, reiterated many aspects of the evolutionary model. Though he found nobility and virtue among "primitive" folk, and considered sexual variation among them innocently natural rather than perverse, he nonetheless retained the primitive/civilized scale and framed his defenses primarily around the fine qualities, high achievements, and sensitive natures of civilized intermediate types. In addition to these limits, all of the defenses of perversion, from Ulrichs to Carpenter, applied only to those termed antipathic, contrary, inverted, intermediate, third sexed, or homosexual—conditions that together might include the contemporary identity categories of transgender, transsexual, transvestite, homosexual, bisexual, or intersexual. Other perversions cataloged by sexologists, from nymphomania and satyriasis to sadism, masochism, or fetishism, were seldom defended.

The place of women in both the pathologizing and naturalizing frameworks for the perversions was profoundly vexed. The development of civilized femininity, and deferential behavior toward women, constituted a cen-

tral marker of evolutionary progress. The term “women” itself tended to reference privileged Anglo-European groups; those lower on the vector of development were more likely to be called “females.” But even the most prosperous civilized women were considered less evolved than the men of their nation, ethnicity, and class and could not fully embody the mental, cultural, and productive achievements of civilization. Though Anglo-European women of the privileged classes gained access to education and many of the professions during the nineteenth century, their access was far from equal. So while the pages of sexology texts like Krafft-Ebing’s were increasingly filled with extensive case histories and even first-person narratives of male perverts, inverters, Urnings, and “aunties” who were identified as clergymen, doctors, and gentlemen of “high social position” as well as artists and writers, there were few cases of women, and none in the first person before the publication of the first edition of Havelock Ellis’s *Sexual Inversion* in 1897.⁸

When women appeared in sexology texts under case listings for antipathic or contrary sexual instinct or inversion, their positioning in the story of evolutionary or racial progress was especially contradictory. For a woman’s physiology, psyche, or behavior to be described as in any way “like” a man’s raised a perplexing conundrum: Was she like a man of her class and therefore a “higher” type than if she were “normal”? Was she “like” a man of a lower position and therefore a degraded or degenerate female? Or was she a freak of nature or, more benignly, a quirk or anomaly to be placed on a horizontal scale between male and female, like the Urning?

The sexologists, from the most conservative to the homophile reformers, equivocated and at times flatly contradicted themselves. But they also proliferated classification schemes and explanatory frameworks that were expansive and flexible enough to contain contradictions, and to stretch to accommodate observations of an increasingly visible social world of multiplying gendered embodiments, sexual styles, and relational practices. Krafft-Ebing, for example, divided cases of antipathic sexual instinct into acquired and congenital forms and divided each of these into grades extending from psychic hermaphroditism, to inversion, and on to androgyny or gynandry. The boundaries among the forms and grades were blurred; cases might be narrated to fit any number of slots. And as Judith Halberstam has argued, the details of the cases always exceeded the taxonomic imaginations of sexologists.⁹

The texts of Anglo-European sexology were therefore expansive, contradictory, multivocal, and politically ambivalent. They contained pathologiz-

ing attacks on populations of perverts, imagined and real, but they also contained a naturalizing if not normalizing homophile discourse right from the start. This defensive discourse emphasized that Urnings or inverters were represented among civilization’s most respected citizens and displayed crucial qualities of civilized interiority—feeling, morality, creativity, self-restraint, and the capacity for self-articulation. These Urnings were to be distinguished from those whose unreflective lives of vice and immorality justifiably excluded them from civilization’s highest benefits. This discourse therefore applied most completely to privileged men, more partially and ambivalently to privileged women, and not at all to races and classes mired in primitive inarticulate unselfconsciousness.¹⁰

The Alice Mitchell–Freda Ward murder case entered the literature of sexology through the U.S. mass circulation press and Frank Sim’s extensive recounting of the story and the courtroom scene in his *Memphis Medical Monthly* article (which was the source for Krafft-Ebing’s addition of the case to later editions of *Psychopathia Sexualis*).¹¹ It was taken up within a relatively small and derivative U.S. medical literature on the subject of sexuality, which began to appear with a trickle of articles during the 1880s.¹² Many of these early articles were summaries or reprints of European publications. Among the first to include a U.S. case history was P. M. Wise’s account of Lucy Ann Slater, alias Rev. Joseph Lobdell.¹³ Lobdell had entered the Willard Asylum for the Insane, where Wise was an assistant physician, in 1880—a year after the *National Police Gazette* story appeared (see chapter 5)—in an apparently deteriorated physical and mental condition. Wise’s report described excited and confused behavior that he diagnosed as “erotomania” and “dementia,” and it also supplied a brief life history, mentioning Slater/Lobdell’s book about her adventures and her reputation as “The Female Hunter of Long Eddy.” But she was not described as simply an eccentric Female Husband, as she had been in the press. Wise presented her as “a case of sexual perversion” and described her marriage as an instance of “Lesbian love.” He quoted Krafft-Ebing but argued against his opinion that “these sufferers should be excepted from legal enactments for the punishment of unnatural lewdness.” Wise then continued on to argue that “true sexual perversion is always a pathological condition and a peculiar manifestation of insanity,” though “[t]he subject possesses little forensic interest, especially in this country, and the case herewith reported is offered as a clinical curiosity in psychiatric medicine.”

