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Abstract

This article considers the two major biographies of sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, MD (1868–1935), an early campaigner for 'gay rights' *avant la lettre*. Like him, his first biographer Charlotte Wolff (1897–1986) was a Jewish doctor who lived and worked in Weimar Republic Berlin and fled Germany when the Nazi regime came to power. When researching Hirschfeld's biography (published in English in 1986) Wolff met a librarian and gay activist, Manfred Herzer, who would eventually be a cofounder of the Gay Museum in Berlin and publish (in German, in 1992) the other major Hirschfeld biography currently available. Using, *inter alia*, the correspondence between Wolff and Herzer, the article aims to explore and interrogate the boundaries and possibilities of 'biography' as a form of 'doing history'.

INTRODUCTION

Charlotte Wolff (1897–1986), who, as a young Jewish doctor was forced to leave Berlin (first for Paris and then for London) when the Nazi regime came to power, knew the importance of (auto)biography – she wrote two auto- biographies (Wolff, 1969; Wolff, 1980), one autobiographical novel (Wolff, 1976) and a biography of Magnus Hirschfeld (Wolff, 1986). For someone forced to leave hastily and in fear of her life with just a suitcase and their imagination, every word recorded is an act of healing and of latter-day resistance against the public burning of books and the destruction of a culture.

This article will use the parallels in Hirschfeld's and Wolff's lives and work, Wolff's biography of Hirschfeld, and correspondence and archival material pertaining to its writing – together with the other major Hirschfeld biog- raphy currently available (Herzer, 1992 [2nd edn, 2001]) to open up further space in 'historiography of psychology' for lgbtq¹ history in line with similar work on the biographies of such figures as Alfred Kinsey and Harry Stack Sullivan (e.g. Capshew *et al.*, 2003; Hegarty, 2005) and to interrogate the possibilities of 'biography' in the history of psychology.

The four existing biographies of that other pioneer in sexology, Alfred Kinsey, were examined by Capshew *et al.* (2003), who divided them into two 'waves', with two biographies (Christenson, 1971; Pomeroy, 1972) belonging to an early, hagiographic, 'official' wave, while the two most recent biographies (Jones, 1997 and Gathorne-Hardy, 1998) took on the exposé and scrutiny of Kinsey's personal life. The 'second wave' biographies were published within months of each other and were based on similar archival sources and witness accounts, yet they were worlds apart in their interpret- ation of this material. Gathorne-Hardy saw that the Kinsey that emerged from Jones's account was 'a man appallingly warped and distorted, driven by vicious personal "demons"' (1998: 464). For Gathorne-Hardy, the overlap of private and research life yielded interesting possibilities, rather than being something to be condemned or even dichotomized. Capshew *et al.* (2003) contextualized this disparity of accounts by 'examining the connections between Kinsey's biographers and the histories they have produced', thereby calling for the 'storyteller's tale' to be considered one of the focuses in the investigation of 'the processes that underlie the construction of history' (2003: 486).

This focus is very much in evidence in Hegarty's (2005) analysis of bio- graphical writings (papers and books) on Harry Stack Sullivan. This analysis reads like a time-line of the construction of

‘homosexuality’ in the western world in the late 20th century, starting with the (unwarranted, as Foucault [1978] has shown) assumption as to its ontological currency as a natural identity, with the concurrent heteronormative assumption (to which purportedly ‘progressive’ accounts are not immune) that ‘homosexuality’ must be ‘unearthed’ from secrecy and ‘proved’ (cf. Stewart, 2003) while ‘the question of what sort of evidence would be needed to prove [his] heterosexuality is not broached’ (Hegarty, 2005: 44). So, Harry Stack Sullivan’s ‘homosexuality’ is granted visibility but only as an explanation of his personal problems and alleged sense of failure (Chapman, 1976; Perry, 1982), is not ‘conclusively proven’ or is ‘kept under control’ (Chatelaine, 1981). In the 1990s, with the emergence of queer theory (Butler, 1990; De Lauretis, 1991; Sedgwick, 1990), Sullivan was enthusiastically constructed as a gay man whose ‘homosexuality’ was an open secret (Harnod, 1998) and finally as an openly gay man (Allen, 1995), complete with ‘coming-out’ narrative, and due importance granted to Sullivan’s relationship with his partner/foster son Jimmy. Referencing Derrida (1996), Hegarty argues that these shifts and the different lives they give rise to ‘animate Sullivan’s ghost to make it assent with their own narrative’ (2005: 46). It is with this in mind that now we turn to the ‘ghost’ of Magnus Hirschfeld, the sexologist and campaigner for gay rights *avant la lettre*.

THE ‘PARALLEL LIVES’ OF MAGNUS HIRSCHFELD AND HIS FUTURE BIOGRAPHER CHARLOTTE WOLFF

Wolff’s painstakingly researched volume, published in 1986, remains to this day the only major Hirschfeld biography in the English language. In the nearly 500 pages of this work, we learn that Hirschfeld was born in 1868 in the German region of Pomerania, near the Baltic coast (in present-day Poland), into the family of a Jewish doctor. After studying philology and medicine and spending time at different German universities, he finally settled on medicine, obtaining his degree in 1892 and following his father and two elder brothers into the profession. After a brief period in Magdeburg, in 1896 Hirschfeld opened a private practice in Berlin and became well known as a physician, although increasing anti-Semitism and his engagement with social issues, in particular the decriminalization of homosexuality, made him a controversial figure often vilified and caricatured in the press (Wolff, 1986).

In 1897, with three friends, Hirschfeld co-founded the ‘Scientific-Humanitarian Committee’ (SHC)² to campaign for the repeal of paragraph 175, which criminalized homosexual acts between men. Controversy, as well as Hirschfeld’s fame, grew in the light of his work at the Institute for Sexual Science which he founded in 1919, the first in the

world dedicated to the study of sexuality. To this day, there is a riddle surrounding the provenance of the funds for the purchase of the two elegant adjoining buildings in the central and exclusive Tiergarten district where Hirschfeld established the institute (Wolff, 1986; Herzer, 1992 [2nd edn, 2001]) – a munificence that his ‘rob the rich, give to the poor’ approach to medical fees could not justify.

