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and sexualities would enrich current scholarship and raise critical questions, as the Lyonses' passing references to feminist and "gay" anthropologists and sociobiologists suggest. It is a shame that such an important and thorough historical text should fall short of reviewing and interrogating the work that today is most immediate in shaping our scholarly and public understandings of sex and sexuality both abroad and at home.

Nevertheless, *Irregular Connections* remains a valuable text, and the authors leave us with several other important points to consider. They note that much of the literature on sexuality has focused on "homosexuality" in both non-Western and Western contexts and that more work needs to be done on "heterosexuality." This discrepancy highlights the ways that anthropological studies may unreflexively reinforce ideas about "abnormal," "deviant," or "primitive" sexual "others" and erase the constructed nature of privileged and normative sexual practices. The Lyonses also stress that most research has focused on "male sexuality" cross-culturally and that "female sexuality" remains underinvestigated. While androcentrism continues to plague anthropology (and other disciplines), the past thirty-plus years of feminist scholarship have begun to rectify this imbalance. Being able to recognize new, critical work on female sexualities may require scholars like the Lyonses to question such homogenizing terms as "gay" anthropology that erase the important work of scholars who either identify as "lesbian" or "transgendered" or who intentionally seek to contribute to an ethnography of sexuality that explicitly marks itself in gendered and politicized ways.

In summary, the Lyonses have provided us with a much-needed volume on the history of sexuality and the ways in which Western analysts have used non-Western cultural "others" to support their own ideologies of sex and power. Though the book is not without its shortcomings, its publication works toward legitimizing the academic study of sex and sexuality and challenging anthropologists and other scholars to think more self-consciously about representations of sexuality, historical and otherwise.

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*Liminal Lives: Imagining the Human at the Frontiers of Biomedicine.* By SUSAN MERRILL SQUIER. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004. Pp. 368. \$84.95 (cloth); \$23.95 (paper).

In 1959 C. P. Snow presented Cambridge University's annual Rede lecture on the topic of the "two cultures," which Snow identified as the "traditional" and the "scientific." In Snow's account literature in particular, or the arts and humanities more generally, is the repository of traditional culture. In his

analysis of the relationship between the two cultures Snow worries that “there seems . . . to be no place where the cultures meet,” and he complains that literature has not been much interested in taking up the scientific exploration of the natural order.<sup>1</sup> Members of the literary intellectual elite, who are the bearers of traditional culture, are, in the particular historical moment in which Snow’s lecture takes place, the powerful class, and they are more powerful than scientists, who come from more diverse class backgrounds, Snow argues. In Snow’s analysis the members of the literary intellectual elite are in a position to delimit the cultural, and they do so through what might be called an “epistemology of ignorance.”<sup>2</sup> Snow explains how this process works:

They still like to pretend that the traditional culture is the whole of “culture,” as though the natural order didn’t exist. As though the exploration of the natural order was of no interest either in its own value or its consequences. As though the scientific edifice of the physical world was not, in its intellectual depth, complexity and articulation, the most beautiful and wonderful collective work of the mind of man. Yet most nonscientists have no conception of that edifice at all.<sup>3</sup>

The result of this attitude, according to Snow, is the bizarre fact that “very little of twentieth-century science has been assimilated into twentieth-century art.”<sup>4</sup>

Science studies scholars often return to Snow’s *The Two Cultures* as an exemplary text that at once diagnoses and constitutes the scientific domain as separate from the literary domain. Today Snow’s portrait is often read as problematic because of its starkly binary rendering of the relationship between the scientific and the literary and also because, in today’s university at least, the literary can hardly be regarded as powerful in comparison to the scientific. What is most interesting to me, however, in returning to Snow’s account is that at this earlier moment it is the literary that apparently doesn’t have to bother with the scientific. Snow argues that by remaining unconcerned about the natural order and by not attempting to understand this order in and through literature, literature will always lack a conception of the complexity of the world. What happens if the reverse is true? What if science didn’t think it had to bother with literary or artistic formulations of the complexity of the world?

<sup>1</sup>C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures* (1959; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 16.

<sup>2</sup>I take the term “epistemology of ignorance” from philosopher Charles Mills. In *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997) Mills demonstrates how the racial contract of his title works through “an inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made” (18).