Within a decade, such cases were no longer regarded as curiosities. The number of cases reported and the volume of the U.S. literature on the subject of sexual perversion had increased dramatically, though the American branch of the field remained much less developed than the European until well after 1900. No major book on the subject was produced by an American, though a small number of American writers, largely European-influenced neurologists, did publish original material such as P. M. Wise's case. Their contributions were scattered among the medical journals—including older journals like *The American Journal of Insanity*, general medicine publications such as *The Medical Record* or *The New York Medical Review*, and the newer neurological publications like *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*. Most of these journals published only a handful of articles on sexual perversion and inversion or homosexuality from 1880 to 1900, with only a handful of writers appearing in many different journals.

One journal took a rather dramatic lead. The *Alienist and Neurologist* published more than twenty articles during this period, by far the highest concentration of material on the subject in any U.S. medical journal. The *Alienist and Neurologist* featured the work of those Americans whose writing on sexual perversion and inversion was most ubiquitous and influential—especially the journal's own editor, Charles Hughes, and the uniquely prolific James G. Kiernan.

Charles H. Hughes, M.D., of St. Louis, was president and Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry of the Barnes Medical College, as well as editor of the *Alienist and Neurologist*.¹⁴ He spoke and published widely on the subject of the sexual perversions and was among the primary conduits in the United States for the ideas of Krafft-Ebing, Westphal, and other Europeans. He first addressed the Alice Mitchell murder case in an editorial published as the trial was in progress during July 1892 and framed as a direct response to continuing press reports:

Alice Mitchell, the "Sexual Pervert," and Her Crime, are now being psychically and medico-legally considered before a Memphis, Tennessee, court and jury. Her trial began on the eighteenth instant, and her counsel have interposed the plea of insanity, to avert the legal penalty for murder of her fated female fiancé Freda Ward.

The newspapers are discussing, and have discussed this case as if it were a foregone conclusion that a woman who, possessed of the reversed sexual instinct, or the erotism of a man in a woman's organism, the *contrare sexuellempfindung* of Westphal, the man's brain in a woman's body of Kiernan, and dominated by that feeling toward

one of her sex as a man be toward the woman he loves, and making no resistance to its imperious sway and inspired by jealousy, destroys for strong motive the object who having once returned her love suddenly ceases to requite it, by transferring it to another, is necessarily insane. . . .

. . . Novices in psychiatry who never had any considerable experience in the treatment of insanity, will not be wanting, doubtless, who on the trial may boldly say, the act establishes Alice Mitchell's mental status, but this will not be the testimony of authority, nor will it be a reasonable deduction from the history of the thus far recorded cases.

It is not the dictum of psychiatry that a flagrant crime like that of murder, perpetrated for revenge or jealousy, or both, by a sexual pervert is of necessity an insane act. . . .

Alice Mitchell may or may not be insane, but the facts concerning her which have thus far been made public, or rather which have come to us through the public press, have not been sufficient to fix her mental status as an impossible lunatic, though they do seem to establish sexual perversity, but so are sodomy, pederasty or what the law calls the unnatural crime of buggery. Their perpetrators are moral perverts not lunatics. . . .

. . . Gentlemen, neurologists, brother alienists, let us pause and consider before we conclude that irresponsibility is a necessary sequel to reversed sexual feeling unrequited and revenged in murder. If this is always insanity, then is extreme normal love, vented in violence upon the object of the opposite sex who responds not reciprocally? And if Alice Mitchell was insane, then what was the mental condition of her dead associate, for the testimony says, "they loved each other alike?"

The court and jury may find Alice Mitchell to have been insane, but will her insanity be that popular insanity which shields the wayward, passionate scions of the wealthy and influential or that undoubted mental disease of which the murder of her companion was but one expression— . . . In the light of all facts thus far made public it would seem that the insanity of Alice Mitchell is still a mooted and mootable question. Yet this girl may be insane, but if she should be insane it will be because of other facts than that of contrary sexual feeling.¹⁵

Besides misstating the legal facts of the case (Mitchell's attorneys did not plead "not guilty" by reason of insanity but asked that she be declared unfit to stand trial), Hughes blurred the conditions of sexual perversion described by Krafft-Ebing and Westphal with categories of illegal vice or moral perversity, including sodomy and buggery. His mixing and matching of warring terminologies broke down the very distinctions that defined and ordered

the emerging field of sexology, but such confusions were characteristic of much of the literature—especially in the United States.