Long before the Nazi regime came to power in January 1933, Hirschfeld had been the target of anti-Semitic attacks, but he was abroad when, between 6 and 10 May 1933, thousands of books and works of art were publicly burned in the Opernplatz (Opera Square) and the Institute for Sexual Science became one of the first targets of Nazi storm troopers sent to destroy all ‘degenerate’ culture.³ In 1930 Hirschfeld had been invited by Berlin-born sexologist Harry Benjamin to give lectures in the United States and subsequently travelled through Asia for research in world sexology. When he returned to Europe, he was advised by friends not to return to Germany and at first stayed in a ‘holiday home’ in Ascona, Switzerland. On his 65th birthday, 14 May 1933, he relocated to Paris, where, soon afterwards, he saw the plundering of the Institute for Sexual Science in a cinema newsreel (Wolff, 1986). In Paris, Hirschfeld worked towards establishing a new Institute for Sexual Science; he made contact with many intellectuals, and founded – if only in name – a new institute, before settling in Nice, where he died in May 1935, on his 67th birthday.

A film-maker wishing to highlight the threads and turns of Hirschfeld’s life that parallel those of his future biographer Charlotte Wolff would possibly split the screen into two or edit a sequence so as to show Hirschfeld and Wolff being (separately) in Paris at the same time. Wolff arrived about two weeks after him, having fled Berlin, but they moved in émigré intellectual circles that never overlapped enough for them to meet.

Apart from precipitous emigration to Paris in May 1933, Hirschfeld’s life and Wolff’s life arguably show many similarities, even when taking into account that Wolff, born in 1897, was almost 30 years Hirschfeld’s junior, and that she died shortly before her 89th birthday. Like him, she came from a bourgeois Jewish family – her father was a grain merchant – from the Baltic region (Riesenburg, present-day Prabuty, near Danzig). She too divided her interests between medicine and the humanities and studied philosophy and medicine at several German universities; in Freiburg she was taught by Husserl and took seminars with a young Heidegger, witnessing the birth of existential phenomenology. She finally obtained her MD degree from Berlin University in 1928, and practised as a doctor in that city.

The new ideas proposed by Hirschfeld and his circle and the 'permissive' Zeitgeist of the Weimar Republic⁴ proved an influence on Wolff who, as a welfare doctor, became involved in a pilot scheme to provide free family planning to working-class women – including several prostitutes in the Alexanderplatz area. The family planning clinic, which also involved collaboration with a team of social workers, counselling and consultation with partners, had evolved from the ante-natal, maternal and infant care service provided by the (public) Berlin Health Insurance Association,⁵ for which many women physicians worked. This was usually both by choice – to make a difference in the welfare of (poorer) women – and also because male doctors tended to compete for the more prestigious careers in private practice. Wolff was soon appointed deputy to Alice Vollnhals-Goldmann, director of the Department of Preventive Medicine, who led an all-women team and was an advocate for the repeal of paragraph 218, the anti-abortion law (Wolff, 1980; Grossmann, 1993).

The family planning clinic – which Wolff would later describe as her 'first lessons in sexology and psychotherapy' (1980: 102) – was not far from the Institute for Sexual Science where another team of doctors and professionals counselled couples. Although Wolff never met Hirschfeld, she was aware of his work. In retrospect, 50 years later, she would consider that she 'was resolved to make a contribution to this new venture [sexology] which broke through the frontiers of current social and medical attitudes' (Wolff, 1980: 103).

In 1931, as a Jewish person, she was advised by the physician-in-chief of the Health Service to leave this work 'for political reasons' and to take up less 'visible' engagements, first as a trainee in electrophysical therapy and then after one year as director of the Institute for Electrophysical Therapy in the Berlin district of Neukölln. By then anti-Semitism had become commonplace, with youths openly carrying banners that read: 'Death to the Jews'.⁶ Wolff lost her relationship with an 'Aryan' woman due to the pressure, but her patients, superiors and colleagues at work were generally helpful and protective, until she received official notification, like all Jewish employees in the public service, that she had to leave her post. A near-arrest and a Gestapo search of her apartment led to her decision to flee to Paris in May 1933 (Wolff, 1980).

In France Wolff found that she had been stripped of her citizenship and profession by the Nazis, and that French bureaucracy did not recognize her medical qualifications. Under these circumstances, she resumed her study of chiromancy, which she had begun to research in Berlin under Julius Spier, a student of Jung, and she made a living giving clients psychological assessments based on their hand-print patterns.⁷ Eventually, with the help of Aldous and

Maria Huxley, towards the end of 1936, she settled in England, where she lived and worked until her death 50 years later.

In England Wolff published scholarly volumes on chirolgy (Wolff, 1936, 1942, 1945, 1951), engaged in comparative psychology, as well as in psychotherapy, and obtained her licence to practise as a medical doctor in 1952, almost 10 years after she was made a Fellow of the British Psychological Society (BPS). At the end of the 1960s, Wolff embarked on the study of sexology. As she would later remember (Wolff, 1980), the occasion was an essay on female homoemotionality that could not be included in her first autobiography. She decided to expand the theoretical scope of the essay and to undertake an empirical research project on lesbianism (*Love Between Women*, 1971), which led her eventually to extend her research to bisexuality (1977). In both works she acknowledged Hirschfeld's pioneering work on these topics; however, it was not until a 'fan' of her own work, Birgit Benitz, started to send from Berlin, starting in 1977, many packages containing reprints of Hirschfeld's writings and Hirschfeld-related material, that Wolff considered engaging with the project of writing his biography and in July 1980 she began reading at the British Library (Wolff, 1986).

