Lourdes Torres

Introduction

Radical new Latina lesbian representations emerged in the 1980s with the rise of a Third World women's movement and the publication of texts such as *This Bridge Called My Back, Loving in the War Years, Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza,* and *Compañeras: Latina Lesbians.*[1] Until that time, depictions of Latinas in both mainstream Anglo and Latino/a popular culture were limited primarily to a constant rehashing of trite, outdated, heterobiased roles. This new body of work boldly challenged the virtual absence of Latina lesbian representations and created an impetus for the emergence of Latina lesbian political, creative, and scholarly works in various genres.

These new, specifically lesbian representations created a space not only for Latina lesbians, but also for Latino gay men, as well as for progressive Latina women who had felt ignored and underrepresented in both mainstream and Latino popular culture. Interestingly, this is one of the rare instances in which lesbians rather than gay men were the first to achieve public visibility in a cultural context. While Latina lesbians do not identify themselves exclusively on the basis of sexuality, choosing rather to foreground the multiple dimensions of their racial, class, and sexual experience, their relatively open, lesbian visibility positions them in sharp contrast to lesbians in Spain and Latin America, who for the most part have not assumed a highly visible public presence.

Historically, lesbianism in Latin America and Spain has emerged in a veiled or ambiguous manner in political, cultural, and literary life. However, transgressive female sexuality seems always to have existed, as is evident in the number of conference papers, articles, and books that now explore female same-sex desire in a variety of historical and social contexts in Europe and Latin America. For example, there has been a recent proliferation of studies of female sexuality in early modern Spain, an era when one might not expect to find much evidence of female same-sex desire, especially given that some recent critics argue that lesbianism as an identity category did not exist before the nineteenth century. A new generation of readers armed with novel and traditional critical tools is discovering evidence of female homoeroticism in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish legal, medical, literary, political, and

religious discourses.[2] In fact, in an overview of non-heterosexual desire in this time period, the historian Louis Compton remarks that Golden Age Spaniards were specialists on lesbianism.[3]

Perhaps what began as the questioning of transgressive gender categories in scholarly research has led to the exploration of transgressive desire in seemly improbable places and time periods. Likewise, in the Latin American context we have witnessed contentious debates over the sexuality of two Latin American icons from different time periods: the colonial Mexican Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and the Chilean Nobel Prize-winner Gabriela Mistral. These stimulating controversies have opened the door to lesbian readings of canonical and non-canonical texts in the past decades, as gay and lesbian Hispanists have attempted to overcome the "homosexual panic" of earlier critics and begun to explore transgressive sexuality in a variety of sites.[4]

By the end of the twentieth century, a previously silenced subject, lesbian and gay Hispanic writing, came out of the closet. With collections such as *Entiendes: Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings* (1995), *Hispanisms and Homosexualities* (1998), *Queer Iberia: Crossing Cultures, Crossing Sexualities* (1999), *Reading and Writing the Ambiente: Queer Sexualities in Latino, Latin American, and Spanish Culture* (2000), *and Lesbianism and Homosexuality in Spanish Golden Age Literature and Society* (2000),[5] the study of queer writing by "Hispanic" writers from Europe to Latin America and the United States emerged as a field (described by Silvia Molloy as "homosexual Hispanisms") worthy of serious scholarly attention.[6] Given the tradition of heterobiased conservatism prevalent in Hispanic studies, these anthologies are particularly groundbreaking. Although the broad category of homosexual Hispanisms includes lesbian studies, most anthologies in fact tend to focus the majority of their essays on male homosexualities; as a result, about one-quarter of the articles in the collections mentioned feature female same-sex desire, and even fewer study Latina lesbians. Ironically, one of the most balanced anthologies, *Lesbianism and Homosexuality in Spanish Golden Age Literature and Society,* studies transgressive sexuality during the early modern period, when lesbian desire was believed to be invisible and, for some, nonexistent or even anachronistic.

The imbalance is not limited to these anthologies. It is found in most collections that deal with homosexuality in Spain and Latin America. For example, the source book *Spanish Writers on Gay and Lesbian Themes* contains entries about sixty writers who are either identified as homosexual or write on homosexual themes.[7] Of these, only thirteen refer to writers who address lesbian themes. One explanation frequently offered for this inequity is the lack of both lesbian writing and critical work on literary representations of female same-sex desire. In his introduction to *Spanish Writers on Gay and Lesbian Themes,* for example, Daniel Eisenberg provides a historical overview of homosexuality in Spain from prehistory to the present that dedicates only four paragraphs in twenty pages to lesbian writing in Spain. He explains that "female homosexuality is largely exempt, and thus little is known about it."[8] Similarly, in David Foster's *Gay and Lesbian Themes in Latin American Writing,* only five of thirty-five novels examined address lesbian themes.[9] Foster laments this imbalance and

suggests that "lesbian interests have yet to be as consistently thematized as male homosexual ones have."[10]

Unfortunately, even in contexts in which lesbian writing is available and in which studies on lesbian same-sex desire are in circulation, anthologies that present critical essays on lesbian and homosexual men's writing still tend to privilege male homosexuality. For example, unlike the peninsular and Latin American case, U.S. Latina lesbians in the past two decades have been much more visible and have published more extensively than Latino gay writers in both creative and critical venues. However, in the one Latino/a gay and lesbian collection now available, *Chicano/Latino Homoerotic Identities,* only six of the sixteen critical studies deal with lesbian sexualities.[11] Such a pattern of marginalization within this emerging field needs to be examined. We might bear in mind that the study of homosexualities in Spanish, Latin American, and Latino/a literatures is a new intervention, and that many of the initial studies in this exciting field focus on same-sex desire in canonized works. Because women, particularly lesbians, are so poorly represented in the literary canon, it is not surprising that scholarly studies of their work have not been at the foreground of this nascent field.

