

Sexual records: the documentation of sexuality and gender

We usually face sex from a genital perspective. Most of us interpret it as circumscribed to the sex act and everything related to it. From an academic point of view this perception has been equally limited to the study of its organic status and its use for reproductive purposes. Sex has been an exclusive territory of medicine where the “irregular” is interpreted as a pathology that should be treated and cured by therapies more or less violent in order to eliminate those sexual behaviors.

But sex has also social connotations. Sexuality is one of the pillars of social settings. Societies have always determined who could be considered as a partner and who could not and which sexual activities were consensual and which were not. Power has regulated sexual life, has persecuted certain practices and has punished the transgressors. Sexuality is a social construction and therefore, a record matter. Many of the documentary evidence preserved in archives could be understood taking into account that official sexuality and the consequent repression.

From the first centuries of this era the sexuality has been dominated by the religious beliefs of those who controlled private and public morality. Sexual activities linked to procreation were promoted and, on the other hand, those recreational without a reproductive purpose were considered sinful, abnormal and harmful. This stigma resulted in the hiding of sex and it also allowed men to enjoy a pleasure banned to women.

In the 18th century marital sex continued to be promoted while other sexualities had to cope with a perfected repression. First, because of medical advances, and secondly due to the rise of the industrial revolution and capitalism that imposed a new tool for the harassment: criminal law.

Fortunately in the last century, new disciplines broke that oppressive line monopolized by doctors and lawyers. The biological and instinctive sexual analysis ended when anthropology concluded that sexuality was a construction that changed depending on each culture. Later doctrinal developments established differences among sex, sexuality and gender. The term sex refers to the biological characteristics that make us sexual beings, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Sexuality, on the other hand, is interpreted as what is done with the sexual organs. The diversity of sexual intercourses gave rise to the establishment of different categories: heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual and other new sexualities. Finally, the social role is understood by gender. Recently multiple options of gender have developed against the simplistic categories of male and female. Facebook, for example, offers more than fifty alternatives. They are also elements that operate independently. A particular gender does not necessarily correspond to a particular sex as it was erroneously believed by authorities and scientists for centuries.

Nowadays religion has lost its authority, power controls have weakened, different sexual choices are not punished that intensely and new technologies have broken many taboos. We have removed a lot of sexual inhibitions even though old ideas are still in force. Many disciplines have made sex the object of their study, but in the archive world we keep hiding it. We do not know the sexual discourses that archives, as a reflection of the institutions of power, have built; we ignore the marginalization of sexual records placed outside archives, even the personal ones; and we lack knowledge about the preservation of documents recording and protecting minorities and sexual victims aiming to promote, among other things, their recognition and justice.

When addressing the topic of sexuality and gender in records we should reiterate the enormous power involved in the registration of the information. Millet, quoted by Gonzalez Estepa, Prieto Royo and Silvestre Cabrera, uses the institutionalization of sex involved in the registry of the birth of a child as an example. Boy or girl categories are considered as human (because they belong to a standard gender) and they belong either to a group of privileged (men) or to a group of subordinate (women). We should also note the influence of the context, together with the social construction of sexual practices and gender relations. If the society has created a repressive sexuality, records will testify. As we have pointed out, behaviors aimed at sexual enjoyment out of the reproductive function were branded as aberrations since they were an individual and social danger. Records, therefore, documented the persecution and coercion to those who broke the sexual behavioral norms.

In this line, the sexual trade was considered to threaten the ethical values and constituted a moral and legal crime that caused the loss of traditional values. Power claiming the role of moral guard sought its eradication by banning the practice and punishing women engaged in it. The punishment of the sex trade in the early 20th century in Argentina, is the object of study of Rocio Caldentey. The obstacles presented by the court records, the difficult access to the police archives and the lack of documentary evidence of sex workers because of their oral culture made the author's use of the Executive Branch records in order to study the repression in this area really worthy.

As the persecution and criminalization of prostitution were not effective, dominant male sexuality eventually integrated paid sexual consumption revealing the double standard in the sexuality of men and women. In the 19th century pragmatism prevailed, and public authorities changed prohibition by tolerance and regulated its exercise by using semantic revisionisms (special hygiene). Ruipérez García studies, through the municipal regulation of Toledo in 1871, the provisions of public order and health checks of those sexual services in the Castilian city.

Analysis of illegal actions linked to sexual activities in a local court (Royal Bailiwick of Terrasa) through the judicial proceedings are the target of the article of Capellades Riera. Procedural documents provide a valuable and varied repertoire of daily life reflecting the sexuality of the time (concubinage and adultery, female honor, bestiality...) and the tensions and violence generated in the society due to crimes against women (rape, statutory rape).