In a theoretical article, "Erotopathia. — Morbid Erotism," Hughes considered the Mitchell case more extensively, within a broader context. He laid out the evolutionary framework and noted the difficulty of distinguishing between perversity and perversion:

We make no plea here in extenuation of genic perversity, lust, rapine, pederasty, homo-prostitution, etc. Disease does not ordinarily originate them. It only sometimes exceptionally excuses them. Salacity and sexual perversity may be solely immoral with no excuse in disease or pre-natal organic perversion. Sexual orgies the most revolting may co-exist with erotic disease on the part of some and without disease on the part of others who participate in them, as the London orgies of 1885, the Manhaters' dance in Berlin and the floral festivals honoring the prostitute Flora of Ancient Rome. . . .¹⁶

In taking up the demanding task of making such distinctions, a task clearly requiring scientific expertise, Hughes sometimes echoed the vocabulary and concepts of the Europeans, but he often also turned to biblical references or to terms and assumptions derived from earlier medical frameworks or from popular or literary sources. He described Zola's novel *Nana* as featuring a "tribadist" and argued that such practices were often introduced in insane hospitals by nymphomaniacs, sexual perverts, pubescent lunatics, hysterics, and imbeciles.

Newspapers were among Hughes's most important nonmedical sources. He quoted extensively from the Mitchell trial coverage and recounted another similar case from the Indianapolis press:

Two girls are arrested in the streets of a western city (Indianapolis, June 27th) whose erotopathia simulates that of Alice Mitchell and Freda Ward, without, thus far, the tragic ending of the latter. Their names are given as Delia Perkins and Ida Preston. They had run away from home together because of their love for each other. Delia had cut off her hair and offered it for sale in order that she might obtain money on which to help defray the joint expenses of herself and the loved Ida. When Delia's step-father was summoned by the Chief of Police to come for his run-away daughter, she threatened to kill him, and when he came treated him coldly. To her step-father's importunities to go back home with him she only finally agreed on promise of being permitted to see Ida whenever she should desire to, imprinting burning kisses upon the cheeks and lips of the paramour of her own sex on parting. These

two devoted girls had been together almost constantly since their departure from home and they had not been in the company of gentlemen. The intense and active passion seemed to be on the part of Delia, Ida being reported as regarding the matter "as a huge joke." When Delia was returned home the following colloquy took place with her mother (now Mrs. Mendenhall):

MOTHER: "You will not run away again, will you?"

DELIA: "Not if you let me go with Ida."

MOTHER: "That I will not do."

DELIA: "Then I will kill myself and you will be responsible."

MOTHER: "Don't say that. We will try to make you happy and you must try to forget all about Ida. I can't understand why you do not forget this foolish fancy and fall in love with a man and marry him."

DELIA: "I do not care for the best man that ever walked, and never will. Ida is the only one I ever loved and I will continue to love her until I die, and if we are not allowed to go together, I will kill myself and her too."

Miss Perkins told the reporter that she had not left home because she had been mistreated, but because of her love for Ida Preston. "My parents refused to let me go with Ida," said she, "and I decided to be with Ida, let the consequences be what they might."

Miss Preston stated that she had been met in the street by Miss Perkins; that the latter said she was tired of staying at home and said she was going to leave.

"I didn't want to leave home," said Miss Preston, "but Delia told me she loved me so dearly that if I did not consent to go with her she would kill herself and me, too. I like the girl, but don't believe I care as much for her as she does for me."¹⁷

Through such cases, the lesbian love murder narrative entered the pages of the medical press, where physicians searched for similar stories and endlessly recirculated those they discovered. Hughes referenced an article by his associate James Kiernan:

In Kiernan's contribution to our subject, to which we have already referred, another homicide resulting from this perverted passion is cited in the person of Miss D., a young lady of Pocomoke City, Maryland. An attempt was made to break off the relationship, and an engagement was entered into with a young man, whereupon Miss D. shot her "lover" dead. She was tried and found guilty of "manslaughter in heat of passion."

This account of the Lily Duer/Ella Hearn case, reported in the *National Police Gazette* in 1879 (see chapter 5), was followed by references to an instance of

“another violent Lesbian lover whose passion passed into the insane delusion of being with child by the woman she loved” and to “several instances of actual marriage as man and wife between women.”¹⁸

Such reports in the medical literature, taken either directly from the newspapers or secondhand from other medical articles based on news stories, varyingly included some or all four elements of the lesbian love murder narrative: the masculine/feminine contrast, the triangle, the marriage plan, and the violence. But medical articles, addressed to an elite and insular profession engaged in classifying sexual types, generally stressed the case histories of individuals rather than the plots of stories elaborated in the press. The medical writers also added sexual specifics that the newspapers only obliquely referenced. For cases drawn from the newspapers such inclusion required speculation. In the case of Alice Mitchell and Freda Ward, Charles Hughes queried:

How much may not mutual masturbation have had to do with the development of a morbid and perverse erotism in both? Libidinousness, impurity and lascivious sensuality are developed in this way, and by early and bad companionship and salacious literature.¹⁹

An article on the Mitchell-Ward case in the *Medical Fortnightly* elaborated this hypothesis with more detail:

This masturbation probably began alone, was taught to her school-girl friend, mutual masturbation followed, then the well-developed perverted sexual love with all its disgusting details, was the almost inevitable result. From this came the desire to consummate the unnatural love by marriage, the enforced separation, the breaking up of a habit which had made sexual monsters of the two maidens—then the climax—murder.²⁰

Of course such speculations characteristically blurred the distinction between environmental and hereditary causes of perversity versus perversion. In the overall context of the medical literature, the distinction was nonetheless hazily made between populations prone to vice and perversity, who occupied the lower rungs on the vector of development, and populations who might be said to suffer from an involuntary condition—the difference was romance. Though Hughes speculated about Mitchell’s sexual activities and fantasies with or without Freda Ward, he did not doubt that the tale was one of love gone awry:

Alice Mitchell and Freda Ward, two young women, loved each other, “not wisely, but too well.” Their love culminated in a matrimonial engagement as between man and woman. . . .²¹

Romance was not attributed to “primitive” populations, or to degenerate, if elite, denizens of vice-ridden demimondes. As the lesbian love murder narrative worked its way into the medical literature, it contributed to the emergence of a new type—a woman whose sexual deviance was marked primarily by feelings that distinguished her from the prostitute, criminal, primitive, or degraded female. Her difference was not sited in her sexual actions, interpreted as signs or symptoms of deviance, but in her being, located in both body and psyche from which the telltale feelings arose. Though these distinctions were fluid, and at moments vice, disease, and anomaly were indistinguishably conflated, the romance of the lesbian love murder story generally marked its characters as respectable “girls” in trouble.

The lesbian love murder narrative appeared within the medical literature in relation to other types and stories that shaped its meanings. First-person narratives and naturalizing defenses appeared primarily via citations of the European sexologists; a rare American treatise by Edward I. Prime Stevenson, author under the pseudonym Xavier Mayne of *The Intersexes: A History of Similitude as a Problem in Social Life*, was printed privately in Italy in 1908 and circulated very narrowly.²² Such defenses, which coexisted with pathologizing theories and moral condemnations, applied almost exclusively to privileged Anglo-European men. At the other end of the vector of development, the U.S. medical literature repeated the Anglo-European evolutionary framework but also added special American preoccupations with indigenous populations and black people. In his 1893 article, Charles Hughes quoted eminent New York neurologist William Hammond on the subject of the “mujerado”:

The Pueblo Indians are in the habit of selecting some one male from among those living in a village and rendering him sexually impotent, reserving him at the same time for pederastic purposes. This person is called a mujerado. . . . A mujerado is an essential person in the saturnalia or orgies in which these Indians, like the Ancient Greeks, Egyptians and other nations indulge. He is the chief passive agent in the pederastic ceremonies, which form so important a part in the performance. . . . For the making of the mujerado one of the most virile men is selected, and the act of masturbation is performed upon him many times every day; at the same time he is made to ride almost continuously on horseback. From over-excitement comes abo-

lition of the orgasm, the organs atrophy, the temperature changes, and he becomes assimilated with the female sex, perhaps at first with reluctance, but finally with entire complaisance and assent.

Hughes then remarked that “[s]anity in a savage may be lunacy in a civilized being,” and he quoted James Kiernan to argue that “[t]he Zuni ‘mujerado’ is hence not the evidence of either immorality or insanity it would be in an Anglo-Saxon race.”²³

Discussions of black sexuality in the same articles were more consistently hostile and pathologizing than the patronizing, voyeuristic imaginings of Native American practices. In a note appended to “*Erotopathia. — Morbid Erotism,*” Hughes described “an annual convocation of negro men called the drag dance, which is an orgie of lascivious debauchery beyond pen power of description” in Washington, D.C.:

In this sable performance of sexual perversion all of these men are lasciviously dressed in womanly attire. . . . Standing or seated on a pedestal, but accessible to all the rest, is the naked queen (a male), whose phallic member, decorated with a ribbon, is subject to the gaze and osculations in turn, of all the members of this lecherous gang of sexual perverts and phallic fornicators.

Among those who annually assemble in this strange libidinous display are cooks, barbers, waiters and other employees of Washington families, some even higher in the social scale—some being employed as subordinates in the Government departments.²⁴

In 1907 he followed up this report with a “*Note on a Feature of Sexual Psychopathy*” in the *Alienist and Neurologist*:

Male negroes masquerading in woman’s garb and carousing and dancing with white men is the latest St. Louis record of neurotic and psychopathic sexual perversion. Some of them drove to the levee dive and dance hall at which they were arrested in their masters’ auto cars. All were gowned as women at the miscegenation dance and the negroes called each other feminine names. They were all arrested, taken before Judge Tracy and gave bond to appear for trial, at three hundred dollars each signed by a white man.

. . . The names of these negro perverts, their feminine aliases and addresses appear in the press notices of their arrest, but the names of the white degenerates consorting with them are not given.