MAGNUS HIRSCHFELD'S 'OTHER' LIFE: JEWISH GAY SOCIALIST

In the course of her research for the Hirschfeld biography, Wolff, at the end of March 1981, approached Manfred Herzer, a gay activist and historian, then a librarian at the Amerika Gedenk-Bibliothek in Berlin. He replied that he would be happy to put the material he had collected on Hirschfeld at her disposal. Herzer stated that the previous year he himself was planning to write a biography of Magnus Hirschfeld but that he had put on hold the project in favour of a new work, 'Capitalism and Homosexuality',⁸ in which he intended to incorporate some of the Hirschfeld material (Herzer, 1981).

Indeed, when Herzer did publish the first edition of his Hirschfeld biography, more than a decade later, in 1992 (six years after Wolff's) with the sub- title 'Life and work of a Jewish, gay and socialist sexologist',⁹ the extremely detailed chapter 'Sozialdemokratie' [Social democracy] reflects the engagement with the politico-economic forces of a given context on the part of the biographer, as well as on Hirschfeld's part.

Herzer starts by noting that Hirschfeld understood socialism and social reform more in the Enlightenment spirit of the French Revolution than in Marx's and Engels's sense of class struggle, and quotes a poem written for the centenary of the French Revolution in

which Hirschfeld imagines a future of fraternity and peace for all humans, without class hatred, in which war will be called by its right name, murder.¹⁰ But the opening chapter of Herzer's biography concerns Hirschfeld as a Jewish person living in that particular time in history – from the unification of Germany in 1871 when he was a toddler, to the rise of Nazism that led to his exile and arguably early death – and how this interacted with his being gay.

Herzer states that Hirschfeld would have been horrified to see himself labelled in the subtitle of the biography as 'Jewish' and as 'gay'. According to Herzer, a witness of the time, the then 17-year-old music lyricist Bruno Balz, was reprimanded by Hirschfeld in 1920 for using the colloquial word *Schwul* to describe himself.¹¹ As to his own attraction towards men, Hirschfeld always maintained in his writings and in *most* interactions with others the official, 'objective' position of a doctor with humanitarian and scientific intentions and whose sexuality was not a matter for discussion.

His predecessor in activism Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, who had trained as a lawyer, after publicly declaring that he identified as homosexual and writing pamphlets in praise of love between men, had been stripped of the right to practice law for placing himself in the 'criminal class' given that homosexuality was punished by the penal code, paragraph 175 (Steakley, 1975). Ulrichs was very courageous in his openness as an individual, but Hirschfeld was a bourgeois reformist who had confidence in the institutions and in educating the people – so that, if he presented an 'objective' case, without the 'taint' of too personal an interest in the cause, he hoped that the movement he founded would ultimately be successful in its petition to repeal paragraph 175.

The motto of the SHC was 'Through knowledge/science to justice', and 'objectivity' has been seen as inseparable from science – indeed its *conditio sine qua non*. Social science has moulded itself on the so-called 'hard sciences' in order to attain legitimacy and even in present times, reflexivity about the perspective of the researcher(s) – as opposed to attempting to partial it out as 'confounding' – is seen as a threat to the validity of the research.¹² As Minton (2002) has chronicled, it has taken a long time for LGBTQ affirmative science to emerge and carve out a space that would resist the dominant paradigm, whereby homosexuality was seen as pathological, and any personal investment of the researcher in the topic of homosexuality seen as invalidating the research endeavour.

This state of affairs is far from being confined to pre-1973¹³ times; Hegarty (2001) has shown that non-heterosexuality or non-normative sexuality are to be silenced in the contemporary psychology lab, so how was Hirschfeld to

proceed in Wilhelmine and then Weimar Germany? It seems that the biographical details about the researcher's own sexuality, his or her personal investment in the research, are considered to have a bearing – generally in a negative way – on their research on sexuality. As Capshew *et al.* (2003) have remarked *à propos* Kinsey, no biographer of the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Richard Feynman has tried to discredit his contribution to physics on account of his well-documented, very active (heterosexual) sex life.

Equally telling as Hirschfeld's silence about his sexuality, Herzer (1992 [2nd edn, 2001]) argues, is his silence as regards his Jewish origin. Only in the enrolment form at his first university, Breslau (present-day Wrocław) did he enter 'Jewish' under 'religion', then any reference disappeared from subsequent official forms and in his writings. With the rise of anti-Semitism, personal attacks in the press, Hitler's mention of him as an example of the 'degenerate Jews' to be eradicated, disruption of his lectures and a vicious beating that left him for dead when swastika-wielding youths followed and ambushed him after a lecture in Munich in 1920, Hirschfeld downplayed the role of his Jewishness by staying silent. Furthermore, he had always resented the labels that forced him to explain himself. He argued that religion and religious traditions placed constraints on the individual, so that it was common to find that people in adulthood left behind the practice of religion, and this was accepted or, at any rate, allowed to be consigned to a person's past, unless one had belonged to the Jewish tradition, in which case society did not allow the individual to move on from the constraints (Herzer, 1992 [2nd edn, 2001]).¹⁴

In the context of the escalation of violence, Hirschfeld's silence was, according to Herzer's interpretation, a sign of helplessness and fear in the face of events. If Hirschfeld was in denial about the enormity of the situation when he left Germany for a tour of lectures in 1930, knowing and not knowing – it is not clear – that he would never return – he was also very aware, pre-cognizant even, that Jews were already wearing a metaphorical yellow star long before the overt violence when, in language and interaction, they had to 'explain themselves'. He would develop further this attention to the construction of racism in language in the posthumously published *Racism* (1938) – written when he was in exile.

Even Freud had had to 'explain himself'. Psychoanalysis had been labelled, opposed or dismissed as 'Jewish science' from the start, and, as Frosh (2005) reports, Freud, who considered himself the founder of a 'universal' science, not only welcomed enthusiastically the Gentile Jung, but, when considerable differences emerged with him, he was prepared to overlook Jung's flaws for the benefit of psychoanalysis, and urged his

colleagues in the psychoanalytic circle to do the same (Freud and Abraham, 1965).

