Denials and Declarations of Queerness: The Concept of El Hombre Nuevo

by

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ABSTRACT

DENIALS AND DECLARATIONS OF QUEERNESS: THE CONCEPT OF EL HOMBRE NUEVO

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To better understand the socio-historical struggle for inclusion of the queer subject in the concept of *el hombre nuevo*, this study examines landmark essays on revolution by José Martí and Ché Guevara, their liberatory intent, and their rejection of the queer subject. This study also contemplates Anzaldúa's articulation of European/Indigenous/queer *mestizaje* as a site of creative resistance, as well as her call for those in the struggle for liberation to listen to the queer voices in their movements. Finally, acclaimed works on queer sexuality and revolution by Manuel Puig, Senel Paz, and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea are analyzed to demonstrate the struggle to create *el hombre nuevo*, explore the challenging of stereotypes, and show the transformation of the revolutionary man and queer subject into allies, and also to reveal some conceptual tensions around sexuality that arise in bringing Paz's text to film.

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Introduction

The Creation of el Hombre Nuevo

…there is nothing to say that a homosexual cannot also be revolutionary. And maybe I'm injecting some of my prejudice by saying that 'even a homosexual can be a revolutionary.' Quite the contrary, maybe a homosexual could be the most revolutionary.

Huey P. Newton
Founder of the Black Panthers

This thesis argues that three landmark essays on revolution in the Americas move from outright exclusion of the queer subject from their concept of *el hombre nuevo* to a declaration for full political participation of queer people in projects of liberation, and it will show how two of the most acclaimed Latin American works on queer sexuality reflect this shift by challenging received notions of gender, sexuality and masculinity. Specifically, my study examines the notion of *el hombre nuevo* from the point of view of the relationship between the revolutionary man and the queer subject. It shows that the evolutionary process of the inclusion of the queer person into the idea of *el hombre nuevo* has been a long and challenging one. Two leading Latin American revolutionary figures, José Martí and Ernesto 'Ché' Guevara, argued that the road to equality and justice requires not only a change in political systems but also a change in a way of thinking and being. However, as they advocated for the birth of a new consciousness, or a new man, their New Man did not include a new woman or any person that was not heteronormative. In fact, not only did they not include the idea of the sex and gender diversity in their vision of the new man, they consciously wrote and spoke against the homosexual.

My study will begin with José Martí´s explanation of the need for the creation of a new way of seeing the world in order to successfully create a post-colonial Cuban (and Latin

American) reality, as described in his renowned essay *Nuestra América* (1891), and it will examine his discrimination against the queer subject as he rejects European models. Ché Guevara's elaboration on the notion of *el hombre nuevo* in his essay, *Man and Socialism in Cuba* (1965), portrays a heroic man who would embody the ideals of socialist revolution while shaking off the bourgeois ills of an imperialist and capitalist past. Unfortunately, in his leadership in the struggle for social equality, as he advances the notion of the revolutionary man, Ché does so at the expense of the queer subject. The direct consequences of Ché's position are more unfortunate in Cuban history than Martí's ridicule.

Martí's and Ché's positions regarding the revolution and the role of the queer subject in revolution are "corrected" by Gloria Anzaldúa, Chicana author of *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) whose idea of the *new mestiza* echoes their notion of *el hombre nuevo* but with some significant differences. For Anzaldúa, the role of gender and sexuality is of crucial importance in the struggle for liberation: "Being the supreme crossers of cultures, homosexuals have strong bonds with queer, white, Black, Asian, Native American, Latino, and with the queer in Italy, Australia and the rest of the planet" (84). She asserts that rather than being inadequate anti-social elements of the revolutionary project, as Martí and Ché held, queers—especially queers of colour—are on the front lines of the struggle for liberation (85). As she shows particularly in chapter 7, "La conciencia de la mestiza/ Towards a New Consciousness," this new consciousness, also advocated by Martí, can be best advanced by those who are able to traverse borders of race, gender, and class. As a new "priestess at the crossroads" (80), Anzaldúa reinterprets and updates Martí's and Ché's sacred texts in order that their essential message of liberation be realized, so that a new *hombre nuevo* can take up the cause of liberation in the twenty-first century. To paraphrase another revolutionary, Anzaldúa does not come to abolish the law and the prophets; but to fulfill them (King James Bible, Mt 5:17).

Manuel Puig's internationally acclaimed novel *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1976) precedes Anzaldúa´s influential work on the creation of a mestiza consciousness and the evolution of *el hombre nuevo* to a *new mestiza*. As the Argentinian novelist and playwright addresses the paradoxical position between the revolutionary man and the queer subject, in the context of Martí´s need for the creation of a new consciousness, he attempts to educate the average reader. This *conscientização* (*concientización* in Spanish)*,* as the Brazilian education theorist Paolo Freire has called a process of raising social and political awareness, takes the reader through the development of a meaningful relationship between two characters in the novel - freedom fighter Valentín and transwoman Molina. The educational process of the reader also takes place through some real and some fictional theoretical writing regarding the nature of non-normative sexuality that appears in the novel in the form of footnotes. The inclusion of Hollywood films, which the characters relate to each other as a form of soothing entertainment, also has an educational function for the characters, as well as for the reader.

Puig´s interviews are equally educational. They will precede the discussion of the novel and will follow my study of Martí's and Ché's positions. Puig wrote his novel in the middle of the Argentinian and Latin American dirty wars of the nineteen seventies during which right-wing military regimes persecuted leftist fighters, political dissidents, and also sexual dissidents - homosexual men in particular. The film version of *KSW* (1985), as well as the 1993 Broadway musical, do not have the same intellectual and political depth as the novel. Since they omit two crucial elements—the historical backdrop of Argentina's Dirty War, and the footnotes Puig employs to enlighten the reader about past and current theories of sexuality—they will not be studied here. His interviews and his novel, on the other hand, are serious intellectual sources that advance the notion of *el hombre nuevo*.

The last part of my study discusses Senel Paz´s short story/novella “El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo” (1991) and its counterpart in Paz, Gutiérrez Alea and Tabío´s film *Fresa y chocolate* (1993). As in *KSW*, in these two works the relationship between the revolutionary man and the queer subject advances the notion of the new person. As with the Argentinian novel, the Cuban works also emphasize the affective element, or the feeling of love, as the central component in human interaction, as Martí and Ché advocated before them. Similar to the film *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Fresa y chocolate*—the film version of “El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo”—lacks the complexity of the novella. Moreover, it makes significant changes and omissions regarding the idea of sexual identity that are crucial to the original text. However, unlike the film *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, the political and social impact of *Fresa y chocolate* on gender and sexual diversity in Cuba and the Revolution was profound and will therefore be included in this study.

The theoretical thinking that guides this thesis and briefly explains my use of the term *queer* comes from Mignolo’s theory of decolonial thinking as a site from which to interrogate and decolonize a logic that assumes a patriarchal, heterosexual order (and Western European superiority). This study particularly draws from Maria Lugones’s essay “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System” which explains the way in which colonial projects attempted to erase sex and gender “deviance” already existent in pre-Colombian societies and West African groups. This essay notes that while José Martí and Ché Guevara decry homosexuality as a decadent *European* practice of the bourgeoisie, non binary sex and gender roles had been a common component of pre-conquest societies (Lugones 195-201; Oyěwùmí 31-

35; Allen 196-199; Sigal 1-24; Drucker 84-85). This study also draws on the connected concepts of transculturation, hybridity, and mestizaje as articulated by Latin American scholars Ortiz, Canclini, and Anzaldúa. These authors argue that the Latin American *mestizo* subject should not be viewed simply as a victim of Euro-American colonization but that, over time, mixings of race, knowledge, and culture form part of "lo heredado, lo adquirido, [y] lo impuesto" [the inherited, the acquired and the imposed] (Anzaldúa 78, 82); a transcultural process that marks multiple ways of being to form a *mestiza* identity that is, according to Anzaldúa, a powerful and positive force for Latin American liberation and decolonization. Notions of transculturación, hibridización and mestizaje are significant for the discussion of the novel and novella under study because they consider a view that is different from the colonial view of binary oppositions. Furthermore, they allow for the inclusion of new elements and present the world as a multidimensional, complex, phenomenon. Finally this study is informed by Euro-American theoretical scholarship from the area of queer studies, particularly Michel Foucault's theory on the medicalization of peripheral sexualities and the subsequent transition of a subject who engages in sexual acts to one who now has a sexual identity (*History of Sexuality* 39-44); and Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity and the provisionality of identities ("Imitation and Gender" 308) that demonstrate, as seen in the texts considered in this study, that "identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes" and operate either as "normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression" (308). These theories help us understand why the revolutionary man has had certain misconceptions regarding the question of sexuality, as well why queer protagonists in two of the texts under consideration express resistance to the classification of 'homosexual.'

My study acknowledges that there exists some tension in the formation and study of queer theory. Some see it as "stultifyingly identitarian" (Pero 143) while others view it as "radical anti-identitarian posturing" (Hames García 10); or as James Penney argues in *After Queer Theory: The Limits of Sexual Politics*, "queer wants to subvert identity and have it too" (11). This study does not work towards a resolution of this debate, but includes selected perspectives of Foucault and Butler not to seek authority from the privileged Euro-Anglo American academy, but to show that they too, like Latin American thinkers who work around the notions or transculturation and hybridity, emphasize the complexity of sexual identity classifications.

While my use of the term *queer* does incorporate a definition coming out of queer studies—a position "across genders, across sexualities, across genres, across perversions" (Sedgwick *Tendencies* xii)—it should not be understood as solely belonging to the field of queer theory, but as a word that has a history and a political resonance prior to the emergence of queer studies. This study also uses an Anzaldúan understanding of the word. Anzaldúa employed *queer* as a site of socio-political solidarity as early as 1981 in her anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*,[1] and again in 1987 in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. In her essay, "To(o) Queer the Writer—Loca, escritora y chicana" (1990), Anzaldúa discusses, at length, her choice to use the English word *queer*, as opposed to *lesbian* or *homosexual*, despite its emerging associations with queer theory. She explains, "If I have to pick an identity label in the English language, I pick 'dyke' or 'queer,' though these working-class words (formerly having 'sick' connotations) have been taken over by white middle-class lesbian theorists in the academy" (164). For Anzaldúa, the English word *queer* is preferable to the limitations of *lesbian* or *homosexual*. She adds, "Even though today the term means other things, for me there is still more flexibility in the 'queer' mold, more room to maneuver. 'Lesbian' comes from a Euro-Anglo American mold and 'homosexual' from a deviant, diseased mold shaped by certain psychological theories" (166). In the texts studied in this thesis, the authors and their characters express a preference for regional Latin American terms— *jotería* (Anzaldúa), *loca* (Puig), *maricón* (Paz)—to describe their sexual identities. While the English word *queer* is unable to capture all the nuances of culture, language and history of these Spanish language terms, for the purposes of this study it remains the most appropriate translation.

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[1] Co-edited with Cherríe Moraga

Chapter 1

The Natural Man, the New Man, and a New Consciousness: Declarations by Martí, Ché, and Anzaldúa

El Hombre Natural y Nuevo

The concept of *el hombre nuevo* was first proposed by Cuban poet and freedom fighter José Martí (1853-1895). While exiled in New York City, the Cuban independence crusader penned his landmark essay *Nuestra América* (1891) in which he demanded that his country's political destiny be wrested from Spanish colonialism. He argued that the creation of a post-colonial reality required self-knowledge both in terms of natural resources and human orientation. However, while his notion of *el hombre nuevo* is a positive idea from a political point of view because he argued for a man who would challenge the ideals and structures of the old order, his notion that Cuba had to be taken out of the hands of a European-styled bourgeoisie erroneously associated with an unnatural femininity, displayed a specific rejection of the queer subject. Seventy-four years later and six years after the triumph of the Cuban revolution, Ernesto "Ché" Guevara built on Martí's call for the kind of man from different races and social conditions who could truly represent Cuba. In his essay, *Man and Socialism in Cuba* (1965), Ché names this person *el hombre nuevo*, a new and heroic man who would embody the ideals of socialist revolution while shaking off the bourgeois ills of an imperialist and capitalist past. Ché's language in this essay is overwhelmingly optimistic. He places great emphasis on the attributes the New Man would exhibit and who he might become. Ché's revolutionary individual is a heroic man (13); he is of high moral character (23); and he works towards a future in which the "best feelings of human solidarity" are fostered (7). Finally, he is a twenty-first century man (48) "guided by strong feelings of love" (43). What Ché fails to mention, however, is the type of person the New Man is not; an individual who would *not* be allowed a seat at the revolutionary table. As will be discussed shortly, this disallowed category is that of the homosexual, a constituency to which Ché's spiritual forefather makes pointed reference. The seed of this homophobia, as well as the impulse to bar entrance to the revolution's vanguard, was planted generations earlier by José Martí. In his essay *Nuestra América,* Martí elaborated on the kind of man necessary for the construction of a free and independent Cuba.

His work begins with a spirited appeal for the peoples of Latin America to abandon petty squabbles, to right wrongs committed on their own soil and to return to the rightful owners, lands unfairly acquired (288). He calls on Latin Americans to come together with "weapons of the mind" to fight in the "trenches of ideas" against the powerful giants of Spain and the United States (ibid.). These positive ideas are unfortunately accompanied by remarks of intolerance and exclusion. As he imagines the revolutionary Latin American man, Martí similarly warns the reader of the type of man he considers not only incapable of contributing to the cause of revolution but whom, more pointedly, he deems an impediment to it. This personage, according to Martí, belongs to a group of "...delicados, que son hombres pero no quieren hacer el trabajo de hombres!" [delicate men who refuse to do men's work] (55). He scorns them for having "painted nails" and wearing bracelets, asserting that these men are just like those "*incroyables* of the French Revolution!" (289).

The comparison to the *incroyables* is worthy of attention because it highlights a particular preoccupation Martí had not only with their politics, but specifically with the style and femininity of these 'not credible' men. One can read about the *incroyables* in *Paris: The Secret History* (2007) in which Andrew Hussey writes:

> Such public ostentation on the boulevards and in other public places had long been typical of a class of Parisian males who scorned politics, business and family life in the name of art, freedom and self-conscious displays of narcissism. In the late eighteenth century, these elegant young fops had been known as Muscadins or Incroyables, and distinguished themselves with effeminate clothes, exaggerated hairstyles and musk perfume (the Incroyables were so called because they affected not to be able to pronounce the letter 'r', producing sentences in French such as 'Envéité, c'est incoyable!')... The young dandies were all reactionaries and in 1793, in Lyons, and in 1796 in Paris, they took part in anti-Jacobin demonstrations. They despised the working classes and resisted troops with a determination that surprised the stout soldiers who thought them all homosexuals. (270)

Martí writes of these "puny" men with disdain. He disparages them for "dancing, smacking their lips and deliberately slurring their words"[2] (289). It is interesting to note that he suggests that if their Cuban counterparts wish to indulge in luxuries like ice cream, they ought to go to Tortoni's ice-cream parlour in Paris (289), an image that brings to mind the film *Fresa y chocolate* in which the gay character Diego makes a habit of eating pink strawberry ice-cream at the Coppelia ice-cream parlour, in Havana.

One might argue that Martí's intent was simply to identify individuals of economic and class privilege in Cuban society who appeared to care little about duty and country and, instead, preferred to imitate the supposed refinement and culture of the European upper classes. But Marti's shaming is not simply carried out through an accusation of reactionary values or conservative political views. Instead, Martí impugns their masculinity and does so severely. He suggests such men are un-American, weak, craven, immoral, prancing queens; insects dangerous to the *patria* who ought to be loaded onto ships and sent away (289). Indeed, almost a century later this is precisely what occurred during the 1980 Mariel boatlift in which Fidel Castro deported the so-called 'scum' of society, among them thousands of homosexuals (Bejel *Gay Cuban* 107).

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[2] Original Spanish text: "danzando y relamiéndose, arrastraban las erres" (*Nuestra América* 32).

One might also claim that Martí's disparaging reference to the *incroyables* was not so much a repudiation of homosexuality, as a rejection of the comportment and fashion associated with political inclinations of certain members of the bourgeoisie. After all, Hussey does not assert that the *incredibles* were gay, only that some *thought* them to be (270). However, such thinking comes about within a specific context. While homosexuality was "[o]ne of the few taboo areas of experience" in post-revolutionary France, "[e]xclusively homosexual sodomy was considered to be a purely aristocratic vice, despite the fact that... many of those who enjoyed it were from the lower classes" (202). It is evident then that the flamboyant styles and behaviours of the *incroyables* were simultaneously, if sometimes erroneously, associated with exclusive same-sex sexual behaviour and aristocratic social position. It stands to reason that Martí was as perturbed by homosexual practice itself as he was with its association with the aristocracy or those who would seek to imitate it.

Martí's anti-homosexual sentiment was not solely contained to *Nuestra América*. Another of Martí's works demonstrates further evidence of his acute discomfort with homosexuality, an unease—in this case—not linked to issues of class, privilege and power. In the section "The Poet Walt Whitman" from the *Letters from New York* series, Martí heaps praise on Whitman. Foreshadowing the language of *Our America*, Martí lauds Whitman's "vast and fiercely burning love" (189). For Martí, Whitman is the ideal natural man:

> ... a man who strides, loves, fights, rows, a man who does not let his misfortunes blind him but reads the promise of final joy in the grace and equilibrium of the world – when they find

> themselves before so sinewy and angelical a father as Walt Whitman, they flee as if from their own consciousnesses and balk at recognizing the true nature of their dimmed, housebound, gimcrack species in his fragrant and superior humanity. (183)

His portrayal of Whitman clearly embodies all the characteristic virtues of the exemplary kind of man called for in *Nuestra América*. However, within his tribute, Martí feels it necessary to dispatch the elephant in the room, that is to say, to excise any reading of homosexuality into Whitman's work or his personal life. To do so, he makes the case that any suggestion of homosexuality in the works of Whitman comes about as a result of malicious misreading. Martí writes:

> His language has struck those who are incapable of understanding its greatness as lascivious; there have been imbeciles who, with the squeamishness of lewd schoolboys, believe they see a return to the vile lusts of Virgil for Cebes and of Horace for Gyges and Lysiscus when in "Calamus" he celebrates the love of friends with the most ardent images in human language. (189)

But, as Sylvia Molloy argues, it is Martí who is guilty of a deliberate misreading. She contends that Martí, himself, inappropriately reads salacious homosexuality into the Greek texts (376) and conversely, when discussing Whitman's work, he engages in acts of "misquoting" and "negation" in a "cleansing" of the obvious sexuality of the poetry and of the poet (ibid.), a practice we will see denounced by Virgilio Piñera in chapter three of this study. Martí goes to great lengths to idealize Whitman as the *natural man*—a strong, heroic figure, a "man of nature [who] works the free earth alongside his peaceful horses and beneath the Sun that weathers him" (185) – yet, his erasure of Whitman's poetic meaning and carnal passion demonstrates Martí's inability to reconcile two characteristics he considers polar opposites – masculinity and homosexuality.