Social reverse complexion homosexual affinities are rarer than non reverse color affinities, yet even white women sometimes prefer colored men to white men and

vice versa. Homosexuality may be found among blacks, though this phase of sexual perversion is not so common or at least has not been so recorded, as between white males or white females. . . .²⁵

Needless to say, romantic feeling was not a feature of Hughes’s fantasies of these proceedings.

Such racializing reports were ubiquitous in the psychiatric journals. Few articles there repeated or responded to the lynching narrative directly, however, as was more common in medical articles under the broad rubric of turn-of-the-century eugenics. F. E. Daniel, M.D., editor of the *Texas Medical Journal* in Austin, argued in 1893 for castration as the appropriate eugenic punishment for rape, sodomy, bestiality, pederasty, and habitual masturbation. He suggested that punishment “to lessen the evil of transmission of vice, disease, and the propensity to crime” and offered it as an alternative to capital punishment, including by lynching:

It may be answered that capital punishment does fulfill two of the ends; it prevents a repetition of the offense, and stops hereditary transmission; but that it lessens crime cannot be admitted. After the abolition of the death penalty for rape in England the crime greatly increased; but in Texas, although the offense is visited with swift retribution, and often a cruel death is inflicted by a mob; yet rape, and that too, in its most horrible, cruel and revolting form, that of tender young girls, is greatly on the increase. Not a newspaper can be picked up that does not contain the announcement of something of the kind, and it is by no means confined to Texas. Even the horrible execution by fire of the wretch at Paris, Texas, seems to have been forgotten, if it has not, indeed, acted as a suggestion or excitant, to that incomprehensible race, the negro, so different from his immediate progenitors of only one or two generations ago.²⁶

Though Daniel’s position was extreme and unusual, even for eugenicists in the South,²⁷ his views were not outside the mainstream of medical discussion. The *Texas Medical Monthly* article included a summary of other physicians’ views, including those of G. Frank Lydston, a prominent U.S. specialist in genitourinary and venereal diseases, a professor at the Chicago College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the author of a widely cited classification scheme for the sexual perversions:²⁸

. . . Dr. Frank Lydston (*Va. Medical Monthly*) in reply to a question from Dr. Hunter McGuire as to the cause of so much rape by negroes in the South, advises castration as a remedy for the evil; and there is much wisdom in the advice. He would cas-

trate the rapist, thus rendering him incapable of a repetition of the offense, and of propagating his kind, and turn him loose—on the principle of the singed rat—to be a warning to others. Dr. Lydston says, and very truly, that a hanging or even a burning is soon forgotten; but a negro buck at large amongst the ewes of his flock, minus the elements of manhood, would be a standing terror to those of similar propensities.²⁹

Daniel wrote at the intersection of eugenic and sexological discourses in 1893. He remained primarily within the frame of reference of hard-line eugenics, but he also referenced Krafft-Ebing and other European sexologists in arguing for the “powerful influence of the sexual sense,” which in the healthy person “dominates life, and is the great incentive to action, to the acquisition of property, the struggle for social eminence, and the foundation of a home.” His objective—to locate the threats to property and the white home—led him to focus on an especially wide range of sexual perversions. He noted that “in light of the Alice Mitchell case it might be well enough to . . . asexualize all criminals of whatever class.”³⁰

In Daniel’s article, the Mitchell case was only briefly referenced and lumped into the undifferentiated mass of crimes and perversions. More commonly, the Mitchell-Ward story appeared in more elaborated form along with “similar cases.” The lesbian love murder narrative, thus assembled, stood uneasily at the boundary between vice and perversity on one side and the natural romantic intensities of normal elite white women on the other. The figure of the lesbian killer, allied with masculinity, expressed the danger of romance out of its gendered place; the figure of the “passive” or “feminine” partner expressed the fear that any white woman might be susceptible. Though the element of violence marked the lesbian love murder’s characters as pathological and dangerous, and set them off from the honorable Urnings of Ulrichs, the element of romance distinguished them from females of the “lower” races and classes.

The most prolific and influential U.S. sexologist, James G. Kiernan, circulated this typical framework throughout the international medical press, helping to integrate American cases with Anglo-European theories. His career followed the common trajectory for sexologists from asylum work and forensic experience to neurological practice and university-based research. After receiving his medical degree from New York University in 1874, Kiernan worked as assistant physician at Ward’s Island Asylum in New York until 1878. He then moved to Chicago as Superintendent of the Cook County Insane Asylum. During the next decade he held a series of chairs in nervous

and mental disease at Chicago medical schools, taught forensic psychiatry at the Union Law School, and contributed to a long list of general medical and neurological publications. He appeared as a witness in the notorious Guiteau trial in 1881 and wrote extensively on issues of the criminal responsibility of the insane.³¹

In his earliest articles on sexual perversion, Kiernan reported on the writings of Ulrichs, Westphal, and Krafft-Ebing, and he began summarizing and numbering their cases, adding to them the handful of cases reported by Americans during the 1880s. From the beginning he exhibited a particular interest in female sexual inverts, devoting more space proportionately to such cases than to cases of male inverts or any other perversions. In an 1884 article in the *Detroit Lancet* he summarized a case of Westphal’s as well as P. M. Wise’s 1883 article on Lucy Ann Lobdell, and he also contributed a case history from his own practice.³² Alice Mitchell first appeared in one of his most ambitious articles, “Responsibility in Sexual Perversion.”