Psychoanalysis brought to the foreground the hitherto taboo subject of sex, so, in the increasingly anti-Semitic climate, it became the means for Jews 'to strike the Nordic races at their most vulnerable point, their sexual life' (*Deutsche Volksgesundheit aus Blut und Boden* [German People's Health from Blood and Soil], 1933, cited in Brecht *et al.*, 1985: 101). This was compounded in the case of 'sexology'

[*Sexualwissenschaft*] that explicitly declared itself 'the science¹⁵ of sex' and that was founded (arguably by Iwan Bloch who coined the term *Sexualwissenschaft*) and practised by Jews (notably by Magnus Hirschfeld, Albert Eulenburg, Albert Moll and Max Marcuse). Thus, as in the case of psychoanalysis, as Haeberle has noted, the idea of sexology being 'Jewish science . . . ironically and unintentionally contained a kernel of truth' (1981: 276); this also meant that sexologists were persecuted by the Nazi regime, and their works were burned, remaining unavailable or neglected for translation long after the war – which can be considered 'an enduring victory for Hitler' (Haeberle, 1982: 306).

Homophobia, even among Hirschfeld's (Jewish) sexologist colleagues, was a divisive force. Haeberle (1981) puts forward a convincing argument in ascribing Moll's intense dislike for Hirschfeld to homophobia, the only explanation of the alleged 'problematic nature' that was the basis and justification for Hirschfeld's exclusion – by Moll and to the surprise and outrage of their colleagues – from the Congress for the International Society for Sexual Research which convened in Berlin in 1926.

In public opinion, anti-Semitism interacted with homophobia. Hirschfeld was a Jew, so no wonder he promoted a degenerate cause – after the Harden affair, a series of trials in which he had given expert testimony, Hirschfeld was seen as labelling as 'homosexual' prominent personalities close to the emperor, and, *ipso facto*, he was widely considered untrustworthy.¹⁶ As Herzer reports, the whole thing was presented in the press as some 'Jewish machination. Harden, his lawyer Max Bernstein and Hirschfeld were all of them "Hebrews" who accused Christian Germans . . . close to the Emperor of being homosexual', cynically tainting with their Jewish malice 'the ideal friendship between males, the noblest thing in Germany' (1992 [2nd edn, 2001]: 47).

Had Hirschfeld not left Germany, or had he returned after his lecture tour,

Herzer argues that he would have died in a concentration camp, as his elder sister did, for being Jewish or homosexual or both. This fact alone, in Herzer's view, calls for an emphasis on these aspects of his identity, even though Hirschfeld would have rejected such emphasis.

THEORIZING BIOGRAPHY IN THE MAKING: WOLFF AND HERZER IN DIALOGUE

As noted, Wolff had approached Herzer a few months into her research on Magnus Hirschfeld. They shared information and a 20-month correspondence until they fell out – with Wolff (1982a) accusing Herzer of withdrawing important information allegedly known to him. In particular, she accused him of not sharing the address of Hirschfeld's great-niece who lived in Scotland and who was apparently in possession of many letters written by Hirschfeld to her father, his nephew. Herzer (1982a), in his turn, accused Wolff of conveniently keeping secret the Hirschfeld-related correspondence she was allegedly entertaining with various institutions in America, in particular the Kinsey Institute in Bloomington, Indiana. Furthermore, he deplored what he saw as her tendency to seek 'territorial' exclusivity not just for materials but also for the few remaining witnesses who had known Hirschfeld at the Institute for Sexual Science (Herzer, 1982b). Wolff (1982b) stated that she simply did not want 'replication'. Herzer had arranged for Erwin J. Haeberle,¹⁷ whom Wolff intensely disliked, to interview the same witnesses he introduced to her, and she perceived this 'duplication' like 'a slap in the face'.

Haeberle was securing many interviews – in Germany and in the USA – with such witnesses for a large-scale project on sexology in Hirschfeld's times. Wolff accused Haeberle of being selfish and exploitative, and she warned Herzer against him. Wolff had contacted Haeberle earlier, and she berated him for not following up on his promises and for not replying to her letters (Wolff, 1982b, 1982c). When relations with Herzer became strained, she made a point of warning the Berlin eye-witnesses from Hirschfeld's time that Herzer, too, as well as Haeberle, was untrustworthy (Wolff, 1982d). When Wolff's Hirschfeld biography was published, she gratefully acknowledged Herzer's help at four different points in the introduction, in spite of their association ending quite abruptly, and she mentioned that it was through his 'good offices' (1986: 10) that she obtained access to witnesses. In the introduction she also deplored that Hirschfeld's great-niece's address had been withheld from her (although she did not indicate by whom).

To this day Herzer (personal communication to T. B., 5 August 2007) finds it difficult to understand why Wolff suddenly turned against him. In her last item of correspondence with Herzer, a postcard, she hinted that she likened him to the Nazis, with her accusations of 'throwing

stones, figurative if not material ones, to a blameless person, reminding me of a time I thought con- signed to a distant past, when those stones were real' (Wolff, 1982e). Three days later, in a letter to Erhart Löhnberg (one of the eye-witnesses from Hirschfeld's time), Wolff described her falling-out with Herzer and the content of her final postcard, explicitly stating that she thought that Herzer's attitude towards her showed signs of a "Nazi" mentality' (Wolff, 1982f).

In the course of their correspondence prior to this postcard, Wolff and Herzer, as (prospective) biographers, were already theorizing the 'doing' of biography long before the research they were then conducting (in the early 1980s) coalesced into their two books. Herzer's view was that

... Löhnberg and Maeder¹⁸ are not my or your private property in the same way that Iwan Bloch's son or Harry Benjamin are not Haeberle's property. I would see it as a good thing if the next few years saw the publication of 50 books on Magnus Hirschfeld and the emergence of sexology in Berlin. (Herzer, 1982b)

Herzer added that, in his opinion, in the (then) present situation of research/ scholarship, it would not be possible to write 'the DEFINITIVE¹⁹ book' on the topic. Then, he speculated that this task cannot ever be achieved, for 'isn't a book all about the narrative and the thoughts that an author expresses, much less about the facts? Of course the facts must be correct, the more they are the better, but an author is more than just a computer that stores facts' (1982b).

