

Introduction

Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute of Sexual Science plays a central role in season 2 of Jill Soloway's *Transparent* (2015), the Amazon series following the lives of the Pfefferman family from the time the now retired father, Mort, starts living openly as a woman, Maura. Set mainly in an affluent, predominantly white twenty-first-century Los Angeles, season 2 of *Transparent* frequently flashes back to life at Hirschfeld's Berlin institute in 1933. These backward glances, which are prompted by one Pfefferman daughter's exploration of her Jewish identity, affectively link Maura's turmoils to the life of her transgender aunt, Gittel, who had chosen to remain at the institute when the rest of the family left for America. While the details of what ultimately happened to Gittel never come to light in this season of the series, we last see her alive during the Nazi attack on Hirschfeld's institute, which took place on Saturday, May 6, 1933, in the cold light of day. *Transparent* renders these traumatic events as a dreamlike sequence that depicts how the serene play of a salon of beautiful queer and transgender people is harshly disrupted by Nazi men who burst through the door and brutally drag away the young people—Gittel included—while the institute director, Hirschfeld, is forced to look on helplessly. The sequence is a loose interpretation of events, not least because the historical Hirschfeld had long fled into exile by the time his institute was destroyed. By inserting an imagined character, Maura's aunt Gittel, into the surviving accounts, *Transparent* draws attention to the significance of the many unknown and unknowable figures in queer history

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whose lives have left no imprint on the official historical record but whose existence continues to haunt the present. The aesthetic staging of the raid on the institute in the dream-turned-nightmare spaces of trauma and (post) memory is a reminder that modern queer and transgender existence has been forged out of, and against, violence and suffering. At the same time, however, the exaggerated whiteness of the characters—many of the salon’s performers are covered in white body paint—problematizes the status of queer victimhood by raising questions about the location of emerging modern sexual and transgender rights activism in central European nations such as Germany, which were built on the bodies of colonized subjects. Despite playing fast and loose with historicity, *Transparent* captures some of the fundamental truths of queer history: that the lives of people whose bodies and desires do not conform to binary social norms and expectations have been subjected to violence across time; that the victims of such violence are often imagined as white; that the intertwined histories of sexual, gender, and racial oppression and their affective reach, can be difficult to bring into view; and that Hirschfeld’s life and work remain of importance to those who seek to explore these questions today.

The Hirschfeld Archives examines the violence of queer existence in the first part of the twentieth century. It pays attention to the victims of homophobic attack and gender violence but also to how the emerging homosexual rights activism was itself imbricated in everyday racism and colonial violence from around 1900 to the 1930s. During this time the new vocabulary of sex—words such as *homosexuality* and *lesbianism*, which had been coined in nineteenth-century cultural and scientific discourses in Europe—came into more widespread use, and the idea that humans are sexual beings who are somehow defined by their sexual object choice started to gain traction.¹ The book is prompted by the realization that while this history has received much attention, including in relation to the many people who have been attacked and sometimes lost their lives because their bodies and desires, real and imagined, did not match social norms and expectations, we know surprisingly little about the impact of such violence on the emergence of a more collective sense of modern queer existence. Spending time with ordinary victims whose lives have barely left an imprint in the historical archive, I want to try to bring into view how the emergence of homosexual rights discourses around 1900 was framed—and remains haunted—by not only antiques attacks but also colonial violence, racial oppression, and the unequal contribution of power within a society that denied full citizenship on grounds of gender. My claims are built around the work and reception of Magnus Hirschfeld, an influential sexologist who is best known today for his homosexual rights activism, foundational studies of transvestism, and opening of the world’s first Institute of

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Sexual Science in Berlin in 1919. The book is, however, not a biography. Instead, it excavates Hirschfeld's dispersed accounts of same-sex life and death before World War II—including published and unpublished books, articles, and diaries, as well as films, photographs, and other visual materials—to scrutinize how violence, including death, shaped modern queer culture. I turn to Hirschfeld's lesser known and overlooked writings on homosexual suicide, war, racism, sexual violence, and corporal punishment, presenting little-known, and sometimes speculative, evidence that documents the difficult, often precarious lives of ordinary people whose bodies and desires did not fit the sexual norms of their time. At the same time, I also ask what these writings can tell us about the historical situatedness of modern sexuality: Did a parochial focus on homosexuality at times obscure gender-based and colonial violence? By exploring Hirschfeld's complex and sometimes paradoxical work and reception, then, the book attends not only to how violence constitutes the archive in terms of what is destroyed and what remains across time. Examining the violence felt and experienced by people whose lives have barely left an imprint in the archives of queer and mainstream histories, it also pays attention to the gendered and racialized limits of empathy and apprehension that shaped the emergence of modern queer culture in the West and continue to haunt gay rights politics today.