This 1892 article provided a typical rhetorical mixture—an extended discussion of the evolution of the sexual instinct, from the primitive protoplasmic hunger of the amoeba through savage human lusts, to the romances of the civilized races; charts detailing G. Frank Lydston’s and Krafft-Ebing’s classification systems for the sexual perversions; and a series of numbered case histories. The cases included Lucy Ann Lobdell, Alice Mitchell, and Miss H. D. (who must have been the *National Police Gazette*’s Lily Duer), “a young lady of masculine tastes” who “‘loved’ another young lady also of Pocomoke City, Md.” Kiernan concluded with reference to the source of many of his case reports:

It should be remembered that sexual pervert crimes of all types are likely to increase, because of newspaper agitation of the subject, among hysterical females, from a desire to secure the notoriety dear to the hysteric heart.³³

More than twenty years later, Kiernan was still invoking the same notorious lesbian love murders in his column for *The Urologic and Cutaneous Review*, headlined “Sexology.” In 1916 he wrote:

. . . Since the dramatic sex-invert homicide of Hattie Deuel at Pocomoke City, Md., in 1878, followed by that equally sensational one by Alice Mitchell of Memphis in 1892, female sex invert manifestations of all kinds have been much exploited by the press. Attention has been attracted to it. As a result sex invert friendships not hitherto viewed with alarm have been suspected by mothers. In an Illinois town

the mothers dreaded girl friendships with a local poetess more than intimacies with young men. The androphobia, so to speak, of the deeply ingrained sex invert has led to her leadership in social purity movements and a failure to recognize inversion. Such inverts see no harm in seduction of young girls while dilating on the impurity of even marital coitus.³⁴

But by 1916 he was also responding to the claims of Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), the most influential sexologist since Krafft-Ebing, that sexual inversion was increasing among Americans. Though Kiernan labored to refute the English sexologist's claim, his own reports of U.S. cases based on newspaper stories had in fact shaped Ellis's conclusions. In the 1915 edition of *Sexual Inversion* Ellis recounted a series of U.S. cases:

. . . Inverted women, who may retain their feminine emotionality combined with some degree of infantile impulsiveness and masculine energy, present a favorable soil for the seeds of passionate crime, under those conditions of jealousy and allied emotions which must so often enter into the invert's life.

The first conspicuous example of this tendency in recent times is the Memphis case (1892) in the United States. . . . In this case a congenital sexual invert, Alice Mitchell, planned a marriage with Freda Ward, taking a male name and costume. This scheme was frustrated by Freda's sister, and Alice Mitchell then cut Freda's throat. There is no reason to suppose that she was insane at the time of the murder. She was a typical invert of a very pronounced kind. Her mother had been insane and had homicidal impulses. She herself was considered unbalanced, and was masculine in her habits from her earliest years. Her face was obviously unsymmetrical and she had an appearance of youthfulness below her age. She was not vicious, and had little knowledge of sexual matters, but when she kissed Freda she was ashamed of being seen, while Freda could see no reason for being ashamed. She was adjudged insane.

There have been numerous cases in America more recently. One case (for some details concerning which I am indebted to Dr. J. G. Kiernan, of Chicago) is that of the "Tiller Sisters," two quintroons, who for many years had acted together under that name in cheap theaters. One, who was an invert, with a horror of men dating from early girlhood, was sexually attached to the other, who was without inborn inversion, and was eventually induced by a man to leave the invert. The latter, overcome by jealousy, broke into the apartment of the couple and shot the man dead. She was tried, and sent to prison for life. A defense of insanity was made, but for this there was no evidence. In another case, also occurring in Chicago . . . , a trained nurse lived for fourteen years with a young woman who left her on four different occasions, but was each time induced to return; finally, however, she left and married,

whereupon the nurse shot the husband, who was not, however, fatally wounded. The culprit in this case had been twice married, but had not lived with either of her husbands; it was stated that her mother had died in an asylum, and that her brother had committed suicide. She was charged with disorderly conduct, and subjected to a fine.

In another later case in Chicago a Russian girl of 22, named Anna Rubinowitch, shot from motives of jealousy another Russian girl to whom she had been devoted since childhood, and then fatally shot herself. The relations between the two girls had been very intimate. "Our love affair is one purely of the soul," Anna Rubinowitch was accustomed to say; "we love each other on a higher plane than that of earth." (I am informed that there were in fact physical relationships; the sexual organs were normal.) This continued, with great devotion on each side, until Anna's "sweetheart" began to show herself susceptible to the advances of a male wooer. This aroused uncontrollable jealousy in Anna, whose father, it may be noted, had committed suicide by shooting some years previously. . . .

