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In the Shadow of Empire

THE WORDS AND WORLDS OF SEXUAL SCIENCE

Howard Chiang

Since Foucault first contrasted what he called *scientia sexualis* and *ars erotica* in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, historians have variously but powerfully wrestled with the racial, colonial, and Orientalist burdens of his work.¹ The essentialism-versus-social-constructionism debate preoccupied much of the subsequent theoretical and empirical directions of the field; indeed, the debate itself can be perceived as a plenary response to what Foucault did for sexuality in the way that feminists had done for gender.² Yet, as Foucault's original juxtaposition makes clear, the denaturalization of sexuality by way of historicism relied on the hermeneutic existence of an imaginary Other (itself entailing an imagined procedure of Othering).³ Simply put, without *ars erotica*, Foucault's equation of sexuality with the transfer of the technology of the self from the religious sphere of pastoral confession to the secular discourses of modern science and medicine loses its most sedimentary grip. The contents of this volume bring the comparative underpinnings and hidden agendas of Foucault's original formulation into stark relief. Through a series of localized and transregional case studies, the authors collectively reorient the history of sexual science toward a global optic, bringing to light fresh interpretive strategies and new historical interlocutors in ways that draw the field out of the shadow of Western intellectual hegemony.

The various innovative and critical engagements with the themes highlighted in my earlier work signal the decisive denouement of a historical approach that comfortably neglects the "tens and tender ties" of empire.⁴ This is hardly a suggestion to discredit the merit of a generation of scholarship that has considerably enriched our conceptual canvas for assessing the history of sexual science.⁵ In fact, in concentrating on western Europe and North

America, that body of literature has disentangled a web of intricate themes such as the antonymous frictions between scientific and medical authority; the mutually productive tension between sexology's disciplinary/repressive impulse and its liberating/subversive potential; and the pressure from social and political movements in altering the nature and condition of the truth claims of sex research—themes that have enhanced the nuance of our decoding of sexuality as a sociocultural product and yet have intermittently and unevenly receded to the background throughout this volume. Nonetheless, by bringing on board certain features of the imperial or postcolonial circuits, which can often be taken as a bona fide second to what the editors call “global formations,” the preceding chapters creatively attend to a historical world at once conjoined by untapped terrains and punctuated by the familiar grids of empire.⁶

This historiographical recalibration takes place through a series of smart and insightful procedures. First, the turn to the global (read: imperial) casts new light on well-known sources and figures in the history of sexual science. Kate Fisher and Jana Funke's chapter calls attention to the shift in methodological interests and priorities among early-twentieth-century sexual scientists, who increasingly moved away from a strictly medical/clinical approach and toward an interdisciplinary framework that integrated historical and anthropological perspectives. Iwan Bloch's proclamation to “leave the hospital and the medical consulting room” and to “make a journey around the world” nicely captured the evolving ambition of this generation of sex scientists. Angela Willey's chapter illustrates the investment of European sexologists, including Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis, in construing the geographically distanced Other (e.g., Islam) as symptomatic of a digressed evolutionary past. This biased compression of cultural place and temporality provided a secular source for legitimating sexology as a scientific discipline and monogamy as a scientific discourse. In Rebecca Hodes's chapter, Georges Cuvier's autopsy of Sarah Baartmann in 1816 marked a watershed moment when sexologists like Ellis significantly amplified their obsession with the physical and sexual variance of non-Western bodies. The concept of “transvestism” developed by Magnus Hirschfeld, as Rainer Herrn's chapter demonstrates, did not emerge out of an isolated European vacuum. Intrigued by the homoerotic tales of samurais and the female impersonation of *onnagata* actors, Hirschfeld's distillation of the idea of transvestism from that of homosexuality unfolded in a transnational and reciprocal process of knowledge exchange between Japan and Germany. And when Max Marcuse went

to exile in Palestine, as Kirsten Leng's chapter argues, he failed to reestablish himself as a sexologist whose prominence would be considered comparable to that of his peers in Europe and America. A host of factors, ranging from material circumstances and language to the rapidly changing contours of sexology in the local Jewish community, attested to the limits of transnationalism in the (re)making of sexological science. Whether it is the construction of scientific claims based on Orientalist premises, the connections across different empires (German and Japanese) that leveraged the conduit of knowledge transmission, or the affliction of imperial racism (the Nazis) forcing the physical relocation of key sexologists (Hirschfeld and Marcuse), these examples give the unambiguous impression that empire and its centrifugal/centripetal velocity have played a pivotal role in sealing the fate of sexual science.

