

# The boundaries and conventions of sexual knowledge

**Adriana Piscitelli**  
**Maria Filomena Gregori**  
**Sérgio Carrara**

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## Sexuality, culture and politics A South American reader

Although mature and vibrant, Latin American scholarship on sexuality still remains largely invisible to a global readership. In this collection of articles translated from Portuguese and Spanish, South American scholars explore the values, practices, knowledge, moralities and politics of sexuality in a variety of local contexts. While conventionally read as an intellectual legacy of Modernity, Latin American social thinking and research has in fact brought singular forms of engagement with, and new ways of looking at, political processes. Contributors to this reader have produced fresh and situated understandings of the relations between gender, sexuality, culture and society across the region. Topics in this volume include sexual politics and rights, sexual identities and communities, eroticism, pornography and sexual consumerism, sexual health and well-being, intersectional approaches to sexual cultures and behavior, sexual knowledge, and sexuality research methodologies in Latin America.

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# The boundaries and conventions of sexual knowledge\*

Adriana Piscitelli\*\*

Maria Filomena Gregori\*\*\*

Sérgio Carrara\*\*\*\*

On a cold November morning in 2003, Carole Vance and Gayle Rubin were the center of attention in Chicago. Facing a crowded auditorium,<sup>1</sup> the anthropologists, known for their critical reflections on sexuality, discussed a concept that, while not new, has been recreated over the past decades: “sexual panic”. This concept was developed within feminist anthropology and gay historiography, inspired by a 1970s formulation from British sociology: “moral panic”. Its references were large-scale movements brought together by anxieties concerning sexual issues. These anxieties had given rise to conflicts within which complex political agendas used sex as a vehicle for expressing other concerns, such as those related to moral decadence or social disorder. According to this line of thought, the concept of “sexual panic” has been particularly suitable for thinking about issues such as the anti-prostitution movements of late 19<sup>th</sup> century England, or mid-20<sup>th</sup> century crusades against homosexuality.

At the conference, Vance spoke about several issues surrounding the historiography and social geography of sexual panic, pondering the phenomenon’s reach, the singularity of its dynamics in diverse contexts (particularly with regards to its symbolic mobilizations), the use of sexual issues as a vehicle for expressing social anxieties and its political and legal consequences. Was it a culturally located issue or was it widely diffused, running beyond the boundaries of the Anglo-Saxon world? How are these panics situated locally, nationally and globally? Do they “travel”? And, if they do, what are the material and symbolic mechanisms implemented in that circulation?<sup>2</sup>

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\*\* PhD. Professor at State University of Campinas and researcher at PAGU - Nucleus on Gender Studies.

\*\*\* Full professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Human Sciences, State University of Campinas; principal researcher at PAGU - Nucleus on Gender Studies.

\*\*\*\* PhD. Professor at the Institute of Social Medicine, State University of Rio de Janeiro; Co-Chair at the Latin-American Center on Sexuality and Human Rights.

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<sup>1</sup> We are referring to the “Sexual Panic” panel that took place during the 102<sup>nd</sup> *Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association*. November 19-23, 2003, Chicago.

<sup>2</sup> These formulations are suggestive and illustrate the issues guiding the authors who contributed to a number of CLAM’s publications, a selection of which is now offered to an English-speaking readership, referring to sexuality and sexuality studies in Brazil. This introduction, originally written for the volume *Sexualities and Knowledge, Conventions and Boundaries* (Piscitelli, Gregori, and Carrara, 2004), addresses the topics in the articles from that volume included in this reader; authored by Duarte, Bento, Gregori, Russo, Fonseca, Piscitelli and Simões.

Within the Humanities, several lines of thought tend to converge upon Foucault's (1977) work, considering it to be definitive because it removes any possibility of naturalizing the term *sexuality* by delving into that device's historicity, which is, in fact, the expression of certain political relations and of a certain economic organization.<sup>3</sup> However, though we must acknowledge Foucault's immense influence on post-structuralist contemporary feminism, dissent and tensions regarding his *oeuvre* are significant.