Martí was not alone in his anxiety regarding the practice of same-sex sexuality, nor was such discomfort restricted to attraction between males. Francine Masiello notes that in the late nineteenth century, melodrama dominated "high culture" (275) and, at the same time that Latin America started to modernize, Latin American writers became obsessed with writing about sexual deviance as a way "to underscore the corruption of national values" (276). Masiello points to Martí's novel *Amistad funesta* (1885) which warns that Latin America's propensity toward perversion will be its downfall if not eradicated. Martí writes, "Aquí todo es pecado; contra la naturaleza," [Everything here is sin; against nature] in reference to the excess of passion between two of the novel's female characters, Lucía and Sol del Valle (Masiello 276). Bejel is blunter in his characterization of Martí's message:

> ...besides the theme of Lucía's "excessive passion" (the ideal woman ought not to have excessive desire in the carnal sense, according to Martí's way of thinking), this story allows for a reading of homoeroticism between two women, and certainly for a reading of the attempt by the text to represent Lucía as a monstrous queer who destabilizes the formation of an idealized nation as conceived by Martí (*Gay Cuban* 18).

In addition to identifying the threat posed by passionate excess, Martí also reckons there are sartorial clues to sexual and gender deviance. As Bejel asserts, Martí employs fashion and hairstyle as a signifier for the political and moral leanings of characters both male and female, the symbolism of which can be ascribed to the players in only one of two ways: they are either good or they are evil (*Gay Cuban* 21; 22). This assessment certainly seems to coincide with Martí's other writings on the subject. Martí reviews a lecture he attended in 1882 given by writer and socialist, Oscar Wilde, on "the English Renaissance of Art:"

> Look at Oscar Wilde! He does not dress as we all do but in a singular manner. . . . His hair falls over his neck and shoulders, like that of an Elizabethan courtier; it is abundant, carefully parted

> down the middle. He wears tails, a white silk waistcoat, ample knee breeches, black silk hose and buckled shoes. The shirt collar is cut low, like Byron's held together by an ample white silk cravat knotted with abandon. A diamond stud shines on the dazzling shirtfront; an ornate watch-chain hangs from the fob (qtd. in Bejel *Gay Cuban* 23).

Reading like something from a gossip column, Martí ridicules Wilde for his flamboyant attire. Whether it be Cuban men using bracelets and nail polish or Frenchmen with "effeminate clothes and exaggerated hairstyles," Bejel notes that Martí is clearly perturbed by "a certain queerness that carries with it a disquieting difference," one that "the new nations of the continent should avoid" (*Gay Cuban* 24).

Bejel posits that Martí's particular preoccupation with effeminacy came about as a response to assertions from certain U.S. Republican politicians that Cuba was a weak and effeminate nation whose "lack of virile strength and self-respect is shown by the apathy with which they have submitted to Spanish oppression for so long..." (*Gay Cuban* 11). The politicians believed Cuba's lack of virility rendered it unable to govern itself and that the solution was an injection of 'American' masculinity achieved by way of a strong U.S. presence in Cuba (ibid.). Martí's defensive reaction to the name-calling may be understandable, but his tactic of diverting blame to Europe for the existence of Cuba's queer subjects was hardly revolutionary. Cuba was also roundly criticized in negative racial terms by the very same forces: "Cuban Negroes [] are clearly at the level of barbarity," the politicians opined (ibid.). Yet in this case, Martí does not buckle to "ignorant prejudice" ("My Race" 160). On the subject of racial discrimination, he writes: "Everything that divides men, everything that specifies, separates or pens them in, is a sin against humanity" (ibid.). Marti, time and again, takes a bold anti-racist stance at a time when racial essentialism was as common a mindset as notions of fixed gender and sexuality.

Given Martí's progressive opposition to racial discrimination, it is logical to consider why he embraced a sexual discrimination that limited the requisite qualities of the *natural man*. After all, upon gaining independence, several Latin American nations followed the liberal example of both the French Revolution and the Napoleonic code on the issue of sexuality, and decriminalized "previously punishable acts of private and consensual sex between adults" (Ben 34). However, Foucault notes that where the law gave up ground on the management of sexual behaviour, and the Church declined in influence, the field of medical science moved in to take their place (40). The medicalization of sexuality would have a significant impact on the creation and perception of "unnatural" and "peripheral sexualities" (39). Foucault notes medicine's extraordinary surveillance of the "sexually peculiar," writing that "since sexuality was a medical and medicalizable object, one had to try and detect it—as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom—in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of behaviour" (44). Indeed, in *Del otro lado del espejo: la sexualidad en la construcción de la nación cubana*, Cuban historian Abel Sierra Madero documents how, in the late nineteenth century, members of Havana's emerging homosexual community were the focus of detailed medical research. He mentions a paper presented by Dr. Luis Montané at the Primer Congreso Médico Regional in Havana in 1890 (33) in which the doctor discusses the peculiar tastes of his objects of study: their penchant for perfumes, powders, jewelry, handkerchiefs and stockings (38). Dr. Montané, Sierra continues, then assigns his patients medical conditions that he determines specific to homosexual men: a propensity to nervous attacks and a condition he calls 'hysterical epilepsy' (40). Thus, medicine, with its stamp of scientific truth, now creates a class of individuals in need of medical treatment, as well as a justification for their exclusion from society. Foucault argues that this kind of intense focus on sexual classification participated in the creation of the homosexual identity, in contrast to a person who simply engages in "forbidden acts:"

> [t]he nineteenth century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. (43)

Hence, given that this particular discourse of homosexuality-as-pathology would have been circulating Martí's entire life, his preconception of homosexuals as "weak" and "unnatural" would have been reinforced by the prevailing positivist and naturalist movements and their predisposition toward scientific classification.

If the project of independence excludes those '*contra natura'* and Frenchified *maricones* (Sierra 34), it includes its supposed opposite; a person Martí calls "the natural man, strong and indignant" (291). He is an individual who belongs to the category of men necessary to form a government that will represent the spirit of the nation and her natural elements. Martí boldly challenges erroneous assumptions of European superiority of race, class, and intellect; and he advances the notion that the man born of and in accord with his environment is the appropriate person to control the destiny of that territory. He writes:

> In America the natural man has triumphed over the imported book. Natural men have triumphed over an artificial intelligentsia. The native mestizo has triumphed over the alien, pure-blooded criollo. The battle is not between civilization and barbarity, but between false erudition and nature. The natural man is good, and esteems and rewards a superior intelligence as long as that intelligence does not use his submission against him or offend him by ignoring him – for that the natural man deems unforgivable, and he is prepared to use force to gain the respect of anyone who wounds his sensibilities or harms his interests... (290)

Martí's tone, previously exuding antagonism to a regime that imitated artificial foreign models serving European interests, now expresses hopeful aspiration toward a future in which new men will build a society whose goods, institutions, and people are authentically American. He heralds a new era in which "… the new men of America are saluting each other..." and who are "beginning, almost unknowingly, to try love" (294).

And it is with this last amorous attribute that we take up Ché Guevara's New Man because he writes that the twenty-first century man is "guided by strong feelings of love" (48; 43). The requirement for love as an indispensable component in the formation of *el hombre nuevo* is recognized not only by Martí and Ché but it is an essential element in the relationship between the each pair of characters in Puig´s *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, "El *lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo*," and the film *Fresa y chocolate*. Love is the element that opens a door to inclusion of the queer subject that had been seemingly barred by Martí. In his construction of *el hombre nuevo* Ché built a safeguard against the irrelevancy of outdated thinking. He guaranteed that the New Man would live on because he has the capacity for transformation, which is a permanent feature of his makeup. As Ché wrote in his proviso, *el hombre nuevo* "is as yet unfinished" (25) and, in a new socialist society in which man is freed from alienation, human beings will have "different characteristics" (26, 29). Ché creates yet another opening to keep the New Man from being a static entity. He concedes: "[There is] a lack of understanding of the need to create a new human being who will represent neither nineteenth century ideas nor those of our decadent and morbid century. It is the twenty-first century man whom we must create..." (38), thus providing a space for unconventional thinking in the future.

There is no doubt that Martí and Ché each lacked the understanding that a queer subject could be a revolutionary man/human being par excellence. As discussed earlier, Martí's own presuppositions about homosexuality were reinforced by the most up to date medical thinking of the nineteenth century. It is unlikely that he would be able to comprehend, let alone address, an issue of sexual oppression that was not even considered until the first half of the twentieth century when experts like Freud and Kinsey began to challenge the notion of homosexuality as a pathology. In 1935, Freud sent a letter to a concerned mother in which he wrote, "Homosexuality . . . is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation; it cannot be classified as an illness" (reprinted in *American Journal* 1951: 786); and in his ground breaking report *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male,* Alfred Kinsey argued that "scientific judgements" regarding the weakness and delicacy of homosexuals "have been based on little more than the same sorts of impressions which the general public has had concerning homosexual persons" (638), adding that all sexuality exists on a continuum and that "males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual" (639). That said, for the better part of twentieth century, medical science still treated homosexuality as a mental illness in need of treatment, classified in the DSM[3] as a mental disorder until 1973 (Herek). Given the slow pace of progress on issues of sexuality and gender, it stands to reason, although disappointing, that medical doctor Ché Guevara lacked the necessary awareness to challenge assumptions about gender and sexuality despite the contributions of visionaries in the field.

The writing of the two leaders of Latin American social and political liberation, combined with the political determination of Fidel Castro, has had more than damaging consequences for the island's queer citizens, as well as other 'anti-social' elements. Writing during the early years of the Revolution, Cuban artist and intellectual Samuel Feijóo explains some of these consequences:

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[3] Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

> On a certain occasion, Fidel let us know that the countryside does not produce homosexuals, that this abominable vice does not grow there. True. The conditions of virility found among the Cuban peasantry do not permit it. But in some of our cities it proliferates. …Against it, we are struggling and we will struggle until we eradicate it from a virile country, wrapped up in a life and death battle against Yankee imperialism. And in this super-virile [virilísimo] country, with its army of men, homosexuality should not be and cannot be expressed by homosexual or pseudo-homosexual writers and 'artists'. Because no homosexual represents the Revolution, that is a matter for males [asunto de varones], of fists and not of feathers, of fury and not of trembling, of sincerity and not of intrigues, of creative valour and not of candy-coated surprises [sorpresas merengosas]. …Unfortunately, this has become an alarming political and social matter. …We are not talking about persecuting homosexuals but of destroying their positions in society, their methods, their influence. Revolutionary hygiene is what this is called. (qtd. in Guerra 281)

Feijóo believed that socialism would cure these ills (Bejel *Gay Cuban* 100). The following are just some of the measures taken against gay men and lesbians in Cuba after the revolution: In the early nineteen sixties, Cuban police began roundups (redadas) under *Operation 3Ps* – ' prostitutes, pimps, and pájaros" [queers] (Lopez-Goicoechea "A Hundred Years") which included the arrest of writer Virgilio Piñera about whom Ché once asked: "which asshole reads this maricón?" when he spied a copy of one of Piñera's books at the Cuban embassy in Algiers (Lumsden 60). In 1961, *Lunes* - the literary supplement of *Revolución* - was closed down. Among the reasons given was that it was a known haven for homosexuals (Lumsden 59). In that same year, playwright, Antón Arrufat was dismissed as editor at the publishing house, *Casa de las Américas*, for the inclusion of a gay poem in the organization's journal (ibid). Most notoriously, in 1965 the revolutionary government instituted labour camps known as Military Units to Aid Production (UMAPs) in which homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day

Adventists, Catholics, hippies, and others were interned to perform hard agricultural labour so that they might become "real men" (Lumsden 66). The camps were closed three years later as a result of condemnation from the international community, including Jean Paul Sartre and Allen Ginsberg, as well as Cuba's National Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC), and others. From the late sixties through the mid-seventies, the *quinquenio gris* [five grey years] and laws of *parametraje* [parameterization] rid the arts, culture and education of "sodomitic writers" and "sick effeminate dancers" as a part of the Revolution's "social hygiene" (Feijoo qtd. in Lumsden 71). Finally, in April 1980, the Mariel Boatlift marked Cuba's last significant anti-homosexual campaign[4] in which the government called on Cuban-Americans to take 'antisocial scum' off the island. Included in this group of "escoria" were family members of Cuban-Americans, criminals, and homosexuals (Bejel *Gay Cuban* 107).

It is important to note that these outcomes were not linked to Ché's policies alone, but were also the effect of the adoption of Soviet-style communism by Fidel Castro in 1961, which imported attitudes that perceived homosexuality as a capitalist, decadent, bourgeois phenomenon in need of rooting out (Lumsden 64). It should also be acknowledged that state sponsored mistreatment of Cuban homosexuals that occurred after Ché's departure from Cuba in nineteen sixty-five, while influenced by his legacy, cannot be directly attributed to him. Nonetheless, Bejel describes Ché Guevara as "one of the staunchest homophobic leaders of the revolutionary period" (*Gay Cuban* 100).

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[4] Some include the 1985 establishment of quarantine centres for people diagnosed with HIV as part of Cuba's legacy of homophobia. The argument that this was part of a policy of homophobic persecution is unconvincing. Those first diagnosed with HIV in Cuba were returning soldiers from Angola and Mozambique, the majority of whom were presumably heterosexual. Unlike the UMAP camps, from all accounts homosexuals in the AIDS sanatoriums were treated with the best care the country could offer (Lumsden).

A New Consciousness

Standing on the shoulders of José Martí and Ché Guevara, Gloria Anzaldúa is emblematic of the audacity required to challenge convention. She explains that a revolutionary consciousness must impel us to become wholistic 'mestizo/a' beings in possession of complex combinations of physical and cultural characteristics, always challenging assumed normal/natural ways of being, and resisting imposed identities and structures. For Anzaldúa, Martí's and Ché's *natural* or *new man* is but the beginning of a process; one that takes the first steps on a path leading to a wholly new way of being for all persons. While violent uprising may be one step to revolution, Anzaldúa insists that in order for lasting change to occur, the process cannot stop there. She argues that not just a new 'man' but a *new consciousness* is required, one that allows society to build upon the inspirational visions of liberation and equality put forward by Martí, while also providing the opportunity to identify their limitations and to push those boundaries so that they may include Ché's new person of the twenty-first century. Indeed, Anzaldúa's chapter in *Borderlands* — "La conciencia de la mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness" – may be read as a *Nuestra América* for the twenty-first century; an updated and more inclusive take on Marti's landmark essay and call for Cuban/Latin American independence, as it speaks to Ché's vision of the revolutionary for the next generation, a new man for the twenty-first century (Guevara 48). Anzaldúa broadens the scope of Martí's and Ché's promise of a new and more equal society, one that not only values the contributions of *all* its citizens regardless of racialized and socially classed identities but a society that also recognizes and appreciates particular and important actors once marginalized by old thinking. Her concept of a new consciousness provides those once on the periphery with agency and locates subjects who inhabit new and inclusive ways of being on the vanguard of the revolutionary project.

Anzaldúa begins her chapter on *new consciousness* with a reference to Vasconcelos's theory of *la raza cósmica* in which she contrasts his understanding of racial mixing as inclusive, hybrid, and malleable, to 'white America's' notions of 'pure race' (*Borderlands* 77). She concurs with Vasconcelos's assertion that the blending of ethnological elements ought not be considered a weakness but instead a fusion that provides for a better and more whole human being. Further, Anzaldua's concept of mestizaje goes beyond just acceptance of racial mixing. She builds on traditional notions of mestizaje by incorporating culture, gender and sexuality into her understanding of what it means to be mestiza, insisting that the inclusion of these elements is essential if humankind is to develop a different consciousness. Anzaldúa's concept of an all-encompassing mestizaje calls for a transcultural understanding of the term; an approach not bound solely by racial identity but one that embraces multiple and intersecting aspects of the human experience. "La mestiza", she writes, "is the product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another" and she incorporates the challenges of an identity that is made up of "lo heredado, lo adquirido, [y] lo impuesto" [the inherited, the acquired and the imposed] (*Borderlands* 78;82). This approach is reminiscent of Ortiz who asserts that the makeup of the Cuban and Latin American individual is marked by multiple ways of being through processes of transculturation. He writes:

> I have chosen the word transculturation to express the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as the result of extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here, and without knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the evolution of the Cuban folk, either in the economic or in the institutional, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual, or other aspects of life. (98)

Transculturation upsets binary oppositions of European and Latin American culture. Not only does Ortiz reject the idea of separating out these characteristics of identity, but he also suggests that myriad existing transcultural processes in place make such an exercise virtually impossible. Anzaldúa embraces and embodies this multifaceted mestizaje replete with its own tensions. Her approach is supported by Canclini's concept of hybridization. Canclini reminds us that "hybridization is not a synonym for fusion without contradiction" (xxiv); that America is "the result of prior hybridizations"; and that society undergoes a continual process of "cycles of hybridization (xxv).

As much as Martí and Ché may yearn for a separation of Cuba and the rest of Latin America from the baggage of its Euro-North American historical influences, Anzaldúa reminds us that the reality of a transcultural and hybrid mestizaje means that an attempt at such identity divisions may eventually lead to violence to the self and to others. Instead, she calls for a new and inclusive way of resistance:

> It is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank shouting questions, challenging patriarchal white conventions. A counterstance locks one into a battle of oppressor and oppressed; locked into mortal combat … both are reduced to the common denominator of violence. … Because the counterstance stems from a problem with authority—outer and well as inner—it's a step toward liberation from cultural domination. But it is not a way of life. At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once… (*Borderlands* 78)

Anzaldúa acknowledges that while at one time there may have been justifiable strategic motivations for a dualistic 'us versus them' path to liberation, these can only form a provisional response at best; and at worst, they create a formula for discord and violence. Bejel reminds us of the unsteady ground on which national discourse on identity is built:

> For the discourse of nationality to have referential validity, there would have to exist a homogenous horizontal community that could express itself through time in spite of time—that is to say, in spite

> of changes and temporal differences, in spite of accidents and the plurality of contingency. ("Cuban CondemNation" 44)

Indeed, being at once Mexican, North American, European, and Indigenous, Anzaldúa's own national borders are in a state of constant flux. Moreover, her national and racial identities, by their very nature, cross borders; being a woman and being queer add further complexity through the inclusion of gender identity and sexuality.

Like Marti and Ché, Anzaldúa writes of equality and revolution, but she adds a fresh perspective. And similar to Martí's warning against imitation of old-world values and practices, she warns against repeating archaic habits and patterns (*Borderlands* 79). However, as a queer woman who inhabits multiple national and ethnic identities, Anzaldúa calls for a progressive and more inclusive approach that seeks to break down the kinds of dualistic thinking that result in the separating out of identities and histories, especially particular constructs of nation, race, gender, and sexuality. She challenges us to "shift out of [these] habitual formations;" and to recognize that these are "habits and patterns [that] are the enemy within" (ibid.). Instead, Anzaldúa appeals to us to embrace "divergent thinking characterized by a movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more wholistic approach, one that includes rather than excludes" (ibid.).

