

SEXUALITY BEYOND CONSENT

RISK, RACE, TRAUMATOPHILIA



Radical alternatives to consent and trauma

Contemporary discourse on sex and sexuality is fixated on consent as a means of mitigating danger and avoiding forms of sexual trauma. *Sexuality Beyond Consent* dares us to step into a different territory, where we do not guard the self but risk experience.

Avgi Saketopoulou maintains that we are overly focused on healing trauma and need to reroute our attention to what subjects do *with* their trauma, in the process taking up a series of provocative questions: Why is sexuality beyond consent worth risking, and how does risk become a way of soliciting the future? Why might surrendering to the fact that your pain is not going away enable you to do things *with* pain? In what ways are race and racism shot through with the erotic? How can something proximal to violation become a site of flourishing? Central to the transformational possibilities of trauma is a queer form of consent, *limit consent*, that is not about maintaining control but risks sexuality beyond consent. Moving between clinical and cultural case studies, Saketopoulou takes up theatrical and cinematic works such as *Slave Play* and *The Night Porter*, to show us how the force of the erotic surges through the aesthetic domain.

Grounding its arguments in the psychoanalytic theory of Jean Laplanche in conversation with queer of color critique, performance studies, and philosophy, *Sexuality Beyond Consent* proposes that enduring the rousing of the strange in ourselves, not in order to master trauma but to rub up against it, may open us up to encounters with opacity and unique forms of care.

"Lavishly brilliant. Rarely has a book so daringly startled me. Clarity, nuance, pain, even tenderness here braid uniquely, keyed to sexual collisions with race. A series of showstopping claims result, glistening with seduction. Never have I felt so welcomed into trauma as a mode of doing, a mode of expanding, a mode of greeting what is foreign in oneself. Take this invitation laced with surprise."

—Kathryn Bond Stockton, author of *Gender(s)*

"Making a vibrant argument for psychoanalysis's importance in grappling with our modern racial dramas, *Sexuality Beyond Consent* weaves together insights from queer theory, performance studies, and critical race theory to explore overwhelm. Saketopoulou's clear and compelling prose brings together clinical case studies, Laplanche, and *Slave Play* to arrive at an ethics for dealing with power and difference now—the result is a dazzling, brilliant read."

—Amber Jamilla Musser, author of *Sensual Excess: Queer Femininity and Brown Jouissance*

"Offers nothing less than a theory of sexuality, one that refuses contemporary pieties. In a series of profound and sometimes personal reflections, Saketopoulou subjects our reigning models of consent to close scrutiny, and asks what happens when fantasy—intractable, recalcitrant, but also protean and surprising—belies our most dearly held political and ethical commitments. The result is a work that excavates the complex enmeshments of the sexed body, race, and history, and demonstrates the ongoing salience of psychoanalytic concepts to feminist and anti-racist cultural analysis. Saketopoulou's critique of the liberal sexual subject is politically necessary and intellectually thrilling."

—Damon Ross Young, University of California, Berkeley

"This brilliant, often counter-intuitive examination of sexuality, race, and consent explores how we might yield to the opacity in ourselves. Saketopoulou unpacks with startling insight moments beyond the politics of identity and trauma to imagine how the surrendering of consent might lead to an ethical expansion rather than diminishment of the self."

—David L. Eng, University of Pennsylvania



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