HOW TO DO THE HISTORY OF SEXUAL SCIENCE

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There is always more surface to a shattered object than a whole object, and likewise the surfaces of a fragment are less "cheering."
—Djuna Barnes, letter to Emily Holmes Coleman, 1935

Sexology is a shattered object that was never whole. Its broken fragments, diffused across the globe, have lacerated sexual life into some decidedly uncheerful shapes, lending violent structure while nonetheless creating new possibilities and new forms. This special issue gauges how sexual science's pasts and shattered but newly instantiated presents inform constructions of sex, sexuality, and gender, understanding sexology as both something that we're returning to with increased interest and something we're living in.[1] It will trace not just sexual science's travels but also its modes and methods of transport, its movement across paths, sometimes difficult to follow and retrace. The title of this special issue—"The Science of Sex Itself"—encapsulates this difficulty, animating the oddly placed emphatic and reflexive pronoun "itself" to gesture to how the study of sexology, even while ineluctably entwined with the study of sexuality, has its own motor force, laying claim to objects, regions, questions, and authority distinct from those that have historically been at the heart of sexuality studies. Before, between, and alongside Gayle Rubin's (2012: 137–81) theorizing of sexual practice as a vector of oppression, or Roderick Ferguson's (2004) anatomization of Black sociosexual cultures as the target of increased state and private regulation, some of the core concepts of early sexual science—deviance, sexual maturity, a normative sense of sexual functionality—had provided a hegemonic grounding for the elaboration of racialized sexual mores surrounding gender and sexual comportment. At the same time, sex *itself*, with its

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doubling insistence that seems to insist *too much*, calls into question our sense of surety about sexual science as a chronologically delimited object that spans the middle of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[2] That is, the unmoored and unmooring *itself* threatens to fracture and disperse the object's solidity, asking: what *is* sexology? What are the limits or the extent of the sexological?

Pinning down what, exactly, sexology *is*, and how we might recognize traces of, as Joan Lubin and Jeanne Vaccaro (2021: 6) put it, "the undead qualit[ies] of sexual science" in our current moment is profoundly difficult. While there is certainly some strategic use to invoking, as many have before us, Janice Irvine's (2005: 1–2) characterization of sexology as "an umbrella term denoting the activity of a multidisciplinary group of researchers, clinicians, and educators concerned with sexuality," there is still much scholarship, writing, and even state discipline that concerns itself with sex but that is still, nonetheless, not *sexology* or *sexological*.[3] Thus, one of the first tasks as we conceptualized this special issue was to figure out what we mean when we name sexology as one of the intellectual genealogies of a formation—sexual difference, for example, or the racialization of gender—and how to distinguish between what might be termed a sexological account of sex, sexual difference, or sexuality, and a less sexological or nonsexological account thereof.

If not all understandings of gender and sexuality are significantly inflected by sexology, and not all legacies of the sexological have anything to do with sex or sexuality, then how do we effectively think with what we have called, between ourselves, the "squishiness" of sexology as a highly porous and widely influential field of the human sciences—and a field that also may not *really* be part of the human sciences at all?[4] If the porousness of this putative field—its capacity to soak up and incorporate parts of other disciplines, practices, and fields of knowledge—renders sexology somewhat shapeless, able to expand and contract, how do we narrate its histories and chart its lines of force? How do we make sense of the use of sexology as a discipline dedicated to the study of gender and sexuality, even as some of the most well-documented uses of sexological literatures have not been the *study* of sexuality so much as the *practice* of it, for this genre of print has historically provided some of the most tried-and-true outlets for the more masturbatory inclinations of a certain echelon of the population—learned treatise or spank bank? Indeed, if the limits of the sexological are blurred by its more innocuous disreputability—it has never shaken the taint of the pseudoscientific, the paraprofessional (Wolffram 2009)—its proximity, too, to the occult (Dixon 1997), obscenity, pornography (Cocks 2004; Bull 2021), and quackery amplifies the uncertainty that envelops its epistemological nature and authoritative value.

