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Contemporary

DAVID *Latin*

WILLIAM *American*

FOSTER *Cinema*

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Contents

viii	PREFACE
1	INTROIT: QUEER DIFFERENCE
1	<i>De eso no se habla</i>
19	HOMOSEXUALITY: IN AND OUT OF THE CLOSET
22	<i>El lugar sin límites</i>
32	<i>Aqueles dois</i>
44	<i>Convivencia</i>
50	POLITICAL INTERSECTIONS
50	<i>Conducta impropia</i>
60	<i>The Disappearance of García Lorca</i>
70	<i>La Virgen de los Sicarios</i>
85	FORGING QUEER SPACES
85	<i>Doña Herlinda y su hijo</i>
94	<i>No se lo digas a nadie</i>
109	<i>En el paraiso no existe el dolor</i>
113	<i>A intrusa</i>

vi *Queer Issues in Contemporary Latin American Cinema*

127 QUEER TRANSCENDENCE

127 *Plata quemada*

143 *Afrodita, el jardín de los perfumes*

147 *Fresa y chocolate*

163 NOTES

171 REFERENCES

171 *Filmography*

172 *Bibliography*

181 INDEX

Preface

This book is the fourth in a series dealing with Latin American film. *Contemporary Argentine Cinema* (1994) examined Argentine filmmaking since the return to constitutional democracy in 1983 and was therefore focused on films that dealt with issues of re-democratization in that country: the abuse of power, authoritarianism, sexual rights, women's issues, and the relationship between current events and national history.

Gender and Society in Contemporary Brazilian Cinema (1999) dealt with Brazilian films produced, with one exception, after the return to constitutional democracy in that country in 1985, although I was principally interested in framing the discussion in terms of gender. Hence the volume is organized in three large blocks: masculinist focuses, feminist focuses, and same-sex focuses. This organization was not so much to highlight the fact that Brazilian film deals with issues of gender, sexuality, and sexual transgression —it does so no more than the films of other nations, even if this constellation is part of national mythmaking for tourist purposes. Rather, I was interested in intersecting gender issues and filmmaking because there was not yet any monographic study on Latin American film from this perspective.

Feminist theory has seen the development, in part through its intellectual inspiration, first of queer studies, which question the gender categories held in place by the heteronormative patriarchy, and subsequently, masculinist studies, which both question the assumption of the universal categories of the masculine/nonmasculine binary (a primary

contribution of feminism) and the normalization of the masculine (a primary contribution of queer studies). Specifically, I was interested in how the changes in Brazilian society were allegorized in primarily gendered narratives with the return to democracy, the critical analysis that redemocratization brought with it of the two decades of tyranny, and the empowerment of previously repressed and oppressed social groups (along one axis, women and queers). The allegories tended to focus on love stories—or at least stories in which gender is foregrounded—that had much to say about sociopolitical arrangements of social power and legitimacy. Concomitantly, I was interested in how gender—the foregrounding of a man's or a woman's body—could be particularly effective as a strategy of semiosis in a film.

Mexico City in Contemporary Mexican Cinema (2001) delineates the intersect of film and urban studies, in this case of Mexico City, the world's most populous megalopolis. Unlike Argentina and Brazil, Mexico did not experience neofascist tyranny, and therefore there is no sociohistorically significant dividing point for this study. However, the study takes advantage of the international attention paid to Mexican film in the 1990s and the fact that recent decades have shown, in the Mexican imaginary, a definitive shift toward the urban. Consequently, with a handful of exceptions, the films examined in the study are from the 1990s; all of them, if not direct interpretations of the urban experience, are set in Mexico City, and the city is in some way an integral part of each film's narrative. Even if the stories are not explicitly urban tales, the city intervenes in the experience of the film's protagonist; even if the physical attributes of the city are not specifically foregrounded, the story would make little sense if it were transposed to a provincial or rural setting.