This Archive Is (Not) Empty

Hirschfeld gathered what was arguably the first full-scale archive of sexual science.² With his colleagues at the Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin, he accumulated a large library containing books, journals, objects, and visual material as well as clinical notes, questionnaires, and other documents relating to the work of the institute itself. Hirschfeld thus played an active part in the institution of sexual knowledge. The doors to his archive were open to both scientific and lay visitors from around the world. They included doctors, scientists, and campaigners, who sometimes partook in the institute's research and clinical work, but also queer and transgender people who met, and occasionally lived, at the institute. The institute came to a sudden end when in May 1933 Nazi henchmen raided it and removed parts of the library for public burning. Chapter 4 examines these events in detail. Here I briefly discuss what happened to Hirschfeld's estate after his death, introducing the archives that underpin this book and reflecting more broadly on the issues at stake in historical archive formation.

The Nazis did not manage to destroy all Hirschfeld's papers and publications. They are today gathered in major collections in Berlin, London, and Indiana, as well as scattered across other libraries around the world. Some of

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Hirschfeld's private papers and books were saved by his partner Tao Li. After Hirschfeld's death Tao Li settled for a while in Switzerland and then left Zurich for Hong Kong in the early 1960s, when his whereabouts became unknown. In 2002, however, Ralf Dose from the Magnus Hirschfeld Society in Berlin read in an online forum a message that had been posted there in 1994 by a certain Adam Smith, who was looking for members of the families of Magnus Hirschfeld and Tao Li.³ Smith, it turned out, had been living in the same apartment building as Tao Li in Vancouver, British Columbia. While he did not know the man, he came across Tao Li's belongings by chance because they had been cleared out after his death and left in the communal bin area. It was here that Smith found a suitcase full of Tao Li's papers. Realizing that they might be of interest, he advertised their existence online and then held on to them until he was eventually contacted by Dose in 2002. Dose bought the materials from Tao Li's estate with the support of the Hirschfeld Society, the Munich forum for Homosexuality and History, and the Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection of the University of Minnesota. These events are now well documented. In a further twist to the story, I found that when I tried to locate the materials in Minnesota they were not listed in the library catalogue. The librarian, Lisa Vecoli, told me that the boxes from Germany had arrived empty. There is little doubt that the materials were shipped by the Hirschfeld Society, but it is unclear how they were emptied in transit and why. The only certainty at this stage is that part of Hirschfeld's—and Tao Li's—estate is once more lost. Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell have likened archives to the closet, arguing that both are “queer spaces; they contain, organize, and render (il)legitimate certain aspects of LGBT life.”⁴ The complex history of Hirschfeld's material legacy furthermore indicates that archives are subject to circumstance, the keeper of strange knowledges, which can be shaped by serendipity and unexplained events as much as by traceable personal and financial investments or the agendas of the institutions that make it their task to select materials to keep or destroy.

The title of this book—*The Hirschfeld Archives*—takes its name not from a physical collection of texts but rather from my own queer gathering of examples from Hirschfeld's work and reception of the negation of queer existence, 1900–1930s, and the apprehensive blind spots of the emerging homosexual rights movement. The title indexes my theoretical debts to recent feminist, queer, transgender, and critical race scholarship on archives and archiving, which has shown that archival practices are bound up with fundamental questions about power, resistance, and the legitimatization or erasure of certain lives and deaths.⁵ The archive as metaphor, method, and material space links bodies to discourses and subjectivities to the social. Negation here is not always manifest as a gap in the historical record. Anjali Arondekar,

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for example, in her work on sexuality and the colonial archive, points out that she works with an “exhaustingly plentiful” official record that “run[s] counter to our expectations of archives as lost, erased and/or disappeared.”⁶ In Hirschfeld’s case, it is certainly true to say that despite the attacks on his work, a large body of materials survives, which provides detailed insights into his life and work. At the same time, however, Hirschfeld’s often parochial focus on documenting the denial of same-sex existence indexes the kind of archival bias that lets certain subjects slip off the historical record.