To say that the contents or limits of what might fall within the purview of the sexological are uncertain and can never be clearly delineated, however, is not to abjure the pressures it has exerted on the material world. Indeed, it is precisely sexual science's protean portability that has enabled it to worm its way into so many matrices of power. To return to sexology then, as this special issue does, is to inquire into sexology's influence on the making of our present world and to theorize how it has given shape to some of the most vital questions central to gender and sexuality studies today: questions about how sciences of racialization begat—and continue to beget—understandings of gendered and sexual diversity and difference; about how these sciences fed modern-day legacies of eugenics and other biopolitical forms of population management; about how the relationship between gender and sexuality is theorized, by whom, and to what ends; about how a range of sciences responsible for biological accounts of gender difference, including but not limited to gynecology and endocrinology, insofar as they rely on specific forms of scientized bodily scrutiny, may or may not be drawing from sexological methods of investigation; and many more. While this special issue cannot comprehensively answer these questions, it *does* speak to the vast epistemological terrain and infrastructural landscape upon which sexological thought has left its mark and the pressing need for further examination of the long tail of these sciences and their effects.

As a part of our efforts to capture, or at least characterize, sexology's incredible handiness as a tool for state and nonstate discipline, we offer two methodologies for tracking sexual science: one spatial and infrastructural, and the other temporal. In the first of these, we take up and revamp the study of global sexology through what Ann Laura Stoler (2001: 831) calls "circuits of knowledge production," mapping the way that sexual science's squishiness richly capacitates it for movement and enables it to be ported and portable for uptake in a hugely various set of discursive sites. Stoler's methodology has led to a growing body of work tracing overlapping and interconnected circuitries of sexuality and sexological knowledge; the most well-mapped of these circuits is the so-called "Latin circuit."[5] This circuit of exchange encompassed France, Italy, Spain, Romance-speaking Switzerland, Portugal, Romania, Argentina, Mexico, Cuba, Brazil, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, and Chile, and was built on a shared cultural imaginary of Latinness "based on a synthesis of Ancient Roman civilization, linguistic and cultural commonality, and Roman Catholicism (in the Romanian case, Christian Orthodoxy)" (Turda and Gillette 2014: 1). Sexual knowledge moved between and was created in collaboration among these countries in rich, multidirectional circuits of transatlantic exchange. Our special issue implicitly builds on and critiques this meth-

odology, drawing attention to the ways in which it tends to focus on majoritarian subjects in global capital cities or nation-states and thus struggles to account for minoritarian subjects and regional specificities. The essays that follow, and especially those by Zohar Weiman-Kelman, Howard Chiang, Rovel Sequeira, Aaron Stone, and Emmett Harsin Drager, embody a multivocal critique of this approach in method, content, and argument.

For example, Weiman-Kelman's essay, "Yiddish Sexology: A New Language for the History of Sexuality," approaches the well-known fact that many of the most influential European sexologists—including Heinrich Kaan, Iwan Bloch, Albert Moll, Marc André Raffalovich, Magnus Hirschfeld, Cesare Lombroso, Max Marcuse, and Ludwig Levi Lenz—were Jewish, and turns to Yiddish sexology to track "how European Jews theorized their own sex, in their own deviant tongue." Weiman-Kelman posits Yiddish as a linguistic circuit that operates outside nation-states and "national narrative[s]" of sexuality, given the uneven citizenship status of European Jewry and the transnational nature of Yiddish, a transnationality that—because it is produced in part in Europe—"challenges the dichotomous distinction between 'the west' and its 'others.'" This special issue is organized around precisely this kind of nuanced, grounded intellectual history, taking as a point of departure what Laura Doan (2019: 307–8) characterizes as global sexuality studies' "paramount interest in knowledge as it travels in multidirectional ways" and thus the fundamentally "dialogical nature" of epistemologies of sex.[6]