In order to break these habits, Anzaldúa argues that what is required is not simply a new man, but a new consciousness; a "mestiza" consciousness that continuously breaks binaries and disrupts the "unitary aspect of each new paradigm" (*Borderlands* 80). She argues:

> The future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures... By creating a new mythos—that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave—la mestiza creates a new consciousness." (ibid.)

The irony is that, even in the project of revolution over and liberation from reactionary forces, liberators may unwittingly rely on the some of the same tools of their oppressors. Earlier Cuban revolutionaries like Martí and Ché lacked the sufficient consciousness to fully appreciate gender and sexuality as integral parts of the project of liberation. While extolling the virtues of racial and social equality in the Americas, they still subscribed to European masculinist notions of revolution as the work of 'real' men; that saw women only as mothers and wives "que deben ser parte del sacrificio general" [who ought to be part of the general sacrifice] (Guevara *El Socialismo* 29); and that expressed contempt for anyone who would deviate from his or her ascribed gender role. For example, an Anzalduan approach would suggest that it is not the effeminacy of so called "delicate creatures unwilling to do men's work" (Martí 122) that is at issue but instead, it is received notions of gender roles that trap us into retaining and perpetuating outmoded ways of being. It is not the man who embraces the feminine within that requires re-education as was seen in the post-Revolution labour camps for homosexuals and other 'anti-social elements,' but instead it is the individual who is only able to grasp gender in solely traditional binary terms that is in need of a rejuvenated consciousness.

Anzaldúa informs us that it is essential we update notions of what it means to be a man, suggesting that one of the stumbling blocks encountered with past ideas about both the *natural man* and *el hombre nuevo* is that this man is only half made and, as Ché would say, "his image is as yet unfinished" (*Man* 25). Even at their best, Anzaldúa maintains, men are still corrupted by an entrenched conventional masculinity that stands in the way of progress. She laments, "I have encountered a few scattered and isolated gentle straight men, the beginnings of a new breed, but they are confused, entangled with sexist behaviors that they have not been able to eradicate" (*Borderlands* 84). Moreover, Anzaldúa's following entreaty rings of Marti's appeal for racial equality and a pride in mestizaje:

> The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, violence, of war. (*Borderlands* 80)

In order to catalyze change, Anzaldúa argues that the time has come for a new being to take up the cause of revolution; "... a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings" (*Borderlands* 81). She celebrates the vital contribution a hybridized identity provides, declaring: "...I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system..." (ibid.). "La mestiza", she pronounces, "has gone from the sacrificial goat to becoming the officiating priestess at the crossroads" (*Borderlands* 80).

Taking on the sacerdotal mantle of revolution, Anzaldúa demands inclusion, respect, and appreciation for the feminine beyond gendered bodies and as part of the antidote to traditional masculinity. In Cuba, sexual dissidents were routinely the object of ridicule by revolutionary leaders, marginalized by both society and government, and denounced for failures of masculinity in the case of gay men or failures of femininity in the case of lesbians. This revolution, firmly tied to the concept of the archetypical male hero imbued with patriarchal and masculinist constructs could not sufficiently include women or value those qualities traditionally associated with them. Anzaldúa argues that it is the feminine within each of us that is the hope for a new revolutionary being and that, precisely because homosexual men are more likely to accept their feminine side, they may be more appropriate allies in the struggle for equality and for a new consciousness than their 'straight' male counterparts. In resisting heterosexual male constructs, Anzaldúa opens the door to new a new type of hero, declaring:

> Men, even more than women are fettered to gender roles. Women at least have had the guts to break out of bondage. Only gay men have had the courage to expose themselves to the woman inside them and to challenge the current masculinity . . . . *We need a new masculinity and the new man needs a movement.*[5](*Borderlands* 84)

As we will see in the next chapter, this new masculinity and movement are taken up by Puig through his examination of gender roles and sexuality in revolution, and by Senel Paz and directors Tomás Guttiérez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío in their treatment of the relationship of the queer intellectual with a revolutionary Cuban militant.

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[5] Emphasis mine

Chapter 2

Puig's New (Wo)man: Reconciliation between the Queer Subject and the Revolutionary Man in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*

This is broken spirits speaking for a better day
so in the tenderness of our words we carry blades
To cut ourselves free from gender roles
Build a life free from social norms
Redefine humanity and sexuality through our own terms
Yosimar Reyes

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.
Simone de Beauvoir

Until *KSW*, no Spanish language novel had dealt with the subject of queer sexuality as a positive force for liberation in such a direct and explicit manner. Prior to works from scholars on gender and sexuality like Foucault or Butler, to name only two, out of necessity Puig created and published his own theoretical analysis of human sexuality by means of *KSW*'s expert Dr. Anneli Taube, who offers the novel's final footnote on homosexuality. The fictional Danish psychoanalyst's publication, *Sexuality and Revolution,* was Puig's "own thinly disguised invented theory" according to Puig's friend and sometime translator, Suzanne Jill Levine, who referred to it as "a condensed autobiography" (258). Indeed, when Manfred Engelbert asked the author directly if Dr. Taube represented Puig's own personal conclusions, Puig confirmed that this was indeed the case (Amícola & Engelbert 629). It is under the guise of the female doctor that Puig argues that non-normative gender and sexual identities come about, in part, as the result of a deliberate rejection of the negative attributes of patriarchal *masculinity*, in the case of the biological male child, or the negative attributes associated with a submissive *femininity,* in the case of a biological female child. Taube writes: "the rejection which a highly sensitive boy experiences toward an oppressive father—as symbol of the violently authoritarian, masculine attitude—is a conscious one" (207). The doctor continues with this train of thought, repeating Puig's own real life critique of normative masculinity and its contempt for femininity, when she writes:

> The boy, at the moment when he decides not to adhere to the world proposed by such a father—use of weapons, violently competitive sports, disdain for sensitivity such as a feminine attribute, etc.—*is actually exercising a free and even revolutionary choice*[6] inasmuch as he is rejecting the role of the stronger, exploitative one. (207)

Her statement on the topic echoes the sentiment of Herbert Marcuse who argued for a society free from oppressive and unequal gender constructs. In his *Essay on Liberation* (1969) he writes:

> [T]he construction of such a society presupposes a type of man with a different sensitivity as well as consciousness: men who would speak a different language, have different gestures, follow different impulses; men who have developed an instinctual barrier against cruelty, brutality, ugliness. They would be shaped by men and women who have the good conscience of being human, tender, sensuous, who are no longer ashamed of being themselves […]. (29)

Marcuse, like Puig, lays blame for the world's ills at the feet of a destructive masculinity in desperate need of change. Using words like "tender," "sensuous" and "no longer ashamed," Marcuse posits that part of the solution can be found in a new kind of humanity and a new sexuality.

Puig wrote his bestselling novel *Kiss of the Spider Woman* while in exile in Mexico, but with a view to publishing his work in Spain, the nation and political regime that produced the historical inspiration for his best-known character, queer inmate Luis Molina. At a colloquium on Hispanic text at the Université d'Orléans in 1982, Puig was asked if there was relationship between homosexuality in *El beso* and the name 'Molina,' to which the author replied:

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[6] emphasis mine

> Bon, ça je crois que cela a quelque chose à voir avec le chanteur espagnol Miguel de Molina, qui a été un vrai martyr en Argentine, le pauvre, vers les années 40. Il a essuyé de terribles humiliations à cause de son homosexualité -on l'a expulsé… Je ne sais pas, ça a dû être une sorte d'hommage à cet homme. ("Autour de Puig" 245)
>
> [Well, I think that this has something to do with the Spanish singer Miguel de Molina, who was a real martyr in Argentina around the forties, the poor man. He suffered terrible humiliation because of his homosexuality. They threw him out… I don't know, it must be a kind of homage to this man]

The inspiration of celebrated cabaret singer Miguel de Molina (1908-1993) as an example of the struggle of the queer subject is apt. Before his expulsion from Spain in 1939 for homosexuality and republicanism, he was kidnapped and tortured by three men who, comparable to Argentina's edict in the seventies to "acabar con los homosexuales" [finish off the homosexuals], yelled: "Vamos a terminar con todos los maricones y los comunistas. ¡Uno por uno!" [We are going to put an end to all the faggots and communists. One by one!], as they pistol-whipped him and took electric clippers to his head leaving him bald, bloodied, and beaten in a field outside Madrid (Bazán 229). Molina fled Spain and went into exile, eventually ending up in Buenos Aires in 1942, where his public performances met with acclaim. His success, however, was short lived. On 31 July 1943, Molina was detained and subsequently jailed at the Villa Devoto prison—the same prison in which *KSW*'s Luis Molina is incarcerated—before finally being deported from Argentina on a dubious charge of participating in immoral acts (Bazán 234, 235).[7]

Puig's homage to this political and sexual dissident is expressed in *KSW*'s goal to expose two different kinds of readers to the possibility of a revolution brought about by liberation from traditional social constructs of sexuality and gender, as well as from the oppressions of race and class fought against by other revolutionary factions. With a sexual and political revolution in mind, Puig specifically directs his novel to both *el lector medio* [the average reader] and the queer reader so that they might have a new appreciation for the liberatory possibility that non-normative gender and sexuality could allow. In 1973, when Puig began writing *El beso de la mujer araña*, he wanted to reach out to Spanish queers suffering oppression under the Franco dictatorship. In a conversation with Amícola and Engelbert in 1981, Puig makes clear that the purpose of the footnotes in *KSW* was to provide young Spanish queer readers with the history and latest theories on human sexuality to use as a tool for both information and liberation so that they might be ready to seize an opportunity to occupy their rightful place in society. Puig says to his colleagues: "Entonces pensé mucho en un chico homosexual de quince años que está recién abriéndose los ojos a su condición en un pueblo de España. Era una España que estaba esperando la muerte de Franco minuto a minuto" [So I thought a lot about the fifteen-year-old homosexual kid in a town in Spain who was just opening his eyes to his situation. It was a Spain waiting minute by minute for the death of Franco] (Amícola & Engelbert 630). He also wrote to *el lector medio*, a category that included those sympathetic to socialist causes who may unwittingly participate in the marginalization of their queer compatriots and who may have had scant reliable information about homosexuality. Puig explains:

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[7] Miguel de Molina, with the help of Eva Perón, returned to Argentina a year later (Bazán 236).

> cuando estaba yo planeando esta novela, en español no habían salido libros que trataran de la homosexualidad…. Yo me veía enfrentado a un lector en el año 73, un lector español que estaba ahí, más o menos víctima de aquellas interpretaciones generalizadas que eran: "bueno, es una cuestión tal vez de hormonas", o "no se sabe, parece que puede ser una cosa de educación" y eso era lo máximo a que se podía llegar. (Amícola & Engelbert 629)
>
> [when I was planning this novel, books in Spanish dealing with homosexuality hadn't been published…. I saw myself facing a reader in 1973, a Spanish reader who was more or less victim of

> generalizing interpretations like: “well, maybe it’s an issue of hormones,” or “who knows? It seems like it could be a matter of education” and this was as far as one could get.]

As Levine notes: “Manuel did have a political mission: to educate both the victims and the perpetrators of homophobia in Latin America” (258). Upon its publication, Puig was unequivocal regarding the educational objective of the novel:

> No sé cuál será su suerte […] pero te voy a decir una cosa disparatada y es mi creencia de que esta novela puede ser útil, en un aspecto didáctico. Es decir, que se ventilen, que se conozcan cuestiones de las que no se tienen la suficiente información. Verdaderamente, la novela tiene una intención didáctica y no me avergüenzo de decirlo. (qtd. in Bacarrisse 88)
>
> [I don’t know how it will be received, but I’m going to say something crazy and that is my feeling that this novel might be useful from a didactic point of view. What I mean is that subjects about which we haven’t got enough information may be recognized and aired. Actually, there is a didactic aim behind this novel, and I’m not ashamed to say so.]

The importance of this declaration cannot be overstated. Puig’s unashamed writing of committed literature for an “average” reader flies in the face of the favoured tendency of the time to write for an already educated reader with literary competence, a person Stanley Fish calls an *informed reader*. Fellow Argentinian writer and contemporary, Julio Cortázar, spoke of the need for a *lector complice*, an engaged reader who would welcome the challenge of experimental form and content. However Puig, while still managing to blend creative narrative styles of film, dialogue, academic theory, and institutional documentation, consciously sets out on a mission to create a committed literature whose purpose is to educate the reader about the importance of the political struggle of the queer subject in revolution as well as the need for all people, queer or not, to become more whole human beings through both affective and intellectual growth. Given the political and social potential, not to mention an already established broad international readership, it stands to reason that Puig would take an unapologetic committed literary approach in order to inform his readers.

While the two authors sometimes found themselves at odds with one another, Cortázar and Puig did agree on one issue; that a new vision of the new man in both Cuba and Argentina was necessary if the project of liberation was to be truly revolutionary. In a 1973 interview, translator and biographer Evelyn Picon Garfield asked Cortázar to comment on the reason for the inclusion of the theme of homosexuality in a number of his works. Cortázar responded:

> That stems from something more important, my concept of the new man, the man of the future. I keep on believing something I've told my Cuban and Argentine friends, that in the project of a socialist society, revolution must come about not only from without but also from within on the level of the individual. Until now, the socialisms in power have not resolved the problem of one of the aspects of man's liberation, the problem of his libido, his sexuality. On the contrary, it has been complicated more. Socialism, in general, continues to consider homosexuality as a disease, as a physical defect, a concept that psychoanalysis, medicine and psychology had dispensed with long ago. (19)

Cortázar recognized that in both Argentina and Cuba, socialist projects had to address the issue of sexuality if it was really going to produce a new man that would represent humanity in its fullness. In *KSW,* Puig tackles the issue of liberation and dissident sexuality head on, addressing outdated medical and psychological theory and championing the latest progressive scholarly work of the time.

Theories of sexuality

The footnotes in *KSW* are aimed at the two specific types of readers that Puig spoke of above: the queer reader repressed by an authoritarian regime and a conservative society, and the *lector medio* who, without access to modern scholarly material in Spanish, still labours under obsolete yet persisting explanations for the root causes of homosexuality. While the relationship between Molina and Valentín shows the fiction as praxis, Puig's footnotes explain the theory.

They exist to furnish the uninitiated with “a brief treatise on the theory of sexuality,” as Daniel Balderston calls them, in order to enable the reader to make the connection to “the relationship between sexual liberation and broader social change” (217).

Much of what has been written about Puig’s footnotes on theories of homosexuality is unenthusiastic. To paraphrase Mark Twain, some critics prefer never to let the theory get in the way of a good story. As Balderston notes: “Many readers, and most critics, have questioned the need for the series of footnotes…” (ibid.). New York Times book critic, Robert Coover, referred to the footnotes as “mostly a fragmentary academic essay on homosexuality” resulting in a “minor supportive intrusion” (NYT 22 April 1979). Scholar, Carol Clark D’Lugo, laments: “what started as interesting material begins to emerge as annoying interference, one that might detract from the reader’s enjoyment of the narration that shares the page” (241). And Pamela Bacarisse sums up Yves Macchi’s frustration with footnotes that seem “unconnected to the main text” while “clarifying and explaining nothing” (113).

Keeping in mind that homosexuality was declassified as a mental disorder in the DSM in 1973 (the same year Puig started writing *KSW*), Puig’s footnotes act as more than unrelated fragmentary academic intrusions to the fictive text. They constitute a carefully crafted path that leads the reader on a journey through a history of scholarly thought on the subject of sexuality until finally arriving at the most progressive theories of the day. Puig first provides the reader a review of some refuted theories about same-sex sexuality and then he moves on to a more detailed exploration of the notion that same-sex sexual desire is part of a stage of normal sexual development called “polymorphous perverse” (151), a term referring to a Freudian concept describing a state in which “the infant enjoys an undifferentiated ability to take pleasure from all parts of the body” (Altman 60). Freud posited polymorphous perversity as a normal stage in childhood sexual development that is eventually repressed as the child matures into heterosexual adulthood (Puig 140). However, in the nineteen sixties and seventies, and in contrast to Freud's position that polymorphous perversity was only a temporary stage, the term became popular with progressive social theorists, like Marcuse, cited in *KSW's* footnotes. He argued that a polymorphous way of being was not merely an interrupted developmental phase; instead, it was a natural and desirable state for *all* people (153). Both Martí and Ché called for a shift in consciousness, but for Marcuse, their movement in this direction was not revolutionary enough. In his *Essay on Liberation* (1969), Marcuse writes that a "radical change in consciousness" must be "the beginning, the first step in changing social existence" and sexual liberation is a vital component in "the emergence of the *new Subject*"[8] (92). Here Marcuse makes an important shift in terminology in which the word *man* changes to *Subject*, thereby removing essential masculinity from the concept of *el hombre nuevo*. An integral part of this radical change, the German American philosopher argues, is an understanding that "every real theory of sexual liberation must take into account the polymorphous needs of human beings" and would include "a new morality and a revision of the notion of 'human nature' itself" (Puig 153, Altman 61). Altman further argues that not only must the needs of gender and sexually diverse people be taken into account, but the political role of the sexual dissident in transforming society must be made clear: "In the context of a society based on rigorous repression of polymorphous and bisexual urges, the homosexual thus comes to represent a challenge to the conventional norms. *This challenge makes him/her a revolutionary*"[9] (66). Puig promotes the concept of polymorphous sexuality in *KSW* as part of the makeup of the all-round human being;[10] a multifaceted sexuality that goes beyond notions of solely heterosexual genital copulation for the purpose of procreation. It is a sexuality that embodies liberatory and revolutionary aspirations. Channeling Marcuse (through Altman), Puig writes:

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[8] Emphasis mine

[9] ibid.

> …in defiance of a society that employs sexuality as a means toward a useful end, perversions uphold sexuality as an end in itself; as a result, they are outside the orbit of the ironclad principle of 'performance,' which is to say, one of the basic repressive principles fundamental to the organization of capitalism. And thus they question, without proposing to do so, the very foundation of the latter. (Puig 153; Altman 66)

In plainer language, writer and activist, Shelly Wolf describes the linking of compulsory heterosexuality to the repressive economic system of capitalism: "Capitalism depends on privatized reproduction to raise the next generation of workers at little expense to itself. Likewise, the oppression of LGBT people stems from the implicit challenge that sexual minorities pose to the nuclear family and its gender norms" (75). By refusing to conform to capitalist performance principles, a non-conformist sexuality participates in the deconstruction of the status quo. As Marcuse affirms: "perversions are a rebellion against the tyranny which would subordinate sexuality to procreation, and the institutions which would serve such subordination" (qtd. in Dollimore 206). The sexual dissident, then, does not merely inhabit an unconventional way of being but, more importantly, has the potential to be a potent political actor.