The Hirschfeld Archives engages in archiving by gathering evidence from neglected sources and reading against the grain of official ones. It follows Daniel Marshall, Kevin P. Murphy, and Zeb Tortorici, who have argued that “archives [are] stages for the appearance of life,”⁷ where, we might add, cultural texts function, in Ann Cvetkovich’s memorable words, as “repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception.”⁸ The book retrieves stories of queer suffering from Hirschfeld’s writings and places them in dialogue with accounts of his own violent reception to reveal some of the sociopolitical contingencies that caused women and men to kill themselves or mutilate their bodies because their desires seemed to fundamentally deny their existence. It further tracks the violence that framed the emergence of homosexual rights activism by considering Hirschfeld’s silences for the insights they provide into the structural and everyday inequalities that shaped modern homosexual rights discourse.

I have deliberately sought out Hirschfeld’s lesser known and overlooked writings and their contexts, reading them against his more familiar studies of homosexuality and transvestism (a term he coined) with the intention of documenting something of the precariousness of modern queer life alongside the limits of queer apprehension in relation to other forms of injustice, especially colonial violence and the deeply entrenched social habits and practices of marginalizing women. If this method does not formally follow Jack Halberstam into a “silly archive” that is cobbled together from popular culture, my engagement with sexological literature, newspaper reports, literary and visual representations, and biographical and autobiographical accounts nevertheless shares Halberstam’s suspicion of “disciplinary correctness,” meaning the rigid adherence to particular disciplinary conventions, that all too often “confirms what is already known according to approved methods of knowing.”⁹ A degree of deliberate disciplinary slipperiness befits the book’s concern with the paradoxically overinvested yet forever-evasive queer subject. By paying attention to the traumatic shaping of queerness in modernity, I do not seek to fix the queer subject, rehearsing often problematic narratives of victimhood that deny queers of the past an existence that is not marked by

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injury. Instead I focus on queer traumas because they constitute what Ann Cvetkovich has called “experiences of politically situated social violence [that forge] overt connections between politics and the emotions.”¹⁰ The accounts of violent acts and practices I have gathered here problematize the intersections between the individual and emerging collective forms of identification and activism in the early twentieth century, revealing that queerness was bound up in complex ways in the racialized (re)production of modern gender and social norms.

Violence and the Queer Angel of History

That violence is part of modern queer culture has been documented in some detail in studies of what Michel Foucault has called the “correlative” emergence of sexology and sexuality in the nineteenth century.¹¹ It was then that medical doctors, lawyers, criminologists, and social scientists first turned sustained attention to matters of sex, initially at least as part of efforts to identify and categorize (male) sexual offenders, especially those men who were suspected of sexual acts with other men, which was a crime in many European countries and in North America until well into the postwar years. While critics have sometimes located the emergence of sexual categories such as homosexuality specifically in this scientific realm, understanding them as problematic products of the disciplining of sex in the medical and legal institutions through which the state exercises power over its subjects,¹² the contributions of literary scholars and cultural historians to the history of sexuality as a field have loosened the disciplinary grip on sex to show that modern sexuality and sexual identifications are part of a more complex process of social renegotiation, which is most overt in but by no means exclusive to the ties between sexual acts and identities.¹³ We today know, for example, that cultural production as much as medico-legal intrusions influenced subjects’ development of a sense of self and brought it in relation to others via categories of sexual pleasure and desire and that such allegiances were forged out of imaginative, material, and affective encounters across time as well as the experiences of living in specific places and spaces.¹⁴ Furthermore, studies of the intersecting histories of sexuality and violence¹⁵ and the growing body of work on different national and global histories of sexuality¹⁶ have extended the critical focus beyond questions of sexual identity to expose, in Regina Kunzel’s words, “the fretful labor involved in the making of modern sexuality and its distinctive fictions.”¹⁷

If violence, as Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgeois have argued, “can never be understood solely in terms of its physicality,” physical attacks are nevertheless often what alert us to the hidden “social and cultural