<sup>3</sup>Snow, 14.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

In *Liminal Lives*, published in 2004, Susan Squier diagnoses the two cultures and their relationship to each other somewhat differently than Snow did some fifty years earlier. She is interested in how the literary and scientific domains coconstitute the natural world, or, more particularly, how concepts of the human come into being through both scientific and literary imaginative practices. In her analysis it is science that is now in a position to ignore literature, a situation that demonstrates a shift in cultural authority from a literary elite to a scientific elite in postmodernity. But just as Snow was concerned with literary intellectuals ignoring science, Squier is concerned with scientists, and even some science studies scholars like Bruno Latour, ignoring the literary. While Snow thought mid-twentieth-century literature should take up science as an important narrative theme, Squier thinks science should consider the literary as offering access to the scientific or “biomedical imaginary,” a term she takes from Catherine Waldby.<sup>5</sup> Literature and science are not separate domains, in Squier’s assessment, they are both technologies that “define what is knowable” and “bring . . . objects into being” (3).

The word “interdisciplinary” gets tossed around a lot these days: everyone seems to be doing it, but no one is much good at describing how or why they are doing it. For me, interdisciplinarity is best understood as a practice or set of practices that demonstrates how objects come into being, and in this respect Squier’s work is exemplary. The objects Squier investigates are those “liminal lives” of her title, which she describes as various forms of “a new biomedical personhood mingling existence and nonexistence, organic and inorganic matter, life and death” (5). In her fascinating case studies of the production of liminality Squier discusses, to mention just some of her examples, gender and laboratory life in England in the 1930s at Strangeways Laboratories, where the field of tissue culture was developed; interspecies mixing and what she calls “xenogenic desire” in contemporary reproductive technologies; the emergence of the interdisciplinary study of human growth and the use of growth hormone not as a medical treatment but as an enhancement technology; and attempts to slow the process of aging and extend the length of life through technologies of organ replacement and tissue regeneration. In all of these examples the liminal does not exist as an entity awaiting discovery through improved scientific and biomedical technologies. The liminal must first be imagined, in science and biomedicine, of course, but also in literature, as Squier shows. To accomplish this task Squier must imagine into being a new methodology that brings together multiple genres: scientific studies, fiction, science fiction, popular science writing, governmental documents on bioethics, and journalism. Liminality, then, is not just an object situated between categories of human and nonhuman, human and animal, and male and female, it is an interdisciplinary practice

<sup>5</sup>Catherine Waldby, *The Visible Human Project: Informatic Bodies and Posthuman Medicine* (London: Routledge, 2000).

of juxtaposition. Squier's text enacts this practice of juxtaposition, and her exploration of liminal lives becomes an opportunity for her to demonstrate an interdisciplinary methodology that "puts literature in conversation with medicine" and gives us "an alternative model for addressing what have seemed to be intractable biomedical problems" (22).

Her first chapter, "The Uses of Literature for Feminist Science Studies: Tracing Liminal Lives," is a brilliant delineation of why such a method might matter for literature, for science, and also for a feminist criticism and practice. Although Squier doesn't place her work in direct conversation with scholarship on the history of sexuality, I think her method will be useful to scholars in this interdisciplinary field. Just as Foucault sought a method to investigate the deployment of sexuality across multiple domains, Squier seeks a method to investigate the deployment of the liminal. As a professor of literature Squier might be said to have a personal and professional stake in reasserting the authority of literature in relation to science. Yet her analysis is not an attempt to reclaim the cultural authority that literature has lost the fight in the time since Snow's earlier assessment of the literary and the scientific cultures. What Squier is determined to unpack is the epistemology of ignorance at work in both domains. Again echoing Snow, she asserts that "this science/literature divide has been maintained by literature *and* science, producing a kind of systemic ignorance, a product of the compartmentalization of experience that we can trace through the practice of science and literary criticism" (32). It isn't simply a matter of twenty-first-century art assimilating science into its representations, however, as Snow might have put it, or a matter of making the practices and objects of science visible through literature and the arts. Rather, Squier believes we must investigate how the "division into scientific and literary objects of knowledge is constructed as the solution of a past controversy over disciplinary realms and regimes. There is nothing inherently literary or scientific, only what disciplinarity makes so" (46).

At a time when scientific authority is being undermined by what a recent article in the *New York Times Magazine* called "Political Science," Squier's claims might appear to contribute to recent attempts to relativize scientific expertise.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, in her book's coda she critiques a column in the *New Yorker* by writer-doctor Jerome Groopman, who takes Leon Kass, chair of the President's Council on Bioethics, to task for turning to literature to

<sup>6</sup>Daniel Smith, "Political Science," *New York Times Magazine*, 4 September 2005. Smith's article describes a scientific community at odds with Bush administration policies, opening with another presentation of two cultures: "When Donald Kennedy, a biologist and editor of the eminent journal *Science*, was asked what led so many American scientists to feel that George W. Bush's administration is anti-science, he isolated a familiar pair of culprits: climate change and stem cells. These represent, he said, 'two solid issues in which there is a real difference between a strong consensus in the science community and the response of the administration to that consensus.' Both issues have in fact riled scientists since the early days of the administration, and both continue to have broad repercussions."