Howard Chiang's and Rovel Sequeira's essays further elaborate the theorization of the circuit by pointing to a vast Asian network of sexual scientific knowledge, which has thus far been overshadowed by the European-centered idea of the circuit itself. In the widespread global circulation of ideas, sexological study and practice took on a life of their own in Asia and were quickly absorbed by a wide range of both state and nonstate disciplinary formations, such as colonial and metropolitan law, medicine, and education. For instance, while German sexological materials flowed into Japan beginning around 1875, these materials were retrofitted into already-existing infrastructures of scientific exchange between Japan and China, through their collective grappling with this supposedly Western sexual science (Pflugfelder 1999; Driscoll 2005; Rocha 2010; Chiang 2018). At the same time, Japan disseminated its sexological ideas to its Korean colonies, while there was precious little at least acknowledged flow from Japanese, Chinese, or Korean sources back to Europe (Driscoll 2005: 223n36). Even as we know that major European figures in the history of sexology, such as Magnus Hirschfeld, did visit Japan and China, Hirschfeld's work neither cites nor seems to think with important Japanese sexologists such as Tanaka Kōgai, Habuto Eiji, or Sawada Junjirō, or Chi-

nese sexologists such as Zhang Jingsheng, Pan Guangdan, or Chai Fuyuan. In this telling *lack* of a certain dialogism with non-European sexological traditions, European sexology begins to look less like a circuit than an echo chamber, suggesting the need for site-specific accounts of circulation that would offer rich cartographies of the movements of global sexual knowledge.

Chiang's essay, "The Secrets of a Loyalist Soul: Psychoanalysis and Homosexuality in Wartime China," offers such a geographically located account, taking up the example of Bingham Dai, a pathbreaking US American-trained Chinese psychoanalyst, to brilliantly theorize what he calls Dai's "transcultural style of reasoning," which foregrounds Chinese cultural knowledge and "debunks the assumption that Western biomedical categories are universally applicable." In so doing, Chiang sketches the way in which these flows of sexual science were not meant necessarily to circulate but rather to provide location-specific kinds of knowledge.

Similarly, Sequeira's "The Anatomy of Habit: Prison Sexology and the Scandal of Pederasty in Colonial India" illustrates the uneven flows of sexual knowledge, uncovering a hitherto unknown sex scandal in colonial Indian prisons. This essay examines the sexological study that John Mulvany, an Irish medical officer, conducted at the Alipore New Central Jail in the second decade of the twentieth century, as he tested British penological and sexological theories of the relationship between prison spatial relations and sodomy. The results of his study, however, were systematically ignored by both colonial administrators and those outside India. Sequeira uses Mulvany's study to illustrate how the colonial order was "produced through degrees of willful ignorance rather than through knowledge," indexing a heretofore understudied facet of the role of sexual science in the landscape of colonial power.

If the flows of sexological thought extended unevenly across the globe, they also tended to cluster around specific ideas, formations, and populations in particular regions. In the United States, as scholars such as Jules Gill-Peterson and Emma Heaney detail, the concentration of sexological sciences' disciplinary power tended to intensify in its interface with Black and Brown populations (Gill-Peterson and Heaney, in progress; Velocci 2021a). Indeed, one of the questions that joins a number of essays in this issue—including the aforementioned essays by Weiman-Kelman and Sequeira, but also those by Harsin Drager and Stone—is an inquiry into how race became the occasion for extensive theorizing about the significance of sexual comportment, morphology, and difference writ large, even as the increasing authoritativeness of the sexological sciences lent new force to extant and modernizing forms of racism.

For example, Harsin Drager's essay "Early Gender Clinics, Transsexual

Etiology, and the Racialized Family" charts how the clinical, sexological gaze that was believed to be directed nearly exclusively at white and Jewish subjects also encompasses Black people. The essay begins with a startling archival discovery: namely, that some of the first patients at the most storied early gender clinics were people of color "who made their way to the clinics via state psychiatric hospitals and/or the criminal justice system." Correcting earlier accounts of these clinics as populated by largely white and middle-class patients, Harsin Drager traces how "early transsexual research hinged on racialized patients and the pathologization of the racialized family, while simultaneously appearing to be raceless." In particular, they read the confluence of racial science and trans therapeutics in the work of Robert Stoller, John Money, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan to offer a new account of the racialized construction of mid-twentieth-century trans identity in the United States.