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dimensions [that give] violence its power and meaning.”¹⁸ It was an attack on Hirschfeld that first led me to articulate some of the questions that prompt this project. During a visit to Munich in October 1920, at the height of his fame, the sexologist was ambushed on the street by right-wing thugs who viciously beat him and left him for dead in a gutter.¹⁹ The impression of Hirschfeld’s death must have been convincing, because international newspapers soon afterward published obituaries, with the English-speaking press announcing the death of what the *New York Times* called “the well-known expert on sexual science.”²⁰ Three days later, the newspaper was forced to publish a correction, explaining that the “noted German physiologist” was alive after all but that he had fallen victim to “a beating given him by some Anti-Semites because he was a Jew.”²¹ In Germany meanwhile, right-wing newspapers openly bemoaned the news that Hirschfeld, whom one paper called “this shameless and horrible poisoner of our people,” had not come to “his well-deserved end.”²² While Hirschfeld claimed to have embraced the “opportunity of reading his own obituary,” there is little doubt that the verbal attacks compounded his physical injuries.²³ The events indicate the precariousness of Hirschfeld’s situation in Germany, where, rather than pursuing his attackers, prosecutors charged him “with the distribution of obscene material, mainly dealing with homosexuality.”²⁴ The assault on Hirschfeld in Munich marks the rising antisemitism that would escalate so horrendously when the Nazi Party came to power in 1933, and it also indicates how deep-seated antihomosexual sentiments denied justice to a victim of violence.

In some ways the violence against Hirschfeld adds further evidence to the catalogue of injuries that mark queer history, a history “littered,” in Heather Love’s memorable phrase, “with the corpses of gender and sexual deviants.”²⁵ It also speaks to the growing body of scholarship on public feelings and their archives, especially those projects that focus on the “bad feelings” that gather around negative experience.²⁶ Scholars such as Sara Ahmed, Judith Butler, Heather Love, and Ann Cvetkovich, despite their distinct concerns, all understand negative feelings, in the words of Elizabeth Stephens, as “shared and communal experiences, rather than personal or private sensations.”²⁷ In these projects negativity is understood variously in terms of the discursive negation of certain lives (Butler); the phenomenological impact of sexism, racism, and resistance (Ahmed); as a refusal of the forward-looking, affirmative recuperation of the queer past (Love); and as part of ordinary, everyday life that indexes the affective reach of power (Cvetkovich).²⁸ By documenting feelings and affective states, my project archives racist, gender-based, and anti-queer violence, including in terms of how, in Cvetkovich’s words, such violence is “forgotten or covered over by the amnesiac powers of national culture.”²⁹ It in turn examines the violence in and around Hirschfeld’s work to bring

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it back into memory and consider how it might haunt twenty-first-century homosexual rights activism in sometimes unexpected ways.

The dead and the wounded are difficult subjects in transformative criticism, which struggles with the fact that “its dreams for the future,” in Love’s words, “are founded on a history of suffering, stigma, and violence.”³⁰ Some critics seek to bury the hurt of the queer past, focusing instead on the legal and social gains and achievements that have collectively improved queer existence. Many Hirschfeld scholars, for instance, emphasize Hirschfeld’s contributions to “the gay liberation movement,” casting him in the role of a “pioneer” of “sexual freedom.”³¹ Yet such straightforward progress narratives fail to capture the complexities of a queer past whose grand narratives of oppression and liberatory struggle intersect with countless personal and fictional life stories, confused cultural fantasies, and fragmentary evidence of intimate relationships that sometimes support and sometimes undermine our understanding of their historical context. Acknowledging the affective pull of the difficult queer past, Elizabeth Freeman has argued that we need to “laboriously rework [pain] into pleasure.”³² Carla Freccero, in contrast, welcomes the ghosts, arguing for a spectral approach to queer history that “reworks teleological narratives of reproductive futurity” by allowing the ghosts of historical and fantastic subjects to haunt us and demand justice.³³ Both Freeman’s injunction to find pleasure and Freccero’s reparative wish fulfillment can be elusive, however. For while queer history, like other traumatic histories, is undoubtedly a haunted subject, its subjects often refuse to submit to recuperative pleasures and remain lost in mundane or unresolved miseries, as Love argues in *Feeling Backward*. Moreover, and this point is often neglected, the past is populated not only by the victims of antiques attack but also by those awkward queer subjects whose place in affirmative or redemptive histories is brought into question by cruelties they have committed, aligning themselves with oppressive politics or simply remaining silent on, and apparently unmoved by, the violence and injustices of their time.