Although the recent anthologies strive to be inclusive, their generalized introductions to gay and lesbian history or studies tend to refer almost exclusively to male homosexualities. Because of the relative scarcity of texts documenting lesbian history, women tend to be rendered invisible or marginalized in works that seek to represent both gay male and lesbian writing. *Tortilleras: Hispanic and U.S. Latina Lesbian Expression,* the first anthology to focus exclusively on queer readings of Spanish, Latin American, and U.S. Latina lesbian literature and culture, begins to address the notable underrepresentation and marginalization of lesbians. A separate study examining lesbians in Hispanic literature is perhaps a necessary step, given that lesbian cultural history in many significant ways has evolved differently from that of male homosexuals and cannot always be collapsed under the same rubric. Because men's and women's experiences are structurally different in all societies, and political and cultural contexts shape and condition sexuality in particular ways for men and women, conflating lesbian and gay homosexualities can be problematic. Subsuming the study of lesbians under a general homosexual umbrella often erases the gender hierarchy and gender ideologies inherent in most societies and thus renders lesbians less visible.

It is certainly true that, given the historical tendency to focus on men's sexuality, studies of women's same-sex desire are less available; consequently, there is a tendency to conflate the male homosexual and lesbian practices and histories. However, by positing analogous practices or meanings for male and female same-sex desire, well-intentioned studies run the risk of undertheorizing and underanalyzing lesbian identities and practices. Although there may be good reasons for presenting a unified trajectory of lesbian and gay histories, at this juncture, as more and more studies focusing on women become available, insights can be gained by separating the histories and focusing exclusively on female same-sex desire. *Tortilleras: Hispanic and U.S. Latina Lesbian Expression* thus brings to the forefront essays on Spanish, Latin American, and Latina lesbianisms in the spirit of encouraging more studies in this area.

Another problem emerges, however, when one assumes that lesbian practices are the same, or have the same meaning, in all historical, political, and geographic contexts. As Evelyn Blackwood and Saskia Wieringa document in their collection *Female Desires: Same-Sex Relations and Transgender Practices across Cultures,* sexual acts, patterns of behavior, and the meanings attributed to these vary according to historical moment and sociocultural context.[12] In this collection, it is not surprising to see that, in sites where dictatorships and right-wing governments rule, possibilities for lesbian expression may be limited, and expressions of same-sex desire may take a different form than in places where such expression entails less risk. Latina lesbians in the context of the United States have been able to express same-sex desire more openly than lesbians living in some Latin American counties, where openly gay and lesbian people are routinely subjected to state and police violence.

Lesbianisms thus merit their own investigation in each sociocultural context. Yet this still raises a question about including in one collection studies of female same-sex desire in Spanish, Latin American, and U.S. Latina contexts. The field of Hispanism pertains to those communities with a cultural connection to Spain, as well as to the study of Spanish-speaking peoples and to those who share a Spanish-speaking heritage. As Sylvia Molloy and Robert McKee Irwin remind us, for some the groups encompassed by this term share some basic cultural values and practices, whereas for others "Hispanism" refers to an imagined community that spans centuries and nations and is nothing more than a convenient organizing construct.[13] In fact, even within these general geographic and national categories there is little sense of uniformity. The multiple subcultures in Spain (Catalan, Basque, and Castilian, for example) and the United States (Puerto Rican, Chicana, Cuban, and so forth), as well as the nationalistic and indigenous divisions in Latin America, create anything but a unified lesbian "Hispanic" identity. In any case, one thing that clearly links Spain to Latin America and Latino/a communities is a history of colonization. In the present context, it is worthwhile to ask whether this link or any other connections can be established among Spanish, Latin American, and Latina lesbianisms or the representation of female same-sex desire in the literary arts in these three broad contexts.

Especially in the cases of Spain and Latin America, investigations of female homoeroticism have been marginalized and obscured. In this volume, Sherry Velasco shows that the legislation of lesbianism in early modern Spain resulted in a tendency to ignore or minimize the criminal transgression of sexual love between women because such love was not interpreted as threatening to normative heteropatriarchal order. However, contemporary critics have been slow to consider the study of same-sex desire in the early modern period because of the assumption that lesbian identity is a nineteenth-century phenomenon. While some scholars reject use of the term "lesbian" (as an identity category) for pre–nineteenth-century women-loving women, Velasco argues that this term is not anachronistic, because there is evidence that this and other phrases denoting same-sex desire between women were already in circulation during the early modern period. Moreover, most concepts and terms have changed meaning over time, but selectively avoiding the term "lesbian" in discussions

of same-sex desire before the nineteenth century excludes lesbianism from certain considerations. The history of female homoeroticism is still being written, and regardless of the terms used, lesbian desire has a unique history that requires further investigation. Literary studies of lesbianism in contemporary Spanish literature seek to uncover an often veiled or ambiguous representation of female same-sex desire (see especially the chapters by Wilfredo Hernández, Inmaculada Pertusa, Gema Pérez-Sánchez, and Nancy Vosburg in this volume). For example, Hernández traces the similarities and evolution of the image of the lesbian in contemporary Spanish literature and relates the changing treatment of lesbianism to the gradual liberalization from the era of Francisco Franco's dictatorship to the emergence of democratic reforms in Spain following his death in 1975. He demonstrates that, during the era of government censorship, writers had to use coded references and ambiguity to represent lesbianism. Hernández argues that, although the early works of writers such as Teresa Barbero and Ana María Matute may seem muted by today's standards, they represent a challenge to existing Spanish mores and laws against homosexuality, given the social and political climate of the time in which they were written.