While Harsin Drager's account of sexology's role in the clinical practice of the first US American gender clinics further blurs an increasingly indistinct line between sexual science and scientific racism, Aaron Stone's essay approaches the question of how Black writers—many of whom were inspired by sexological writings—engaged with this archive despite its notably pernicious past and present. "Toward a Black Vernacular Sexology" reads across literary works by Pauline Hopkins, Sutton Griggs, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and especially Charles Chesnutt to theorize how "Black modes of sexual knowledge production engaged with institutional sexology." In particular, Stone argues that Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901) deploys a "black vernacular sexology" to undermine and reverse the racist presumptions of white sexology. That is, Chesnutt's work transforms its Black protagonists from, in the words of Weiman-Kelman, the "objects of [sexual] science to its producers." In this sense, both Stone's and Weiman-Kelman's essays trace how minoritized ethnic and racial communities fashion alternative and depathologized accounts of their sexual lives.

If one of the aspirations of this special issue is to chart the circulation of sexological thinking between global and regional networks, most of the essays that take up this challenge tend to focus on these flows across the first half of the twentieth century. So, lest we accommodate any sort of deeply erroneous suggestion that sexology is "over"—a vestige of past ways of thinking, an atavism that properly belongs to the decades prior to the apotheoses of various gendered and sexual liberation movements—the second guiding framework and method we brought to assembling this issue is what we call *present-tense sexual science*. This approach tries to capture the aliveness of sexology and sexological logics today. While the imbrication of sexological thinking within institutions and epistemes

has been a feature of sexology's history since its inception, the project of tracing what Lubin and Vaccaro have termed sexology's "afterlives" has recently experienced something of a resurgence in a range of fields, among them transgender studies, Black studies, and critical ethnic studies. This perspective has emphasized sexology's character as both what Foucault has called a *dispositif* and as a method, a particular way of looking, analyzing, and consolidating information that "operationaliz[es] bodily difference as public policy and infrastructure" (Lubin and Vaccaro 2021: 5).

Rather than something that is *after* or undead, we understand sexual science as very much a part of contemporary self-making and understandings of identity. To this end, Kadji Amin's "Taxonomically Queer? Sexology and New Queer, Trans, and Asexual Identities" reveals the vitality of sexology's difficult-to-grasp contemporaneity, tracking vernacular sexual and gender identities in the present. This essay takes as its focus what Amin calls the "taxonomical renaissance" evident in our contemporary moment's "proliferation of genders and sexualities," as part of the essay's broader effort to trace this renaissance's sexological past and its relation to its legacies of racism and imperial violence. Amin's essay explores the affordances and pitfalls of such taxonomies and ultimately theorizes an ethical relation to their fraught pasts. In so doing, he animates the liveness of sexology as a form of sexual common sense and elucidates how its logics continue to reverberate in and shape the present.

The sheer cultural and epistemological *endurance* of sexological logics also throbs in the contemporary debates around the so-called gay gene, as Stephanie Clare, Patrick R. Grzanka, and Joanna Wuest demonstrate in their contribution, "Gay Genes in the Postgenomic Era: A Roundtable." This roundtable offers a collective exploration of the cultural consequences of Ganna et al.'s 2019 Genome Wide Association Study, lauded as perhaps the most technologically advanced sexual scientific inquiry ever undertaken, but whose results were yawned at as being "unsurprising and unremarkable" insofar as the study found that "genes contribute minimally, inconsistently, and complexly to human sexual expression." Grzanka's contribution to the roundtable, "Programs of Life/Knowing Ourselves," offers an ethnography of Ganna et al.'s study, theorizing its cultural reception to recover the contemporary "*affective investment* in bioessentialism" that the study indexes. Wuest, too, takes up the durability of sexual biologisms in her essay, "The Dream of Bioessentialism Is Alive in a Postgenomic Era," in which she historicizes the rise of bioessentialism, reading the emergence of the putative "gay gene" in light of "political economic and legal incentives." Finally, Stephanie Clare's "Biological Sex and the 'Overrepresentation of Man'" identifies the racial history of the

notion of "same-sexness" that lends the Ganna study its epistemological foundations, exposing how the study reifies dimorphic constructions of sex and shores up a universalizing logic that assumes and thus prioritizes whiteness. Together these contributions make evident how much sexology continues to inform pervasive understandings of sex and gender.

