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Review Of "Disciplining Reproduction: Modernity, American Life Sciences" By A. E. Clarke

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Book Review***Disciplining Reproduction: Modernity, American Life Sciences, and "the Problems of Sex."***

Adele E. Clarke. *Disciplining Reproduction: Modernity, American Life Sciences, and "the Problems of Sex."* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998. xvii + 421 pp. Ill. \$45.00, £35.00.

Disciplining Reproduction is a book about alliance politics, the construction of scientific boundaries, and how certain areas become amenable to scientific study. It lives up to its complex pun of a title in that it concerns both (a) how the social area of reproduction is disciplined (i.e., tamed); and (b) how the scientific concerns about reproduction become an academic discipline. Moreover, it is central to Clarke's thesis that these two types of "disciplining" interact. The emotionally charged and personal worlds of reproduction must somehow have been made accessible to science, and existing scientific disciplines--such as biochemistry, embryology, pharmacology, endocrinology, and sexology--must somehow have been realigned so that their intersection set forms a new discipline: reproductive biology.

If ever a field can be readily shown to be socially constructed, it is reproductive biology. Society has an enormous interest in reproduction--in who can do it with whom, when it can be done, and under what auspices. Reproduction has never been a strictly scientific or medical concern; rather, it has also been the focus of eugenicists, neo-Malthusians, feminists, agricultural reformers, politicians, and philanthropic organizations. Clarke views these actors as inhabiting different (and sometimes multiple) "social worlds." She writes about how these different worlds have fought one another and/or formed alliances over the course of the past century, documenting how reproductive biology was forged in a context of British and American social movements. Reproductive biology and its accompanying technologies were financed by those interested in woman's emancipation (such as Katherine McCormick, who funded Pincus's contraceptive research) as well as by those interested in wielding scientific control over cultural practices [**End Page 733**] (such as the Rockefeller Foundation). Reproductive biology and its technologies of control were seen (especially by the eugenicists and the neo-Malthusians) as being at the heart of what constituted "the family." The changing social topography caused different scientific worlds to meet and interact.

Clarke describes reproductive biology as having been an "illegitimate" area of study until the alignment of the scientific disciplines enabled it to become a subject with its own textbooks and professors. But the scientific disciplines were, themselves, constrained by the specific practices of American and British cultures. Thus, Clarke details how certain areas of reproduction could be studied only in special contexts. She shows the critical importance of the agriculture schools, wherein animal husbandry research could lead to F. H. A. Marshall's

groundbreaking book *The Physiology of Reproduction* (1910). Similarly, she documents the struggle of endocrinology to take "problems of sex" from sexology into physiology (a battle whose fortunes are reflected in the funding from the Rockefeller Foundation), and she delineates how a volume such as Edgar Allen's *Sex and Internal Secretions* functioned simultaneously as a textbook, a manifesto, a fund-raising document, and an organization builder.

As it details the rise of reproductive biology from the realm of illegitimacy and the role of social factors in promoting its coalescence into a scientific discipline, *Disciplining Reproduction* also reflects the same processes in the history of science. The history of reproductive biology, like reproductive biology itself, had been an "illegitimate" discipline. Moreover, this history was made possible only when social forces--the rise of feminism in the Academy, and the prominence of reproductive biology in our contemporary culture--allowed people to study such things as the history of diaphragms or of in vitro fertilization.

This is a rich and well-documented book. It is not a volume in which to find a detailed history of any of the scientists, reformers, techniques, or organizations involved in forming the field of reproductive biology. Rather, it is a set of contour maps in which to find how social movements, changes in scientific methodology, and changes in scientific knowledge permit certain areas of life to become studied.

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