These films underscore the extent to which so much of contemporary—one might say postmodern—Latin American reality has become urban: the migratory patterns in much of Latin America are toward the city; national identity means to a large extent having an urban consciousness; and the most significant filmmaking is set in the city. Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Amores perros* (2000), which became available in video after this study was completed and thus is not included in it, is a perfect example of what I am talking about. It is built around three tales of the city involving three social classes and interlocking, overlapping, and conflicting experiences in a precariously shared urban landscape. Gender is, of course, an issue of urban life, and the city is where both feminist and lesbian movements have prospered. As a consequence, several of the films in this study continue the gender focus of *Gender and Society in Contemporary Brazilian Cinema*.

Queer Issues in Contemporary Latin American Filmmaking, the volume at hand, corresponds to the previous studies in a number of ways. In the first place, by dealing with specifically queer issues, it necessarily examines films both set in the city and in which the city plays a crucial role: this is particularly evident in Barbet Schroeder's *La Virgen de los Sicarios* (2000), in which the drug-related violence of Medellín, Colombia, at the height of the power of Pablo Escobar and the so-called Medellín cartel is integral to the same-sex relations narrated. Queer studies question patriarchal heteronormativity and the compact narrative of compulsory matrimony, compulsory heterosexuality, compulsory monogamy, and the unquestionable homologizing of romantic love, erotic desire, and individual fulfillment. In this sense queer studies are gender studies: while they may reach out to question other forms of social normativeness (for example, in the overall conception of the body, not just its sexualization), they are centered insistently on questions of sexuality. Sexuality (gender identities, gender roles, gender preferences, gender performances, erotic desires, sexual practices) as defined by compulsory heterosexuality (i.e., what we can call heterosexism) may be analyzed and questioned—deconstructed, in a word—while at the same time other configurations of sexuality may be explored and proposed.

The essays that appear here continue the practice of the other three titles in this informal series of selecting a limited range of texts in order to focus on each text in some depth. A few films are treated in a briefer fashion either because they are tangential to the direct representation of homoerotic desire (Víctor Saca's *En el paraiso no existe el dolor*, 1995) or because they are, I will argue, defective in their utilization of a reference to it (Marcos Zurinaga's *The Disappearance of García Lorca*, 1997). However, most films are examined in considerable detail. One might always wish to treat cultural products as deserving of in-depth analyses: if cultural production is socially significant, it deserves to be analyzed in detail to demonstrate this importance in terms of how its texts create and negotiate meaning. But it is even more imperative to discuss texts in detail when they are proposed as particularly pertinent to the intervention in highly contested debates such as those surrounding issues of gender identity, sexual preference, and erotic desire and their sociopolitical interfaces.

In order to devote myself to fairly detailed analyses of individualized texts, I have made no attempt to survey the entire canon of pertinent films. (I take note of the preliminary survey by Waugh.) In one understanding of queer studies, any cultural text—hence, any film—can be read from a queer perspective, can be queered. What this means is that it can be read against the grain of the unquestioned, and therefore un-

theorized, heterosexist presuppositions that ground the vast majority of our culture, and it means that the text can be shown to reveal internal contradictions, aporia, confused thinking, and strategic missteps in the exercise of patriarchal norms that make it interesting from the perspective of a spectator unwilling to abide by heteronormativity or gloss over its incoherences. (Sandy Quinn's study on "pink noir," which involves the queering of American noir films, usually considered exemplars of heterosexism, would be a good example of what I am referring to here.) Films examined here that match this parameter are Carlos Hugo Christensen's *A intrusa* (1979), María Luisa Bemberg's *De eso no se habla* (1993), and Jaime Humberto Hermosillo's *Doña Herlinda y su hijo* (1985).