Herzer's statement exemplifies how biography is necessarily (auto)biography, a view also espoused in postmodern conceptualizations of the complex intertwining of 'subject' and 'object' of narration (e.g. Curt, 1994) whereby a biography can be said to be as much about its author as about the 'life' it purports to 'write/inscribe'. As seen in the case of Kinsey's biographies (Capshaw *et al.*, 2003) and Sullivan's (Hegarty, 2005), the very existence of such profoundly diverging accounts based on virtually the same so-called 'facts' and sources problematizes claims to historical 'truth' and lends evidence to Herzer's (1982b) idea that a book, including a biography, is primarily about the author's thoughts rather than 'facts' – as well as to Capshaw *et al.*'s call for more attention to the biographer's tale (2003: 486) and Hegarty's (2005) historicization of biographical narratives.

One such example of the biographer's tale emerging from a biographical

narrative could arguably be the prominence given by Wolff to Hirschfeld's relationship to the women's movement. In the introduction to his Hirschfeld biography, Herzer credits Wolff with highlighting how Hirschfeld, 'in spite of all his engagement for women's rights, clung to a representation of women that did not depart enough from the patriarchal and misogynist representations of conservatives, Christians and Nazis' (1992 [2nd edn, 2001]: 28). However this point is not developed further by Herzer in the body of the biography beyond commenting on the paucity of women in the SHC, especially on its council. This may be due to the fact that Wolff had already described at length and in painstaking detail, in a dedicated chapter of her book, the situation of the women's movement at the time of the SHC and then the Institute for Sexual Science, as well as Hirschfeld's sometimes ambiguous or contradictory position vis-à-vis early feminism.

While taking into account the need to pay attention to the storyteller's tale, any claims as to the biographer's investment in the biography, however seemingly 'substantiated', come with a caveat. There is a danger that the 'realist', detective-like project of finding perhaps secret 'motivations', 'drives' and 'mechanisms' revealed, and proceeding in a straight, causal line from the archive, might just be transferred wholesale from the 'intellectuals'/figures whose lives are narrated, to the biographers. This points to the need to attend to a complexity of interwoven stories with symbiotic boundaries.

Sometimes 'facts' in the 'photographic'/'computer memory' sense (Herzer, 1982b) do little to enhance the portrait: when Wolff's Hirschfeld biography was almost finished and Erhart Löhnberg (1984) wrote to let her know that Magnus Hirschfeld's last will and testament had been found and an article on these latest developments had appeared in the *Mitteilungen* [Reports/Newsletter] of the Magnus Hirschfeld Society²⁰ – Wolff (1984) replied that she was grateful, but that this certainly valuable information was not going to add much to her 'portrait . . . not a cold photograph' of Hirschfeld. The need to go beyond 'the photographic' or 'computer-like' rendering of a person's life in a biography is very clearly reiterated in Wolff's introduction to *Magnus Hirschfeld*, subtitled *Portrait of a Pioneer in Sexology* – in which she considers that a biography, *qua* 'depiction/record of a life', can attempt to be photo-graphic or like a 'painted portrait':

Our 'knowledge' about a person [even ourselves] is nothing but subjective interpretation. A 'photographic' account of the minutest data of an individual's life and work could never project an image of his personality. A portrait might, with luck, be able to do this. (Wolff, 1986: 14)

This seems to be an apparent reversal of Walter Benjamin's (1936) argument that mechanical reproduction liberated art from being representational and

from its dependence on the ritual.²¹ Wolff's distinction between 'photography' and 'portrait' is perhaps only, as noted, an *apparent* reversal of Benjamin's argument; it could also be considered an extension of Benjamin's ideas: it is the liberation from striving towards 'objective' writing (arguably the equivalent of 'photography') that has freed biography writing from its subjection to the merely representational. This also concurs – down to the use of technological metaphors – with Herzer's (1982b) rejection of the biographer as a mere 'computer that stores facts'. This view does not necessarily underestimate painstaking research of 'facts', but, rather, it posits that 'facts' do not exist independently of the narrative that produces them as constituting an account. Such a move has come with more attention to reflexivity in the human sciences to which poststructuralism and social constructionism have contributed (Foucault, 1972; Gergen, 1992; Henriquez *et al.*, 1984; Maturana, 1988).

THEORIZING BIOGRAPHY, PROBLEMATIZING DICHOTOMIES AND BOUNDARIES

Herzer's and Wolff's books remain to this day, well after two decades since the publication of Wolff's volume and 15 since the publication of the 1st edition of Herzer's, the only two major biographies of Magnus Hirschfeld, although other endeavours have focused on parts of his life and work and have advanced Hirschfeld scholarship (notably Bauer, 2003, 2006). The 1999 film *The Einstein of Sex*²² – subtitled 'Life and work of Dr Magnus Hirschfeld' – by film director and gay activist Rosa von Praunheim cannot be considered a 'biography' in the conventional sense. And yet, neither Wolff nor Herzer would have excluded the film from the biographical corpus by virtue of its medium or von Praunheim's straddling of historical reconstruction and artistic endeavour. Wolff's (1986) idea of biography as 'portrait' has already been discussed. In the preface to the second edition of his Hirschfeld biography, Herzer (2001) contemplates how... it is always legitimate, and particularly in consideration of the paucity of information on Hirschfeld, to seek to approach an understanding of historical figures or events through artistic means. A historical novel, a drama piece, a film can lay open the truth content of the course of historical events with often astonishing accuracy. They do not make the work of the historian at all redundant, but in certain fortunate instances, they can complete it. (Herzer, 2001: 20)

Herzer sees von Praunheim's film as a character study in this spirit,

‘filling with fictional narrative the gaps left by research. That the film sometimes treats quite liberally the ascertained facts does not detract from the psycho- logical truthfulness of the portrait’ (2001: 21). Herzer cites the sequence in the film in which Hirschfeld’s quite sudden and otherwise unexplained possession of the fabulous sum of money that in 1919 enabled him to purchase two adjacent villas in the centre of Berlin to establish the Institute for Sexual Science is explained by his having performed a sex-change operation on the hermaphrodite family member of a rich oriental sultan – something that, ‘like many other events in the film, is entirely fictional. However, the fictions suit the psychology of the Hirschfeld portrait that the film sketches, so that what emerges is the paradoxical effect of veridicity in spirit although the “facts” are not right’ (ibid.). Although this particular example, shown in the film in rather ‘cartoonish’ tones, may be seen as making a very rash claim, and one replete with stereotypes of ‘rich oriental sultans’ and of doctors as ‘hired hands’, it illustrates the possibility of breaking down the aesthetic/’factual’ boundary.

