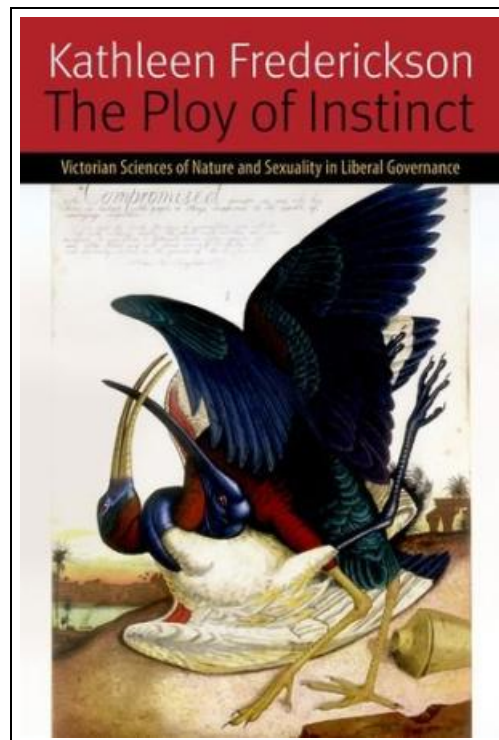


## The Ploy of Instinct: Victorian Sciences of Nature and Sexuality in Liberal Governance



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Fordham University Press. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, *The Ploy of Instinct: Victorian Sciences of Nature and Sexuality in Liberal Governance*, Kathleen Frederickson, It is paradoxical that instinct becomes such a central term for late-Victorian sexual sciences working in the confessional mode of the Foucaultian consulting room given that instinct had long been defined in its opposition to self-conscious thought. The classic instinctive agents animals and "savages" were instinctive precisely because they were supposedly incapable of producing a self-conscious narrative about themselves or their actions. It is thus odd that instinct was so necessary to the elaboration of models of sexual subjectivity based on lack, confession, and introspection. *The Ploy of Instinct* argues that this paradox emerges as a result (and a cause) of changes to how instinct operates as a mechanism for governmentality as it helps gloss over contradictions and gaps in British liberal ideology that had been made palpable as writers around the turn of the twentieth century grappled with the legacy of Enlightenment humanism. As a result of these changes, instinct takes on new appeal to elite European men who identify instinct as both an agent of civilizational "progress" and a force that offers (in contradistinction to the lack associated with desire) a plenitude that can hold the alienation of self-consciousness at bay. Without wholly or consistently unseating the idea that instinct marked the proper province of women, workers and/or savages, this shift in instinct's appeal to civilized European men nonetheless modified the governmentality of empire, labor, and gender. The book makes this argument by examining materials such as legal and parliamentary papers about the regulation of obscenity, pornographic fiction, ethnological monographs about Aboriginal Australians, treatises on political economy, and suffragette memoirs alongside scientific texts in evolutionary theory, psychology, sexology, and early psychoanalysis.

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