Likewise, the relative dearth of studies of female same-sex desire in Latin America can be attributed in part to the heteropatriarchal regimes that make explicit explorations of lesbianism a life-risking venture for writers. As Norma Mogrovejo and others document, Latin American lesbian activists began organizing an autonomous lesbian movement in the 1980s after attempts to work with other potential allies proved untenable.[14] Although they had worked for decades within the male-dominated gay and lesbian movement and within the mainly heterosexual and heterosexist feminist program, they became frustrated with sexism in the gay movement and with lesbophobia in the feminist movement. It has been much more difficult for lesbians to organize and conduct meetings like the series of Latin American and Caribbean feminist meetings that have taken place. Internal conflicts account for some of the difficulties in organizing, but the deadly repression and violence with which lesbians are often threatened presents a greater obstacle. Critical treatment of lesbian topics will also be slow to emerge in a context in which academic feminism is underdeveloped, as Amy Kaminsky points out, because scholars do not want to be marked as lesbian.[15] Thus, it is not surprising to find that most writers who address female same-sex desire do so in a veiled form or from an exiled position. Writers who dare to deal with lesbianism in their home country often suffer persecution and abuse.

As I noted earlier, the situation of Latinas in the United States is very different from the situation of those in Spain and Latin America. In the Latino/a case, discussions of homosexuality were initiated not by Latino gay men but by Latina lesbian political and creative writers. In the 1980s, discussions and publications centering on Latina lesbianisms emerged. This body of work not only boldly challenged the virtual absence of Latina lesbian representations; it also created an impetus for the proliferation of Latina lesbian creative works in many genres, including film (*Carmelita Tropicana: Your Kunst Is Your Waffen* and *Brincando el charco: Portrait of a Puerto Rican*[16]); comedy (Monica Palacios, Marga Gomez[17]); journal publications (*Esto No Tiene Nombre,*

Conmoción[18]); and literary fiction (Terri de la Peña, Emma Pérez, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, and Achy Obejas[19]). These new and specifically lesbian representations made possible innovative readings of gay and lesbian Latina and Latino identity that had been absent from the political and literary Latino/a world.

There are historical and situational differences in the genealogy of Spanish, Latin American, and Latina lesbianisms, but there is also a common struggle for representation and legitimacy in the sociocultural and literary worlds. "Tortilleras" in the title of this anthology is one of the many names used for lesbians in Hispanic and Latina contexts. Others include "jota," "loca," "pata," "marimacho," "culera," "lambiscona," and "pajuelona." Although these words are often used in derogatory ways, Hispanic and Latina lesbians have reappropriated many of them as affirming identity markers. This ongoing project of redefining and reconfiguring same-sex desire has myriad historical and cultural variations that encompass questions of gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, and class, making it impossible to posit a singular Hispanic or Latina lesbian. The essays in this anthology investigate the creation, maintenance and contradictions of lesbian space(s) and lesbian identities in a range of Hispanic and Lesbian texts and performances. The book is divided into four parts, each of which focuses on central issues of Hispanic and Latina lesbian reality: Coming Out/Covering Up, (Re)presenting Lesbian Desire, Sites of Resistance, and Racialized Lesbianisms.

The essays in Part I: Coming Out/Covering Up engage the complications and intricacies involved in the coming-out process for Hispanic and Latina lesbian women and for literary expressions of lesbianism. They explore some of the factors that shape the revelations and limitations possible in various historical, political, and cultural contexts. It was not until the 1990s that a Spanish writer (Andrea Luca) publicly discussed her lesbianism.[20] Prior to this, lesbian writing in Spain was ambiguously represented. In his chapter "From the Margins to the Mainstream: Lesbian Characters in Spanish Fiction (1964–79)," Wilfredo Hernández explores the effects of political and social repression on Catalan authors writing on lesbian themes or presenting women-loving women characters during two decades of extreme censorship. Hernández offers a specific lesbian trajectory for lesbian writers in a particular historical site, positing a genealogy of representations of same-sex desire in five novels by Catalan writers published in the 1960s and '70s in Spain. He argues that similar images, location, motives, and outcomes in the writing of Ana María Matute, Teresa Barbero, Ana María Moix, and Esther Tusquets point to an indigenous lesbian tradition in Spanish letters, and that later novels by Tusquets, Moix, and Luis Goytisolo differ from earlier representations in their more explicit treatment of lesbian sexuality. Despite this movement toward a more open articulation of lesbianism, Hernández concludes that in the end an autonomous lesbian subject does not surface in any of the five novels discussed.