Furthermore, in recent years, the view that the artificial²³ is even ‘more real’ than the ‘real’ object it represents has emerged in postmodern thinking, notably at the intersection of social constructionism and the theorizing of new technologies and ‘virtual’ environments (e.g. Stone, 1995).²⁴

Cvetkovich (2002) troubles the more or less explicitly hierarchical artistic/ factual dichotomy by exploring the cultural meanings that coalesce around a (lesbian history) fictional archive in the film by Cheryl Dunye *The Watermelon Woman* (1996).²⁵ The boundaries between ‘real’ and ‘fictional’ blur and the archive as a site of history and as an institution (albeit a grassroots one) is simultaneously made fun of (almost affectionately) and made visible and relevant.

The implications of this blurring of boundaries between ‘real’ and ‘representation’ (that casts a doubt on the legitimacy of the distinction) have yet to be fully explored for biography in history and academia beyond the existing genre of avowed ‘fictionalized biography’. As Herzer hastens to add, in line with current prescriptions on the place of biography in ‘doing history’,

... that the facts must be right is unfortunately the first condition for the entirely inartistic task of exploring Hirschfeld’s life and work and *Lebensgefühl* ²⁶ through writing history, with very few certain facts and many unanswered questions and dark spots, a far cry from the nicely rounded picture offered by the imagination of a film-maker. (2001: 21)

If Rosa von Praunheim's film, as an artistic creation, made by an activist (although a prominent one) as an independent production, helps to understand Magnus Hirschfeld as a historical figure, Charlotte Wolff's life, too, has been recently revisited in an artistic endeavour, the installation *Everything I Need* (Buckingham, 2007), which premiered in London in April 2007. In this 21-minute installation, one screen shows details of the interior of an airplane as would have been used in the 1970s for international travel and on a second screen are juxtaposed the thoughts/interior monologue of Charlotte Wolff as would have gone through her mind on her return to Germany in the late 1970s after 45 years of exile. Her thoughts go to the happy times in the Weimar Republic and to 'those who stayed and waited when the times got less happy, and they perished' (Buckingham, 2007). It could be argued that this adds to Wolff's understanding more than the factual knowledge of the exact dates and times she boarded the planes when, hailed as a feminist icon, she returned (on several occasions) to Germany at the end of the 1970s to give lectures and readings.

The main objection to problematizing the artistic/factual dichotomy seems to be neatly summarized by the phrase 'You've got to draw the line somewhere' or more scholarly wordings thereof. There are practical reasons why the line has been, is – and probably will be – drawn, at different points and with a pencil of varying sharpness, so to speak. However, it is our contention that a policing of boundaries would preclude alternatives that would be interesting for intellectual historians to explore, along the lines indicated by Dunye (1996), von Praunheim (1999) and Buckingham (2007).

In the history of psychology, what is presented and understood as 'factual' history is increasingly being recognized as the result of historical processes. Consider, for example, how textbooks reproduce historical myths in Kuhnian fashion such as Watson and Rayner's (1920) 'Little Albert' studies (Harris, 1979) or the linear, 'official' stories surrounding 'classic' experiments in social psychology (Cherry, 1995). Manning, Levine and Collins's (2007) recent demonstration that the Kitty Genovese murder has been misrepresented for decades in undergraduate psychology textbooks shows that this process is ongoing, rather than complete. Thus, it is important to ask why, how and with what effects widely known myths about the history of psychology entrench themselves in popular accounts, rather than simply to undertake a revisionist project of 'correction'. We argue for the extension of this process of recognition of the plurality of accounts in 'doing history', to the inclusion of the 'artistic'. In other words, the demise of the 'factual' suggests that the time may be right to reconsider the artistic/factual dichotomy.

Another story to which ‘biography’ could open up is that of the process of writing the biography, of interacting with sources and witnesses. Herzer’s (1982b) wish to see, as reported above, ‘in the next few years’ ‘the publication of 50 books’ on Hirschfeld positions him as someone who had reason to expect to live to witness these new developments (and possibly play a part in them). Indeed, at the time of his correspondence with Wolff, Herzer was in his early 30s, and eventually he would be a major player in the founding of the Schwules Museum [Gay Museum] in 1985 and of its publication, *Capri*, (of which he is still editor), two years later. This long-term perspective would have been impossible for Wolff, who was already 85 at the time, and she would mention in many letters to different correspondents (for example, the writer Christa Wolf) how much energy the research for the book was taking and how this was detrimental to her health (Wolf and Wolff, 2004). She saw the publication of *Magnus Hirschfeld* in spring 1986 and died a few months later in September.

Wolff and other scholars who researched Hirschfeld’s life and times knew that any people who had personally known Hirschfeld, even if young at the time, would be, if still alive in the early 1980s, quite elderly. Under these circumstances, prompt action was required to record the testimony of these potential witnesses for posterity, for nothing can stop the holocaust – literally, ‘total burning’ – operated by the passing of time. There is a saying that, when a person dies, a library burns – and the eye-witnesses interviewed by Haeberle (notably a 100-year-old Harry Benjamin²⁷) and by Herzer and Wolff could be described as ‘burning libraries’,²⁸ with Wolff also being acutely aware that she shared that position. Günter Maeder’s heroic efforts to produce a drawing of the floor plan of the Institute of Sexual Science in spite of crippling multiple sclerosis can also be seen in this light as an effort to wrest recorded memory from the two fires – the Nazi burning of the institute and the fire of time and impending death. Furthermore, as Cvetkovich has remarked about the ‘archives of trauma’, citing the examples of LGBTQ history and the Holocaust (and Hirschfeld’s institute belongs to both examples), they often ‘depend so much on the evidence of memory, not just because of the absence of other forms of evidence but because of the need to address traumatic experience through witnessing and retelling’ (2002: 110). However, retelling can also mean reliving trauma; this in itself, as well as Herzer’s caring towards Maeder in his illness and the difficult situation when Maeder (unsuccessfully) attempted suicide,²⁹ present issues that go beyond what is laid down in guidelines for interacting with research participants.