As seen earlier in Puig's own theory—expressed as Dr. Taube's "Sex and Revolution"—the concept of gender and sexual dissidence is lauded as the "revolutionary nonconformity" of the "impulse toward homosexuality" and the choice to consciously resist gender normativity

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[10] "The idea of a new type of man as the member (though not as the builder) of a socialist society appears in Marx and Engels in the concept of the 'all-round individual', free to engage in the most varying activities" (Marcuse *Essay* 28).

(210). However, Taube reminds the reader of the pitfalls of choices based on a heteronormative model; that patriarchal gender and sexual binaries may force those who reject the gender assigned to them at birth to choose the only other option with which they identify, prompting a possible imitation of "the defects of heterosexuality" (211). Through Taube, Puig argues that if the reader has negative preconceptions that question homosexual political commitment, this is a situation that comes about because of a "slow brainwashing" by "bourgeois models" that compulsory heterosexuality creates (212). It is the acceptance of the heteronormative model that places queers "on the periphery of movements for class liberation and political action in general" (213).

Like the 'heterosexual' militant, the 'homosexual' activist also has elements of a sexuality and a gender identity influenced by heteronormative constructs from the past, but this does not preclude them from having a political consciousness very much in the present with a view to the future. Taube's call for revolutionary sexuality reflects Puig's mission to make his readers aware of the need for a radical dismantling of oppressive and compulsory heterosexuality with its insistence on a strict gender binary and its associated roles of dominance or submission, but he also challenges those queer readers who may identify as female to beware of replicating systems of oppression based on patriarchal systems.[11] As Valentín advises Molina: "Quiero decir que si te gusta ser mujer… no te sientas que por esos sos menos…. Quiero decirte que no tenés que pagar con algo, con favores, pedir perdón, porque te guste eso. No te tenés que someter…" [I want to say that if you want to be a woman… do not feel because of this you are less…. I want to tell you that you don't have to pay with anything, with favours, or ask for forgiveness just because you like this. You do not have to submit…] (Puig *El beso* 246). Hence, Puig employs 'new' theories on gender and sexual diversities in order to encompass a more complex understanding of gender and sexuality; one that includes not only Molina, but the archetypal masculine revolutionary Valentín, as well. Moreover, Puig insists that dissident sexuality is not simply worthy of societal acceptance but that sexual dissidents are, in and of themselves, important members of the revolutionary cause. The author challenges assumptions regarding courage, strength, and heroism as being only heterosexual male virtues, while his queer subject introduces not only the possibility but indeed the desirability of a new kind of person with a new consciousness. This person is not actually all that 'new', but the recognition of their value certainly is. "What interests Puig," as Balderston reminds us, "is not what the homosexual is but what he or she could become" (220). Tying together liberation and social transformation, Puig suggests that the sexual dissident will become a person with a new consciousness and who will be—like Ché's *hombre nuevo*—a new human being in a constant process of becoming.

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[11] Whether or not the sexually marginalized engage in this imitation may be irrelevant if there exists an assumption, as we see in the case of "El lobo" and *Fresa y chocolate*, that the homosexual is bourgeois by nature.

In spite of an effort to do justice, the revolutionary, Valentín, still holds antiquated notions regarding sexual identity. He is evolved enough, however, to warn his cellmate Molina of the injustice of gender discrimination. From the point of view of sexual liberation, Valentín's attitude towards people on the sex and gender periphery—homosexual women and men, transgender people, and others outside the heterosexual norm—is initially similar to the attitude of other Latin American revolutionaries, Martí and Ché who, while fighting against racism, class inequality, and European and North American hegemony, were not ready to recognize that the promotion of the classical masculine revolutionary hero led only partially to the creation of their desired *hombre nuevo*. While these men argued for progressive change in terms of class and racial discrimination, they held on to the colonizing effects of the colonial/modern gender system originating in western Europe (Lugones 186) which continued to be as oppressive after the Cuban Revolution as it was during the colonial period. As discussed previously, in *Nuestra América* Martí railed against the danger of the influence of *delicados* in Cuba; and Ché's well-established anti-homosexual attitudes contributed to a "charged atmosphere" of homophobia contributing to the Cuban government's repressive policies toward homosexuals in the nineteen sixties and seventies (Bejel *Gay Cuban* 100). This situation of conflict, in which actors in socialist movements for equality simultaneously oppress as they attempt to liberate, is of major concern to Puig in his novel. The reader is witness to the affective and political impact Molina and Valentín make on one another in a process of a mutual *conscientización* in which oppressive sex and gender norms are discarded and thus, in the telling of this story, Puig invites his readers to begin their own journey of awareness.

Story Summary

Set at the beginning of Argentina's infamous Dirty War shortly after the 1976 overthrow of the government of Isabel Martínez de Perón by the right wing military junta led by Jorge Rafael Videla, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* follows the development of a relationship between Luis Alberto Molina and Valentín Arregui Paz, two dissidents—one sexual,[12] the other political—who share a cell in the notorious Villa Devoto prison in Buenos Aires. As their affective and physical bond develops during their incarceration, the establishment of a more complex human connection—one that Anzaldúa would describe as the development of a *new consciousness*—challenges assumptions about sex, gender, and the value of the *queer* in revolution, and takes *el hombre nuevo* to a new level of development.

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[12] *Sexual* in the sense that Molina rejects the sex assigned to him at birth and the normative sexual role assigned to him by society.

Molina, a ‘homosexual’ who identifies as female, is serving an eight-year maximum sentence for the supposed corruption of a minor.[13] To the average reader, he exhibits qualities considered stereotypically feminine. Molina appears delicate, emotional, and submissive. In the cell he performs the conventional female roles of nurse and mother as he tends to his cellmate’s illnesses while recounting to him the plots of B-grade nineteen forties Hollywood films (with obligatory *femmes fatales*) as if they were bedtime stories “just like lullabies” (279). The purpose of the stories is to soothe and distract the Marxist revolutionary, Valentín, from the pains of his repeated torture at the hands of prison authorities. Arrested for his role as a guerrilla, Valentín is an archetypal revolutionary hero. Self-disciplined and self-sacrificing, he projects traits of strength, intellect, and leadership; qualities associated with traditional masculinity. In return for Molina’s kindness and support, Valentín helps Molina improve his own self-image by challenging the notion that a woman’s role is one of domestic and sexual subservience. He educates Molina about the importance of the struggle for social justice and revolution in general, and about a woman’s right to dignity and equality in particular. Over the course of their exchanges, an affective and sexual bond develops between them that allows each of them to let go of their attachment to rigid rules of gender and sexuality standing in their way of the development of a more profound and more wholistic sense of what it means to connect as human beings.

During this process, the two cellmates come to an awareness of the intersections of the oppressions against which they are struggling. This awareness consequently enables Valentín to enter into an exchange with Molina about liberation. Like his revolutionary predecessors, Martí and Ché, Valentín educates his audience about the need to fight social inequality. However, over the course of his increasingly intimate relationship with Molina—a person who at one time he would have dismissed as weak and bourgeois—a new and more inclusive perspective is awakened within Valentín; one that creates a rupture in his notions of manliness and femininity. Consequently, his new consciousness allows him to see Molina as an equal agent of revolution.

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[13] Puig provides no other details about the charge against Molina, nor does he give the reader any indication of its veracity. The charge is unlikely to be true, given Molina’s preference for more mature married men like the waiter, Gabriel. Gayle Ruben notes that “[t]he term *sex offender*” was used in the U.S. in the 1950s to describe a variety of serious sexual crimes and “eventually functioned as code for homosexuals” (140).

As the novel progresses, the reader begins to see that the female-identified Molina challenges a worldview of assumed binary oppositions while demonstrating through a feminine identity that the perpetuation of immutable and essentialist sex and gender roles are oppressive. In both performance and speech, Molina complicates strict identity classifications and shows how regimes of sexuality and gender are unstable. During Molina's retelling of *The Panther Woman*, a film that "sets up the psychological terrain between the two men" creating "a male-female polarity…. characterized by *machismo* and *marianismo*" (Pinet 21), Valentín impugns the male protagonist's masculinity and sexuality when he argues that the architect has too close an association with his mother (18). In addition, Valentín finds it suspicious that the character enters into relationships with women in which there is "no sexual possibility" (23). Molina takes Valentín's criticism personally, inferring that Valentín believes there is a psychological pathology behind Molina's sexuality, the theory of which Puig explains in the footnote on Freud (131). Molina is offended by the perception of his femininity as a defect indicative of a problem with his upbringing. Molina rejects this analysis and, asserting his own self-awareness, recommends that Valentín save his diagnosis for someone else: "yo quiero ser mujer. Así que ahorrame de escuchar consejos, porque yo sé lo que me pasa y lo tengo todo clarísimo en la cabeza" [I want to be a woman. So, spare me your advice because I know what's going on with me and I have it all very clear in my head] (*El beso* 17), echoing the final words of the film *Cat People* from which Puig takes this story: “despite psychoanalytic theory, in the ultimate analysis—she is exactly what she said she was.”

Molina feels further alienated and silenced by Valentín when he dismisses the possibility that Molina might understand what it is like to suffer torture:

> V. … prison is nothing if you think about torture… because you have *no* idea what it’s like.
>
> M. I can imagine.
>
> V. No you can’t. (*KSW* 27)

Yet, like the protagonist in the film that Molina recounts about a race car driver who rejects his parents’ upper class life and goes to join the guerillas (113-32), Valentín grew up with all the bourgeois advantages and privileges of the upper-middle class (76). His engagement in political struggle comes about relatively recently compared to Molina, who has experienced a lifetime of torture and persecution as an openly feminine male of the lower classes in a ruthlessly machista society. And it is Molina who, at the end of the novel, sacrifices his life for the cause of revolution.

As their relationship progresses and Valentín gradually opens himself up to his cellmate, Molina makes the effort to educate Valentín about the term ‘homosexual.’ He explains to Valentín that the word comprises various categories. Indeed, at the time Puig was writing *KSW*, many categories of non-heteronormative identity—including bisexual and transgender—would be often placed under the umbrella term ‘homosexual’ (Ryan 238). Distancing himself from a common conception of homosexuality as simply any man who has sex with another man, Molina advises that he is not the kind that settles down with another gay man, a practice he considers “strictly for homos” (203). Instead, he asserts that he identifies with a group that is “one hundred percent female,” adding, “we’re normal women; we sleep with men” (203). Thus, as gender studies scholar Jonathan Allan and Brazilian literary and social critic Anselmo Peres Alós discuss later in this study, a contemporary reading of the text—one that takes into account current approaches to sex and gender diversity[14]—suggests that Molina is more appropriately identified, if one must select a gender and sexuality for Molina,[15] with a heterosexual trans-female than homosexual cis-male.[16] In this single exchange with Valentín, Molina challenges the stability of fixed notions of homosexuality and heterosexuality. In doing so, Molina fosters in Valentín, and in the reader, a questioning of these classifications.

Valentín's Transition

Valentín's initial reaction to Molina's femininity is one of rejection and mockery, epitomizing the expected response of the *lector medio* that Puig had in mind during the writing of *KSW*. When Molina tells Valentín that he is a "lady" who wants to marry a man, Valentín retorts: "that's impossible because if he's a guy he wants a woman, well, you're never going to undeceive yourself" (44). Finally, when Valentín chides Molina for getting him into "bad habits" after Molina uses up his personal provisions to cook him a sumptuous dinner, Molina expresses hurt feelings. Valentín's response to Molina's unhappiness is to scoff at him for acting "like a woman" (27-29). Valentín's negative attitudes to the feminine are further revealed when the spotlight of gender is placed on *him*. Molina touches a revealing nerve when, after he refers to his cellmate as “Miss Valentina,” Valentine sternly replies: “don’t call me Valentina, I’m no woman” (38). Yet as their relationship develops, and Valentín begins to see Molina as a human equal instead of as a *maricón*, he ceases denigrating his cellmate’s femininity and starts to accept Molina as female. Valentín moves past his own homophobia and, instead, engages in a more inclusive political discourse on social equality—one more appropriate to an enlightened revolutionary—in order to encourage Molina to challenge his own conventional ideas of female subservience. Valentín instructs his cellmate: “the man of the house and the woman of the house have to be equal with one another. If not, their relation becomes a form of exploitation” (244). Thus, Molina’s submissive female identification “allows Puig,” through Valentín, “to expose and denounce the brainwashing suffered by women in a patriarchal society” (Foster 342) and Molina begins to appreciate that being female is not the same as being unequal and underserving of respect; that being a woman ought not be a source of shame but of strength. Conversely, the gradually increasing emotional and physical connection with Molina brings about an internal liberation in Valentín, one that unburdens him of the weight of an oppressive masculinity. He is now a new man who, as Foster points out, “is supposedly a straight man who ends up accepting and assuming his innate homosexuality, a political activist who attains a deep and transforming understanding of his feminine side and his gay self” (343). This transformation is evident when, in their final moments together, Valentín finds himself at a loss for words as he tries to tell Molina how much his relationship with him has changed him:

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[14] A 'contemporary' reading includes, what Sally Hines refers to in her book *Transgender Identities* as, a " 'cultural turn to transgender' . . . signified by a rising focus on transgender within the media and popular culture" (11). She also notes that recent "social, cultural and legislative developments reflect the ways in which transgender is acquiring increasing visibility in contemporary society" (ibid).

[15] It is likely that Puig would argue against such an identitarian approach given his reluctance to apply the term *homosexual* to himself and his preference for a world without gendered sexual roles, as discussed later in this study. However, Butler acknowledges that some trans activists reject such an approach, arguing that it denies lived realities and desires to work within the binary system ("Interview with Judith Butler" 9).

[16] The term *cis* is used in opposition to *trans*. *Cis* refers to a person whose gender identity is aligned with the biological sex assigned to them at birth.

> V. I learned a lot from you, Molina…
>
> M. And what is it you’re supposed to have learned from me?
>
> V. It’s kind of hard to explain. But you’ve made me think about so many things, of that you can be sure … (261)

Valentín does not try to explain. Instead, in an act that demonstrates his transition into a new kind of person—"human, tender, sensuous," and "unashamed" (Marcuse, *Essay* 29)—he expresses himself by removing his clothes and making love to Molina one last time (261-63). Towards the end of their lovemaking, Valentín accepts Molina's request for a kiss and thanks him for it (262-3).

The Kiss of the Panther Woman

The kiss is the element that begins their relationship and signals its end. In *The Panther Woman*, the first film Molina recounts to Valentín, the title character Irena is "not a woman like all the others" (3). She is sure her kiss will mean the death of any man who touches her and so avoids kissing her husband at any cost. Near the end of the film, the handsome psychiatrist who is treating Irena's phobia meets his death when he attempts to 'cure' her by doing what she fears most (39). When Valentín asks Molina which character in the film he identifies with, Molina answers: "With Irena, what do you think? She's the heroine, dummy. Always the heroine" (25). However, by the end of the novel Molina's role changes. During their last night in their cell, Molina asks Valentín about the possibility of a kiss:

> M. I'm curious . . . would you feel much revulsion about giving me a kiss?
>
> V. Mmm . . . It must be a fear that you will turn into a panther, like with the first movie you told me.
>
> M. I'm not the panther woman.
>
> V. It's true, you're not the panther woman.
>
> M. It's very sad being the panther woman; no one can kiss you. Or anything.
>
> V. You, you're the spider woman, that traps men in her web. (260)

Molina now denies that he is Irena, the panther woman, and Valentín validates this statement giving Molina the name "spider woman" instead. But the life-changing power of the kiss does not disappear, it only shifts from one body to another. Valentín kisses his cellmate at the end of their final sexual act, after which Molina agrees to take a message to Valentín's comrades when he is released from prison the next day. It is an undertaking Molina fears will be his end, a suspicion confirmed when he is shot in the street by Valentín's comrades who mistakenly assume he is informing on them to the police (274). Valentín was correct, Molina was not the panther woman, rather it was Valentín who would give the kiss of death. As Bacarisse notes:

> The traditional sex/death connection is explicit. For example, any attempted physical contact with Irena, in *Cat People*, will prove fatal. And odder still is the fact that her name means 'peace', since, conversely, it is sex with Valentín, part of whose name is Paz (peace), that leads to the same outcome as the main narrative. (101)

However, both the sex and the kiss are given freely and out of love because Valentín has become a fuller human being through recognition of his feminine and homoerotic side. Out of this transformation and the love it produces, Molina is able to become a whole human being himself thus enabling him to take up his part in the revolution even though he knows it might cost him his life. Their relationship demonstrates what both Martí and Ché insisted upon in the project of revolution, that the creation of a new consciousness and a new way of being must be guided by strong feelings of love.

The Politics of Sexuality and Gender in KSW

Reading against the stereotype

Given Puig's pronouncements against the perils of traditional masculinity and his antagonism toward binary gender systems, it is significant that he employs Molina as protagonist. At first blush, Hollywood-diva-obsessed Molina does not appear to fit the conventional image of the typical revolutionary - someone strong, ascetic, selfless, and masculine. Indeed, there are those who would read him as a stereotypical depiction of a homosexual: effeminate, melodramatic, bourgeois and superficial. Gay critics were not exempt from this unflattering reading, some of whom reacted with initial disappointment in Molina, a character who seemed conventionally timid and frivolous at the time of a vociferous emergent gay rights movement. On his first reading of *KSW*, author and friend of Puig, Roberto Echavarren, found Molina's feminine qualities "anachronistic." He wrote: "Evocaba la atmósfera tradicional más que el contexto de activismo político que experimentábamos" [He evoked a traditional atmosphere more than the context of political activism that we were experiencing] (Echavarren 462). After *KSW* opened as a play in Brazil, another critic accused Puig of being reactionary for not portraying "homosexuals in a heroic light" (Levine 262). Levine recalls Puig's response: " 'The Stalinist queens,' as Manuel called them, wanted him to be more political and less a woman. They never understood that to be a woman was already political …" (ibid). But their anxiety around stereotypical readings of Molina, and of gay men in general, proved to be somewhat justified, as critics seemed to damn Molina with faint praise. As Bacarisse, opined:

> My contention is that Molina is not a reprehensible character, only a misguided one […]. Though there is certainly more to him than his sexuality, this is undeniably what is most distinctive about him, and at the same time, it causes him to be fatuous, pathetic and touching. (95)

The assumption made here is that it is Molina's homosexuality—he is an anatomical male who desires another anatomical male—that is at the root of his struggle and that this is why an average reader would react to him with discomfort and perhaps pity.

