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Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, \$29.95/£20.95). Pp. 227. ISBN 978 0 691 13598 4.

*The Straight State* details clearly and compellingly how homosexuality became a category for US federal governmental discipline, control, and exclusion. Canaday explains that though the American state was small and limited in 1900, its massive expansion by mid-century came as it cultivated a distinctly aggressive antihomosexual bureaucracy. Her argument operates through three central engines of modern national governmentality: immigration, the military, and welfare. In tracing these through two periods (the 1900s–1930s and the 1940s–1970s), she complicates explanations of Cold War state repression that have rested upon McCarthyism and the uptick in World War II/postwar queer visibility and organizing.

In her early period, she shows how identifying and regulating “perversion” often occurred through efforts to address other issues such as poverty, transience, family, and crime. The most widely used anti-queer mechanism in early immigration law was not accusation of sexual perversion but likelihood of becoming a public charge. This allowed the state to link sexual and gender nonconformity to degeneration, racialism, and poverty, and to engage in inspection and investigation to ferret out suspicious “tendencies.” The military adapted physical and mental investigatory means utilized by immigration officials in and after World War I. By the 1920s and 1930s, the military had established a dual process of court-martial for those caught engaging in sodomy (particularly when violent or public) and administrative discharges for other consensual encounters. Meanwhile, welfare systems during the Great Depression, faced with accusations of facilitating homosocial sex perversion associated with cultures of vagabondage, shifted from supporting “unattached” transient men to affirming family economies and developing male breadwinners and female dependents.

In the second half, Canaday shows that as the state became more efficient at seeing and striking out at queerness by the 1940s through the 1960s, the implementation of a homosexual–heterosexual binary became a key issue. While men dominated earlier policies and policing, the binary became more gender-neutral as women as a class gained greater access to citizenship rights. She illustrates this through the uneven heteronormative distribution of benefits under the 1944 GI Bill, which explicitly excluded homosexuals and allocated fewer resources to women soldiers. Moreover, the military’s addition in 1949 of Class III policies against homosexuality brought the innovation of intentionally vague “tendencies” as formal justification for discharge. These were officially gender-neutral but used disproportionately to police female masculinity and women’s intimate networks which, in addition to shattering lives, reasserted male supremacy in increasingly co-ed armed forces. Such targeting of the homosexual as a “type” that could be found even in absence of a given act or self-identification was then consecrated in the “psychopathic personality” excluded from immigration in the 1954 McCarran-Walter Act. As consensus on the linkage of this psychiatric category to homosexual people broke down over the subsequent twenty-five years, immigration officials

defended gay exclusion by claiming, remarkably, that their use of psychopathy was a legal, not a medical, designation.

Canaday reveals that this process through which the state constituted modern homosexuality and its relationship to citizenship also facilitated the claims through which a modern lesbian and gay political movement could assert its rights. It is a smart argument and an assiduously researched project; one can see why Canaday, an assistant professor of US history at Princeton, has received accolades for this work and for the dissertation and articles from which it evolved. As she suggests, this book would be excellent for legal and political historians because it brings sexuality into questions regarding the expanding US state, growing federal involvement in social issues, and how state institutions shape identity. Given its potentiality to gain a readership among scholars who might otherwise seldom concern themselves with queer matters, one wishes that *The Straight State* had conversed more with the work on sexual citizenship mounting in the field of critical citizenship studies. It would have been invigorating had Canaday also placed her argument into dialogue with interdisciplinary scholarship on the linkages of whiteness, heteronormativity and national identity or on the local and subcultural influences also at work in the formation of modern gay political identity. Without these, even though she makes no such claim, one could take from this book that the state is all-powerful in its production of a homosexual minority and in setting the terms through which sexual citizenship is conceived. It would be a shame if that were an inadvertent effect of what is by all standards a masterful work of political history.

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