The legalistic language of the guidelines of professional bodies such as the American Psychological Association (APA) or the BPS arguably falls short of covering the ramifications of seeking testimony from respondents in this unique position. There are indeed oral history projects that stipulate a minimum age for respondents – evoking again the image of the burning library – but research or even reflexive accounts of how these particular interactions, apart from ethical considerations, impact on all parties involved and on the resulting narrative, is, to our knowledge, uncharted.

When her fan Birgit Benitz sent Wolff Hirschfeld's works and Hirschfeld-related material, it was as if, with the material, a duty of care was thrust upon her – to tell Hirschfeld's story. Later, Wolff bequeathed her own papers to the BPS; in doing so, she placed herself – voluntarily – in the position of the 'researched'. The 'duty of care' towards memory re-emerges in the present with a new configuration: the authors of this article – now in touch with the other Hirschfeld biographer, Herzer – are confronted with a thread that runs in a by no means straight line.

CONCLUSIONS

What has emerged from our analysis of the possibilities and limitations of 'biography' as it is currently understood in history of psychology, is the disjunction between the straight, hierarchical line of the 'archive' and the 'stories' that resist this prescription. As Derrida (1996) reminds us, *arkhe* is the place where everything originates, the root, and therefore it possesses the authority conferred by primacy. An authoritative biography then would spring from that root, keeping as close as possible to the *arkhe*/archive, but, as it has been seen, the 'subject'/storyteller stubbornly resists separation from the 'object' of narration, so that, inevitably, in Curt's (1994) words, *homo narrans narratur*. Substantially different accounts may be based on the same materials and sources, challenging the 'objectivity' and 'ahistoricity' of 'doing biography' or at least disrupting the top-down linearity of the process. The antidote to the power of the hierarchical organization inherent in the archive, to the malaise Derrida (1996) called *mal d'archive*, is to decentre, to eschew such hierarchical dichotomies as 'author/subject' and 'factual/ artistic', and the deferral of the search for the psychological 'truth' from the scientist/intellectual figure onto the biographer. Rather, different parallels can be spotted between different stories that emerge in 'doing biography', more like portraiture and less like fantasies of literality; 'plateaus', as Deleuze and Guattari (1987[1980]) might say, that urge 'democratic' consideration in no particular order.

As Herzer (1982b) wrote to Wolff about the witnesses from Hirschfeld's times, these stories are not anyone's property – they must

be everyone's. We can only echo that argument that the history of psychology and of the human sciences attend more 'democratically' to the different rivulets that feed into it. This would not only yield interesting possibilities for the history of the human sciences in general, breaking down barriers and attendant hierarchies between 'subject' and 'object', between the so-called 'factual' and the 'representational', between the 'historical' and the 'aesthetic', but such suspensions of objectivist impulses would embody commitments to democratic scholarship. Hirschfeld, the Institute of Sexuality, and, arguably, Charlotte Wolff, with their twofold belonging to the 'archives of trauma' (Cvetkovich, 2002: 110) – the Holocaust/Jewish Diaspora and lgbtq history – demand forms of memory work that require the 'democratization' of stories and reinvention in biography. How else to wrest a legacy from what Haeberle (1982: 306) has called Hitler's 'enduring victory'?

NOTES

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1 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer.

2 Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee.

3 As Herzer (1997) has reported, there is only one witness account – by Günter Maeder, departing from this date and placing the plundering of the institute much earlier, at the beginning of the year when the Nazis came into power (M. Herzer,

'In Memoriam Günter Maeder', *Capri* 23 [May 1997]: 16–17).

4 In her second autobiography, *Hindsight*, Wolff pondered, 'Was it his [Magnus Hirschfeld's] influence that made the Germany of the twenties the first European country where sexual freedom was preached and practised, or did the Weimar Republic make a Magnus Hirschfeld possible? In any event, the time must have been right for both' (1980: 72).

5 Verband der Krankenkassen Berlins.

6 After the unification of Germany in 1871, and the general short-lived enthusiasm during the *Gründerjahre* [years of the foundation], discontent swept through all the socio-economic strata of German society – from the aristocracy and land- owners, through industrialists and the emerging middle class, to labourers and peasants, who, for different reasons, saw their hopes frustrated. Anti-Semitism, which had never disappeared after Jews were granted emancipation and citizen- ship (in 1812 in Prussia) and had grown with the nationalism that brought about unification, provided an outlet for this widespread resentment, and the ideal soil for the Nazi Party (founded in 1919) and its rise.

7 'Chirolology', or 'cheirolology', literally 'discourse about/study of the hand', is a holistic assessment of health and personality based on hand patterns. Wolff strove to free chirolology from its association with chiromancy ('fortune-telling' based on observation of the hand); she sought evidence that 'should make chirolology a new branch of psychological knowledge, as chemistry once developed from the obscurities of alchemy' (Wolff, 1969:

75, 76). However, ‘chirology’'s standing in the scientific community has remained, at best, controversial, with only few psychologists – notably Bayne (1975/1976, 1982) – cautiously recognizing its potential as an (albeit unorthodox) form of assessment of personality.

8 Although, to our knowledge, ‘Capitalism and Homosexuality’ never saw publication as a volume, a distinct attention to politico-economic forces from a leftist perspective has characterized Herzer's subsequent work – e.g. M. Herzer, ‘Communists, Social Democrats, and the Homosexual Movement in the Weimar Republic’, *Journal of Homosexuality* 29(2–3) (1995): 197–226; also available as a chapter in: G. Hekma, H. Oosterhuis and J. Steakley (eds) *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left* (Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, 1995), pp. 197–226.