The infatuation of young girls for actresses and other prominent women may occasionally lead to suicide. Thus in Philadelphia, a few years ago, a girl of 19, belonging to a very wealthy family, beautiful and highly educated, acquired an absorbing infatuation for Miss Mary Garden, the prima donna, with whom she had no personal acquaintance. The young girl would kneel in worship before the singer's portrait, and studied hairdressing and manicuring in the hope of becoming Miss Garden's maid. When she realized that her dream was hopeless she shot herself with a revolver. . . .³⁵

These cases sat like an undigested lump within what Siobhan Somerville has called Ellis's hybrid text.³⁶ Though educated as a physician, Ellis never practiced. He did not come to sexology with the asylum or courtroom experience of many of his predecessors, though his first book, *The Criminal* (1890), drew on the criminal anthropology of Lombroso.³⁷ He made his career as a writer, beginning his lifelong study of sexuality with the first edition of *Sexual Inversion* (1897).³⁸ He uneasily combined a naturalist's emphasis on nonjudgmental observation of benign variation with the framework of an evolutionist and the concerns of a eugenicist. Influenced strongly by his coauthor of *Sexual Inversion*, John Addington Symonds, as well as by Ulrichs, Hirschfeld, and his personal friend Edward Carpenter, Ellis penned strong arguments for legal and cultural tolerance for the invert.³⁹ But he combined such pleas with the vocabulary of abnormality and degeneration derived from Krafft-Ebing.

Though *Sexual Inversion* included far fewer female than male cases of inversion, it contained the first women's first-person narratives to appear in the published cases of the sexological literature. Ellis's wife, Edith Lees, helped collect the women's cases for him. An invert herself, her own case history was also recounted in her husband's text. Altogether, Ellis's six numbered cases of female inversion did not feature the violence of the American newspaper reports that also appeared in the book. They shifted the portrayal of women inverts more in the direction of the naturalized Urning, but the histories and analysis were nonetheless still more negative, reductively generalizing, and ambivalently pathologizing than those in the men's cases.

Ellis disputed the congenital versus acquired distinction that marked most sexologists' discussions of inversion, stressing that such conditions (as opposed to vices) were generally congenital. In describing female inverts, Ellis insisted that they were characterized by some degree of masculinity, in body and psyche. This theoretical strategy worked to fix the female invert as an identifiable type, decidedly differentiable from normal femininity. But in his case histories, Ellis recounted numerous contradictory instances of ardent "womanly" partners of more markedly masculine or even only boyish inverts. He labored to resolve this contradiction:

A class in which homosexuality, while fairly distinct, is only slightly marked, is formed by the women to whom the actively inverted woman is most attracted. These women differ, in the first place, from the normal, or average, woman in that they are not repelled or disgusted by lover-like advances from persons of their own sex. They are not usually attractive to the average man, though to this rule there are many exceptions. Their faces may be plain or ill-made, but not seldom they possess good figures: a point which is apt to carry more weight with the inverted woman than beauty of face. Their sexual impulses are seldom well marked, but they are of strongly affectionate nature. On the whole, they are women who are not very robust and well developed, physically or nervously, and who are not well adapted for child-bearing, but who still possess many excellent qualities, and they are always womanly. One may, perhaps, say that they are the pick of the women whom the average man would pass by. No doubt, this is often the reason why they are open to homosexual advances, but I do not think it is the sole reason. So far as they may constitute a class, they seem to possess a genuine, though not precisely sexual, preference for women over men, and it is this coldness, rather than lack of charm, which often renders men rather indifferent to them.⁴⁰

This residual category, required to shore up the portrait of inversion without implicating "normal" women, addressed the competitive anxiety of the "normal" man rather obliquely by arguing that the partners of inverts were women likely to be passed over by men. Ellis's textual anxiety may or may not be related to the fact that as he began his work on *Sexual Inversion*, his wife was simultaneously embarking on her first serious affair with a woman since their marriage.⁴¹

Ellis thus included the versions of the lesbian love murder narrative derived from U.S. press reports, but he reworked the competitive triangle of invert-normal man-normal woman in his case histories and analysis. Ellis's cases of female inversion were not violent; they posed less of an immediately dangerous threat to the Anglo-Saxon home. The threat they still posed was contained in Ellis's text with notions of congenital abnormality, mixed with defensive condescension.

Ellis's text repeated the evolutionary framework in a less starkly judgmental but still hierarchizing mode. His cases of inversion were nearly all from the privileged classes. His discussion of female inversion thus marked a shift over time in the preponderance of cases from the asylum-based populations and forensic interests of the earliest reports, such as P. M. Wise's article on Lucy Ann Lobdell, to the love murder stories involving respectable women like Alice Mitchell, to the speaking inverts who appear in *Sexual Inversion*. This shift in preponderance did not involve a fundamental change in the overall framework for analyzing the sexual perversions, however. The latter kinds of cases did not supersede the earlier kinds, nor did they emerge over time as parallel discourses. The privileged invert of homophile reform emerged more distinctly over time, but she always appeared in relation to vice-ridden or criminal, primitive others. The discourse of sexuality that defined the speaking invert in the texts of sexology was from its inception interarticulated with hierarchies of race, class, and gender. The homophile discourse embedded within the contradictions of sexology depended for its coherence on the discourses of morality, crime, and disease, in relation to which, and in terms of which, its pleas were constructed.⁴²

The sexologists served up a strong brew of materials gathered from fiction, fantasy, clinical experience, newspapers, and autobiographical reports. The resulting vocabularies, concepts, and frameworks were influential beyond the scope of professional scientific, medical, and legal interests. But their categories and theories never dominated the social or cultural landscapes.