In another understanding of queer studies, it will mean seeing how cultural products can be understood to promote principles of an anti-heterosexist stance. This may mean defending and promoting the so-called lesbigay agenda (such as occurs in Francisco J. Lombardi's *No se lo digas a nadie*, 1998), as well as it might mean questioning that agenda in a move to destabilize any privileging of alternatives to the master narrative of privileged heteronormativity. *La Virgen de los Sicarios*, which drains any utopianism possible from same-sex relations, comes to mind here, as does Marcelo Piñeyro's *Plata quemada* (2000), in which a gay idyll in the end cannot separate itself from implacable political facts of life. Yet it can also mean poeticizing homoeroticism in the attempt to create alternative realms of erotic experience, as in Pablo César's *Afródita* (1998), and the concept of alternative realms may more specifically involve the creation of protected spaces in a hostile world where homoeroticism, in something like a resemanticization of the closet, can be pursued with relative impunity: in increasing degrees of intensity, this is what takes place in Sérgio Amon's *Aqueles dois* (1985), *No se lo digas a nadie*, *En el paraíso no existe el dolor*, *A intrusa*, *De eso no se habla*, and *Doña Herlinda y su hijo*.

One of the major issues of this study is homophobia, widely understood as the irrational fear of homosexuals/lesbigays/queers. In reality, this is not a very useful definition, or at least it is a very limited one. I would argue, rather, that homophobia is a complex dynamic that functions to enforce the principles of heteronormativity and that any irrational fear associated with it is what homophobia as an instrument of heteronormativity is all about. In this sense, little intellectual effort is required: heteronormativity, to maintain its hold as a dominant social practice, marks off a wide swath of phenomena alleged to be threats to it. These phenomena are beliefs, behavior, or specific acts in themselves, or they are reflexes of them, signs that are read as indicative of a belief, be-

havior, or specific act such that the signs themselves do not constitute a challenge to heteronormativity in any direct sense but are taken to point to something that is. An alleged feminine swish of male hips is taken as a sign of sodomic practices, and sodomy is a threat to heteronormativity because it is an improper sex act in that it represents a waste of reproductive seed. A crew cut on a woman is read to signal that such a woman refuses to assume the appropriate female role of reproductive sex with a man; moreover, her crew cut signals that she is usurping the role of the man with whom she should have reproductive sex instead of seeking to replace his subject position. And on and on.

In order to protect its turf—and it is a turf that evidently requires constant policing and whose principles, while they are taken to be so evidently “natural” and “universal,” require enforcing with unflagging vigilance—heteronormativity generates a strategy of homophobia toward whatever or whoever would challenge it and endows that strategy with the power to hate, to execute that hatred with varying degrees of psychologically and emotionally violent terrorism, and—in one of its most singularly outstanding provisions—to function so as to interdict any debate of the legitimacy of heteronormativity, the strategy of homophobia, and the execution of the latter’s power. In something like a perpetual-motion ideology machine, heteronormativity holds that any suggestion of the need to engage in debate regarding its supremacy is, *prima facie*, a sign of challenge to that supremacy, and in an efficient recursive fashion, that sign itself becomes susceptible to the defensive strategies of homophobia. In turn, any question of the legitimacy of homophobia as a way of enforcing heteronormativity is taken as a transparent sign of challenge to the latter and thus closes the loop.

What does require extensive intellectual investigation are all of the ways in which homophobia manifests itself along a continuum of terrorism and what the concrete consequences of its application are, both in terms of the everyday life of a society and in terms of its cultural production. I cannot undertake to do that here, although it is worth noting that it has barely begun to be done. We have ample documentation of acts of homophobic violence, although these tend to cluster at the end of the spectrum of physical terrorism. We have a certain amount of cultural production—typically in fiction—that tells the story of the emotional consequences of emotional terrorism. Let me choose as a paradigm, because of the iconic value of its title, Edmund White’s *Boy’s Own Story* (1982) or one of the great lesbian coming-of-age narratives, Jeanette Winterston’s *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), both from the crest

of the first major production of lesbigay literature in English. And we have now a good bibliography on the consequences of the homophobic silencing of cultural production, such as Lee Edelman's *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (1994); in film, Vito Russo's *Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (1981, revised 1987; film documentary 1995 directed by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman); and in theater, Kaiier Curtin's *We Can Always Call Them Bulgarians: The Emergence of Lesbians and Gay Men on the American Stage* (1987) and Nicholas De Jongh's *Not in Front of the Audience: Homosexuality on Stage* (1992). All of these works cut in two directions. On the one hand they examine the difficulty of writing/filming/staging lesbigay lives, while on the other they speak both to how those gay lives were told despite homophobic restrictions in the form of official, casual, and self-imposed censorship and how recent works have accomplished in large measure the destruction of the codes of silence.