9 The original subtitle of Herzer's biography of Hirschfeld reads: ‘Leben und Werk eines jüdischen, schwulen und sozialistischen Sexologen’. The German word *Schwul* has no exact English equivalent – perhaps ‘gay’ is too recent to render the much older *Schwul* and, as Herzer acknowledges, ‘perhaps *queer* would be a more appropriate translation’ (personal communication to T. B., 24 August 2007) but he personally prefers and conceptualizes it as ‘gay’.

10 Furthermore, during the Weimar Republic, Hirschfeld was a member of the Union of Socialist Physicians [Verein sozialistischer Ärzte].

11 This was in spite of the fact that it had become common in Berlin homosexual circles to use the word *Schwul* – which had been somewhat wrested away and reclaimed from its original pejorative meaning of ‘fag’.

12 Parker points to the ‘perversity’ of a discipline, present-day mainstream psychology, that prescribes as an axiom of legitimacy that one should have no interest in the subject matter one is investigating. See I. Parker, *Revolution in Psychology* (London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2007). It can be argued that this criterion is even more stringent when the topic is (non-normative) sexuality.

13 In 1973 ‘homosexuality’ was deleted from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association.

14 See Finlay for an analysis of how rejection of (religious) traditions is construed as Jewish self-hatred or denial of Jewish identity but passes without comment or is seen as embracing rationality and secularism if enacted by, say, individuals brought up in the Christian tradition. W. M. L. Finlay, ‘Pathologizing Dissent: Identity Politics, Zionism and the “Self-hating Jew”’, *British Journal of Social Psychology* 44 (2005): 201–22.

15 As Haeberle (1982) has observed, ‘The word “Wissenschaft”, to this day, has escaped the reduction in meaning to only one kind of

knowledge that the English word “science” has suffered’ (1982: 320); it includes the idea of knowledge and study.

16 Maximilian Harden, editor of the publication *Die Zukunft* [The Future], on 17

November 1906 published an article with an ostensible concern about the security of the country, accusing many of Kaiser Wilhelm II’s advisers of being homosexual; the story ricocheted through the press, high-ranking aristocrats found themselves dragged before a court, and Harden himself (as well as another journalist, Adolf Brand, who had made similar allegations) was tried for libel, in a labyrinthine case that continued until mid-1909 (Steakley, 1975; Wolff, 1986).

17 Then, Haeberle was a professor at the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, San Francisco. The materials he collected at the time are now part of the Magnus Hirschfeld Archive for Sexology at Berlin’s Humboldt University, of which he has been the director since its foundation in 2001.

18 Günter Maeder was the institute’s second secretary. Erhart Löhnberg (who requested to be identified only by his inverted initials, Dr L.E., in Wolff’s book), as a young man from a bourgeois secular Jewish family, approached the Institute for Sexual Science and Hirschfeld to attempt to understand himself and his attraction to men. Eventually Dr L.E.’s identity was revealed after he died in

1989. Subsequently, Herzer wrote about Löhnberg's life and his association with the Institute for Sexual Science; see M. Herzer, 'In Memoriam Erhart Löhnberg', *Capri* 37 (May 2005): 19–23.

19 Original emphasis [*das ENDGÜLTIGE Buch*].

20 Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft – founded in 1982 by members of the gay and lesbian movement in (then) West Berlin. The article on the discovery of Hirschfeld's will was published in Heft 4 [issue 4] of the *Mitteilungen*, October

1984. Wolff (1986: 417) was able to include in the book the information that, with the permission and power of attorney of Hirschfeld's great-niece, the will had been found in a German archive (although written in Nice on 15 January 1935) by Manfred Baumgardt and published in the *Mitteilungen*.

21 Benjamin maintained that in previous times the painted portrait or sculpture was invested with power on account of what or whom it stood for, and that the advent of photography liberated art from this link. Incidentally, Walter Benjamin was one of the many Berlin intellectuals Wolff was acquainted with during the Weimar Republic. Wolff impressed the philosopher so much that, in those years of financial instability, he went to see Wolff's parents to plead with them to continue to support her university studies and eventually, through his wife Dora, found a Dutch benefactor to fund her with a stipend (Wolff, 1980).

22 Original title: *Der Einstein des Sex. Leben und Werk des Dr Magnus Hirschfeld*.

23 Both in English and in German, as well as in Romance languages, the words for 'art'/'artistic creation' are closely related in etymology to 'artificial'/'not "natural"'.

24 Stone (1995), for instance, cites the radio drama example of fire being best represented by crumpling cellophane rather than by holding a microphone to a real fire.

25 In this film, for which the terms 'mockumentary' or 'faux documentary' would not merely neutrally describe its alleged genre, but reinforce the real/fictional dichotomy, a video-store assistant, Cheryl, played by the director, becomes obsessed with Fae Richards, a (fictional) African American actress who played stereotypical maid roles in the 1930s. Cheryl visits fictional lesbian archives (although modelled closely on existing ones) in her quest to find material on the object of her obsession. The viewer sees 'archival' photos of Fae with her white lover Martha, etc. – but these photos are all posed by the film's protagonists, and styled and shot in much more contemporary times by the photographer Zoe Leonard.

26 (Literally) 'feeling of life' – experience/enjoyment of life.

27 E. J. Haeberle and H. Benjamin, 'Der transatlantische Pendler. Ein Interview mit Harry Benjamin' [The Transatlantic Commuter. An Interview with Harry Benjamin], *Sexualmedizin* 14(1) (1985): 44–7. An English version is available at: <http://www2.hu->

berlin.de/sexology/GESUND/ARCHIV/TRANS_B5.HTM

28 This analogy is used to great effect in Edmund White's (1994) collection of essays on popular culture that share a sense of impermanence and foreboding of loss. See E. White, *The Burning Library*, ed. David Bergman (New York: Knopf, 1994).

29 Maeder, in spite of increasingly failing health, survived for another decade and died on 3 January 1993.

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