The frameworks we have elaborated here—thinking with the global circulation of sexological thought and its particularized efflorescence in specific regional circuits, on the one hand, and thinking with the sexual sciences of the present, on the other—cut a starkly different figure from older and more traditional approaches to sexological intellectual histories, like the "great man" model that focuses on a single figure, or scholarship that focuses on particular sexual formations (notably, homosexuality and inversion). Because we agree with Kirsten Leng and Katie Sutton's (2021: 4) contention that "the historiography of sexology is young"—and, we would add, full of possibility—we want to conclude by gesturing toward a few more of the methodological openings that the essays collected here afford. Developing a thick, critical relationship to the histories and presents of the sexological is important because sexology is not a dismissible object. If we have learned anything from curating this special issue, it is that the sexological sciences have had a profoundly long reach and a surprisingly enduring impact on people and knowledge systems all over the world. Sexology has, at its best, a complex and profoundly ambivalent history, and for every person who has identified something salutary in its insights—and it is no coincidence that many who have are white and from the global North—there are scores of others who have encountered it through the vagaries of state discipline: the prison, the hospital, the law. In the context of many major US gendered and sexual cultures—both those that are more normative and those that are more minoritarian (and which can often be normative in their own ways)—there is not really an escape hatch out of the reach of sexological logics; one cannot really opt out. Indeed, as Amin argues in this special issue, even those who seek to renounce gender (i.e., people identifying as *agender*) or sexual identity still announce these refusals in a taxonomical idiom that is nearly impossible to divorce from the history of sexual and gender classifications, which are themselves also legacies of the sexological. We thus conclude in a more theoretical tenor, asking: how do we cultivate a critical—dare we say *ethical*?—relationship to sexology's legacies? Insofar as it is difficult, in many contexts, to describe gendered or sexual experience or identification in a way that eludes sexology's epistemological capture, how do we reckon with the complex and deeply compromised quality of not only these vocabularies' distant histories, but

also their pressing *presents*? We hope this special issue offers a blueprint for readers grappling with these questions, and many others.

Notes

1. The recent attention and renewed interest in these archives are evident in books like Snorton 2017, Heaney 2017, Gill-Peterson 2018, LaFleur 2018, Kahan 2019, See 2020, and Chiang 2021.
2. For an account of the relation between "It" and sexual allure, see Roach 2007. Our title is also, in part, inspired by Richardson 2013.
3. For a debate on the definition of sexology, see Crozier and Bauer 2017.
4. On the relation between sexology and nonhuman animals, see Linge 2021 and Velocci 2021b. We would be excited to follow Linge and Velocci in thinking sexual science outside the human into teratology or to explore Erasmus Darwin's *The Loves of the Plants* (1789), Eugen Steinach's work with rats, Serge Voronoff's work with monkeys, Richard B. Goldschmidt's lepidopterology, and Auguste Forel's theorization of ants and other insects.
5. On a circuit-based approach, see Fuechtner, Haynes, and Jones 2018. On the Latin circuit, see, e.g., Cleminson 2009, Turda and Gillette 2014, Cleminson 2016, Jones 2018, Beccalossi 2018, MacMillan 2018, and Beccalossi 2021. This body of work has its intellectual roots in Stepan 1991. For alternative methodologies and conceptualizations for theorizing transnational and global sexuality, see Canaday 2009, Bauer 2015, and Kahan 2017.
6. The scholarly texts that Doan describes as most clearly exemplifying this circuit model are Bauer 2015 and Fuechtner, Haynes, and Jones 2018.

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