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## RESEÑAS DE LIBROS / BOOK REVIEWS

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ZEB TORTORICI, *Sins against Nature: Sex and Archives in Colonial New Spain*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018.

The field of the history of homosexuality has evolved considerably since its inception in the 1970s. The earliest work came from anthropologists like Joseph Carrier, sociologists like Stephen O. Murray, to say nothing of the body of literature by Salvador Novo, such as his autobiographical *La estatua de sal*. The field of the colonial history of homosexuality in Latin America is now a fully-fledged genre. Nearly three decades have passed since the landmark 1993 dissertation by Lee Penyak, “Criminal Sexuality in Central Mexico, 1750-1850.” Since then, a wide range of studies on homosexuality in colonial Latin America has emerged. There is not enough space here to discuss all of this literature but a couple of salient points could be made.

First, the field has been often divided between essentialists and social constructionists. The essentialists took their cue from John Boswell, the medievalist who created controversies in academia—discussion of homosexuality and being out as a gay man at a place like Yale in the 1970s were still not socially acceptable—especially with the 1980 publication of *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*. In short Boswell’s book was the foundational text for the essentialists who argued that gay people have always existed as gay persons. Among Latin Americanists, Luiz Mott is most closely associated with the essentialist position. The social constructionists argue that it is inaccurate to call all people who had same-sex sexualities gay. Rather, this interpretive approach says, we must be attentive to the peculiar cultural contexts of the people we are studying. Social constructionists do not draw a straight line, as Boswell would, from Socrates to Harvey Milk. Pete Sigal is among the more prominent and innovative social constructionist historians of colonial Mexican homosexuality.

Tortorici can definitely be considered a social constructionist in this debate. His new book is a tour de force. It is also an extremely rich book. It has a dense consideration of theory. The research is among the best that I have read in many years for a first monograph. Tortorici is also a good global citizen as he has made available a massive database of archival material relating to homosexuality. But the breadth of the research makes the book stand out. He conducted research in virtually every available local archive in Mexico; the command of

the secondary and theoretical literature is superb and is inclusive of the important Spanish-language scholarship.

*Sins against Nature* makes some striking claims which I think will help to influence the ways we think about homosexuality in Latin America. First, Tortorici has moved away from a study exclusively about men who had sex with men. Rather, he suggests that the same apparatus of control that repressed queer men also impacted everyone else. I found this to be one of the more salient points of the book. In other words, his project was to queer the archival material. How exactly does this work?

The book does indeed tell us a great deal about the history of homosexuality in colonial Mexico. But that discussion takes place squarely in the context of a wide range of “queer” behaviors and socially condemned actions. We learn about bestiality, necrophilia, and the solicitation of boys in the confessional. In short homosexuality is a central but not the only focus of the book. In other words he suggests that historians of sexuality consider a broader categorization of sexual norms and socially unacceptable behaviors. Thus his major contribution is a study of what was considered unnatural; in doing so, Tortorici shows that in the colonial context, homosexuality was one of many categories of the unnatural.

Tortorici also engages in several theoretical debates. Running through the book is a discussion and consideration of archives. In short the book makes an epistemological argument—our knowledge about socially unacceptable behaviors is in turn skewed by the fact that the production of archival material is the result of a repressive social apparatus—criminal courts, social expectations and violence, religious courts like the Inquisition. The book spans close to three centuries, and the analysis is sustainable, given the extraordinary research. Tortorici also touches on some of the main debates in the history of homosexuality. For example, he concludes that the distinction between tops/actives and bottoms/passives was largely a cultural phenomenon, as sexual role was not determinative in sentencing in trials against men for having sex with men. One such famous case in 1658 in Puebla and Mexico City resulted in more than a dozen men being executed for sodomy. But I wonder about the sex-role debate. When one surveys the secondary literature, one finds that in Aragon, Portugal, and Brazil the men who were prosecuted by the Inquisition were often men who formed part of a queer subculture with known actors, places, hook-up spots, safe houses. We might argue that such men were less likely to be the stereotypical macho who reputedly gains social prestige by penetrating other, more effeminate men. I have never found convincing the argument that strictly top men from the sixteenth century suffered no social or legal consequences for their sexual behavior. It seems more likely that we know more about the *fanchonos* of Lisbon, for example, or the many crossdressing males in Mexico

City in the 1658 case, because they were more easily identified or because they shared legal risks together in taverns, bathhouses, barbershops, or docks. But in this more public world there was always a risk that someone would be caught or make a denunciation.

In sum Tortorici has provided us with one of the best single books on the history of Latin American homosexuality. I learned a good deal about archival theory, the complexities of social opprobrium, and the actual sexual escapades of a wide cast of characters. I also really enjoyed reading the book; it is dense in theory and extraordinarily rich in evidence. It will become a classic of queer history in Mexican historiography.

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EMILY ENGEL, *Pictured Politics: Visualizing Colonial History in South American Portrait Collections*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020.

*Pictured Politics: Visualizing Colonial History in South American Portrait Collections* takes the reader on a journey through three centuries of portraiture history in viceregal South America. In this work, Emily Engel explores the development of portraits and portraiture in colonial South America by examining political genealogies that delineated shared history and were also embedded in negotiations of viceregal authority with local political circumstances. The author concludes in her introduction to *Pictured Politics* that “[t]he material presented here opens the possibility for official portraits to participate in local history that was crafted by local subjects jockeying for power in South America” (16).

The first two chapters provide broad foundational information for the subsequent chapters. Chapter 1 examines how Spanish monarchs would embrace portraiture as sponsors and collectors, in formats that represented the political as well as moral power of the individual. Engel then moves to an extended discussion of how portraiture was used to demonstrate indigenous viewpoints of Spanish colonial practices through Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala’s work, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1615-1616). Addressed to Philip III, King of Spain, Guamán Poma illustrated this history of the Viceroyalty of Peru with line drawing portraits of Inca officials and Spanish viceroys. It also included critiques of Inca as well as Spanish colonial rule as Guamán Poma offered narratives of how pre-colonial and colonialism practices and conditions impacted the lives of indigenous peoples. Engel argues that the images within the *Corónica*’s pages may be considered early instances of official portraiture as history paintings that chronicled local development and contends that the