The ambiguous and coded coming-out process through which lesbianism emerges in Spanish literature is also taken up by Inmaculada Pertusa in "Carme Riera: (Un)covering the Lesbian Subject or Simulation of a Coming Out?" which discusses the con-

tradictions inherent in the coming-out process through an analysis of two of Carme Riera's short stories. Reading Riera's stories through the lens of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's proposal concerning the epistemology of the closet, Pertusa shows how, in "Te dejo, amor, en prenda la mar" and "Pongo por testigo a las gaviotas," the coming-out process signals a covering up as well as a revealing. Gestures of disclosure by the stories' protagonists reveal that the act of coming out simultaneously enacts a making visible and a reproduction of closed spaces. While Riera opens a discourse on lesbians and thus renders them visible in Spanish letters, Pertusa argues, the stories ultimately emphasize through narrative strategies such as ambiguity, silence, and denial the double act of (re)vealing and veiling, of simultaneously coming out and covering up. Interestingly, a recent text on lesbianism in Spain in the 1990s by Olga Viñuales argues that female desire remains muted even within the visible lesbian movement where lesbians, although they may be out, are reluctant to identify specifically as lesbians publicly.[21] The women interviewed preferred vague identity markers such as "tener pluma," "entender," and "mas que amigas" to less ambiguous terms such as "lesbiana." Viñuales argues that lesbians' fear of being treated as a homogeneous group, one that conforms to social stereotypes of the masculine dyke, continues to make difficult any public discussion of the subject of lesbian identity.[22]

The coming-out process is no less fraught with contradictions and uncertainties in Latin America. Given that region's political reality, with its dynamic mix of Catholicism, heterobiased traditions, and authoritarian regimes, Norma Mogrovejo describes the writing of the history of the lesbian movement as much more than a historical, anthropological, or sociopolitical task. She refers to it primarily as an archaeological task that relies on oral histories and the reconstruction of personal archives that are always in danger of being destroyed or disappearing.[23] Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes explores coming-out dynamics in a Caribbean context in his chapter, "Tomboy Tantrums and Queer Infatuations: Reading Lesbianism in Magali García Ramis's *Felices días, tío Sergio*." If representations of male homosexuality have been scant in Puerto Rican letters, lesbianism and lesbian desire have been all but invisible. La Fountain-Stokes proposes that lesbianism is in fact present but coded in Puerto Rican literature and that only a queer reading will unveil the taboo subject. In the novel *Felices días, tío Sergio,* La Fountain-Stokes argues, lesbianism is insinuated through the depiction of a young girl's marginality and oddness. The "lector entendido" reads Lidia's lesbianism in her rebelliousness and in the anxiety provoked at home by her refusal to adopt "appropriate" gender behavior. Lidia is linked to her homosexual uncle because of their gender nonconformity and similar nationalistic sympathies; in the middle-class Puerto Rican society of the 1950s, such an affinity, like gender (in)difference, was read as aberrant. Thus, La Fountain-Stokes argues that, rather than an explicit presence of lesbianism, Magali García Ramis's novel contains an exchange between lesbian and male homosexuality.

The last chapter in Part I engages aspects of coming out in the work of the Chicana novelist Terri de la Peña. Of the authors analyzed in this section, de la Peña is the one whose writing most clearly articulates an out, openly lesbian identity. This is

not surprising, given that her work has evolved in the U.S. context, where lesbians in the past decades have established a more visible presence, as shown by the growth of a specifically American genre of coming-out stories in lesbian fiction. In "Coming-Out Stories and the Politics of Identity in the Narrative of Terri de la Peña," Salvador Fernández traces the creation of Chicana lesbian space in autobiographical and fictional writing and discusses the articulation of a new Latina lesbian voice by employing Emma Pérez's theoretical musings on constructing "un sito y lengua" for silenced Chicanas. Fernández identifies de la Peña's *Margins* as the first Latina lesbian coming-out novel, locating it within the tradition of the work of Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa and crediting de la Peña's intervention for its nuanced exploration of Chicana lesbian sexuality and erotic discourse in fiction. Fernández also documents how de la Peña's work challenges the hegemonic discourse of the Anglo mainstream, as well as of Anglo feminist and lesbian literary traditions. The work creates a "sitio y lengua" for the representation of Latina lesbian subjectivity. All of the essays in Part I underscore the idea that, although similar difficulties are encountered in the coming-out process in the Spanish, Latin American, and Latina context, this process of revelation is also marked by specific historical and situational particularities.

Part II: (Re)presenting Lesbian Desire takes up the question of how Hispanic and Latina lesbian desire is represented in literature, theater, and film. The essays in this part interrogate diverse strategies that enunciate lesbian desire in a variety of Hispanic and Latina contexts. Given that external and internal oppression problematize an open expression of lesbian identity, the articulation of same-sex desire will sometimes be located in unexpected places. The first two chapters in Part II explore diverse aspects of silence and desire in two of Ana María Moix's most powerful texts. In an elegant reading of Moix's "Las virtudes peligrosas," Nancy Vosburg demonstrates how the text de-centers "women's silence" in symbolic discourse, foregrounds the power of the silent gaze, and characterizes the failure of patriarchal force to control women's sexuality. Her essay, "Silent Pleasures and Pleasures of Silence: Ana María Moix's 'Las virtudes peligrosas,'" asks whether the text about two women who engage in a life-long, silent, scopophilic relationship should be read primarily in terms of narcissistic pleasure or lesbian desire. Vosburg embraces a lesbian reading that is characterized by ambiguity, the deferral of desire, delayed revealing of narrative voice, and many layerings of silence. Critiquing other readings of "Las virtudes peligrosas" that silence lesbian desire, Vosburg maps a lesbian reading that finds the reader, like the story's narrator, engaged in a voyeuristic process, attempting to unveil the ambiguities of the text. Employing Moix's own theory of the erotic, which "is a question of communicating as much as possible by silencing as much as possible," Vosburg locates the text's erotic nature in the deferral of desire and the staging of appearances as disappearances.