What is recognized as normal (individuals with a defined sex and heterosexual practices) continues to be a scenario for patriarchal rule and unequal power relations leading to violence against women. An interpretation of the record fact linked to the process of construction of reality led the teachers of the University of Deusto Gonzalez Estepa, Prieto Royo and Silvestre Cabrera to wonder about the official records of violence against women under the regional administration of the Basque country. The authors criticize the lack of objectivity of non-domestic violence and the consequent lack of registration and institutional aid. Meanwhile, Pak Linares analyses how women are portrayed as dishonest individuals that incite illegal actions and men as victims of an irresistible feminine seduction in the procedural documents of sexual assaults in Argentina. A discourse that professionals of the records must fight with a series of measures in the documentary management.

The traditional concept of sex, due to religious ideas and based on procreation, put all the blame on couples who did not have sex in order to have children. Unacceptable feelings that must be persecuted and punished. This rejection also meant the exile of the social memory and the record and in fact, all the documents about marginalized sexualities were rejected and moved out of

archives. As noted by Terry Cook, records and their professionals have historically ignored documentation that did not belong to administrations and governments. In the case of sex, this behavior originated repositories exclusively responding to the official sexual narrative underscoring the lack of objectivity of the discipline and the professionals. Aware of this oblivion, women, homosexuals, transsexuals, and other marginalized groups took the initiative and occupied the empty space corresponding to the memory of feminist, gay, transsexual, etc. activism.

Based on private collections, activism demonstrated that it could be preserved as a cultural asset available to the community and that each person could use it as they prefer. Calvo Borobia researches on archives and repositories of LGBTI/queer documentation and Aaron Devor and Lara J. Wilson present the creation of the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria in Canada. Devor and Wilson defend a particular archive of the different ways of understanding the gender (mainly transsexual, transgender, non-binary, indigenous or two spirits) because of the tension caused by the integration in the gay and lesbian movements in their fight for recognition and acceptance. The archive was constituted in a collection initiative of the University Archives and the Transgender Studies Chair of Victoria in Canada. The stability that this archive provides is what is asked by Kerman Calvo for the memory of the personal and institutional LGBTI/queer activism allowing to place Spain in archival levels similar to those in Canada, United Kingdom and United States.

Feminist records have been studied by Carreño Corchete pointing out the dispersal and poor visibility of women documents. Based on the creation of a special corps of archivists and librarians in 1858, archival work from a gender perspective is analyzed

This statist approach of records also marginalized, in an obvious way, the purely personal documents, since they were also placed outside the area of archives. In this issue of *Tabula* we expose a doubly marginalized record: domestic audiovisuals. To the excluded personal fonds out of archives and official memory (only some privileged were welcomed in libraries) we can add the marginalization of non-textual documentation. The works of Susanna Muriel and Carlos Trigueros address explicit sexual activity documented in photographs and home videos hidden in the family archives. Muriel analyzes, through family archives of Catalonia, Soria, Madrid, Almeria and Murcia, the representation of sex in personal photographs studying their characteristics of production (motivation), use and preservation. The significance of these images is that they faithfully reflect sexual realities since they were not captured in order to be shown in family photo albums. For his part Carlos Trigueros studies the success of domestic pornography (and the technology that made it possible) from their monopolization by the upper classes to its popularity with mass distribution through the

Internet. Trigueros's analysis describes the domestic practices that have overshadowed professional sex and have prompted the industry to create an "amateur" genre providing the closeness and everyday life of amateur productions.

Like any other activity carried out by human societies, sexuality can be also addressed from the perspective of the sources of knowledge. In this issue, we make an approach to the general and municipal archives that show some of the many study options. These sources represent the dominant ideology that will, to some extent, influence the conception of sexuality shown in the analysis. In the archive resources for the study of sexuality we will find records formalizing and ruling the traditional discourse and some other controlling, persecuting and punishing the assault on morality that recreational sex is (homosexuality, extramarital...).

Surprisingly, given their repressive origins, the Historical Memory Documentary Centre has fewer records along the lines of sexual oppression. According to the text of Luis Hernández, their fonds allow research on the sexual liberation of the 1920s and 1980s, prostitution and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. The General Administration Archive holds the records of the Board of Classification and Censorship which prevented the broadcast of films showing "perversions, illicit sexual relations, conjugal love offences and everything that awakens evil passions". Fernández Cuesta y Gozalbo Gimeno's article points out that the Administration Archive has also judicial records testifying the homosexual repression and the human trafficking for sexual purposes through the Vagrancy Act.

The archival holdings of the Municipal Archive of Girona, analyzed by Gironella Delgà, allow to study from a local perspective, the usual manifestations of repressive sexuality. Also, the Archive preserves materials that show the conception of women being weak, prone to sin and in need of male guardianship. When this could not be possible, the responsibility rested with the municipal administration and therefore the Council of Girona provided endowments and supported institutions ensuring that women could reach the marriage without losing their virginity.

With this issue of *Tábula* we have tried to study the sexual discourses held in archives and to reveal the archival processes that have been established by our way of perceiving sex. This is our modest contribution to the analysis of the biased and unfair narrative of sex that records have risen and the consequent fight to combat it with the professional activity.

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