open the first meeting of the council in order to demonstrate the potential dangers of stem cell research and cloning. According to Squier's reading, "Groopman critiques Kass for his turn to fiction, and for the quality of the fiction he chooses: fiction with embarrassingly gothic conventions . . . that seems closer to *science fiction* in its portrait of science" (256). Squier notes that Groopman is critical of the council because it has been "stacked with conservative presidential appointees" and that "he closes with the hope that someone like Dr. Janet D. Rowley, one of the few 'working scientists' in the group, will be able to 'help shape a medical guideline that is based on fact, not on literature or aesthetics—one that distinguishes real science from science fiction.'" <sup>7</sup> Squier is not out to defend Kass's conservative position on stem cells. What she wants to understand is how this debate isn't just about the differences between the literary and scientific but actually brings these domains into being as mutually exclusive of each other. Rather than attempt to assert the preeminence of one approach over the other, Squier suggests that desire is the motive force for both cultures and again brings in Catherine Waldby's concept of the "biomedical imaginary": "A zone of dream work and speculation, the biomedical imaginary is a rich space for the articulation of desire, since of course it is desire—not in the sexual but in the more broadly philosophical and psychoanalytic sense—that motivates all creativity, including scientific creativity" (259).

Squier astutely reads both Kass's turn to fiction and Groopman's turn away from it as attempts at "generic policing" (262). As she understands it, "the law of genre divides fiction (and especially science fiction) from fact," and it produces what she calls two different ecosystems (263). Squier argues that what characterizes the "fiction ecosystem" in general terms is its "ambiguity, complexity, and open-endedness," while what characterizes the "law of fact" is "clarity, simplicity, and closure" (263). Squier thinks the problem is the rigidity of these laws of genre, and she turns again to an interdisciplinary method as a way out of this generic bind. She argues provocatively for the invocation of "genre not as a law to be obeyed but as a site for playful investigation" (263). Although "playful investigation" does suggest the presence of desire in the production of scientific as well as literary knowledge, I think the turn to play is a risky one because it can be, and often is, easily dismissed as an activity that is not serious. Indeed, I was surprised that the word "play" came into play in her coda, because it seems to me that what Squier delineates convincingly throughout *Liminal Lives* is the juxtaposition and investigation of science and literature as imaginative practices that come to structure the world, not separately but in tandem. In order to understand how this structuring happens we must

<sup>7</sup>Squier, 257, quoting Jerome Groopman, "Comment: Science Fiction," *New Yorker*, 4 February 2002.

create a methodology that juxtaposes the scientific and the literary, and in *Liminal Lives* Susan Squier has done just that.

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*Medical Women and Victorian Fiction*. By KRISTINE SWENSON. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005. Pp. 240. \$39.95 (cloth).

The figure of the “naughty” or “nasty” nurse is ubiquitous in modern British popular culture, as likely to appear in a P. D. James novel as in a Benny Hill comedy sketch. As Kristine Swenson suggests in the introduction to her wonderful new book, *Medical Women and Victorian Fiction*, the presence of this perverse inversion of the angelic Nightingale nurse has its origins in the “cultural intersections of fiction, feminism and medicine during the second half of the nineteenth century in Britain and her colonies,” origins this work is largely devoted to exploring. As Swenson suggests, recent scholarship on Victorian fiction, feminism, and medical discourse has come together most persistently around the figure of the prostitute, who more than any other figure “embodied her culture’s anxieties over sexuality, disease, and moral corruption” (2). This text, however, takes as its focus a seemingly “opposing figure,” the medical woman, whom Victorians deployed to combat these social ills and who, Swenson convincingly argues, “signals better than any other female figure the inherent contradictions of ‘woman’ in a ‘scientific’ culture” (2). Using evidence drawn largely from Victorian and Edwardian novels, biography, newspaper and periodical literature, medical journals, and nursing tracts, *Medical Women and Victorian Fiction* explores the many contradictions inherent in cultural representation of the medical woman in nineteenth-century Britain and how debates about women doctors and nurses were played out in the pages of such texts.

The theoretical framework of *Medical Women and Victorian Fiction* is essentially Foucauldian, although also informed by recent feminist scholarship. Swenson asserts a reciprocal and complicated relationship between women and medicine in Victorian culture by examining development of cultural representations of the reformed or “Nightingale nurse” and the “new woman” doctor. Swenson structures the text around a shift in popular perceptions of the “medical woman” embodied in the figure of Mrs. Gaskell’s Ruth Hilton and sets out to explore the origins of the sensational and sexualized “nurse” through Gaskell’s novel *Ruth*. In Swenson’s analysis *Ruth* serves as the Ur-text through which the contradictions inherent in the figure of the medical woman in Victorian literature and culture can