Gema Pérez-Sánchez also problematizes issues of authorial and critical silence in her chapter, "Reading, Writing, and the Love that Dares Not Speak Its Name: Eloquent Silences in Ana María Moix's *Julia.*" She explores the layers of silence(s) in the 1968 Spanish novel *Julia* and in the critical responses it has generated. Because the novel

was published under Franco's dictatorship, astute readers must read between the lines, via the novel's gaps and silences, to flesh out a narrative of lesbian desire. By playing on the said and the unsaid, Pérez-Sánchez deconstructs how Moix deploys a veiled lesbian narrative that, in a context of censorship and repression, is "understood" only by a "lector entendido" who can recognize queer codes and the re-semanticization of silence(s). Pérez-Sánchez deciphers the encoded meanings of silence(s) that pervade the text and, like Vosburg, argues that previous readings of the novel perpetuate the censorship of the forbidden topic of lesbianism. While Pérez-Sánchez demonstrates that the narrative's silences ultimately are an unsuccessful feminist strategy for the novel's young narrator, she argues nevertheless that Moix successfully dramatizes the dangers of silence as a feminist strategy for heterosexual and lesbian women. Thus, these two essays consider the benefits and dangers of silence as a vehicle for the expression of lesbian desire and feminist politics.

Because works that theorize lesbian desire in Spanish, Latin American, and Latina contexts are scarce, European and North American models of reading and analysis frequently are transposed and grafted onto these texts. Janis Breckenridge breaks a different type of silence as she seeks to expand the paradigms now available for conceptualizing attraction between women. In "Outside the Castle Walls: Beyond Lesbian Counterplotting in Cristina Peri Rossi's *Desastres íntimos*," she undertakes a lesbian reading of two short stories in the 1997 collection by Uruguay's Cristina Peri Rossi. Although Peri Rossi's texts for the most part are not overtly marked as lesbian, she often encodes her work by using a male narrative voice that identifies the female body as its object of desire. Breckenridge builds on Terry Castle's proposition that, in lesbian fiction, a subverted triangulation allows for female bonding by positioning men between women. According to Castle, this "counterplotting" leads to both a disruption of heterosexual relationships and a realignment of canonical narrative codes. Breckenridge analyzes two of Peri Rossi's short stories, "La semilla" and "El testigo," as examples of lesbian counterplotting that pre-empt male homosocial bonding and thus create a space for the surfacing of lesbian desire. Thus, Breckenridge goes beyond Castle's paradigm for lesbian narratives, which is found to be too rigid and limiting to account for desire as represented in Peri Rossi's work, as well as in other recent lesbian texts.

Regina Buccola is interested in theorizing ways to both represent women as desiring subjects and articulate women's experience of sexual abuse in women's theater. In her chapter, "'He Made Me a Hole!' Gender Bending, Sexual Desire, and the Representation of Sexual Violence," Buccola develops an analysis of Cherríe Moraga's *Giving Up the Ghost* that embodies a troubling intersection of lesbian sexual desire and abuse. Although elements of the play lend themselves to heterosexual readings, Buccola argues, feminist performance strategies subvert the male gaze. One such strategy involves disrupting linear temporality, while another addresses the fracturing of the subject, since Corky and Marisa are presented together on the stage at different moments of development. An interactive performance strategy that engages the spectator as a participant in the theatrical performance also provides a disruption of the

male gaze and enacts the possibility for a powerful subject position for female characters and audience participants. All of the essays in Part II suggest that lesbian desire is represented and embodied in Spanish, Latin American, and Latina texts in ways that involve a rereading of silence and a disruption of familiar paradigms.

Although the patterns and practices of female same-sex desire are clearly mediated by the customs, traditions, and laws that exist in any sociocultural context, Hispanic and Latina lesbians have enacted creative tactics to defy the forces that seek to make them invisible. Part III: Sites of Resistance examines strategies of resistance and rebellion enacted by Hispanic and Latina lesbians. The studies in this part consider a range of tactics deployed in lesbian texts as successful or not-so-successful means of articulating a lesbian presence. In "*Bomberas* on Stage: Carmelita Tropicana Speaking in Tongues against History, Madness, Fate, and the State," Karina Cespedes explores the weapons used by Alina Troyano to create a space for Cuban American lesbianism in her performance piece *Milk of Amnesia.* By using tools such as campy choteo, drag, and CUMAAs (Collective Unconscious Memory Appropriation Attacks), Cespedes dissects how Carmelita Tropicana, a transplanted Cuban, attempts to negotiate the meanings of *cubanidad* offered to her from both the reactionary right and the idealistic left. According to Cespedes, *Milk of Amnesia* deconstructs these idealized visions and in the process, through the use of Latina lesbian camp and humor, posits a new queer *cubanidad.* A trip back to Cuba is narrated through the voices of both Alina Troyana and her creation, Carmelita Tropicana; this parallel journey allows for a multiplicity of viewpoints, from the logical to the schizophrenic. The piece challenges sexist, racist, and homophobic constructions of *cubanidad* and provides a site of resistance previously unarticulated for the Cuban American lesbian.