However, one might challenge the undeniability of Molina's sexuality as his most distinguishing characteristic. If anything, it is Molina's femininity, more than the person with whom he chooses to have sex, that unsettles the reader. If Molina were a traditionally masculine and male-identified homosexual, a counterpart to Valentín similar in every respect except same-sex desire and Marxist politic, he would likely be read quite differently and he would almost certainly allay some of the misgivings expressed by gay critics worried about potentially unfavourable 'straight' readings. Thus, the reduction of Molina to a stereotypical effeminate homosexual is of legitimate concern. Some recent scholarly work addresses this preoccupation by questioning readings of *KSW* that seem convinced of the notion that Molina must be a homosexual stereotype. In his introduction to the 2002 Critical Edition of *El beso de la mujer araña*, Amícola expresses his frustration with inadequate and outdated reductionist identity categories:

> El hecho de que las publicaciones más recientes que luchan contra los estereotipos sexuales siguieron utilizando un término como "homosexual" pareció revelar, con todo, hasta qué punto seguimos anclados en esta designación que al parecer data de 1860 y de la que no parecemos todavía capaces de liberarnos. (Amícola xxiii).
>
> [The fact that the most recent publications that fight against sexual stereotypes continued using a term like 'homosexual' seemed to reveal, however, to what extent we continue chained to this worn-out designation apparently originating in 1860 and from which we seem unable to free ourselves.]

Indeed, some current scholars argue that it would be more productive for readers and critics to unshackle themselves from outdated language tied to unexamined assumptions about gender roles and masculinity.

A closer reading of Puig's novel reveals that it is neither necessary nor beneficial to accept Molina as a homosexual stereotype since it is not Molina's sexual desire, as such, that is at the heart of the issue, rather it is his distinct femininity that appears to discomfort and disturb. In other words, Molina's gender identification as female, more than the assigned biological sex of his choice of sexual partner, is what becomes most conspicuous and challenging to an average reader. Disputing the automatic assumption that Molina is a clichéd effeminate homosexual, Peres Alós comments, "As for his gender and sexuality, Molina is not perceived as a man or as a homosexual," raising Néstor Perlongher's question, 'if by homosexuality one understands relations between men, then what happens when one of the subjects declares himself a woman?' " (Peres Alós 1126). Since Molina defines himself as female and expressly rejects sexual relationships with gay men as something "strictly for homos" (203), then applying the term 'homosexual' to Molina is clearly inaccurate. Peres Alós and Perlongher challenge the reader to critically examine the clichéd notion of femininity as a constituent part of Molina's assumed homosexual pathology and to dig deeper for a more complex analysis. Allan also makes this challenge, noting that scholarly work on *KSW* often accepts displays of male femininity as an automatic indicator of stereotypical homosexuality:

> [A]cademic studies have largely relied on stereotypes in an attempt to deflate or deconstruct them. Unfortunately, the bulk of these studies participate in a sort of "paranoid reading" informed by a "hermeneutics of suspicion." That is, instead of working through the stereotype, critics often accept it as a stereotype and subsequently work to critique the stereotype. For instance, Molina is fundamentally feminine, constitutively so, and his femininity is rendered as symptomatic of his homosexuality; thus, his femininity is a stereotype of the "gay man." (74)

Rather than automatically ascribing a gay identity to Molina, Allan advocates a reading of the novel "that focuses on femininity and accepts it as such *without reading it as symptomatic or stereotypical of homosexuality*"[17] (71). He concurs with Jessica Burke's decision to use the term *transgender*, rather than *homosexual*, with reference to Molina because, as Burke reasons: 'it is more accurate in discussing characters who truly identify more with women interested in pursuing relationships with men, rather than identifying themselves as men attracted to men" (qtd. in Allan 76).

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[17] Emphasis mine

The use of specific and updated terminology to describe Puig's characters represents an important epistemic shift toward a more complex understanding of classifications of gender and sexuality. As our understanding of identity categories evolves, so does the language associated with those categories. Thus, the lumping together of gender variance with homosexuality is no longer appropriate. Allan suggests the reader put away outdated conventional notions of sexuality and, instead, examine how *KSW* "discomforts and unsettles the fixity of gender;" arguing that, "Puig, through Molina, is creating and allowing for a feminine identity freed from reductive (and tyrannical) understandings of gender" (84). Expanding on this idea, Peres Alós argues that an anti-reductionist reading of *KSW* yields much more than simple stereotypes can provide and redirects the reader's focus to the instability and injustice of an immutable gender/sex system that led to Molina's imprisonment in the first place:

> invés de subscrever o caráter binário dos códigos de sexo e de gênero, questiona a própria possibilidade de uma matriz dicotômica a produzir identidades de gênero e de sexualidade, ao mostrar o quanto são frágeis os seus limites classificatórios. [...] Mais produtivo do que discutir se Molina encarna ou não uma persona masculina e homossexual, ou uma persona feminina e heterossexual, é avaliar de que maneiras os binarismos de gênero e de orientação sexual são denunciados como ficções reguladoras da identidade humana. (Peres Alós 1127)
>
> [instead of subscribing to a binary nature of sex and gender codes, [Molina] questions the very possibility of a dichotomous matrix producing gender identity and sexuality, to show how fragile the limits of these classifications are. More productive than arguing whether or not Molina embodies a masculine and homosexual persona, or feminine and heterosexual persona, is to assess the ways in which binaries of gender and sexual orientation are denounced as regulatory fictions of human identity]

As suggested in the quote above, Puig is asking the reader to resist a reductive approach that points to an essentialist interpretation of sex and gender identity. For Puig, both gender and sexuality—no matter the assigned sex at birth—are socially constructed fictions imposed by patriarchal structures invested in an oppressive masculinity tied directly to capitalist exploitation. Spanish philosopher Paul B. Preciado's[18] view of the systematization of gender and sex is in line with Puig's premise:

> Los hombres y las mujeres son construcciones metonímicas del sistema heterosexual de producción y de reproducción que autoriza el sometimiento de las mujeres como fuerza de trabajo sexual y como medio de reproducción. Esta explotación es estructural, y los beneficios sexuales que los hombres y las mujeres heterosexuales extraen de ella obligan a reducir la superficie erótica a los órganos sexuales reproductivos y a privilegiar el pene como único centro mecánico de producción del impulso sexual. (*Manifiesto Contrasexual* 18)
>
> [Men and women are metonymic constructions of the heterosexual system of production and reproduction that authorizes the subjugation of women as a sexual labour force and as a means of reproduction. This exploitation is structural, and the sexual benefits that heterosexual men and women extract from it requires the reduction of reproductive sexual organs to an erotic space and to privilege the penis as the only central mechanism of the production of the sexual impulse]

Molina directly confronts Valentín's and the reader's own acceptance of this system, thereby creating a space for the queer subject in which full participation in the cause of liberation is possible.

Traditional Masculinity

Puig argues that any revolution worth its salt must first address outdated and oppressive concepts of masculinity and femininity and his political message on sexual liberation goes beyond the issue of basic equal rights for homosexuals. He challenges the legitimacy of sexual identity categories in and of themselves and lays blame for past and current injustices at the feet of patriarchy and the systems of power that it creates; a society in which the masculine dominates and the feminine is subjugated. In a 1974 interview with Puig, Mexican writer Elena Poniatowska questioned the author about his frequent criticism of machismo and the subjugation of the feminine. Puig was unequivocal in his stance on normative masculinity, calling it a sickness produced by fascism:

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[18] Cited in the bibliography under: Preciado, Beatriz

> La masculinidad, con lo que implica de fuerza y de regodeo en el poder, me parece la escuela perfecta del fascismo. La masculinidad está a la derecha. Y lo peor de todo es que el hombre que se gradúa en esa escuela no es como se pretende, un producto de la naturaleza facultado por esta última para someter a cualquier ser más débil que se le ponga a tiro. Es un enfermizo producto histórico-cultural. (Morales Saavedra 371)
>
> [Masculinity, with its implications of strength and selfish pleasure found in power, seems to me to be the perfect school for fascism. Masculinity is on the [political] right. And the worst of it is that the man who graduates from this school is not what he claims to be, a product *of* nature and empowered *by* nature to subdue any weaker being in his sights. He is a sick historico-cultural product.]

Puig takes a firm anti-essentialist position against the notion that 'natural' characteristics award the biological male distinct and superior status to the biological female. Continuing with his response to Poniatowska, he adds:

> Yo creo que toda lucha de clases debe pasar antes por una revisión del concepto de la masculinidad, porque es en la relación hombre-fuerte, mujer-débil, que se le toma el gusto a la prepotencia. Es un vicio, una adicción, el gusto por el mandato. (Morales Saavedra 371)
>
> [I believe that all class struggle must first undergo a revision of the concept of masculinity because it is in the relation of strong-man, weak-woman that leads to arrogance. It is a vice, an addiction, this taste for power]

Here, Puig specifically addresses the toxic nature of traditional masculinity that leads to oppressive authoritarian rule. He would argue that the spurning of movements for gay liberation and the rejection of other queers by their leftist compatriots is also fruit of the same poisonous masculinist tree.

For Puig, a "revision of the concept of masculinity" also involves a re-evaluation of sexuality and its categories; of unhooking human interaction and intimacy from hetero- vs. homosexual identities and practices; and challenging the notion that gender and sexuality are immutable and essential characteristics. In a 1985 interview with author Daniel Yakir, Puig comments on the necessity of sex and affection, and the fabricated nature of sexuality classifications:

> For me [homosexuality] doesn't exist. Heterosexuality doesn't exist either. Sex isn't transcendental—it's as necessary as sleeping and eating, an activity of the vegetative life. What's transcendental for me is affection. Sex doesn't define anything. Our sick old society one day decided that sex had a meaning and a weight, with guilt and who knows what. [….]. *I don't think there is a difference between men and women, except for what they have between their legs. The distinction between masculinity and femininity, the whole notion of role-playing, isn't natural. […] It all becomes a big masquerade.*[19] (Levine 261)

Puig's anti-identitarian position on gender and sexuality categories is made even clearer in his interview by Kathleen Wheaton in *The Paris Review* in which Puig was asked whether it was possible or desirable to eliminate heterosexual and homosexual classifications. He comments: "It's only a utopian ideal. But I see it as the only answer…. *Once you've eliminated sex as a means of superiority or inferiority, sex is of no meaning*….[20] We are so immersed in sexual repression, it's impossible to think of a world without it—but it will come" (1989). Puig clearly sees the value in maintaining "utopian" ideals in spite of the lived reality of wanting or needing to claim identities.

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[19] Emphasis mine

[20] ibid.

Given Puig's aversion to the problematic fixity that gender categories and roles invoke, it is arguable that the author might still view the current term *transgender* as an inadequate form of identity classification since it could be seen to accept, as legitimate, a comparison against a cis-heterosexual standard. However, it is also likely that he would favour provisionally framing Molina as a transwoman, instead of as a homosexual stereotype, since it opens up the possibility for the reader to move on to a more complex appreciation for Puig's political mission while still acknowledging the need to challenge regulatory binary gender and sexual identity constructs.

Puig's Political Formation: Homosexual Liberation Front

When considering the themes of gender and sexuality in *KSW*, it is important to examine the political and social context within which Puig wrote as well as to take into account the educational purpose of the text and his discontentment with the concept of homosexuality. Unlike current identity classifications like *LGBTQI*[21] and its variations, that endeavour to name distinct sexual minority classifications, in the nineteen seventies the term *homosexual*—and the less stigmatizing alternative *gay*—were much broader categories used to encompass a wide variety of sexual and gender identities, including "homosexual men and women, […] bisexuals and gender variant people" (Ryan 238). It would be a mistake then to only consider the 'G' in LGBTQI when reading the term 'homosexual' in *KSW,* or when Puig uses the word 'homosexual' in his public discourse. While Puig rejected the designation 'homosexual' in general terms, he accepted its strategic use for purposes of political solidarity[22] and the liberation for 'homosexuals' of all stripes was a motivating factor for the writing of *KSW*.

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[21] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex. Anzaldúa calls these categories both "subsuming" and "fragmenting" ("To(o) Queer" 163; 166).

During his years as a writer, many countries—including communist, fascist, and 'democratic' nations—were actively rooting out an imagined homosexual menace. Gayle Ruben describes the decades-long mistreatment that queer people suffered in the United States:

> From the late 1940s until the early 1960s, erotic communities whose activities did not fit the postwar American dream drew intense persecution. Homosexuals were, along with communists, the objects of federal witch-hunts and purges. Congressional investigations, executive orders, and sensational exposés in the media aimed to root out homosexuals employed by the government. Thousands lost their jobs. The FBI began systematic surveillance and harassment of homosexuals which lasted at least into the 1970s. (140)

National anti-homosexual policies were, of course, not confined to the U.S. In Cuba, after the 1967 closure of the UMAPs—labour camps for homosexuals, religious objectors, and hippies—a policy of *parametraje* [parameterization] during the period known as the *quinquenio gris* [five grey years], spanning 1971 to 1976, saw the relocation of homosexuals from their positions in education and the arts to jobs away from the public sphere (Roque Guerra 221). In 1970s Argentina, a long history of anti-homosexual oppression only intensified during the lead-up to the dirty war during which time authorities hunted down and arrested homosexuals and other sexual dissidents as a matter of public policy (Roco 1, Modarelli *Pagina 12*).

The 1969 Stonewall Riots in the United States held particular resonance for Buenos Aires' nascent gay liberation movement. Likening the severity of the raid carried out by the New

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[22] My use of the concept of strategic and provisional uses of identity categories draws from Butler (*Bodies That Matter* 167).

York City Police on its queer citizens to his own experience of police repression in Argentina, Bazán observes:

> Aplicaron tolerancia cero y como si Nueva York y Buenos Aires estuvieran ligadas por un edicto enorme e interminable, intervinieron el local y arrestaron a todos los clientes…. [y] anunciaron que iban a dejar salir a todos los que tuvieran documentos. Sí, parecía un procedimiento en la Avenida Santa Fe. Indocumentados y travestis no serían liberados. (332)
>
> [They applied zero tolerance and, as if New York and Buenos Aires were linked by an enormous and never-ending edict, they invaded the bar and arrested all the patrons…. and announced that they would allow those with documents to leave. Yes, it looked like an operation on Avenida Santa Fe. The undocumented and transvestites/drag queens would not be freed.]

The violent struggle at Stonewall by transgender people of colour, lesbians, and gay men against police abuse marked "the birth of the gay and lesbian political movement" in the United States (Duberman xv) and consequently inspired, at least in part,[23] the birth of Nuestro Mundo, Argentina's first gay liberation group.

In 1971, Nuestro Mundo joined the newly formed *Frente de Liberación Homosexual de la Argentina* [Argentinian Homosexual Liberation Front] (Perlongher 77) founded by five university students; Manuel Puig among them. These young intellectuals "ponían en combustión las ideas estudiadas en Filosofía y Letras, Psicología, y Sociología" [ignited the ideas studied in Philosophy, Psychology, and Sociology] and took inspiration from North American social movements like the Black Panthers and women's rights groups (Perlongher 77, Bazán 340). As an integral part of this campaign, Puig would have been well acquainted with theories of class and gender oppression, as well as being informed about the tactics and risks of engaging in political action against Argentina's authoritarian regime. He was also fully and painfully aware of intolerance and discrimination against those on the sexual periphery, not just on the part his political enemies, but also from his supposed comrades on the same side of the political divide as demonstrated by the initial antagonism from the Marist revolutionary, Valentín in *KSW*. Perlongher, also a key FLH member, notes that at one time the government put up posters attacking "el ERP[24], los homosexuales y los drogadictos" (80) [The ERP, homosexuals and drug addicts]. In response to the association of the ERP with homosexuals and drug addicts, the left wing Juventud Peronista [Peronist Youth] denied the FLH the right to march with them, and would later chant the slogan: "No somos putos, no somos faloperos" [We aren't fags. We aren't druggies] (ibid.).

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[23] 1969 was also the year of Argentina's *Cordobazo*, the uprising that unseated authoritarian General Onganía. 1971 saw the rise of "antiauthoritarian student movements" and the beginning of the Lanusse military government (Perlongher 77).

In spite of existing tensions with various factions, the FLH maintained its solidarity with the nation's liberation movements, while continuing to insist on the right of Argentinean queers to participate in the project of revolutionary change and to articulate their own needs within that process. Perlongher asserts:

> Tanto la sincera necesidad de liberarse de un machismo profundamente anclado en la sociedad argentina, como la convicción de que esa liberación no podía sino producirse en el marco de una *transformación revolucionaria*[25] de las estructuras sociales vigentes, constituyen elementos constitutivos del movimiento gay argentino, que aparecen constantemente a lo largo de su historia. (78)
>
> [As much as the sincere need to be liberated from a machismo profoundly rooted in Argentinean society, as the conviction that such liberation could only occur within the framework of a *revolutionary transformation* of existing social structures, make up the constituent elements of the gay Argentinean movement, that appear constantly throughout its history.]

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[24] Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo. [People's Revolutionary Army]

[25] Empahsis mine

In true militant fashion, the FLH published a set of demands[26] to confront the authorities. These demands included: the immediate cessation of anti-homosexual political repression; the repeal of anti-homosexual ordinances; and the liberation of homosexual prisoners. Perlongher described the sexual oppression of the time as "'heterosexual compulsivo y exclusivo' vigente como propio del capitalismo y de todo otro sistema autoritario, se llama a la alianza con los 'movimientos de liberación nacional y social' y con los grupos feministas" [compulsive and exclusive heterosexuality – as belonging to capitalism and all other authoritarian systems. And it call[ed] for an alliance of 'national and social liberation movements', including feminist groups] (78). In a second publication, "Sexo y Liberación," the FLH emphasized its position as a truly revolutionary group well in line with the Marxist philosophies of other liberation factions, even when not in accordance with some of their commonly held misconceptions around particular notions of gender and sexuality. The edict declares the FLH:

> [U]n movimiento anticapitalista, antiimperialista y antiautoritario, cuya contribución pretende ser el rescate para la liberación de una de las áreas a través de la cual se posibilita y sostiene la dominación de la mujer y del hombre por el hombre, en convencimiento de que *ninguna revolución es completa, y por lo tanto, exitosa, si no subvierte la estructura ideológica íntimamente internalizada por los miembros de la sociedad de dominación.*[27] (82)
> [an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-authoritarian movement, whose contribution seeks… liberation from one of the domains through which the domination by men of women and of men is made possible and is sustained, with the belief that *no revolution is complete, and therefore successful, if the intimately internalized ideological structure is not subverted by the members under the dominant society.*]

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[26] *Puntos Basicos de Acuerdo* (1972) (Perlongher 78)
[27] Emphasis mine

Without a doubt, the Front sought a "complete" revolution; one that not only liberated the queer people in their ranks but all those who suffered under a patriarchal authoritarian ideology.