Critics focus, on the one hand, on the ethical consequences related to freedom which emanate from Foucauldian theory. The most common position in this critique has been to point out that these consequences lead to a sort of depoliticization of feminist and homosexual movements' emancipatory strength. No one denies the importance of Foucault's ideas about the implications of power upon the devices that organize sexuality or for the analysis of gender subordination and sexual discrimination. However, many authors address the limitations of his concept of power, characterized as it is by plurality and capilarity.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, some feminist theoreticians have criticized the fact that Foucault operates with categories that presuppose pre-discursive sexual or bodily practices, without questioning these with the same rigor with which he invested his analysis of legal or judiciary practices. These readings acknowledge that Foucault deconstructed the notion of natural sex, inscribing it at the judicial and political level in his writings (especially in his example of the Lapcourt peasant or the case of Herculine Barbin). However, they also claim that Foucault presupposes that sexual practice can be emancipated from norms, creating a multiple universe of pleasures when he talks about the pre-discursive stage of human sexuality.<sup>5</sup>

Collectively, these critical lines of thought take Foucault's proposal of denaturalizing sexuality even further, undoubtedly contributing to understanding the ways in which social conventions permeate erudite knowledge about sexuality. We understand this knowledge as normative because, in the cases of Law, Medicine, Sexology and, in some ways, Psychoanalysis and Sociology, it operates based upon notions of disease, crime, deviation, anomie, and perversion. Generally speaking, sexuality has remained, even in the most (self) critical of these fields, profoundly naturalized. It is understood as a powerful and dangerous irrational force. This does not mean we should not value efforts to denaturalize sexuality, especially those carried out in the social and historical sciences, particularly by social anthropology. However, should we question the reach

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<sup>3</sup> It is worth remembering that, according to Foucault, this device, created in modern Western societies since the 18th century, overlaps with the device of alliance. In a specific historical period, Western sexuality begins to acquire autonomy with regards to the device of alliance (but not with regards to other social domains, such as economy and politics). Hypothetically, according to Foucault, the device of sexuality may, in the future, come to take the place of the device of alliance.

<sup>4</sup> Nancy Fraser (1993) can be considered to be the feminist theoretician who most cogently critiqued the limitations in Foucault's work. For more information, see her article "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions." In: *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender and Contemporary Social Theory*. Cambridge, Polity Press.

<sup>5</sup> Judith Butler (1990) carries out this critique very persuasively in her "Foucault, Herculine, and the Politics of Sexual Discontinuity." In: *Gender Trouble – Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, Routledge. For an intriguing analysis of the tense relations between feminism and Foucault, see Josefina Fernandez (2000) "Foucault: marido ou amante? Algumas tensões entre Foucault e feminismo." In: *Estudos Feministas* vol.8 n.2.

of this denaturalization and of the understanding of the political mechanisms that permeate discussions regarding sexuality when we deal with issues understood as requiring urgent intervention?

In his contribution to this reader, Luiz Fernando Dias Duarte draws attention to the negotiations under way regarding the “normalization” of sexual practices that were rejected in the past, particularly adultery, masturbation, pornography, sodomy and homoeroticism. Such negotiations are simultaneously linked to the “criminalization” of practices such as sexual violence or pedophilia. We can add other phenomena which mix with those listed by Duarte: sadomasochism or sexual tourism, for example. Within this gradual shifting of boundaries (as the situation is understood by the Humanities) the conventions that make up this normalization and the criminalization of practices that provoke violent reactions (in spite of their involving issues related to the right to freely express one’s sexuality) evoke possibilities for the generation of a new wave of sexual panic. What are the contributions that the literature inspired by the homosexual and feminist movements offer to the reflection regarding the construction of these limits? Is it possible to establish any consensus concerning the knowledge regarding these processes which has been generated in Brazil?