Because of the power of heteronormative patriarchy, the tools used to resist its grip are often subtle but no less effective. María Claudia André considers some of the methods used to resist the recent readings of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's conjectured lesbianism. In "Empowering the Feminine/Feminist/Lesbian Subject through the Lens: The Representation of Women in María Luisa Bemberg's 'Yo, la peor de todas,'" André traces Bemberg's feminist filmic discourse, specifically as it is exemplified in her historical film *Yo, la peor de todas,* which is based on Octavio Paz's biographical work of the seventeenth-century Mexican nun. André discusses how Bemberg represents the relationship between Sor Juana (renowned as Latin America's first feminist) and the Spanish vicereine who befriends and protects her. Despite Paz's suppression of the possibility of Sor Juana's lesbianism, André reads the film as a study of the intellectual, emotional, and erotic relationship that ensues between these women, who, although they are from very different worlds, are similarly subjected to gender restrictions in their respective spheres of the convent and the court. André argues that duality or doubleness between the two women is enacted throughout *Yo, la peor de todas,* and ambiguous erotic discourse pervades the film. As viewers enter the closed worlds of the two women, they become accomplices in a voyeuristic act and must decode the nature of the erotic relationship. The differences between the sacred and the profane, as well as between eroticism and spirituality, are blurred in the film. André contends that, because lesbianism is still perceived as a threat, femi-

nist cultural workers such as Bemberg must subvert mainstream heterosexual discourse via strategies of ambiguity and multiplicity to challenge heteronormativity and create a new language of representation.

Another way to resist patriarchy is by destabilizing the notion that the family unit is conceivable only through the heterosexual union of a man and a woman. Sara Cooper considers a radical departure from this normalized ideal in "The Lesbian Family in Cristina Peri Rossi's 'The Witness': A Study in Utopia and Infiltration." Cooper underscores that, in addition to the invisibility of lesbians in Latin American letters, there is a lack of narratives on Latin American lesbian or homosexual family structures. Departing from insights offered by family studies theory, Cooper explores the concept of the gay family in a Latin American cultural context. As with coming-out stories that play a vital part in making visible gay and lesbian stories, lesbian family stories play a similarly important cultural role. In Rossi's "El testigo," two lesbian women and the son of one of the women set up what initially seems to be a utopic alternative family unit. Cooper finds a tension between the presentation and possibility of an ideal lesbian family and the reality of patriarchal violence. She argues that, although the story culminates in a horrific and fantastically violent episode, the narrative is revolutionary for representing an overtly lesbian family in Latin American.

In the final chapter in Part III, Elisa A. Garza considers how Chicanas are reshaping the narrative form itself as an act of resistance that mirrors and reflects their lesbian lives. In "Chicana Lesbianism and the Multi-Genre Text," she examines how Chicana lesbians refuse to silence any part of themselves in their literary work. This essay explores the meaning of the multi-genred text in the writing of Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa—specifically, the breaking out of traditional genre boundaries by these Latina lesbian authors. Garza places the work of Moraga and Anzaldúa in the transgressive tradition of ethnic women's writing that often departs from canonized literary tradition and is realized in nontraditional texts such as cookbooks and journal entries. Garza argues that writing in multiple genres involves a rejection of fragmentation and of the silencing of contradictions in narrative voice. Such writing rejects the dichotomy of public and private, community and individual, and is articulated from a racial, cultural, sexual, and academic space. Garza documents how Anzaldúa and Moraga traverse geographical, cultural, and literary borders and how the shifting of genres mirrors the resistance of multiple oppressions. The essays in Part III, then, explore the myriad tactics Latin American and Latina lesbians deploy to resist, rebel, and create new possibilities for their lives and their writing.

While all of the essays in the anthology investigate questions of lesbianism and identity, the chapters in Part IV: Racialized Lesbianisms deal explicitly with the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality in the lives of women. In the 1980s and '90s, women of color developed critiques of political movements against racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia founded on issues or strategies that isolate any one of these factors as singularly important.[24] Monocausal or additive models of oppression have been replaced by theories that explore the intersectionality of oppressions. Such approaches foreground the necessity of considering not only gender when discussing women's condition but also its interconnection with discrimination based on race,

ethnicity, sexuality, and class. These models, which consider the simultaneity of oppressions, create a space to examine how diverse oppressions intersect, feed, and reinforce one another. The studies in Part IV underscore the centrality of intersectionality, regardless of period or geographic location. In her study "Interracial Lesbian Erotics in Early Modern Spain: Catalina de Erauso and Elena/o de Céspedes," Sherry Velasco traces the history of two transgendered individuals in seventeenth-century Spain. Although Erauso and Céspedes both lived as men and desired women, they received very different treatment from royal, religious, and legal authorities when their anatomical status was investigated. Céspedes, a mulatta claiming hermaphroditism, received punishment; the aristocratic Basque lieutenant nun Erauso, by contrast, was rewarded by church and crown. This, Velasco argues, exposes the genealogies of race, class, and ethnicity that account for the divergent trajectories of these two women-loving transgendered historical figures.