Many of the works examined in this study deal with homophobia as an experience. That is, characters are subject to a generalized homophobia, if they are not the outright victims of its multiple procedures of specific violence. The grimdest film examined here in this regard is Arturo Ripstein's *El lugar sin límites* (1978), a title that evokes a common metaphor in Spanish for hell, which in this case is a direct evocation of the hell on earth that is the lot of the sexual outlaw whose life of constant humiliation at the hands of the agents of heteronormativity (agents who, nevertheless, are not above abusing him sexually because after all, he is a queer, a defective, feminized man) leads implacably to a murderous death. This is the dynamic of homophobia at its worst, and an examination of the film will provide ample opportunity to dwell on the internal contradictions of heteronormativity and the ways in which homophobia works to serve as a distraction from, a covering over of, those contradictions. Equally grim—perhaps even more so, since its context is the liberation from oppression and the creation of the New Man as a benevolent social agent in relation to the 1959 Cuban Revolution—is Néstor Almendros and Orlando Jiménez Leal's *Conducta impropia* (1984), one of the first major international documentaries to question the human rights abuses of the Cuban revolution (it was released originally as a French production, in French).¹ As this documentary reveals, the homophobic persecution of sexual dissidents (i.e., queers) as much turned the latter into the paradigmatic social outcasts as it made them part of a spectrum of abuse in which their alleged social dissidence was linked to other forms of social dissidence against which the Revolution must be

defended, while at the same time extending the master trope of homosexuality² to anyone who would question the Revolution: one must be queer or protoqueer if one questions the Revolution.

Such a semantic chaining led to the sort of abuses that, with historical hindsight, are implicitly denounced in the internationally successful Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío's *Fresa y chocolate* (1993). The film was touted as a plea for tolerance, while in reality this masked the historical homophobia of the period in which it is set (the events of the 1960s and 1970s documented in *Conducta impropia*) and the homophobia of the mid-1990s in which the film was made and although who is tolerated and why are never quite fully explained (Santí prefers to stress the various levels of reconciliation in the film). In the process, the truly legitimate rights—artistic, affective, sexual—of the characters of the film end up occluded by a paean to a presumed enlightened thaw in Cuban society, at least as regards “homosexuals.” By showing how the film’s elisions result from the homophobia still dominant in the 1990s in Cuba rather than dismissing it as part of an intolerant past that has been overcome in the rightful progress of the Revolution, my reading attempts to understand how, when all is said and done, an erotic relationship between Diego and David is in fact figured in the film, even if this means a sustained perverse understanding of the narrative and the “intolerance” it purports to show.

Films like *The Disappearance of García Lorca* and *Plata quemada* constitute very different versions of homophobia, both with reference to each other and in terms of what I have been saying here about homophobia. In *Disappearance*, it is impossible to avoid the issue of homoeroticism, not only because it was central to García Lorca’s life, but because it is generally understood that his growing visibility as a queer at a time when fascism and its own brand of homophobia were increasingly evident in Spain and especially in his native Granada was an important factor in his assassination in that city in 1936. By contrast to María Luisa Bemberg’s 1990 *Yo la peor de todas* on the Mexican nun-poet Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, in which problematic issues of lesbianism in her work (see Bergmann; Paz) are converted into the principal motor of the film’s narrative, *Disappearance*’s director, Marcos Zurinaga, struggles to convert the centrality of Lorca’s homoeroticism into a peripheral matter, making his assassination more the consequence of accusations of a vague and generalized issue of social corruption—Lorca is viewed as a bad role model, a Sophoclean corruptor of the young—rather than the specific consequence of the fact that the man was a queer in a city in which a strong