The texts that make up this reader offer elements to answer these questions by exploring conventions present in the normative sciences that address sexuality and by considering how they permeate theoretical reflection, medical and judicial practices and sexuality research in Brazil. Based on discussions of research into relevant themes regarding the right to freely express one’s sexuality, the present book brings together analyses of how these conventions are produced by doctors, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts and social scientists and on how they are diffused throughout society by the media. It thus offers new approaches to old problems and new themes that can be used to update classic discussions within the Social Sciences.

## **2 – Gender, homosexualities, heterosexualities**

In order to understand this reader’s focus and relevance, we must take into account certain things that are found in the literature regarding sexuality produced by the Humanities. This literature exploded from the 1980s onward and it presents many intriguing points. The authors involved in producing it are far from an agreement with regards to the delimitation of “sexuality”. As Loyola (1999) points out, this varies according to the conceptual schemata used and in accordance with the angles from which the issue is addressed. Sexuality may be considered with regards to family and/or kinship; thought of as constitutive of subjectivity and/or individual and social identities; conceived of as representation, desire or, simply, as activity or behavior. It should be noted that, according to some authors, sexual behaviors and eroticism are at the very core of sexuality (Vance, 1995).

There are also differences within each of these approaches. The differences among perspectives that consider sexuality to be constitutive of subjectivity are particularly interesting. These approximations point out that practices, representations and attitudes concerning erotic exchanges reflect individuals' internal dimensions and are therefore particular to a given culture. Because of this, using sexuality as an "explanation" would only be possible when this is authorized by the cultural context. Maria Luiza Heilborn develops these ideas within sexuality studies in Brazil. According to her, the contexts that authorize this explanation are those in which there is a notion of personhood in which interiorization and individualization model subjectivity. This idea of the person—the modern Western subject—associated to the notion of the individual as a value,<sup>6</sup> would only be found in specific social groups (Heilborn, n/d).

Thus, if certain comparative studies display an inadequate treatment of sexuality, attributing a transhistorical and/or transcultural meaning to it, others show how that which might be identified as "sexuality" is not situated in an internal dimension of individuals in certain social groups in other societies, but coupled with other fields of meaning such as family, kinship or morality. These, in turn, encompass individuals and any possible individuality (Ortner & Whitehead, 1980). These studies are guided by an interest in uncovering the meanings taken on by sex and reproduction in different cultural and social settings. They show that in certain societies, the erotic is dissolved in the economic. Issues of passion evaporate in concerns about status, and reproductive acts cannot be separated from aspirations about military honors or property.

Some recent discussions about what are considered "contemporary Western societies" (for lack of a more appropriate denomination) also draw attention to the inadequacy of thinking that sexuality occupies the same place in the construction of personhood in different national cultures and even in different cultural contexts within complex, heterogeneous societies (Bozon & Heilborn, 1996). In these societies, sexuality may take on different meanings and values for individuals who are part of different social segments. This approach holds that among certain segments, sexuality is not a basic reference for identity definition or even a domain with an isolated meaning. Sex and pleasure are instead encompassed by a broader morality (Heilborn, 1999). These formulations condemn any generalizing assertion about sexuality that homogeneously cuts across any given complex society. We must ask ourselves, however, how this literature (which is increasingly sophisticated in its consideration of the relationship between sexuality and differences) deals with the links between gender and sexuality.

Approaches inspired by feminist thought consider the incorporation of gender (seen as a difference that constitutes the social) as one of the great contributions of feminist thought to social theory (Moore, 1991). Despite sharing this assumption, the literature

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<sup>6</sup> We are referring here to the idea of the individual as presented by Dumont: a morally and rationally autonomous being, the normative subject of institutions, associated with the ideals of equality and freedom, one of modern society's dearest values (Dumont, 1992).

on sexuality that addresses gender is largely heterogeneous in the way it considers this category. The controversy concerning the different meanings attributed to gender is related not only to the conceptual reference points used, but also to the empirical dimensions which are privileged in the analysis of the category.