The other chapters in Part IV consider issues of intersectionality in the context of Latinas in the United States. All three studies articulate how the complexities of race, class, and sexuality play out in the Latina communities. In "Violence, Desire, and Transformative Remembering in Emma Pérez's *Gulf Dreams*," Lourdes Torres analyzes how race and ethnicity are intimately related to questions of desire, power, and violence in her reading of Emma Pérez's *Gulf Dreams.* This novel chronicles the obsessive love of two Chicanas, whose twenty-year relationship is marked by repression, manipulation, and emotional and physical violence. Departing from a framework grounded in the intersectionality of oppressions, Torres suggests that early experiences of molestation and of racial, class, and sexual discrimination condition the development of sexual desire. The protagonists, who have been victimized by childhood sexual assault, seem destined to model their perpetrators and engage in a cycle of seduction and abuse in their relationships with men and other women. Torres claims that memory serves as a central strategy to explore the complexities of Latina lesbian violence and desire. Pérez enacts what bell hooks refers to as "a politicization of memory that distinguishes nostalgia, that longing for something to be as it once was, a kind of useless act, from that remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present."[25]

The politics of race within Latino/a communities has been a thorny issue that too often has been marked by denial or lack of sustained discussion. Although the racial system imposed on Latinos in the United States may be different from the categorizations that originate in our home countries, native hierarchies do exist and are transposed to the already highly racialized U.S. context. The often painful repercussions of refusing to confront racial hierarchies and difference within Latino communities and families has been a frequent subject of literary works;[26] it has also been the subject of scholarly attention within Latino/a studies.[27] Interestingly, while Cherríe Moraga's work has received much critical attention, issues of race—and, in particular, "blackness"—in her work have largely escaped critical attention. Christina Sharpe's "Learning to Live without Black Familia: Cherríe Moraga's Nationalist Articulations" analyzes borders in Moraga's work as sites where racial differences are

interrogated and simultaneously enforced and erased. In her reading of Moraga's work, from *This Bridge Called My Back* to *Loving in the War Years* and *The Last Generation,* Sharpe finds that Moraga not only rejects but also reproduces repressive borders.[28] She traces in Moraga's work a shift from the development of a third-world feminist movement, a movement premised on the centrality of coalition building, to a more limited Chicano nationalist project. Sharpe argues that the recuperation of Chicano nationalism is ultimately accomplished through an exorcism of "blackness."

In "Shameless Histories: Chicana Lesbian Fictions Talking Race/Talking Sex," Catrióna Rueda Esquibel explores how Chicana lesbian writers are creating their own histories, as they have been written out of Chicano heterosexual and white lesbian accounts. Rather than being completely rejected, oppressive and exclusionary heterosexual Latino and white lesbian cultural forms are appropriated and reconfigured to represent a specifically Latina lesbian history. Drawing on three aspects of Chicano/a and lesbian popular culture—the corrido, pulp fiction, and oral history—Rueda Esquibel documents how a racialized Chicana existence is created in three Chicana lesbian short stories. Although these racialized Chicana lesbian representations are "fictions," they serve to validate a Chicana lesbian history that is erased in other literary and scholarly genres. The stories that Rueda Esquibel analyzes are steeped in working-class Southwestern Chicana rural realities; they elucidate how the love of Chicana lesbians is conditioned by their gender, racial, and class positions. Rueda Esquibel's work explores a strategy used by Chicana writers that consists of the reappropriation and transformation of heterosexual Latino and white lesbian cultural forms. Rueda Esquibel demonstrates how Chicana writers use this strategy of "queering" Chicano heterosexual cultural codes and racializing white lesbian cultural forms to write themselves into history.

The Spanish, Latin American, and Latina lesbian texts analyzed in this volume share a number of concerns, such as an exploration of the coming-out process, the challenge of expressing lesbian desire within the context of heteropatriarchy, the exploration of sites of resistance, and the articulation of the self within the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. They are all related in one way or another to the power of naming that, in this instance, involves making female same-sex desire visible. However, the range of texts analyzed in this anthology interrupts an inclination to configure a monolithic Hispanic or Latina lesbianism. Similarly, the analyses used demonstrate a diversity of queer readings and literary perspectives that open, rather than limit, lesbian readings. Although the anthology clearly does not offer an exhaustive treatment of Spanish, Latin American, and Latina lesbianisms, it continues the task of revealing how Hispanic and Latina lesbian practices and identities are defined, negotiated, and projected across a range of historical moments and cultural and literary spaces. As Spanish, Latin American, and Latina lesbian creative works become more available, and as new readings of contemporary, modern, and premodern texts that feature female homoeroticism are undertaken, the emerging field of homosexual Hispanisms promises to be as rich with readings of female same-sex desire as it is with readings of gay male homosexualities.

Notes

1. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1981); Cherríe Moraga, *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (Boston: South End Press, 1983); Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987); Juanita Ramos, ed., *Compañeras: Latina Lesbians* (New York: Latina Lesbian History Project, 1987).

2. See Sherry Velasco, *The Lieutenant Nun: Transgenderism, Lesbian Desire and Catalina de Erauso* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), esp. chap. 2, which provides an overview of studies of lesbianism in the early modern period.

3. See Louis Compton, "The Myth of Lesbian Impunity: Capital Laws from 1270 to 1791," in "Special Issue: Historical Perspectives on Homosexuality," ed. Salvatore J. Licata and Robert P. Peterson, *Journal of Homosexuality* 6, nos. 1–2 (1980–81): 11–25.