version of heteronormativity was viewed as a requisite against moral, social, political collapse on the eve of the Spanish Civil War. Moreover, the film is quite uncomfortable with the obsession of the fictional central character with the circumstances of Lorca's death, and it is necessary to prove his heterosexuality (as though that were ever possible) in order to avoid the audience's mistaking his interest in political history (with Lorca at the center of it) as a frenzied quest for gay heroes. This despite the way in which Jaime Manrique has, precisely, insisted that Lorca must be recognized as *primus inter pares* of gay heroes for Hispanic culture.

Plata quemada is rather a surprising film. Based on a novel by Ricardo Piglia in which the homosexual dimension of the relationship between two real-life bank thieves is considerably muted, Enrique Piñeyro's film version places their homoerotic relationship at the center of his film and, in my reading of it, shows how it becomes a tragic flaw of classical proportions that works to bring about their deaths. Yet, there is an appropriately framed anagnorisis in Piñeyro's version in which the two queer men, faced with certain death at the hands of police who are as homophobic as they are crooks themselves, reaffirm the deep relationship between them. Just as their society cannot transcend the homophobia that leads to their death (they are betrayed to the police by a woman abandoned by one of them to be with the other), Piñeyro himself is unable fully to face the consequences of the relationship his film sets out to represent. The erotic punches that are pulled in the film, the major final filming error that occurs, and the distractions of categorically displayed heterosexuality in the plot all work to suggest considerable disorientation, if not outright discomfort, in following through with what he has proposed to represent. And yet, as in the case of the perverse reading I propose for *Fresa y chocolate*, *Plata quemada* comes off as a very queer film indeed—especially in the context of the scant queer-marked filmmaking that has been forthcoming in Argentina (by contrast to narrative fiction and, quite notably, television), which has, at least in Buenos Aires, many reasons to tout an important shift toward gay rights.

Another issue that is treated in this study is the question of homosociality, particularly in its dimensions that segue into homoerotic relations. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has pointed out in her important work *Between Men* and as Newfield has shown, homosociality is not homosexuality, at least with regard to American democracy. (For a brilliant contribution to Almodóvar criticism see Maddison's analysis of homosociality and heterosociality in *Todo sobre mi madre*, 1999.) Indeed,

the two are mutually exclusive. Homosociality is understood to refer to the way in which patriarchal society forges bonds between men for the orderly transference and maintenance of masculinist power: these bonds not only allow for men to transmit power from one to another (along any number of social axes of class, caste, race, religion, profession, and the like), but also they allow for the process of inclusion of some men in power and exclusion of others from it, and they allow for the vigilant scrutiny of men to determine if they are abiding by the conditions of the patriarchy—that is, if they are worthy exponents of it.³ It is here, of course, that homophobia comes in, since homophobia works against those men who do not abide by the heteronormative rules of the patriarchy, and it works both to punish and to exclude them, often by violent death. In homosociality, women are tokens of the exchange of power between men: appropriate and adequate heterosexual relations with women are taken as a guarantee of one's conformance with the patriarchy, and it is frequently through women that patriarchal power is transmitted—for example, from a powerful man to his son-in-law.

The bonds between men range over the sociocultural spectrum between what, popularly, we call the buddy system to, in a more formal and professional context, the old-boy network; clearly, one of the effects of homosociality, in its confrontation with feminism, is to co-opt some women such that they become token men in the perpetuation of the system. Such is the case, for example, with the figure of Mamá Grande in the title story of Gabriel García Márquez's collection *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande* (1962), and one might compare Mary Daly's concept of "token torturers" in various points in her *Gyn/ecology*. In order to maintain in place the heterosexist patriarchy, it is important that homosociality never yield to homosexuality, since this would disrupt the hierarchical equality between men, as in the homophobic understanding of homoeroticism, one of them would necessarily occupy the position of the "passive"—i.e., powerless—woman.