The FLH's revolutionary stance did not go unnoticed by the dictatorship and, as was the case with communists, homosexuals became even further vilified as enemies of the state. Public humiliation, paramilitary-styled witch hunts, lynching, and threats of death were part of government policy. In 1975, Argentina's Minister of Social Welfare, José López Rega – intellectual author of the 1973 Ezeiza massacre—penned a scathing article in the right wing magazine *el Caudillo,* entitled: "Acabar con los homosexuales" [Finish off the homosexuals] in which he called for the eradication of homosexuals, especially those associated or allied with left wing political groups. He writes:

> [P]roponemos que se los interne en campos de reeducación y trabajo, para que de esta manera cumplan con dos objetivos: estar lejos de la ciudad y compensarle a la Nación trabajando por la pérdida de un hombre útil. Hay que acabar con los homosexuales. Tenemos que crear brigadas callejeras que salgan a recorrer los barrios de las ciudades, que den caza a esos sujetos vestidos como mujeres, hablando como mujeres. Cortarles el pelo en la calle o raparlos y dejarlos atados a los árboles con leyendas explicatorias y didácticas. (*Roco 1*)
>
> [We propose that they be interned in re-education and work camps so that they fulfill two objectives: that they be located far from the city and that they compensate the Nation, through their labour, for the loss of useful men. We must finish off the homosexuals. We must create street brigades to go out and scour the cities' neighbourhoods; to hunt down those individuals dressed like women, who talk like women. Let us cut off their hair in the street or shave their heads and leave them tied to trees with educational messages on them.]

Under these worsening conditions of repression, the continued functioning of the FLH became impossible and in 1976 the group announced its dissolution (Roco 1). By the end of the dirty war in 1983, in addition to those 'legally' incarcerated by the dictatorship, an estimated 400 homosexuals had been tortured and disappeared, FLH members among them (Júaregui 171, Brown 121).

Our New Man in Havana

It is against this backdrop of political oppression that Puig writes of the relationship between a sexual dissident and a conventional revolutionary man in which the two come to understand and love one another, and then evolve to become newer and better human beings; each incorporating part of the other into themselves. Moreover, Puig writes an intentionally committed literature so that queer and average readers might have access to the latest theories and ideas on sexuality that were unavailable in the Spanish language at the time. In the next chapter of this study, we will see that "El lobo" and *F&C* were also made with a specific audience in mind; one with a recent memory of the history of the Revolution's marginalization of the queer subject. Like Puig's *KSW*, Paz's work has an educational mission to refute the notion that a homosexual is an unsuitable participant in the revolutionary project due to his bourgeois reactionary nature. Also like *KSW*, "El lobo" and *F&C* show how the affective relationship between a queer subject and a young militant creates the conditions for a change in consciousness which allows the revolutionary to become the new man "guided by strong feelings of love" (43) that Ché envisioned.

Chapter 3

Tea and Sympathies: Senel Paz's New Men in "El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo" & *Fresa y chocolate*

We are the queer groups, the people that don't belong anywhere, not in
the dominant world nor completely within our own respective cultures.
Combined we cover so many oppressions. But the overwhelming oppression
is the collective fact that we do not fit, and because we do not fit we
are a threat. Not all of us have the same oppressions, but we empathize and
identify with each other's oppressions. We do not have the same ideology,
nor do we derive similar solutions. Some of us are leftists, some of us
practitioners of magic. Some of us are both. But these different affinities
are not opposed to each other. In El Mundo Zurdo[28] *I with my own affinities*
and my people with theirs can live together and transform the planet.
Gloria Anzaldúa (1981)

Following in the footsteps of Puig's *KSW*, Senel Paz's "El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo" [The Wolf, the Forest and the New Man] and film based on that novella, *Fresa y chocolate* [Strawberry and Chocolate], are acclaimed as two of the most important works on the topic of homosexuality in Cuban history. They created "an essential moment in [] society's development" (Feinberg 70) due to the profound impact they had on the Cuban state and social attitudes of the nineteen nineties; one that opened a dialogue on sexuality and social commitment previously thought impossible. This chapter will show how the relationship between Paz's characters, Diego and David, challenge and revise the Cuban Revolution's established notion of masculinity as a necessary component of the revolutionary man, just as the development of Molina´s character in *KSW* prompts an evolution in Valentín's understanding of sexuality and gender and its place in the struggle for liberation. The study will show that the development of the relationship between two characters representing two different voices indicates that the idea of *el hombre nuevo* is a complex and evolving concept that ought to be viewed in its complexity. This complexity includes a cultural, aesthetic, and intellectual appreciation that must be viewed differently from rigid interpretations during the Revolution's past; the reading of certain works of literature ought not be equated with the bourgeois class and forbidden; and intellectual and cultural pursuits should not be viewed as unproductive and therefore counterrevolutionary. Instead, the revolution needs to accept that a rural person from humble beginnings, like David, can benefit and contribute to the formation of a new society through a rich and varied education in the humanities, as was the case with Paz and Anzaldúa.

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[28] The Left-handed World

Following a brief summary of the novella and film, this study will first analyze some of the tensions that arise in the production of the text and the film, including: the controversial role committed literature plays in the discussion of the novella; the assertion by director Gutiérrez Alea that homosexuality is not *F&C*'s central theme; and, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the significant omissions and changes to the story of Diego and David's relationship, as well as David's sexuality, as "El lobo" is reworked for film. Secondly, the study will examine Paz's literary and socio-political influences. It will look at Paz's literary inspiration for "El lobo," the effect his experience with the author and mentor, Eduardo Heras León, had on his personal and professional life, and the impact this would have had on the creation of his characters. Finally, my study will suggest against reading Diego as a gay bourgeois stereotype. It will be argued that Diego's camp performance, intellectualism, and use of queer taxonomies ought to be considered resistant, creative, and politically strategic elements of his identity.

Story summary

In contrast to the backdrop of the struggle for revolution during Argentina's dirty war in *KSW*, Paz's works "El lobo" and *F&C* take place in Havana two decades following the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. The period of the late sixties and the first half of the seventies was an era of homosexual persecution that included internment in labour camps and dismissal from employment in education and in the arts. These events would have been fresh in the memory of a Cuban audience when “El lobo” was published in 1991, a time during which the nation was also dealing with the severe economic impact on Cuba brought about by the fall of the Soviet Union. During that period, debates leading up to the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba discussed not only the possibility of new economic policy but also the creation of a “greater political space for dissenting views that were not manifestly counterrevolutionary” (Brenner 55). This opening was a moment for Paz to write about the long-standing injustices committed by the Revolution against Cuba’s queer citizens. He develops the topic of the creation of the New Man, a central concept of for the construction of a new Cuban society, through the story of the relationship between a thirty-year-old gay intellectual and a young man dedicated to upholding the hard-fought values of the Revolution. As in *KSW*, in this short work of fiction and later in the film, the revolutionary man finds himself in a situation in which he is challenged to consider a relationship with a queer subject.

Diego, a homosexual man who identifies as a *maricón*, is a cultural worker for the state but his progress has been slowed by the revolution through acts of persecution that included internment in one of the countries infamous UMAPs - Military Units to Aid Production - labour camps for homosexuals, religious dissenters, and other elements considered anti-social. To an average Cuban reader, Diego may exhibit qualities considered stereotypically gay. He is emotional, flamboyant, and he employs camp style and speech. Yet underneath this performance, he is an artist and intellectual keen to safeguard and share his knowledge but he feels ostracized by a revolution that fails to recognize the value of his expertise and his worth as a human being because of his sexuality. The situation changes when he meets David, a student at the University of Havana and an *almost* archetypal Cuban communist youth. David is grateful to the revolution for taking him from the countryside to the capital where he could receive a free university education and choose a career, a feat inconceivable in his parents' time during the Batista era. However, David is not as hardline as he first appears. What brings the two men together is David's curiosity, his appreciation for literature (including prohibited writing), as well as his performance in a production of Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House,* in which he takes on both male and female roles.

David displays initial resistance to Diego's sexuality, as well as to his artistic and literary tastes but, curiously, he consistently places himself in Diego's company. At first David tells himself, and an official at the university, that his purpose for visiting Diego is to keep an eye out for possible counterrevolutionary activity. But this excuse quickly disappears as David becomes ever more physically and emotionally comfortable with Diego. The two engage in conversation about literature, drink tea and cocktails, share a lavish Lezamian[29] lunch, regularly attend the ballet, and go on walking tours of Havana's decaying architectural beauty. It is only when David spies Diego getting into a diplomatic car that he momentarily suspects his new friend has betrayed him and his country. However, it turns out that Diego had been dismissed from his job at the ministry of culture for defending an artist friend's right to display all of his works at a showing and not just the ones approved by the state. Diego's car trip was not for purposes of colluding with a foreign government but simply to obtain a visa to Europe so he could leave Cuba, a nation he feels does not accept him or his ideas. Devastated by the news, David tries to convince Diego to stay in Cuba and wait for conditions to change. He even offers to support

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[29] José Lezama Lima (1910-1976) was a famous Cuban writer and poet best known for his baroque novel, *Paradiso*, which contained portrayals of homosexuality considered controversial by the state.

Diego financially once he graduates from university but Diego's mind is made up, he can no longer wait for the Revolution to make progress. David understands his friend's situation and, in a gesture of solidarity, he spends a day with Diego in public and even engages in his own camp performance, an act unthinkable for any stalwart supporter of the Revolution.

As Diego prepares to leave Cuba, Diego gives David parting advice not to give up being a revolutionary because it is important that he help transform the system. Through his relationship with Diego, David recognizes that he has become the man he always wanted to be and as he leaves Diego's home and steps out into the streets of Havana, he declares that he will defend the Diegos of this world to his last breath.

Textual and Filmic Tensions

Commitment Issues

Before commencing with the study of "El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo," *Fresa y chocolate*, and the place of the queer subject in Cuba's revolution, it is important to address two significant claims regarding the political and social mission of these works. The first claim, made by the author, is that his novella is not political. The second, made by director Gutiérrez Alea, is that the film is not about homosexuality. It is the position of this study—given that literature and film are often multilayered—that both works come about as the result of a mission to educate the reader/viewer about the treatment and role of the homosexual in the years following the Cuban revolution, while at the same time recognizing that this issue may act as a catalyst to facilitate discussion and examination of broader questions of intolerance.

Cuban writer Victor Fowler maintains that, between 1990-1992, works dealing with homosexual themes tended to be divided into two categories:

> uno en el cual el homosexual, inscrito en situaciones que operan como metáforas de la macro-historia, sirve como vehículo para discutir aspectos del proyecto revolucionario y otro en donde asistimos a una problemática inter-grupal, a un drama íntimo focalizado en la salida al espacio público o en el auto-reconocimiento de la identidad. (Fowler 144)
>
> [one in which the homosexual, written into situations that operate as macro-historic metaphors, acts as a vehicle for the discussion of different aspects of the revolutionary project and the other in which we are witness to an inter-group issue, an intimate drama focused on the coming out into public space or the self-recognition of identity]

However, Paz's novella and screenplay offer a third way of developing the theme of homosexuality. They address the limitations of the revolutionary project and they portray an intimate drama of a friendship between a queer subject and a man of the revolution in which Diego's internal struggles and disappointments are presented to the public. In order for Diego to come out into public space and fully realize his own identity, not only as a gay man but also as a respected participant in the Revolution, his specific experience of unjust intolerance is brought to the fore thereby initiating a public discussion that may cover a broad spectrum of concerns.

Much like Puig's aim of reaching both a queer reader and a *lector medio*, the story of reconciliation between the Revolution and the queer subject in Paz's novella and Alea's film speaks to a specific audience; queer and straight Cuban readers/viewers familiar with the history of institutional and social attitudes regarding homosexuality and its relationship to the Revolution. The specificity of the target audience is significant. As Denis Berenschot notes in *Performing Cuba*, in consideration of how a work will be received by the reader one must take into account the "marked differences between the intended (Cuban) audience and all other actual audiences" (155). Citing Brian Richardson, Berenschot argues that any proper consideration of the audience is:

> meaningless without delimiting adjectives or noun phrases that indicate the most significant and relevant distinctions among readers: gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation as well as interpretive sophistication, appropriate cultural knowledge, mastery of intertexts, and familiarity with the work. (156)

The Cuban audience of the time—well educated, well read, and politically engaged—was in an ideal position to appreciate the impact of Paz's writing.

Although both Puig's and Paz's works are similar in that they consider the politically aware reader and directly address concerns of people whose sexual orientation was other than heterosexual, unlike Puig who had an unapologetic didactic goal for his novel, Paz insists that he did not write his short novel or screenplay with a particular mission in mind. In an interview commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of "El lobo," Paz asserts:

> Mi relato, el filme y las puestas teatrales, hechas suyas por el público, las ayudaron a librarse del rollo y a encontrar el rumbo. Tal resultado no fue para nada producto de una intencionalidad de mi parte, no soy culpable de mi buena acción; ocurrió así porque tenía que ocurrir, porque ya estaba en el aire. (Bobes)
>
> [The public made my story, the film, and the theatrical productions their own and this helped them liberate themselves from the 'situation' and find their way. This was in no way the result of any intentionality on my part. I am not responsible for my good work; it just happened that way because it had to happen, because it was already in the air]

One may argue that Paz distances himself as a writer from Cuban readers' political interpretations of his work out of an apprehension regarding its reception by the state due to the subject matter. However, it is more likely that in this interview Paz wishes to emphasize that the public is ready to move beyond the accepted stage of the Cuban revolution; the new revolutionary moment is, as he says, "already in the air." Paz's work fits into the category of *instrumental autonomism* – in which an "artist in the pragmatist and Marxists traditions" wishes to "emphasize the work of art's distinctive capacity, as an object of value, to do something not done, or not done the same way, by other kinds of objects" (Haskins 43). This position contrasts with *strict autonomism* in which only the work's artistic or aesthetic properties may be considered by the reader (ibid.).

Paz argues that his work has a life of its own and that he had nothing to do, for example, with the fact that his character Diego calls himself "a homosexual, revolutionary and Lezamiano." Paz suggests that this provocative statement by Diego comes about "como circunstancia de su propia vida ficticia. Yo no podía evitar ni interferir en que fuera como es" [as a circumstance of his own fictitious life. I could neither avoid nor interfere with him being how he is] (Bobes). Paz's personal disassociation from his characters implies that his work is an expression of higher reality, and that his political position on homosexuality and the Revolution in "El lobo" is more within the spirit of the revolution and an expression of the popular will than the historically hardline Cuban socialist ideal. Paz comments:

> Por mucho tiempo el ideal socialista pareció ser un individuo ateo, marxista y heterosexual, y tal vez preferentemente blanco y masculino. Todo esto venía a resultar completamente contradictorio con los principios declarados de libertad y amplitud de la revolución, de modo que la institución dejó de representar el modo de sentir mayoritario de los cubanos, *dejó de representar la vanguardia y de ser guía hacia el futuro.*[30] (Bobes)
>
> [For a long time the socialist ideal seemed to be an individual who was atheist, Marxist and heterosexual, and perhaps preferably white and male. All of this ended up being in contradiction with the declared principles of freedom and openness in the revolution, such that the institution ceased to represent the way a majority of Cubans felt, it ceased to represent the vanguard and to be a guide to the future]

In this interview, Paz reiterates an activist stance that criticizes the slow progress of equality for homosexuals and for women in Cuba and reminds his audience that Cuba was supposed to occupy a position on the vanguard, to have a leading role, but instead is behind other Latin American countries, and holding on to bourgeois values:

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[30] Emphasis mine

> En una sociedad como la cubana, de la que esperaríamos una posición de vanguardia, se sigue viendo de lejos la unión legal entre personas del mismo sexo, la adopción de hijos por homosexuales o una mujer presidente del país o ministro de las fuerzas armadas. En estos puntos Cuba va por detrás de la mayoría de las sociedades latinoamericanas, y más que vanguardia parece una señora burguesa que asiste a la iglesia todos los domingos, misal en mano y carné militante en el bolsillo. (Bobes)
>
> [In a society such as Cuba's, which we expected to occupy a position on the vanguard, the legal union between two people of the same sex, the adoption of children by homosexuals, or a female president of the country or minister of the armed forces is still a distant vision. On these points Cuba lags behind the majority of Latin American societies and, instead of being on the vanguard, it looks like a bourgeois lady who goes to church every Sunday, missal in hand and Socialist I.D. card in the pocket]

One can agree with Paz that his mission in writing "El lobo" and *F&C* was not primarily a political one, and that his characters have their own autonomy because there is no doubt that both the novella and the film address their profound human connection more than politics. Nonetheless, the characters of the novella and the film directly challenge the political and social narrative of the first two decades of the Cuban revolution; they argue that the exclusion of the queer subject is an injustice that must be corrected and they contest the view that only a hardline *machista* heterosexual male is worthy of full participation in the revolutionary project.

No homo[31]

While Paz distances himself from didactic literature and clear political motivations, Gutiérrez Alea does not deny that his film has political resonance. He does, however, reject the view that his film is pro-gay despite the fact that the rectification of injustice in both "El lobo" and the film *F&C* comes about through the relationship between a gay man who is marginalized by mistakes of the Revolution and a young Communist militant who earnestly tries to understand his compatriot's point of view. Gutiérrez Alea insists that his film is not about the Revolution's rejection of the homosexual, arguing that *F&C* addresses a much broader theme: "el tema de la película no es tanto el homosexualismo como la intolerancia" [the film's theme is not so much homosexuality as intolerance] (qtd. in Hart 168). Cuban writer and scholar Tomás Fernández Robaina, modifies Gutiérrez Alea's stance by suggesting that *tolerance* is the theme of the film, and that the choice of a homosexual character to show the need for tolerance was no accident: "el objetivo principal era 'la tolerancia,' pero la tolerancia a través de – y que no por gusto se hizo – un homosexual. Hubo una gran influencia" [The main objective was the issue of tolerance, but tolerance how? It was not for no reason that it was done this way. It was tolerance through the example of a homosexual. It had a great influence] (Scully & Fernández). Indeed, it is *F&C*'s message of tolerance for a once vilified constituency that paves the way for future acceptance.

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[31] *No homo* is a slang term "asserting that the speaker of such does not have any homosexual intent. Usually used after an utterance or action that may have given that impression" (Wikipedia).

Unfortunately, the connection in the film between the two main characters, while strong, is not as profound as in the novella. In *F&C*, David and Diego are sexually polarized in ways that in "El lobo," they are not. David´s identity in the film is established as heterosexual from the opening scene in which he attempts to have sex with his girlfriend, Vivian, for the first time. *F&C* also adds another female character, Nancy, not present in the novella, with whom David eventually has sex in Diego's bed after his long awaited Lezamian dinner. Moreover, unlike "El lobo" in which David is eager to visit Diego's home to borrow a copy of Vargas Llosa's latest novel, in *F&C* David feels blackmailed into going to Diego's apartment. In the film, Diego informs David that he has many photos of his performance in *A Doll's House*, information that visibly upsets the young revolutionary. The reason to go to Diego's home, in this instance, is to retrieve photos taken by an unknown homosexual: “Vamos a buscarlas ahora mismo. Me las tienes que dar con los negativos” [Let’s go and get them right now. You have to give them to me along with the negatives] (Paz *Guión* 58), David threatens. Finally, toward the end of the film, David reacts with anger when Diego asks him for a hug. These changes to the narrative have the effect of diminishing David’s curiosity about Diego and his world, while repeatedly performing and reestablishing David’s heterosexuality and homophobia.