4. This body of research has also given rise to contemporary explorations of lesbianism in a variety of cultural forms. For example, Pedro Almodóvar's 1982 film *Entre Tinieblas* explores the fascinating relationship between lesbian desire and mysticism in a post–Franco Spanish convent, and Luisa Bemberg's 1989 film *Yo, la peor de todas* presents a modern reading of the relationship between Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Vicereine Maria Luisa Manrique de Lara y Gonzaga in colonial Mexico.

5. Emile L. Bergmann and Paul Julian Smith, eds., *¿Entiendes? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995); Sylvia Molloy and Robert Mckee Irwin, eds., *Hispanisms and Homosexualities* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998); Josiah Blackmore and Gregory S. Hutcheson, eds., *Queer Iberia: Crossing Cultures, Crossing Sexualities* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999); Susana Chávez-Silverman and Librada Hernández, eds., *Reading and Writing the Ambiente: Queer Sexualities in Latino, Latin American, and Spanish Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000); María José Delgado and Alain Saintsaens, eds., *Lesbianism and Homosexuality in Spanish Golden Age Literature and Society* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2000).

6. Other important works include Daniel Balderston and Donna J. Guy, eds., *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); David William Foster and Roberto Reis, eds., *Bodies and Biases: Sexualities in Hispanic Cultures and Literatures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Elena M. Martínez, *Lesbian Voices from Latin America* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996); Juanita Ramos, ed., *Compañeras: Latina Lesbians* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Carla Trujillo, ed., *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1991).

7. David William Foster, ed., *Spanish Writers on Gay and Lesbian Themes* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999).

8. Ibid., 17–18.

9. David William Foster, ed. *Gay and Lesbian Themes in Latin American Writing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991.

10. Ibid., 3.

11. David William Foster, ed. *Chicano/Latino Homoerotic Identities* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999).

12. Evelyn Blackwood and Saskia Wieringa, eds., *Female Desires: Same-Sex Relations and Transgender Practices across Cultures* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

13. Sylvia Molloy and Robert Mckee Irwin, "Introduction," in *Hispanisms and Homosexualities,* ix–xvi.

14. See Norma Mogrovejo, *Un amor que se atrevió a decir su nombre* (México, D.F.: Plaza y Valdés, 2000), and Juanita Díaz-Cotto, "Lesbian-American Activism and Latin American Feminist Encuentros," in *Sexual Identities, Queer Politics,* ed. Mark Blasius (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 73–96.

15. Amy Kaminsky, *Reading the Body Politic: Feminist Criticism and Latin American Women Writers* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xiv.

16. *Brincando el charco: Portrait of a Puerto Rican,* dir. Frances Negrón Muntaner (Women Making Movies, 1994); *Carmelita Tropicana: Your Kunst Is Your Waffen,* dir. Ela Troyana (Women Making Movies, 1994).

17. Monica Palacios and Marga Gomez are Latina lesbian comedians and performance artists. Among Palacios's work are the performance pieces *Confessions, Greetings from a Queer Señorita,* and *Latina Lezbo Comic.* Gomez's performance pieces are *Memory Tricks, Marga Gomez Is Pretty Witty and Gay,* and *A Line around the Block.*

18. *Esto no tiene nombre,* later issued as *Conmoción,* was published from 1990 to 1996 in Miami. The journal was produced by an editorial collective headed by Tatiana de la Tierra.

19. Works of fiction by Latina lesbians include Terri de la Peña's three novels, *Margins* (Seattle: Seal, 1991), *Latin Satins* (Seattle: Seal, 1994), and *Faults* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 1994). See also Emma Pérez, *Gulf Dreams* (Berkeley, Calif.: Third Woman Press, 1996); Achy Obejas, *We Came All the Way from Cuba So You Could Dress Like This* (Pittsburgh: Cleis, 1994), and *Memory Mambo* (Pittsburgh: Cleis, 1996); Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *The Mystery of Survival and Other Stories* (Tempe, Ariz.: Bilingual Press, 1993), and idem, *Sor Juana's Second Dream* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999).

20. See the introduction to Foster, *Spanish Writers,* 19.

21. See Olga Viñuales, *Identidades lésbicas* (Barcelona: ediciones bellaterra, 2000).

22. Ibid., 94.

23. Norma Mogrovejo, "Sexual Preference, the Ugly Duckling of Feminist Demands: The Lesbian Movement in Mexico," in Blackwood and Wieringa, eds., *Female Desires,* 308.

24. See Lourdes Torres's chapter in this volume for a discussion of this work.

25. bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 147.

26. See, for example, Piri Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets* (New York: Knopf, 1967); Richard Rodríguez, *Hunger of Memory* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982); and Junot Diaz, *Drown* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996).

27. See Clara E. Rodríguez, *Changing Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Roberto P. Rodríguez-Morazzani, "Beyond the Rainbow: Mapping the Discourse on Puerto Ricans and 'Race,'" in *The Latino Studies Reader,* ed. Antonia Darder and Rodolfo D. Torres (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 143–62; Angel R. Oquendo, "Re-imagining the Latino/a Race," in *The Latino/a Condition: A Critical Reader,* ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Linda Martin Alcoff, "Is Latina/o Identity a Racial Identity?" in *Hispanics/Latinos in the United States: Ethnicity Race, and Rights,* ed. Jorge J. E. Gracia and Pablo De Greiff (New York: Routledge, 2000), 23–44.

28. Cherríe Moraga, *The Last Generation* (Boston: South End Press, 1993).