Yet as Sedgwick makes clear in *Between Men*, her analysis of nineteenth-century British fiction, and as others have gone on to point out in elaborating on this important issue, women often serve as channels of "erotic pulsion" between men who either cannot or will not, because of the constantly looming threat of homophobia, follow through on their mutual attraction. This is the function of Dorothy Lamour in her triangular relationship with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope in their "road" films (see Cohan, "Queering the Deal," and his *Masked Men*, 85–96). A film like Tony Scott's 1986 *Top Gun* is almost comically transparent in

this regard, with the amorous relationship with the female civilian scientist Charlie(!) serving to distract attention from the bond between Tom Cruise's character, Maverick (ditto), and his dead buddy. One could immediately think of dozens of similar triangles in American filmmaking. Daniel Eisenberg has pointed out how the mythical Dulcinea in *Don Quijote* serves as a mediating function between the male pair of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza; theirs is only one of several examples of male-male bonding in Cervantes's fiction (Eisenberg, "Cervantes Saavedra," 48; Sahuquillo).

I will make this point about the often precarious nature of homosociality with reference to *Fresa y chocolate*, in which Nancy is interposed between Diego and David, and the sexual relationship between her and David ostensibly serves to show that the deep friendship that develops between Diego and David is strictly homosocial and not homoerotic—despite the clever sexual role reversal that closes the film through the exchange of symbolically charged ice cream flavors that provide the film with its title. Although less interesting as a cultural product, the Argentine Carlos Galettini's film *Convivencia* (1993), based on Oscar Viale's play by the same title, also flirts with crossing the line between homosociality and homosexuality. (A canonical text in this regard from Argentine literature is José Hernández's *Martín Fierro*, 1872/1876; see Geirola. Likewise canonical is Ricardo Güiraldes's *Don Segundo Sombra*, 1926; see Leland.) I need to be clear on this point: my critical assessment of *Convivencia* (or Viale's text on which the film is based) as a less interesting cultural product does not lie with the fact that homosociality rather than homosexuality is dealt with—that is, I am not dissatisfied with the film because it does not do what I think it should do with an opportunity to portray a gay relationship. Rather, my comments will deal with the way in which homoeroticism is barely contained in the film, and yet the film does not address why what is apparently presented as a homosocial bond, one of the many figured by Argentine cultural production, can barely contain a transformation into homoeroticism.

Since it is important to bear in mind that the patriarchy endorses homosociality but not homosexuality, it would be incorrect to say that there is a continuum between the two; they are, as I have asserted, mutually exclusive propositions in the structure of heterosexuality. Yet, the degree to which the ideology of patriarchal heteronormativity fails to address the reality of human passion means that the transformation of the heterosexual/homosexual axis from a disjunctive binary into a continuum means that when that transformation threatens to take place in

a text, we can speak very precisely of the return of the repressed. I do not believe that Galettini has organized his film around repressed homosexuality/homoeroticism: if he has, he ends up doing very little that is politically honest with it. Viale, indeed, is so taken with the concept of homosociality that his 1979 play is complemented by a female version, *Convivencia femenina* (1986). Homosociality becomes, in *No sé lo digas a nadie*, the smoke screen of a homoerotic relationship, whether viewed as a legitimate defense against homophobia in which, as one character says, “You can be anything in Peru but a queer,” or whether viewed as another manifestation of patriarchal hypocrisy at the expense of women. Same-sex bonding between thieves becomes a disruptive—and ultimately tragic—same-sex desire in *Plata quemada*, which is exactly what heteronormativity predicts will happen, makes sure will happen, when the line between heterosexist homosociality and homosexuality is crossed.