In the literature on sexuality, gender may be considered from the perspective of sexual roles and/or from the perspective of the sex/gender distinction. In some recent approaches, it can be analyzed according to a critique of this distinction. At the same time, the category can be thought of as privileging representational dimensions or the identity dimension: i.e. the way in which the individual or collective sense of identity is constituted (Grossi, n/d). On the other hand (and this may be one of the most significant points a perusal of the literature raises), there is of yet no consensus regarding the possible relationships between gender and sexuality (Vance, 1995). It is precisely here that we encounter one of the most intriguing aspects of the literature on sexuality. Reflecting upon women's subordination, some feminist approaches were pioneering in terms of their questioning the direct and "naturalized" relationship between reproduction and gender (the idea that gender is connected to the role that men and women play in biological reproduction). Among other consequences, this led to the confusion of sexuality and gender. Gayle Rubin (1975) made a pioneering contribution to this discussion with her concept of the sex/gender system, showing how that relationship permeates important analytical reference points in the social sciences (Levistraussian formulations among them, cf. Piscitelli, 2003). Rubin's reflections also show how that relationship is anchored in a more generally veiled assumption which "naturalizes" heterosexuality (Rubin, 1975; Rubin & Butler, 1997).

Over the past decades, however, this intriguing line of questioning seems to have become diluted within the field of feminist discussions, in which certain Anglo-Saxon lineages (particularly those critical of pornography) have ended up confusing sexuality and gender in a circular reasoning. Within that debate (which is far from arriving at any definitive conclusions and which indirectly underlie discussions taking place in Brazil), perspectives that affirm the centrality of sexual freedom to women's liberation are confronted by others that tend to establish linear relationships between pornography and violence. Among the latter sort of analysis are Catherine MacKinnon's (1982) writings. MacKinnon regards sexuality as a form of power which is materialized through gender. According to her, heterosexuality institutionalizes male domination and female submission.

Currently, the distinction between non-reproductive and reproductive sexuality is most incisively emphasized by certain lines within queer studies (which also point out that reproductive sexuality occupies a small space in the vast field of sexuality). These lines insist precisely and vehemently upon making an analytical distinction between gender and sexuality (Rubin, 1992; Vance, 1984; Vance & Snitow, 1984). Authors within this tradition highlight the analytical separation between gender and sexuality by critically

mapping the “sexual stratification” present in modern societies. That stratification is understood to orient ideologies considered to be “progressive”, such as certain lines of feminist thought which establish limits between “good” and “bad” sexual practices and which stigmatize or belittle individuals and groups associated with the latter.

Rubin and Vance examine the limits of feminist theory by defending sexual diversity. They regard sex as a vector of oppression that cuts across other forms of social inequality such as class, race, ethnicity and gender. They thus contest the cultural fusion of gender and sexuality carried out by radical anti-pornography feminists. According to Rubin and Vance, feminist theory has a certain explanatory power with regard to sexuality insofar as gender-based hierarchies overlap with erotic stratifications and hierarchies. Gender-based hierarchies, however, do not completely explain the social organization of sexuality because if sexuality and gender are indeed inter-related in specific contexts, they are nevertheless not phenomena of the same order. However, far from excluding gender from their analysis (in the manner of certain queer analysis tendencies: Sedwick, 1990), these currents of thought affirm the need to include that category (Butler, 1997). Rubin’s work is once again pioneering in this respect, showing how the complexity of distinctions between categories considered to be female and male cut across modalities and styles of (“bad”) practices of sexuality such as sadomasochism among men (Butler, 1997).

When we claim that some lines of queer studies have developed this line of thought, we do not necessarily mean that the most incisive analytical distinctions between gender and sexuality are found only in this literature. We simply wish to highlight that in analyses of heterosexualities, gender is more frequently trapped within a binary distinction in which sexuality is cut through by a clear boundary between men and women. These analyses thus establish a continuity between “sex” and gender, even when a broad series of differentiations are taken into account. Maybe the reductive character of some of this literature’s perspectives regarding gender resides in the fact that its focus and/or starting point is the (implicit) idea of the existence of coherent and stable gender identities is due to the role played by men and women in biological reproduction.