Hirschfeld himself was not merely a victim of antihomosexual and antisemitic persecution; nor was he simply a defender of those who suffered because their bodies and desires made them subjects of attack. It is certainly true that he was concerned with the difficulties of lives marked as different, as indicated in particular by his discussions of homosexual suicide. But Hirschfeld was also implicated in discriminatory practices, most obviously in relation to eugenics. Despite his later work on racism, published posthumously in 1938, he was in favor of the efforts of racial hygienists and eugenicists because like many scientists and political activists around 1900 he believed that these sciences could improve the health of the nation.³⁴ Paying little direct attention to the effects of German colonial expansion, Hirschfeld also occasionally

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brushed over what we would today call abuse, often marginalizing women despite his self-proclaimed feminism. Compared to many of his contemporaries Hirschfeld certainly was one of the more radical reformers who made significant structural and political contributions to the well-being of people whose desires and gender expressions were denied or ostracized. His silences are nevertheless also important, because they indicate how sexual rights activism, despite its transformative aims, remained bound up in the everyday injustices of modern German society.

The agency of the historical subject can be difficult to establish. Yet if we accept that silences, gaps, and omissions, as much as concrete evidence, tell a story about past lives and the norms and power relations that shaped them, then it is imperative that we account for unspoken acquiescence alongside overt forms of resistance. Scholarship on the histories of homosexuality in particular, which is founded on, albeit no longer limited to, the recuperation of dead white men, has had to expand and must continue to expand its analytical focus to examine the gendered, raced, and classed privilege that underpins the emergence of homosexuality as a category of collective identification. I conjure the figure of the queer angel of history to capture the complexities of the queer past and explain my concern both with the victims of antiqueer violence and the blind spots of emerging homosexual rights discourse in relation to other forms of oppression and injustice. Unlike the open-eyed figure of historical progress so famously summoned in Walter Benjamin's reading of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, the queer angel of history has its sight obscured by the grit of experience. While the angel of history, according to Benjamin, is speedily propelled away from an inevitably receding past, its queer counterpart is pulled hither and thither by an affective "temporal drag," to borrow Freeman's phrase, that throws a spanner in the linear works of historical time.³⁵ On the cover of this book is Paul Klee's painting *One Who Understands* (1934). It features an abstracted face that is both drawn from and segmented by a series of lines. According to the description in the Metropolitan Museum of Art catalogue, the lines "divide the picture like a cracked windowpane," giving the impression that the subject is both part of and witness to shattering historical experience, simultaneously formed and fragmented by it.³⁶ The image captures well my conception of a queer angel of history. A reminder that "motions do not always go forward," the queer angel of history is compelled by the paradoxical disjuncture between the sociopolitical gains that have improved queer lives collectively and the experiences of violence that nevertheless continue to mark the felt realities of queerness across time.³⁷

By conjuring the queer angel of history, I signal that queer history requires what I think of as the tasks of slow theory: accounting for the felt

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relationship between past and present; exploring the intersections between subjectivity, emotional life, and the public spheres of law, science, and society; and recognizing the significance of cultural production for shaping lives and archives. Slowness here refers to the lingering impact of past traumas that continue to shape, and sometimes haunt, queer lives across time. In my analysis of Hirschfeld's work, the queer angel of history marks the complex, felt links between violence and queer existence. While Hirschfeld's work documents antiques attacks and their impact, close attention to the gaps and silences in his writings reveals that his narrow focus on affirming homosexuality forged a particular kind of righteous cause that privileged attention to its own victims in a way that sometimes obscured or failed to recognize other forms of violence. I use the term *queer* here to describe the collective identifications that started to gather around sexual desires from the later nineteenth century onward, especially the desires and gender expressions that ran against binary conventions. This use is indebted to debates about intersectionality, which have brought into focus, in Kimberlé Crenshaw's words, "the tension [of identity politics] with dominant conceptions of social justice," and to the more recent critiques of the livability of lives whose bodies and desires do not match social norms and expectations.³⁸ Yet I am mindful of the analytical limits of *queer* when applied as an umbrella term that uses sexuality to cover gender and obscure the specificities and complexities of transgender and intersex lives.³⁹ In the book I focus primarily on the emergence of male homosexual rights activism, using the vocabularies of homosexuality and lesbianism (and sometimes other early twentieth-century cognates), transgender (including its early twentieth-century forms of transvestism and transexuality), and intersex when I discuss these specific histories. In addition, however, I deploy *queer* to denote something of the sharedness of experience—however historically, socioculturally, and somatically contingent and emotionally inflected—that comes with living lives that are figured as being against accepted norms, and I think *queer*, as Judith Butler puts it, as "part of the weave of a broadening struggle" for livability and justice.⁴⁰