In contrast to the film, David’s sexuality in “El lobo” is never named or demonstrated. There is only one mention of a relationship with a female, a reference to a past girlfriend named Rita, but David informs the reader that he agreed to be her boyfriend, not because he liked her but because he did not wish to disappoint her. This empathic sensibility is also demonstrated in David’s ability and desire to understand different viewpoints from the perspective of gender. During his relationship with Rita, David learned all of her dialogue in *A Doll’s House*, combining both male and female roles into an “auto-critical monologue” (69). This also reflects the structure of Paz’s novella itself, a self-critical monologue about his relationship with Diego in which David plays both parts.

Furthermore, and unlike the film, David needs little convincing to go to Diego’s apartment. Diego invites David to his home by way of a sexual proposition in which he suggests a trade for Vargas Llosa’s latest novel: “Yo, si vas conmigo a casa y me dejas abrirte la portañuela botón por botón, te la presto, *Torvaldo*” [If you come with me to my house and let me undo your trousers button by button, I’ll lend it to you, *Thorvald*] (68). David is noticeably flustered, not by the suggestion of sex in exchange for books but for being recognized from his performance in Ibsen’s play, as if he had just been outed. Noting David’s distress, a startled Diego tries to calm him: “No, no! Es una broma” [No, no! It’s a joke] (70). Diego apologizes for upsetting David and asks him if he needs medical attention to which David replies assertively: “¡No! Vamos a tu casa, vemos los libros, conversamos lo que haya que conversar, y no pasa nada” [No! We’re going to your house. We’re going to look at the books. We are going to chat about what there is to chat about, and nothing will happen] (70). This is a moment of some humour. Instead of walking away from a stranger who has clearly made him uncomfortable and whom he knows to be homosexual, David virtually insists that Diego take him to his house to chat about books. After a few visits, David becomes so comfortable in Diego’s presence that he walks around his new friend’s apartment shirtless and barefoot, helping himself to whatever is in the refrigerator (79).

Away from Diego’s home, David meets with another man, Ismael,[32] his communist confidant and mentor at the university, who also seems to have a particular appreciation for the young militant. David notices the similarity in the way both men look at him: “Lo que diferenciaba las miradas claras y penetrantes de Diego e Ismael . . . es que la de Diego se limitaba a señalarte las cosas, y la de Ismael te exigía que, si no te gustaban, comenzaras a actuar allí mismo para cambiarlas” [The difference between the clear and penetrating gazes of Diego and Ismael is that Diego’s was limited to pointing out problems and Ismael demanded that if you didn’t like the way things were then you should begin to fix them right then and there] (85). As Berenschot observes, David mentions the “penetrating gaze” of both Diego and Ismael a number of times throughout the text, suggesting “a possible homosexual attraction” between the two men. Thus, while David’s facility to inhabit both male and female roles in Ibsen’s play, his eagerness to accompany Diego to his home to read and chat, and his two relationships with homosexual men do not in and of themselves establish that David is not heterosexual, these elements do provide a sexual ambiguity that allows for at least the possibility over time that, as with Molina and Valentín in *KSW*, there could be an intimate connection between Diego and David.

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[32] The name “Ismael” holds particular resonance in Cuba’s narrative. It was the nickname Martí gave to his son, José Francisco, to whom he dedicated his celebrated book of poetry *Ismaelillo* (1882) and for whom he envisions a brighter future for humankind.

It should be noted that the excising or sanitizing of homosexuality in artistic production in which this sexuality takes centre stage is not an uncommon strategy, one that is usually employed for two possible reasons: to make the topic more palatable to a 'general' audience, and also to avoid any potential negative impact on the reputation of the author as an artist. As early as 1955, noted Cuban queer novelist Virgilio Piñera wrote a stern essay in the journal *Ciclón* about homosexual poet Emilio Ballagas, in which he criticized the practice of omitting uncomfortable yet obvious truths by other artists in order to "whitewash" a fellow artist and his art. Piñera writes: "Charles Steinberger told me once that our history was too close, our heroes so recent, that also the current critic of that history and those heroes would surely bring about irritation to his readers if he decided to speak the entire truth" (qtd. in Miragó 127; Rojas 69). Vito Russo wrote on a similar kind of erasure present in Hollywood film in his book *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*. He remarks that the 1970 film *The Boys in The Band*, based on the play of the same name, was "[t]he most famous Hollywood film on the subject of homosexuality" (174). However, similar to Gutiérrez Aleas's reasoning on the theme of *F&C*, *The Boy's in the Band*'s director William Friedkin said: "This film is not about homosexuality, it's about human problems" (178). In *The Celluloid Closet*, Russo cites six more examples in which directors and actors comment on films with obvious queer subject matter while minimizing the queer subject and the theme the films portray, employing the common explanation: 'The film is not about homosexuality, it is about *x*' (126). By not addressing the films in their complexity, by not recognizing their multiple layers and implications, an injustice is done to these films and to the audience, queer or not. As seen in *KSW*, “El lobo” and *F&C* promote the need to recognize, accept, and incorporate more than one perspective in order to achieve full human liberation.

Miguel and David: Homoerotic Moments

That said, Gutiérrez Alea does provide two significant homoerotic scenes in the film involving David and his college friend and homophobic militant, Miguel. These moments, especially the second scene, are ones in which the film appears to replace some of the same-sex sexuality the film neglects from the text of “El lobo.” In the first scene, the audience finds David and Miguel together in close quarters in the university dorm. David looks over the shoulder of a half-naked Miguel and into the mirror in which his roommate is obsessively grooming himself. The camera then cuts to and lingers upon their underwear hanging in the window. In the second scene, David returns to the dorm very drunk after a visit with Diego. David and Miguel are in the shower, wet and naked except for their underwear. Miguel holds David as he vomits, his torso and groin pressed against him. Miguel bathes David and, upon finishing, smacks his behind admiring it and says, “You’re getting a nice pair of buttocks.” Miguel then wraps his arm around his friend as they head to the bedroom. The camera then cuts to the two lying down on their beds, both their crotches placed in central view.

Though the two men are presented as heterosexual in the film, the scene still allows for a subtextual possibility of a same-sex sexual moment. Latin American film scholar, Stephen Hart, critical of the erasure of the erotic component of Diego’s sexuality in the film, remarks on the homoeroticism of the shower scene:

> But there is one discordant note in this apparently seamless heterosexualization of gay sexuality, and this is the scene in the shower in which Miguel—presented as the macho, homophobic

> communist—who, in a gesture which seems very much out of character, pats David on the buttocks. Though this is the only point at which a same sex gesture is hinted at, it is nevertheless significant that it should be initiated by the character whose actions and words up until this point suggest he is ruled by homosexual panic. This surely must be seen as a deliberate wink to the viewer as well as a humorously ironic jibe at sexual intolerance." (168)

Yet a Cuban audience, especially its gay male viewers, might understand that this homoerotic moment in which Miguel holds David in the shower need not be "very much out of character." As queer Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas explains: "Lo interesante del homosexualismo en Cuba consistía en que no había que ser homosexual para tener relaciones con un hombre; un hombre podía tener relaciones con otro hombre como un acto normal" [The interesting thing about homosexuality in Cuba was that one did not have to be homosexual to have relations with a man; a man could have relations with another man as if it were a normal act] (133). Moreover, in a scene that appears in *F&C*'s script but absent from the film, Miguel visits Diego's apartment alone, pretending to be interested in having some photos taken but in truth he is there to find a way to entrap Diego. In the deleted scene, Miguel ends up on the sofa, takes off his shirt and undoes his trousers while Diego kneels down to perform oral sex on him. This moment is interrupted by David who opens the door and catches them in the act (Paz *Guión* 162-164). Hence, while Miguel's primary intention may have been to acquire ironclad proof of Diego's homosexuality—an unnecessary action for such an accusation—there is no suggestion that he would not have gone through with the act had they not been interrupted.

Yet, there is more to the shower scene than the possibility of Miguel's desire for David. There is also a strong intertextual allusion to "El lobo." In a passage of the novella, not recounted in the film, David recalls Diego's description of his first sexual experience that takes place in Diego's college dorm. A handsome basketball player sings to his erection in the shower while

Diego watches from the shadows entranced, until suddenly the naked athlete roughly takes Diego from behind and "possesses" him (73). The retelling of the story ends with Diego's gaze fixed upon David: " 'Desde entonces' ", concluyó Diego mirándome, " 'mi vida ha consistido en eso, en la búsqueda del ideal del basquetbolista. Tú te la das un aire.' " ["Since that moment", Diego concluded looking at me, "my life has been about this, the search for the ideal of this basketball player. You look a bit like him."] (73). Indeed, later in the novella, a similar image is evoked as David describes bathing himself: "Cuando llegué a la Beca me di un baño de agua caliente y abundante, mucho agua caliente y abundante cayéndome en la cocorotina [coronilla]…" [When I arrived at the dorm, I took a shower with an abundance of hot water, so much hot and abundant water falling on my head] (77). The reader, by way of the text, observes David is as if they were Diego watching his ideal man.

Thus, in the film there are two ideals from which to choose: Miguel, who represents the traditional hardline communist masculine hero of the revolution; or David, a man with an open mind, a curiosity to learn, and a willingness to listen. As David recalls in "El lobo," Diego no longer believed in the worn out ideal of the Revolutionary hero: "si había algún hombre nuevo en la Habana no podía ser uno de esos forzudos y bellísimos de los Comandos Especiales, sino alguien como yo, capaz de hacer el ridículo" [if there were a new man in Havana he wouldn't be one of those brawny handsome Special Commandos, but rather someone like me, capable of looking foolish] (74). Because of his love of for Diego, David is willing to stand up to authority and risk the scorn of his peers, expulsion from university, and the loss of his future career as well as his ability to support his family. If the new man is to be realized, it will not be through officially sanctioned models like Miguel, but through a person courageous enough to put aside received notions of masculinity and, as Anzaldúa would advise, listen to what his *jotería* is saying.

Literary and Socio-political Influences

As we have seen in Martí´s and Ché´s view of revolution, masculine strength is promoted as the necessary and desirable element capable of bringing about change while, in contrast, homosexuality relates to a lack of masculinity and is viewed as feminine weakness. "El lobo" challenges the notion that artistic and intellectual pursuits are feminine characteristics that imply weakness and that the New Man can only be exemplified by a moral and physical strength of traditional masculinity. In his effort to write a new kind of man to challenge this view, Paz draws on the experience and literature of his friend, Heras León.

Heras León's *Los pasos en la hierba* (1970) is a collection of short stories in which the Revolution's militants are portrayed as people who sometimes fall victim to human characteristics of uncertainty, doubt, and physical weakness (Dettman 8), traits that were considered unacceptable for the New Man. However, Heras León points out that the absence of these men in the revolution does not go unnoticed by all. In his short story, "La caminata," an overweight and weak militia recruit named Lorenzo finds himself unable to complete the sixty-two-kilometre march required for him to graduate with his comrades from the Militia School. There is no helping him and he must be left behind, but a strong, exemplary unnamed protagonist observes: "Nadie del pelotón se ha dado cuenta de tu ausencia. Sin embargo, camino y noto que me falta algo" [Nobody from the platoon has noticed your absence. But I will continue on and know that something is missing] (qtd. in Fowler 31). Heras León appeals to the reader not to forget those left behind. The revolution, he suggests, will be complete when more revolutionaries realize that something is missing, that those who may be physically weaker or have feminine qualities have a place in a revolution and in the society.

Fowler argues that Paz builds on the same sensibility of concern for the excluded individual in *Los pasos en la hierba*. He remarks that in the first decades of the revolution, the only acceptable revolutionary man was "un modelo heroico eminentemente masculino, en lo cual la oposición entre lo fuerte y lo débil hace que una de sus principales excrecencias sea alguien que invite a la asociación entre su ser y lo considerado "mujeril" [an especially masculine heroic model, in which the opposition between strong and weak creates a situation in which one of its principle excrescences is a person who invites the association between his being and that which is considered "womanly"] (30). This rigid revolutionary model in which feminine characteristics are considered as weaknesses that must be excised creates an impossible situation for anyone not "eminently masculine." Fowler notes that it is within the context of such a narrow definition of strength that Diego laments: "Soy débil, y el mundo de ustedes no es para débiles" [I am weak and your world doesn't allow weakness] (86). David's response to Diego's complaint appears to address the story of "La caminata." Unlike León's heroic militant whose situation only allows him to miss his comrade who is considered weak, David ultimately recognizes that Diego's difference and feminine traits do not equal a lack of strength. As Fowler informs us, at the end of the story Paz takes Heras León's recognition of the injustice to the individual left behind by the Revolution and writes a place for such a person into the narrative of Cuba's future:

> Si prestamos atención, veremos que en ambos relatos constituye la oposición primaria de la estructura profunda aquella que se da entre lo fuerte y lo débil, tomando a la Revolución cubana y su imaginario como telón de fondo. Luego de tal comprobación estaremos de acuerdo en que Senel re-escribe la Historia y la Nación (y tomo su nombre como símbolo de toda una corriente o modo de pensar) fijadas en el texto de Heras León. (38)

> [If we pay attention, we will see that in both stories the basic structure of opposition between the notions of strength and weakness takes place, using the Revolution and its imaginary as the backdrop. Given this evidence, we will agree that Senel is re-writing History and Nation (and I use his name as a symbol of this current of thought) with a sharp eye on Heras León's text]

As a young militant coming of age twenty years after the triumph of the revolution, David is in a position to make a different decision from the protagonist in "La caminata." Recognizing the value of those once mistakenly labelled as weak, he swears he would never abandon his comrade; rather he would defend Diego and those like him "a capa y a espada" [with cloak and sword] (91).

Reading Against the Stereotype

Queer Taxonomies: The socially committed homosexual

Though Diego may be unlikely to prove his commitment to the Revolution by making a sixty-two-kilometre march, he does confirm his social commitment in one of two sets of taxonomies of homosexuality in "El lobo" (but absent from *F&C*). Significant scholarly attention has been paid to the fact that within his taxonomies, Diego locates himself within the respectable category of the socially committed homosexual and not in that of the oversexed *maricón*:

> Esta escala la determina la disposición del sujeto hacia el deber social o la mariconería. Cuando la balanza se inclina al deber social, estás en presencia de un homosexual. Somos aquellos—en esta categoría me incluyo—para quienes el sexo ocupa un lugar en la vida pero no el lugar de la vida. Como los héroes o los activistas políticos, anteponemos el Deber al Sexo. (77)
>
> [This scale determines the subject's disposition toward his social duty or toward acting like a typical queer. When the balance tilts toward social responsibility, you are in the presence of a homosexual. We are those—and I include myself in this category—for whom sex occupies *a* place in life but not *the* place in life. Like political heroes or activists, we put Duty ahead of Sex]

Diego's *maricones* and *locas* are identified by Foster with "Bad Homosexuals" in contrast to the political engagement of the "Good Homosexual" (307). Moreover, José Quiroga criticizes what he calls Diego's hierarchy of "taxonomies of sexual desire" that place him in "a position of implicit power because of his desire to include himself in the category of the intellectual and distance himself from the other "locas" that he does not defend but, rather, condemns" (143). Indeed, as much as Diego resists the essentialism of negative stereotypes, he does seem comfortable with the idea of inherent positive attributes to homosexuality. However, it is important to remember that Diego describes not one set of taxonomies, but two: the set that Foster and Quiroga focus upon is the one mentioned second in the text. The first set of homosexual classifications comes at the beginning of "El lobo" when David recalls that Diego's expressly prefers the term *maricón*, while rejecting the label 'homosexual' because of its repressed and closeted status:

> Tenía su teoría. "Homosexual es cuando te gustan hasta un punto y puedes controlarte", decía, "y también aquellos cuya posición social (quiero decir, política) los mantiene inhibidos hasta el punto de convertirlos en uvas secas…. Pero los que son como yo, que ante la simple insinuación de un falo perdemos toda compostura, mejor dicho, nos descocamos, esos somos maricones, David, ma-ri-co-nes, no hay más vuelta que darle." (65)
>
> [He had his own theory. "Homosexual is when you like men up to a point but you can still control yourself", he would say, "and also those whose social position (by that I mean, political position) keeps them closeted to the point that they become dried up raisins. …. But the ones who are like me, those who lose their composure at the slightest hint of a phallus, who become brazen, we are queers, David. Ka-weers. There's no way around it]

Diego, therefore, identifies and privileges both the position of the *maricón* as well as that of the *homosexual* in each hierarchy. Rather than being contradictory self-classifications Diego, much like Puig, employs a provisional and strategic use of identity terminology, one that is neither "single" nor "unified" (Allan 75); that is to say, his sexual identity classification is not fixed. Diego uses the term 'homosexual' when it is politically necessary to seek justice or respect, but on a personal level he rejects the term. Diego's position on this terminology is similar to Puig's.

Puig refuses to apply the term ‘homosexual’ to himself in everyday discourse because he finds it is too clinical, too limiting, and believes it does not allow for a free and unencumbered sexuality. However, Puig used its political advantage when marching under its banner as a member of the FLH. This is what Diego does too, although less explicitly. Diego first asserts that he is *not* a homosexual but a *maricón*, and later he temporarily adopts a specific definition of homosexuality that he hopes will afford him some political agency or respectability.

It bears mentioning that varied taxonomies of queer sexuality were not uncommon in Latin American queer subculture. In *Antes que anochezca* [Before Night Falls], Arenas devotes a chapter to his own hierarchical taxonomy of Cuban homosexuality (103), but he also remarks that he finds the “free world” system of egalitarian homosexuality entirely unfulfilling (133). All this to say that Diego’s taxonomies are an acknowledgement of different manners of expressing same-sex sexual desire, but they should not be read as definitive. Critics that charge that his homosexual categories are hierarchical (with his own classification at the top of that hierarchy) are correct only to the extent that they represent his perspective at a given moment or in a particular context and register.

Camp performance as resistance

If scholars have argued that Diego engages in taxonomic hierarchies, they have stressed even more that his artistic tastes and flamboyant style align him with bourgeois politics and appetites, and against socialist ideals. Yet, *not* reading Diego’s style and intellectual pursuits as symptomatic of a bourgeois homosexuality may be a more fruitful approach. In the chapter in which Puig´s novel is discussed, Allan argued that “not reading [Molina’s] femininity as symptomatic of homosexuality” (78) was a productive strategy to consider Molina’s queer identity. Using Allan’s approach, we can see how Paz “openly critiques and questions the possibility of a single, unified stereotype of the homosexual" (Allan 75). It is more productive to consider that Diego's 'flamboyant' style, and his artistic and intellectual tastes, are not necessarily indicative of inherent homosexual upper class values that link him to the *incroyable* reviled by Martí in *Our America* (289), rather they are simply a question of expression of a certain gay subculture, as will be seen shortly.