The effects of these problems are noticeable in recent theories. If some studies operate with the idea of a relatively fixed gender identity, those lines that regard identities as fluid (such as performativism) show other difficulties. Performance theories are unlikely to offer access to the “scripts” that are contextually being performed. In Appadurai’s terms, these approaches show limitations in understanding the “resources” upon which performances are based (Bell, 1999). Their access is limited to what Judith Butler calls “apparently static workings of the symbolic order” (Butler, 1993). In other words, these analyses<sup>7</sup> do not always offer contributions that allow us to reflect on the ways in which

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<sup>7</sup> Examples of these limitations are noticeable in well-known analyses developed within performativist perspectives. See, for example, Roger Lancaster “Guto’s performance. Notes on the Transvestism of Everyday Life.” In: LANCASTER, Roger & di LEONARDO, Micaela (1997). *The Gender Sexuality Reader*, Routledge.

gender operates, the central categorizations through which it is implemented and the kinds of differences and inequalities it expresses and puts in place.

### 3 – Facing the issues

The themes discussed here offer a series of elements for reflecting upon sexuality. The starting point of the texts included in this reader is the production of different kinds of scientific knowledge regarding human beings: particularly Medicine, Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis and the Social Sciences (with an emphasis on Sociology and Social Anthropology). The authors paint a very complex picture, raising new and instigating issues for future reflection and research. At the center of their concerns we find, on the one hand, possible links between scientific, social and moral norms or conventions and, on the other, the ethical limitations of scientifically-oriented interventions.

Luiz Fernando Dias Duarte explores the escape routes projected by the Social Sciences and by Psychoanalysis upon the field of sexuality. Despite being developed in different planes, these lines converge and oppose one another at several points. This has led to a tense dialogue between the disciplines. Of particular relevance among the points of convergence we find the following: the critique of biological reductionism; the refusal to address sexuality as an isolatable dimension of human experience and the effort to reinsert it (“re-embed” it, as Duarte prefers) within broader analytical totalities such as the psyche or culture; and the critique of the idea that there are universal norms establishing clear boundaries between sexual health and illness (or deviance and disorder). Given these premises, it is no wonder that socio-anthropological thought and (in Brazilian contexts, at least), psychoanalytical thought have been strategic fields for the political action of different sexual minorities in their struggle against the naturalization of the stigma that falls upon and demeans them.

Duarte’s extensive and precise overview of the socio-anthropological approaches towards sexuality makes clear the difficulties faced by a tradition based on Western categories of thought (such as the category of *sexuality* itself) seeking to restore these categories to their different contexts of meaning. On the one hand, when sociologists and anthropologists (each in their own way and with different degrees of radicalism) seek to “re-embed” sexuality in the totality of social life, they end up affirming that it is an artifact of singular reason; an autonomous object of reflection. On the other hand (at least with regard to Western societies), analyzing the historical process of the autonomization/disembeddedness of sexuality and its transformation into a bio-political device, following the perspective presented by Michel Foucault, leads to the acknowledgement of the particular way in which it is embedded in these societies, that is, of its close and multiple ties with politics, economy, religion, etc.

If Duarte emphasizes the critical potential of Psychoanalysis<sup>8</sup> and the Social Sciences with regard to medicalization and the naturalization of sexuality, Jane Russo points to a completely different horizon, observing the escape route forged by contemporary Psychiatry. In this field, critical social scientific thought is receding in the face of the growing hegemony of biological theories regarding “mental disorders” and gender and race differences. The psycho-sociological view is giving way in the face of an intense process of re-biologization, revealed in successive versions of the *Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders* produced by the American Psychiatric Association. The manual’s guidelines have been adopted by the World Health Organization in its International Classification of Diseases and operate, according to Russo, as a sort of “bible” of psychiatry, shaping international psychiatric thought. With regards to sexuality, Russo detects concurrent processes of autonomization, through which sexuality originates a specific class of disorders. She also exposes growing multiplications and specifications in the explosion of sexual disorders, which grew from 9 acknowledged categories of “sexual deviations” in the manual’s second edition to 27 “sexual disorders” in the book’s latest edition. Finally, Russo reveals the progressive incorporation into the DSM of the social imperative that “more sex is better”, this being cast as an implicit “sexual health” norm. In this sphere, if a wave of “sexual panic” can be seen in the very multiplication of “sexual disorders”, this panic takes a very precise shape in a generalized fear of impotence.