They were constructed in relation to the social world and reflected the stories and "types" of social life. The figure of the unusually masculine, elite woman in pursuit of more ordinarily feminine women was not an invention of the sexologists. Anne Lister's diaries, for instance, record strikingly similar representations from the early nineteenth century.⁴³ By mid-century when sexologists' texts proliferated, many modes of embodiment, experiences of desire, and forms of relationship organized social worlds in Anglo-European cities, and by the end of the century in U.S. cities as well.⁴⁴ The sexologists condensed these multiple forms into the types charted by their byzantine classification schemes, and interpreted them from the point of view of those authorized to speak as professionals. Readers, writers, and patients participated, contributing ethnographic detail and appropriating ideas.⁴⁵ The narratives of social life thus interacted constantly with those of many varieties of texts, including sexological tomes, though not in an open-ended or egalitarian give-and-take. The most subordinated and deprived populations appeared entirely as objects, never as subjects of sexological discourse.

The literature of sexology thus operated as an interactive public sphere, though in a more constrained arena than the mass circulation press or the courtroom. In referencing other public spheres in their discussions of women's sexuality, the sexologists tended to repeat the press's emphasis on the dangers of the brothel, the theater, and the school, though the European literature also referenced convents and U.S. writers worried over women's social reform organizations. When lesbianism was linked to prostitution, the language emphasized vice and immorality as well as physical or mental abnormality. The theater appeared in discussions of the dangers of cross-dressing or as a site of heterosocial leisure offering abundant opportunities for female immorality. But sexologists centrally featured the school as the primary location of elite female homosociality, lending itself not only to the predations of inverts but also to "epidemics" of sexual desire among students.⁴⁶ Sexologists' focus on these public spheres highlighted the contradiction between their description of a fixed type of female invert and their observations of rampant sapphic desire in nondomestic, collective settings.

When Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) published his article "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," in 1920, the prosperous young woman featured desired a prostitute, an actress, and a teacher.⁴⁷ For all its departures from the theories of sexologists, and its particularly crucial abandonment of the vocabulary of degeneration, Freud's psychoanalysis nonetheless repeated many features of the earlier literature, such as this emphasis

on homosocial public spheres as magnets for or generators of alternative desires and domesticities. Though psychoanalysis more fully psychologized sexuality, and more fully naturalized and normalized the sexual perversions than any of the sexologists' frameworks during this time period,⁴⁸ Freud's theories still invoked an evolutionary model (especially in *Totem and Taboo*) and a vector of psychosexual development.⁴⁹ The biological theories of sexology inflected Freud's discussion of universal human drives, and the sexological stress on the central diagnostic importance of feelings over acts influenced the psychoanalytic concept of *libido*.

Like psychoanalysis, some of the social sciences and U.S. social studies of the early twentieth century emphasized the role of environment, focused on prosperous white populations, and pointed to a plurality of sexual experiences rather than a sharp divide between the normal and abnormal. Most notably, between the pioneering sexual surveys of Magnus Hirschfeld and the groundbreaking researches of Alfred Kinsey published during the 1950s, Katherine Bement Davis's *Factors in the Sex Life of Twenty-Two Hundred Women* established that homosexual experience, defined as feelings only or as also including actions, was widespread among "normal" educated white women.⁵⁰

But the discourses of vice and disease, and the contradictory presumptions of biology as the primary ground for behavior, did not recede, to be replaced by more enlightened theories. They remained powerfully present in religious and moral arenas, in the mix of social and biological studies of insane, feeble-minded, imprisoned or impoverished populations, and in popular conceptions of the aberrations found among "other" races, nations, and classes. During the first half of the twentieth century, reformers and professionals located lesbian vice or pathology in women's prisons, where such relations were often represented as characteristically and alarmingly interracial.⁵¹ Biological theories of sexuality, both pathologizing and naturalizing, were also rejuvenated by the eugenics movement and by the new sciences of genetics and endocrinology during the early twentieth century.⁵²

The sexually defined subcultures that proliferated during the twentieth century produced new vocabularies, types, and explanatory frameworks, many of them complexly intertwined with the evolutionary frameworks of sexology, as well as some quite independent of them. Elements of the lesbian love murder story reappeared in cultural productions expressive of such subcultures, less prominently in popular forms like the blues,⁵³ and more clearly in the forms produced and circulated by readers of mainstream newspapers and sexology—forms such as literary fiction.