Second, in adopting a multiregional approach, this volume advances new analytical angles whereby a range of unexplored social historical evidence is utilized for contextualizing the intellectual and cultural history of sexual science. For example, Pablo Ben's chapter reminds us that the consolidation of modern sexology, with its roots in nineteenth-century anthropology, cannot be explained fully without giving the social history of urbanization and commercial sex its due attention. While a significant portion of this volume deals with the introduction of foreign sexological knowledge in non-Western settings, Rachel Hui-Chi Hsu's chapter bespeaks the interpretive strength of parsing the layered challenges of cross-cultural translation. A nuanced periodization of the ways in which Ellis's oeuvre was reworked in Republican China unearths the diversity of the translational strategies, techniques, and maneuvers that facilitated this transfer of knowledge across deep cultural divides. Both Robert Deam Tobin and Ryan M. Jones draw our attention to the evolving legal contexts in which sexologists staked new claims of credibility and expertise. Forensic medicine and criminology were but two such relevant fields in Germany, its colonies, and Mexico, and Paragraph 51 and sodomy laws were two distinct areas in which sexologists intervened to refashion their wider professional and eclectic image.

In addition to situating sexual science in the broader contexts of urban history, translation history, and legal history, other contributors emphasize the coeval, flexible developments of political consciousness and global sexual science. The chapters by Ishita Pande and Veronika Fuechtner—using the examples of *brahmacharya* in Hindu sexology and the biography of Agnes

Smedley, respectively—historicize the connections between proper sexual conduct and desirable political conduct, especially in the ways they were forged through the ideological visions of Indian national independence. Taken together, these case studies depict colonialism as an asymmetric historical variable that fueled but also compounded sexological circulations outside the West, reaching beyond the confines of any single region—be it Argentina, China, German Southwest Africa, Mexico, or India.

Besides new interpretative outlooks, new analytical angles, and new source materials, this volume expands the list of individuals who will no longer be ignored hereafter in the history of sexual science. From Ralph Leck's chapter, we learn that the sexual anthropology of Edward Westermarck (1862–1939) matured in tandem with the rise of field ethnography and cultural relativism, gradually replacing the evolutionary paradigm that upheld Western superiority. Sexology outside its conventionally assumed “home”—namely, Europe—involved a cast of proponents (and exponents) who steered its development in unexpected directions. Looking east, sex researchers such as R. D. Karve (1882–1953) and A. P. Pillay (1889–1957) in India presented themselves as vanguards of a nascent international discipline responsible for policing its boundaries. The chapters by Shrikant Botre and Douglas E. Haynes and by Sanjam Ahluwalia show that Karve's family-planning program in Mumbai attacked Gandhi's advice on celibacy for reasons that similarly underlay Pillay's editorship of the *International Journal of Sexology* in Bombay: both Karve and Pillay aimed to govern a normative mode of producing knowledge about sex that strictly adhered to the criteria of modern scientific inquiry. In contrast, sexologists in Japan such as Ogura Seizaburō (1882–1941), Hiratsuka Raichō (1886–1971), and Takahashi Tetsu (1907–71) appropriated Western sexual science in highly selective terms to serve their varying agendas. Michiko Suzuki's and Mark McLelland's analyses highlight these thinkers' originality in their strategic embrace of foreign sexology for promoting their own visions of sexual liberalism and feminist ideas of sexual difference and sexual desire.

Looking west, as examined in the chapters by Chiara Beccalossi and Kurt MacMillan, the scientific theories of Nicola Pende (1880–1970), Alexander Lipschütz (1883–1980), and Gregorio Marañón (1887–1960) extended the “core” network of sexological research in central Europe (Italy, Vienna, and Germany) to Latin America. By establishing places like Chile as a global producer of sexual science, these heretofore-marginalized figures in the

history of sexual science in fact laid important groundwork for the global dissemination of the ideas of Cesare Lombroso, Eugen Steinach, and Magnus Hirschfeld. Again, there is no coincidence that this new catalogue of agents in the history of sexual science has been excavated through the shadow of empire, because all of the non-Western regions investigated here (North Africa, South Asia, East Asia, and South America) have experienced the effectual gradations of imperialism in uneven ways.

Despite the specter of empire, there are aspects of the “global” approach adopted in this volume that emphatically exceed the analytic of the postcolonial. When brought together, the chapters shed refreshing light on historical modes of circulation and processes of exchange beyond the networks of imperialism; they demand a more explicit attention to alternative types of sources, thereby redefining the very meaning and boundary of “science” itself; they treat sexuality in conjunction with world geopolitics within a coherent dialogue, so we do not have to bracket one category in the interest of analyzing the other; and they enable the kind of conversations between specialists of different regions (and empires) that would not have taken place otherwise.