The sciences of sexuality continue under scrutiny in the texts that deal with the ambiguities of the body and soul from the broader point of view of sexual difference. Two things are under discussion here. The first is the way in which social conventions which establish sexual dimorphism as a universal rule for the human species were instituted and remain active. The second is the convention that establishes a natural, uncomplicated correspondence (except in those cases considered pathological or deviant) between sex (anatomical, physiological, or genetic), gender and sexuality, understood as *sexual orientation*. Within this correspondence, which is apparently free of gaps or lapses, an individual bearing a male “sex” (genitals) must become a “man” at the level of gender expectations and identification, “naturally” manifesting heterosexual desires and practices at the level of sexuality.

In this reader, sexual dimorphism and the linear correspondence between sex/gender/sexuality are questioned based on the fascinating issues regarding genital mutilation and the “transsexual device” - Berenice Melo Bento’s designation for the heterogeneous set of practices and knowledge operating under the principle that gender and sexuality can only be understood based on sexual difference. In the seminar which gave birth to articles on this reader, such themes were widely discussed for the first time in the field of the Brazilian Social Sciences. They were debated in a very original manner,

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<sup>8</sup> As Berenice Melo Barreto discusses at length, it is certain that psychoanalysis also contains a strong normalizing dimension with regards to sexuality.

because (as Mariza Corrêa states in her article) the anthropological literature has faced these themes almost exclusively through the analysis of practices in use in African and Asian countries. The literature has thus given in to the always-present cultural pressures to orientalize or exoticize non-Western or weakly Western societies, leaving out discussion of the transgenitalization surgeries performed upon babies born with ambiguous genitals in our modern hospitals, or undergone by adult individuals unhappy with their biologically inscribed sex.

From the point of view of the adults who undergo transgenitalization surgeries (that is, from the point of view of transsexuals), is it really an instance of conforming bodies to binary gender conventions? The ethnographic data presented by Berenice Melo Bento point to a far more complex scenario than what physicians, sexologists or social scientists imagine. Despite adopting the anatomy of the “opposite” sex and the other diacritic gender signs related to it (clothing, gestures, etc.), many of the transsexuals studied by Bento did not manifest the sexual orientation considered to be “natural” for that sex and which supposedly justifies the surgery itself. Thus, many of Bento’s informants were men who became women but whose erotic or sexual orientation was directed towards women, or, inversely, were women who became men but who were sexually and affectively involved with other men. Here, lived experience topples traditional taxonomies. We are hardly able to classify these individuals according to any binary opposition such as man/woman, male/female or homosexual/heterosexual. Are we then to acknowledge the existence not only of several sexes and sexualities, but also of several genders, as some lines of contemporary anthropological thought have proposed?<sup>9</sup> Whatever the answer may be, the potential for ethnographic research on transexuality or intersexuality in the development of gender and sexuality studies seems undeniable. By radically shifting both erudite and profane conventions regarding the assumed relationships between sex, sexuality and gender, such studies bring to light myriad new and surprising combinations between these terms and categories.

In debating the normative conventions of those sciences that deal with sexuality, some texts presented here focus their reflections on the different themes that guide research into sexuality: pornography, prostitution, sexual tourism and pedophilia. The choice of these themes (which are only some of a wide variety of possibilities) seeks to stimulate innovative scientific work and renovate policy agendas regarding the right to freely express one’s sexuality.

