Theoretical/Historical Texts on Sexuality - Victorian and Modern

The texts in this list represent various aspects of theoretical and historical understandings of sexuality that will be important for clarifying what it is I am writing about with regard to perceptions of sexuality in the nineteenth-century to the present. The list, as always, is a work in progress.

It seems that there are two major schools of thought in Victorian sexuality, that of Marcus and that of Foucault. Where Marcus in The Other Victorians seems to insist on a paradigm of Victorian sexuality as prudery/pornography and Foucault in his History of Sexuality Vol. 1 as a less binary way of thinking sexuality from a historico-scientific perspective, though he makes use of some majorly broad brushstrokes in doing so. There has been much criticism that takes into account both Foucault’s work as well as the more, shall I say, classical viewpoint of Victorian sexuality and this list aims to take into account those other forms of criticism and learn the direction of the field as a whole while keeping in mind the implications of the major works that inevitably influence any and all writing on Victorian sexuality.

Apart from focusing simply on scholars and critics who offer readings of literary works in studies of sexuality, this list makes extensive use of those working outside the discipline of English literature. To that end, history; sociology; sexology; and other disciplines inform this list and help to give a good all around picture of the work that has been done on the period and topic of this list. In order to fit this reading in with the overall project I am proposing, I have divided the list into theoretical and historical headings. There will be significant overlap in these headings but I feel that the division is important to comprehending what work I want the readings on this list to do. That is, in building on historical knowledge of the period in my more general Victorian reading list, I am subspecializing by taking the broad context of the period and shaping a thesis regarding how sexuality as a concept came about and what it might have looked like in both a popular and specialist culture, the latter referring to mostly medical and psychological discourse. I am particularly interested in the topic of homosexuality and its nomenclatural and diagnostic genesis in Continental sexology that was eventually adopted in England and written about in both medical and certain literary texts. Examples of the former in this list are familiar names in both Continental and English sexology (Kraft-Ebing, Carpenter, Tardieu) and the latter make up the bulk of texts that appear on the list of clandestine publications that inform the crux of my project on the culture of such publication and the underground gay community in Victorian London.


Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble.


Dowling, Linda. *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*