In conclusion, contributors have fundamentally reconfigured the history of *scientia sexualis* from a multidirectional vantage point. This perspective is nested within a cogent apparatus that is ecumenically transcolonial in scope. By centering on the question of social, cultural, and political capital, and by focusing on the task of genealogical and citational rerouting, most of the attention here alights on the superregional intersection of epistemic and “intimate” geographies.⁷ Meanwhile, the ordinary absence of definitional specificity in most invocations of “the global” sometimes renders the descriptor as a vulnerable, at times uneasy, substitute for “the imperial” or “the postcolonial.” I share Warwick Anderson’s concerns that “on the way to the global we seem to have dropped the colonial” and that “the global makes us comfortable with the multiplicity and ambiguity of its performative differences.”⁸ What I call *the shadow of empire* and its workings have haunted “the historical reasons and circumstances that fostered or hindered the movement of knowledge or material objects” in this multisited history of sexual science.⁹ Therefore, rather than evading the imperial in all its valences, a pattern of enduring deployment uncovers and ultimately converges on a postcolonial imperative. Marking a new and exciting phase, this volume offers a spectrum of kaleidoscopic responses to the historical project of de-universalizing the words and worlds of sexual science.

NOTES

1. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 57; Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's "History of Sexuality" and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Gregory Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Siobhan B. Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Howard Chiang, "Double Alterity and the Global Historiography of Sexuality: China, Europe, and the Emergence of Sexuality as a Global Possibility," *e-pisteme* 2, no. 1 (2009): 33–52; Leon Antonio Rocha, "Scientia Sexualis versus Ars Erotica: Foucault, van Gulik, Needham," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 42 (2011): 328–43; and Heike Bauer, ed., *Sexology and Translation: Cultural and Scientific Encounters across the Modern World* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015).

2. David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 7. On the essentialism-versus-social-constructionism debate, see Carol Vance, "Social Construction Theory: Problems in the History of Sexuality," in *Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality?* ed. A. van Kooten Nierkerk and T. Van Der Meer (Amsterdam: An Dekkar, 1989), 13–34; Edward Stein, ed., *Forms of Desire: Sexual Orientation and the Social Constructionist Controversy* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Arnold Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); and David Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

3. In fact, I would argue that the imaginary Othering of China seeped into Foucault's earlier work on the human sciences. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1989), xx.

4. Chiang, "Double Alterity"; Howard Chiang, "Epistemic Modernity and the Emergence of Homosexuality in China," *Gender and History* 22, no. 3 (2010): 629–57; Howard Chiang, "Liberating Sex, Knowing Desire: *Scientia Sexualis* and Epistemic Turning Points in the History of Sexuality," *History of the Human Sciences* 23, no. 5 (2010): 42–69. The phrase "tense and tender ties" is taken from Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," *Journal of American History* 88, no. 3 (2001): 829–65. See also Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in Bourgeois World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

5. See, for example, Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); Vernon Rosario, ed. *Science and Homosexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Adele

Clarke, *Disciplining Reproduction: Modernity, American Life Sciences, and the Problem of Sex* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Jennifer Terry, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Henry Minton, *Departing from Deviance: A History of Homosexual Rights and Emancipatory Science in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Janice Irvine, *Disorders of Desire: Sexuality and Gender in Modern American Sexology*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005); Chandak Sengoopta, *The Most Secret Quintessence of Life: Sex, Glands, and Hormones, 1850–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Elise Chenier, *Strangers in Our Midst: Sexual Deviancy in Postwar Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Howard Chiang, “Effecting Science, Affecting Medicine: Homosexuality, the Kinsey Reports, and the Contested Boundaries of Psychopathology in the United States, 1948–1965,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 44, no. 4 (2008): 300–318; and Donna Drucker, *The Classification of Sex: Alfred Kinsey and the Organization of Knowledge* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014).

6. For critiques of the global in the history of science and medicine, see Warwick Anderson, “From Subjugated Knowledge to Conjugated Subjects: Science and Globalisation, or Postcolonial Studies of Science?” *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy* 12, no. 4 (2009): 389–400; and Sarah Hodges, “The Global Menace,” *Social History of Medicine* 25, no. 3 (2012): 719–28.

7. Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empires: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

8. Warwick Anderson, “Making Global Health History: The Postcolonial Worldliness of Biomedicine,” *Social History of Medicine* 27, no. 2 (2014): 380, 383.

9. Fa-ti Fan, “The Global Turn in the History of Science,” *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal* 6 (2012): 253.