Maria Filomena Gregori’s article addresses the new conceptualizations of sexuality, desire and the body developed by Anglo-Saxon feminist theories in their examination of pornography. Aside from mapping the “state of the issue” as presented by politicized works, Gregori presents an ethnographic analysis of the *Good Vibrations* sex shop created by lesbians in San Francisco in the 1970s, particularly emphasizing the

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<sup>9</sup> For an interesting collection of works that follows this direction, Cf. Herdt, 1996.

shop's sadomasochist proposals. Her article examines intriguing aspects of erotic consumerism discovered in the universe under study: on the one hand, the market's considerable segmentation due to the incorporation of new homoerotic preferences and demands; on the other, the implications of these tendencies in the light of feminist theories regarding pornography. In particular, Gregori draws attention to the creation of a "politically correct" eroticism and to the "neutralization" of violence in S/M experiences.

Maria Filomena Gregori's article addresses a discussion present in feminist debates since the 1980s, especially in Anglo-Saxon feminist studies regarding the not always easily balanced relationship between pleasure and danger in contemporary sexual practices, choices and orientations. The feminist debates concerning pornography were an important reference point in this discussion, insofar as they question and deny the association of sexuality with coercive models of domination, as well as the articulation of these models with static gender positions in a totalizing map of patriarchal subordination. These conventions in the treatment of eroticism and pornography entails the idea that sexual freedom may also involve pleasure and pain in a simultaneous and connected manner. Danger, insofar as rape, abuse and exploitation are irrefutably phenomena involved in the exercise of diverse forms of sexuality. Pleasure, because there is a promise in eroticism and in the search of new erotic alternatives for the transgression of the restrictions imposed upon sexuality when it is viewed as simply a reproductive exercise. This discussion inquires into what is transgressive in eroticism and transgression's meaning for sexual freedom.

Another theme found in the reader is a new approach to an old issue found in studies of sexual practices: prostitution. Claudia Fonseca analyzes a stigmatized occupational category, that of female sex worker, in an anthropological approach which inserts the women involved in sex work in Porto Alegre into the broader universe of relations of which they are part of. The resulting text goes beyond mapping the heterogeneous types of prostitution in that city and challenges the idea of prostitution as a natural, transhistorical object (Chapkis, 1997; Kempadoo, 1998). Fonseca's work offers elements that call into question the conceptualization of prostitution in Brazil, as well as the limits that separate sex workers from women in general in contexts in which the instrumental use of sex is part of life expectations seeking upward social mobility.

Claudia Fonseca's work reflects upon the conventions that pervade knowledge regarding sexuality. It questions the notion of prostitution itself. Fonseca shows that the connection between sentiment and money is a recurring expression of love in our culture, that one idea coexists with the other to which it is formally opposed. The obtainment of material wealth and upward social mobility through the instrumental use of sex is a behavior found among both prostitute and non-prostitute women in our society.

Fonseca shows that women "who turn tricks" share representations regarding conjugality with women from their same social strata who are not sex workers. These

representations reveal analogies between both sets of women concerning the evaluation of relatively stable relationships in which sex is associated with money, synthesized in the figure of the “old man who helps out” (“sugar daddy” would perhaps be the best English approximation). Among prostitutes, this idea describes a client who becomes a regular costumer and who must be exploited. Among non-prostitutes, it expresses the idea of marrying a man for his money, a strategy that is expected of young women from the lower social strata in Porto Alegre. Far from being restricted to that city, the idea of the “old man who helps out” is widely diffused throughout Brazil, being found in cities affected by international sexual tourism where this male character is often replaced by another: the foreigner. The relatively stable relationships which develop based on the exchange of financial “help” for sexual favors lead us to rethink prostitution, which does not present clear outlines, analytically speaking, in those cases where there are no contracts explicitly establishing payments for specific sexual services.

If prostitution can be considered as one of the aspects of sexuality that is currently undergoing a process of “normalization”, others, such as sexual tourism (and its perceived ties to human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation) and pedophilia are the targets of intense preoccupation evoking the idea of sexual panic and which are currently clearly criminalized sexual practices.