Queer Oblivion

A central concern of the book is the apparent obliviousness of Hirschfeld to certain kinds of gendered and racial injustice. The word *oblivious*, most commonly understood today as a state of unawareness, is derived from the Latin *obliviosus*, meaning "forgetful" but also "producing forgetfulness," a tension between passive and active states that speaks to my concerns with the possibilities of apprehending violence. *Obliviousness* is linked etymologically to *oblivion*, a word that can mean, for instance, "freedom from care and worry"

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but also “forgetfulness resulting from inattention or carelessness; heedlessness; disregard” and the “intentional overlooking of an offence.” A linked but separate definition understands *oblivion* as “the state or condition of being forgotten,” “obscurity,” “nothingness,” “void,” and “death.”⁴¹ These conflicting meanings oscillate between the engaged and the subjected, the jubilant and the miserable in ways that speak to my focus on the exigencies of queer existence across time. While oblivion can be understood in terms of the negation of queer existence—the denial, obscuring, and deliberate forgetting of queer lives—that has been one of the hallmarks of heteronormative history, it also captures the blind spots of emerging homosexual activism: the violence ignored or sidelined in attempts to affirm and celebrate queer culture.

The five chapters that make up the main part of the book present new research on the violent norms and discourses that shaped queer modernity and the lives of the people who were their subjects. Chapter 1, which introduces Hirschfeld’s career, reframes the emergence of modern homosexual rights discourse in colonial context to ask whose suffering was apprehensible, and on what terms, in early twentieth-century public and sexual discourses. Chapter 2 reveals that the emotional prompts for Hirschfeld’s work came from a series of sad, and sometimes devastating, interpersonal encounters with suicidal women and men. Examining how queer suicides and the death of arguably the most famous modern homosexual, Oscar Wilde, were received by the women and men who identified in some way with this suffering, the chapter demonstrates that death affectively shaped modern homosexual culture. Chapter 3 then shifts the focus to questions of physical violence. It explores Hirschfeld’s little-known writings on abuse and the treatment of offenders to reveal how a degree of intimate violence was normalized in modern society. In Chapter 4 I turn attention to life at the Institute of Sexual Science, examining the complex relationship between sexual science and the emerging queer and transgender subcultures before demonstrating that the attack on the institute was shaped by deeply engrained homophobic norms that dictated how the Nazi men handled the attack. Chapter 5 explores Hirschfeld’s final years in exile to scrutinize the subtler processes by which lives are denied. Hirschfeld escaped Nazi persecution by embarking on a journey that would take him across North America, Asia, and the Middle East. The published account of his travels, together with the surviving evidence of how he was received, for instance, in North America, India, and the Middle East, offer intriguing insights into the existence of global sexual reform networks before World War II even as this material also demonstrates that Hirschfeld allowed only certain voices into his narrative. The book concludes with a Coda that explores Hirschfeld’s postwar legacy and how his work might provide, if not necessarily straightforward *lessons* for contemporary same-sex rights activism,

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then nevertheless a *historical proxy* for twenty-first-century debates about the gendered and racialized binds of sexual politics. Hirschfeld's silences, as much as the times when he talks over the voices of others, are reminders that it is important to remain alert to the dangers of single-issue politics, emphasizing that sexual rights efforts must be part of the wider struggle for social justice.

By examining Hirschfeld's work and reception, the study attends to the discursive denials, structural exclusions, and symbolic attacks that gathered around same-sex sexuality in the first three decades of the twentieth century. These more theoretical considerations are animated by a concern with the everyday realities and felt experiences of women and men whose lives were subjected to attack because they did not conform to particular social expectations about how a person should look or feel or be. Turning attention to the violence experienced, critiqued, and ignored by Hirschfeld brings into view the complicated ways that the discursive and lived realities of same-sex sexuality were linked emotionally as well as culturally and politically. *The Hirschfeld Archives* brings fragments of queer experience into proximity with each other to reveal some of the fragile threads that held together queer lives and that sometimes unraveled in the face of persecution or denial but also form part of a larger web of oppression that cannot be sufficiently accounted for by a focus on homosexual rights and liberation alone.