The essays in this volume are marked in general by queer issues, which means that they are not specifically interested in lesbigay lives, at least those lived on the level of lesbian or gay or bisexual or any other non- or antipatriarchal identity. This reflects the nature of the filmic production in Latin America, where the identity issues of American filmmaking are virtually absent, which in turn reflects the fact that although there is a phenomenon of identity politics in some Latin American countries (at least in large metropolitan areas) built around sexual matters, a perspective dominates that I am here calling queer, even though the word does not exist in Spanish, has only a haphazard translation into Spanish (see Alzate), and is more often than not used as a clear and therefore problematic calque from English. The reader will immediately note that most of these films deal with male-centered narratives. This is not a consequence of my desire to privilege masculinist culture—for even male queers retain a large measure of masculinist privilege. Rather, it is because the films that have been made that focus on women, such as Bemberg’s aforementioned *Yo la peor de todas*, tend to explore lesbian relationships and culture. I do not deny that lesbianism is, in the process of being whatever else it is, a queer challenge to the heteronormative patriarchy, but it is foremost about women’s lives lived as lesbians or about lesbians transcending, as Wittig would have us understand, the patriarchal category of “woman.” Clearly, this filmmaking deserves its own study, and therefore the only woman-centered narrative included here is Bemberg’s *De eso no se habla*, which is not transparently about homoeroticism, but rather which I read as an allegory of the queer. As a

consequence, discussion of it inaugurates this study—and also because I believe that Bemberg is the founding mother of a truly feminist, and also a truly queer, filmmaking in Latin America.

It will be obvious from my presentation of the issues of this study that my sources are contemporary queer studies such as exemplified by Sedgwick (in addition to *Between Men* and *Epistemology of the Closet*), Alexander Doty, Michael Warner, Jonathan Dollimore, and David M. Halperin. And obvious that I have drawn heavily on the example in queer film analysis from Richard Dyer and the pioneering work of Vito Russo, the second edition of whose *Celluloid Closet* includes some welcome references to Latin America (for an annotated registry of Spanish-language gay male films see Lechón Álvarez). This leads me to the question of theoretical imperialism. I hope it will be clear that I have not read these films in terms of any specific Anglo-American theorizing. Rather, coming from a background of international queer studies, I have used the latter perspectives to begin to talk about key texts that I identified for this project, documenting as necessary from research published in any language. If there is a preponderance of references to sources in English, it is not a consequence of any belief that the Anglo-American bibliography best informs a particular theoretical point, but rather because often it is (still) the only bibliography that is available. It is my hope, in the end, that the reader will perceive how I have not read these texts as entries into an international lesbigay/homoerotic/queer canon but as texts firmly grounded in specific issues of Latin American national societies and a continental (although primarily urban) understanding of sexuality. These are Latin American cultural productions, and I wish them to be understood primarily as such. If they also contribute to transnational debates about same-sex desire, patriarchal heteronormativity, homosociality, and homophobia, it is a consequence of the growing internationality of Latin American filmmaking in terms of the ambitions of directors and production companies, the wish to bring certain internationally debated issues to a national and continental grounding, the technical quality of many of the films being made, and—quite simply—the international recognition that so much Latin American filmmaking is now beginning to obtain.⁴

This study would not have been possible without the generous support of various programs at Arizona State University, which has contributed enormously to my scholarship over almost four decades, and the generosity of friends who aided me in obtaining some of the films

I examine here. My exceptionally fine research assistants over the several years of this project have included Eduardo Caro, Cecilia Rosales, Daniel Enrique Pérez, Cecilia Mafla Bustamante, María Martell, Álvaro Vergara-Mery, Kim Furumoto, Mikel Imaz, and Daniel Smith. Their assistance in reading these films has kept me from committing serious blunders of language and cultural content.

The essay on *El lugar sin límites* is forthcoming in *Violence, Bodies, and the Color of Fear*, edited by Arturo Aldama for Indiana University Press; the essay on *De eso no se habla* is forthcoming in a special issue of the *Revista canadiense de estudios hispánicos* devoted to María Luisa Bemberg; a Spanish version of the essay on *Fresa y chocolate* will appear in a special issue on contemporary Cuban culture.