In international and Brazilian public debates, sexual tourists are frequently seen as international “clients” of local prostitutes and, more particularly, as consumers of sexual services provided by children and adolescents from the poorer regions of the globe. These travelers develop styles of sociability and exchange shared by other actors involved in stigmatized sexual practices (such as the creation of restricted networks of information transmission, particularly on the internet), and seem to occupy the lower levels of sexual stratification (Rubin, 1992). Adriana Piscitelli shows the diversity of the modalities of sexual tourism and styles of the sexual tourists who frequent Brazil's northeast. She approached the phenomenon from a perspective that inserts it within the dynamics of contemporary tourism, showing how it intersects with—but is not reduced to—prostitution. Piscitelli shows how sexual tourism goes beyond its supposed ties to child prostitution and international trafficking, being used by women from Brazil's impoverished Northeast to immigrate to more developed countries.

One of the issue's most intriguing aspects is understanding what it “says” with regards to sexuality in the contemporary world and, even more so, with regards to the relationship between sexuality and gender. It is thus crucial to, in Sérgio Carrara's terms, “hear the tormentors' voices”. In the context studied, some of these tourists see Fortaleza as an inexhaustible “red light district” which propitiates numerous sexual experiences at a relatively low cost (in international terms). These travelers seem to embody an acute expression of hedonism, seeking forms of pleasure that are entirely detached from affective investments. To others, however, this style of sexual tourism widens the range of available options regarding stable relationships that are permeated by feelings. By navigating the different “types” of tourists and opposing rationality, initiative

and autonomy to the submission and docility attributed to them by travelers, Brazilian women create opportunities for immigrating to Europe through the instrumental use of sex as a mechanism of social mobility. If, as some authors claim, sexual tourism is full of traps (Soarez do Bem, 2003), it also presents us with some paradoxes. A situation that is thus apparently exclusively guided (in Luiz Fernando Diaz Duarte's terms) by the sensual, by sex's sensory pleasure, can also end up being considered as ideal for the creation of sentimental pleasure and the constitution of conjugal relations. Within these paradoxes, sexual tourism offers some "natives" the possibility of seeking out economic and social opportunities abroad.

Socio-anthropological studies of homosexuality, which already have a tradition in Brazil (it is worth remembering here the pioneering studies done by Guimarães, 1977; MacRae, 1983, 1985; Fry, 1982; and Perlongher, 1987), make up a privileged field of study for the exploration of aspects involved in the processes of "criminalizing" and "normalizing" sexual practices. The texts we have selected regarding these themes are part of that tradition.

If homoerotic practices can be seen as part of a process of "normalization" directed towards previously criminalized styles of sexuality, recent homosexual claims "to family" have rekindled the debates surrounding that process. The claim to family rights has become a rallying cry in recent pride parades in São Paulo. It should be noted that these claims are not only about marriage, but about "family": an empirically observable form of kinship relations. In its classic definition, family involves affinity and consanguine relations that are socially understood and expressed in kinship terminologies, rules of filiation (which determine individuals' qualities as members of a group and their rights and duties within the group), rules of alliance, residence, identity transmission and the types of social groups to which individuals may be affiliated (Héritier, 1989). At the same time, family claims provoke such an intense resistance that they immediately invite the exploration of their subversive aspects (Butler, 2002).

Julio Assis Simões's article competently takes stock of the main North-American and British theories that connect sexual orientation and practices and life stages. In particular, Simões examines studies, models and concepts that deal with experiences of maturity and aging among men who have sex with men. Two notions, formulated in the 1970s and critically revised by the author, become evident from the compiled material: that of "accelerated aging", which highlights the negative effects of homosexuality in old age and which winds up developing a rhetoric that has a clearly "victimizing" connotation; and that of "crisis competence", which, in contrast, draws attention to the positive aspects of the homosexual experience. In this second case, the difficulties homosexuals face over the course of their lives supposedly end up making them resistant and capable of dealing with the stigmas associated with old age. Julio Assis Simões clearly shows the limitation of these investigations and theories. They are not only incapable of objectively showing that sexual orientation brings about differences in the aging experience, but

also operate through the utilization of “essentialist” assumptions that tend to universalize what is understood by homosexuality, as well as what is learned from the experience of aging itself.

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