For some in *F&C*'s audience, Diego's love of opera and his delight in sipping tea from French porcelain cups may signal a 'natural' queer class-attachment, but a closer look reveals that his fondness for fine china is not simply an appreciation of aesthetics and refinement, but a feeling of patriotism and a love of poetry. In the scene in which Diego explains the provenance of the gilt cups, he proudly informs David that the set belonged to the family of Enrique Loynaz del Castillo (Paz *Guión* 69), a hero of Cuban independence who fought with Martí and Maceo, and whose daughter was renowned Cuban poet Dulce María Loynaz. Thus, while Diego may bring a certain theatricality to drinking tea and listening to opera, this need not be understood as a decadent trait characteristic of homosexuals. Similarly, Diego's passion for John Donne, C.P. Cavafy, Maria Callas, and Maria Malibrán (71-72) is often used to associate Diego with a stereotypical bourgeois homosexual "antisocialist" with "upper-class tastes and values" (Bejel *Gay Cuban* 158). Yet Diego is equally passionate about Cuban artists like singer Celina Gonzalez, pianist Ernesto Lecuona, Carpentier's writing on Havana's architecture, and his favourite writer - José Lezama Lima. Bejel argues that Diego's blend of intellectual and artistic tastes point to a Cuban nationalism mixed with "intense Eurocentrism" that locate Diego politically and socially:

> Diego instills in David a great appreciation of Cuban culture, especially of music, literature, and the architecture of Havana. All of this indicates that, besides being a sophisticated gay man who

> represents the struggle for inclusion of gays and other marginal groups disenfranchised by the Cuban socialist system of that time, *Diego exhibits a series of contradictions typical of a Cuban gay man from a certain class and with certain personality traits*.[33] The sexual politics that Diego represents, with its corresponding illumination and alienation, is of the class that could be called the nationalist bourgeoisie." (*Gay Cuban* 166)

But let us consider that an appreciation for beauty, a love for one´s country, and a drive for erudition, are not characteristics to which only the bourgeoisie has claim but are feelings and needs of other social classes and all genders and sexualities. While it is true that a person like Diego would almost certainly be confronted with a bias in which his tastes would be linked to aristocratic and Eurocentric values—an attitude also expressed by Martí—Bejel himself points out that "homosexuality is not, strictly speaking, a class phenomenon (however frequently it may be utilized in class struggles as a political weapon, as in 'homosexualizing the enemy')" (*Gay Cuban* 159). Let us also consider that while artistic and intellectual pursuits may be the vocation of some queer people, they are not inherent traits of homosexuality. As Quiroga reminds us, the homosexual is "essentialized always as culture, or as a transmitter of culture but nevertheless not organic in relation to it" (138). Thus, an appreciation of foreign literature, music, art and architecture is not an essential characteristic of homosexuality, nor do such pursuits necessarily equate to antisocialism.

If it is to be accepted that Diego is not an upper class counterrevolutionary, what to make of his airs of sophistication and breeding? An alternative to reading Diego as a bourgeois-leftover with aristocratic pretentions is that his style is more appropriately described as *camp*: a humorous yet deliberately oppositional stance to prevailing social mores. Meyer, Harvey, and Babuscio each have complementary definitions of camp that allow for a reading of Diego's style as one that asserts both a queer identity and a resistance to oppression. Meyer defines camp as: “the total body of performative practices and strategies used to enact a gay identity, with enactment as understood as the production of social visibility” (40). Harvey elaborates that the historical link between camp and homosexual men “constitutes a difference that founds an aspect of gay identity and/or practice, binds homosexual men together subculturally and allows them to articulate a critique of hegemonic structures and values” (243). Babuscio notes that camp generally includes four features: “irony, aestheticism, theatricality, humour – which are specifically developed to mock, dodge and deconstruct the multiple binarisms in our society that stem from the postulation of the categories natural/unnatural” (qtd. in Harvey 242). Lastly, Harvey holds that camp’s meanings are communicated by “underlying semiotic strategies” of “Paradox, Inversion, Ludicrism and Parody” (243). While Diego clearly engages in all of Babuscio’s features of camp, it is Diego’s employment of Harvey’s notion of Parodic strategy that is particularly significant. Harvey argues that camp specifically parodies “aristocratic mannerism and femininity by use of French, innuendo, hyperbole, exclamation, [and] vocatives” (243). Although Harvey is referring primarily to English language camp, the parodic appeal to French is also apparent in Spanish language camp, as is seen in *F&C* in the scene in which Diego invites David into his apartment with a “s’il vous plait” and then later delights over the sophistication of drinking tea out of fine French china, contrasting it to the consumption of coffee common to many Cubans. As Babuscio comments: “In terms of style [camp] signifies performance rather than existence” (23). Thus, Diego’s style may be witty, urbane and affected, but it is more a performative tool that serves to carve out a sexual identity that resists and critique, repression, mockery, and invisibility than evidence of deeply held conservative political and social positions.

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[33] Emphasis mine

Diego's 'class as performance' is evident in *F&C* in his playful teasing of David when he expounds on the virtues and sophistication of drinking tea like the English or a character out of Dostoyevsky; or when he attempts a gentle seduction by playing the learned intellectual citing for David a Marxist study by invented sexologist A. Raskolnikov—an ironic allusion to Dostoyevsky's character in *Crime and Punishment*—that claims that sixty percent of men have homosexual experiences without it affecting their personality. However, Diego is capable of suspending this performance and his tone can quickly become serious, leaving all pretensions behind. In the scene in *F&C* in which David accuses Diego of not being revolutionary and only thinking of "machos," Diego's camp performance immediately ceases. His frivolity is replaced by a profound and angry resistance to the notion that he is the stereotype that the Revolution makes him out to be. Diego declares that he is "no clown;" that he is "not sick;" and that even though he may not "act like a typical macho," he still deserves a place in society. Ironically, one of the signals in the novella that David finally accepts and appreciates Diego occurs when David himself happily engages in camp talk and style. Calling loudly to Diego from across the street, David performs the role of a fashionista who is obsessed with shopping while "agitando el brazo que se había llenado de pulseras" [waving his bracelet-covered arm] (89), an image clearly evoking Martí's concern about the revolutionary suitability of men with "el brazo de uñas pintadas y pulseras" [painted nails and bracelets] (*Nuestra América*). David's temporary engagement in camp does not signal that, under the influence of Diego, he is somehow turning his back on the Revolution. Instead, David has chosen to open himself up on a social and cultural level and forge solidarity with Diego thus allowing David to become a more whole and inclusive new man in the process.

Homo-intelectualizado

While Diego's camp style incurs the risk of being misconstrued as a stereotyped bourgeois homosexuality, the fact that he has wide-ranging intellectual interests as well as outspoken opinions on art and literature would be a situation that could just as easily invite unwanted scrutiny from the Revolution's officials. An accusation of intellectualism could have serious repercussions, not because of the implication that the person charged was a proponent of capitalism, rather—as historian Lillian Guerra writes—they were useless and unproductive pursuits of "homosexuals and male intellectuals who really enjoyed the 'blah, blah, blah'" (284), an allegation leveled against Cortázar and other international intellectuals for their criticism of the incarceration of Cuban poet, Heberto Padilla in 1971 (Guibert 281).

Guerra identifies the emergence of this hostile anti-intellectual climate as beginning in the early years of the Revolution, eventually giving rise to the 1966 'Battle against Intellectualism' at the University of Havana in which studies in the humanities were considered "egotistical hobbies rather than productive forms of labour" (283). She points out, however, that such opprobrium was not aimed at the intellectual for being anti-socialist:

> Far from being anti-Communist, the *intelectualizado*'s greatest defects were his obsession with debating Marxist dogma, disdain for agricultural labour, taste for abstract art, zealous reading habits, desire to share his opinions with others and a thirst for knowledge of other countries. (284)

There is no doubt that this description fits Diego. "Far from being anti-Communist," being both homosexual and an *intelectualizado*, Diego embodies all of the abovementioned traits, thus explaining his relegation to the margins of a system that saw him and his talents as useless if not subversive. As Guerra comments further, homosexuality and intellectualism were social defects that were connected:

> Not only were homosexuals the antithesis of the 'New Socialist Man' then promoted by the Cuban state but, according to studies conducted in 1965 by the Cuban Ministry of Public Health, their alleged condition of ideological weakness and vulnerability to imperial propaganda were socially contagious. As non-productive, self-absorbed conditions, 'homosexualism' and 'intellectualism' subverted society's valorization of manual labour. This threatened the survival of the state because it undermined citizens' willingness to produce, mostly without material compensation, for the benefit of others. (Guerra 271)

The state's attack on 'homosexualism' and 'intellectualism' as unproductive demonstrates the limitations of the Revolution's aim to create an equal society, a subject Diego attempts to address in his conversations and in his relationship with David, the young Revolutionary who is in the position to influence change and contribute to a broader understanding of the revolution.

Paz's own experience of the anti-intellectual period in Cuban history is not dissimilar to that of Diego. While Paz's humble rural beginnings in Las Villas and his subsequent relocation for study in Havana make for an obvious comparison with the character, David, there are also significant parallels with Diego in regard to the author's literary and cultural pursuits. During Paz's studies in Havana, he embraced the cultural life of theatre, ballet, art galleries, and film (Bejel *Escribir* 294). His outside intellectual influences were Kafka and Garcia Lorca, the latter mentioned by Diego as one of a storied list of homosexual artists. Paz was also fascinated by the writings of Lezama Lima of whom he says in an interview with Bejel: "Había oído hablar de un poeta muy extraño, que nadie entendía, y comencé a leerlo. Realmente no entendía nada, pero al mismo tiempo sentía que este hombre me estaba diciendo cosas importantes" [I had heard about a strange poet that nobody understood, and I began to read him. I really didn't understand anything, but at the same time I felt that this man was saying important things to me] (*Escribir* 310). Given Diego's apparently deep understanding of the Cuban poet, Paz might be engaging in some false modesty in the above quote. Suffice it to say that both men appreciate the fact that Cuba has poets comparable to the world's greats. Though he appreciated the poetry of Lezama Lima, one of Paz's greatest Cuban inspirations was lawyer and writer Rubén Martínez Villena (Bejel *Escribir* 293) whose example showed him how to combine social justice with artistic and intellectual liberty. Martínez Villena was a founding member of the Grupo Minorista, a circle of left-leaning artists and intellectuals whose 1927 "Declaración" included calls for artistic and academic freedom, instruction in the arts and sciences for all Cubans, as well as a strong posture against dictatorship and against U.S. imperialism (Osorio 248-250).

Paz's intellectual and cultural passions are the kind of pursuits that would have been subject to punitive action during the first decades of the Cuban Revolution; particularly his need, through the written word, to recognize and uplift those who felt left out of officially sanctioned versions of heroism and revolutionary valour. Indeed, after publicly supporting the work of Heras León—expelled from the University of Havana for the publication of his book of short stories *Los pasos en la hierba*—Paz was similarly removed from his youth group and forced to leave Havana to work on a remote part of the island (Dettman 10). Hence, while he begins his life as a young revolutionary man like David, Paz's adult life resembles that of Diego, likely prompting him to reconcile the two men within himself.

Just as supporters of the Revolution like Cortázar, Heras León, and Paz suffered under the charge of intellectualism, so was Diego doubly discriminated against for being both a homosexual and an intellectual, though it is doubtful that in reality either of these attributes made him essentially antisocialist. Apart from assumptions based on gay stereotypes, there is little evidence in the text or the film to suggest that Diego has associations with wealth or privilege, or that he rejects socialism in its entirety. On the contrary, Diego was a willing participant in the

Revolution's Literacy Campaign (87), he volunteered to pick coffee, and he had plans to be a teacher in the new Cuba (*F&C*). Moreover, he held out great hope that socialism's New Man would include people like him (74). Thus, Diego does not question the Revolution from a position of antisocialism, rather it is 'the System' that left little room for him to participate, as is evidenced by his remarks on the treatment of Cuba's queer subjects:

> Es totalmente errónea y ofensiva la creencia de que somos sobornables y traidores por naturaleza. No, señor, somos tan patriotas y firmes como cualquiera. Entre una picha y la cubanía, la cubanía. Por nuestra inteligencia y el fruto de nuestro esfuerzo nos corresponde un espacio que siempre se nos niega. Los Marxistas y los cristianos, óyelo bien, no dejarán de caminar con una piedra en el zapato hasta que reconozcan nuestro lugar y nos acepten como aliados, pues, con más frecuencia de la que se admite, solemos compartir con ellos una misma sensibilidad frente al hecho social. (78)
>
> [The belief that by our very nature we are traitors or susceptible to bribery is completely erroneous and offensive. No sir. We are as strong and patriotic as anyone. Given the choice between a cock and being Cuban, we'll take the Cuban every time. Given our intelligence and the fruits of our labour, we deserve the space we have always been denied. Listen, Marxists and Christians will always walk with a stone in their shoe until the day they recognize our place and accept us as allies because, more often than they would like to admit, we share the same sensibility when it comes to social duty]

Diego is clearly a man who is both a Cuban and a supporter of socialism's ideals, but he also holds that the revolution is incomplete until it fully accepts people like him as equal members of society. This act ought not be one of charity but of rights, not simply of tolerance but of acceptance. As Diego says, "we deserve the space we have always been denied," a situation that comes about due to the blindness of the Revolutionary man to realize and accept that accept that people like Diego—gay men, lesbians, and other dissident sexualities—are their allies because they "share the same sensibility when it comes to social duty." Hence, in Paz´s works, David goes through a process of consciousness-raising through his relationship with Diego; one that helps him understand the wrongs committed by the Revolution and his future role in correcting them.

A New Man for a New Cuba

In 1987, Anzaldúa made an entreaty to Chicano/a activists to "acknowledge the political and artistic contributions" of queer people within their community, imploring: "People, listen to what your *jotería* is saying" (*Borderlands* 85). She urged that they, and all people fighting for social transformation, not only recognize the injustice of queer marginalization, but also that those in the struggle for liberation welcome the participation of their queer comrades in building a new and more just society. Anzaldúa suggests that a possible opportunity to explore the process of education of their non-queer partners in the struggle for justice is with those "scattered and isolated gentle straight men, the beginnings of a new breed" who are "confused, entangled with sexist behaviors that they have not been able to eradicate" (*Borderlands* 84). In "El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo" and *Fresa y chocolate*, the young and naïve militant David is part of this new breed who takes up the challenge to listen to and accept the voice of the "*jotería.*" In gratitude and love, David proclaims to the young boy scout:

> [m]e dije […] al próximo Diego que se atravesara en mi camino lo defendería a capa y espada, aunque nadie me comprendiera, y que no me iba a sentir más lejos de mi Espíritu y mi Consciencia por eso, sino al contrario, porque si entendía bien las cosas, eso era luchar por un mundo mejor para ti, pionero, y para mí. (90)
>
> I told myself […] that the next Diego who crossed my path I would defend heart and soul, even if nobody understood me, and I told myself that I was not going to feel alienated from my Spirit and

> my Conscience because of that; no just the opposite: if I understood things rightly, this would be fighting for a better world for you, scout, and for me. (Paz *The Wolf* 86)

Though Diego feels he must leave Cuba and wait for the Revolution to right its past wrongs, David makes it his mission to fulfill the promise of the New Man and a new society, one in which each person with their “own affinities can live together” (Anzaldúa “La prieta” 290), and that Diego may one day be able to return to Cuba, a nation with a new consciousness.

CONCLUSIONS

(R)evolutions of el Hombre Nuevo and the Queer Subject: Past and Future

My thesis posited that three landmark essays—*Nuestra América* (Martí), *Man and Socialism in Cuba* (Guevara), and "La conciencia de la mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness" (Anzaldúa)—each declared the need for an equal and just society that would resist European and Anglo American imitations and would require a new kind of person to create a new society. But the acceptance of the queer subject into the concept of this new person—*el hombre nuevo*—was an evolutionary process during which the sexual dissident experienced long periods of exclusion from the revolutionary projects of Martí and Ché, eventually gaining a voice with Anzaldúa's call for the full participation of the *jotería*. Furthermore, my thesis submitted that the stances of the writers of the above texts are evident in Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman* and Paz's novella "El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo" and his script for the film *Fresa y chocolate,* which illustrate the queer subject's transition from revilement to respect through an intimate relationship with a traditional revolutionary man, resulting in **both** persons becoming *hombres nuevos*.

While scholars like Molloy and Bejel have carried out extensive and exceptional study on the place of the queer subject in nearly all of the works under consideration here, my thesis differs by offering an analysis that joins the historical, fictional, and filmic texts both synchronically and diachronically in a way that shows the trajectory of revolutionary ideals for racial, economic, and class equality on a path to a new consciousness in which subjects marginalized by their sexuality could become full participants in such liberatory projects. In specific regard to the analysis of Puig and Paz's works, my study offers an alternative reading of Diego in "El lobo;" one that unfixes his sexuality from readings of inherent political bourgeois values and political beliefs, a strategy I borrowed from Allan's idea of unfixing femininity from homosexuality in order to read *KSW*'s character Molina against the stereotype.

I have pointed out that while Martí's famous essay *Nuestra América* is progressive because it calls for independence from Euro-Anglo American models, it specifically excludes the queer subject from the project of building a new nation. By associating the sexual dissident with the failings and weaknesses of an effeminate European bourgeoisie, Martí showed that a struggle for liberation, inclusion and equality needed time evolve. I also suggest that with his call for a *natural man* of the Americas who embodies ideal traits of masculinity, Martí's work was a precursor to Ché's *el hombre nuevo.* Furthermore, I have also asserted that Ché's concept of the New Man elaborated in his essay *Man and Socialism in Cuba*, though admirable in theory, led to exclusion, marginalization and mistreatment of the queer subject in practice. I emphasized, however, that Ché´s text does allow for two important openings for the advancement of the queer subject: the likelihood that the Revolution will make mistakes, and that the New Man must change and evolve as s/he progresses into the twenty first century. Moving on to the idea of acceptance of queer participants in struggles against oppression, I have argued that Anzaldúa makes her own declaration for equality and liberation in her chapter in *Borderlands*, "La consciencia de la mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness" in which she insists upon the inclusion and full participation of queers in the project of creating a new society; one she says will be achieved when fellow activists reach an awareness of their interconnection and common struggle. My study is important because it identifies and discusses texts which reveal the evolution of the queer subject and the call for acknowledgement, equality, acceptance, and a right to participate in the creation of a new society.

In my study of the novel *KSW*, the novella “El lobo,” and the film *F&C*, I point out that these works demonstrate the effect of exclusion, marginalization and mistreatment of the sexual dissident, but more importantly, instead of being simply critical, these works engage the revolutionary man with the queer subject and show that a dialogue between them benefits both. The dialogical relationships between characters in these works is a means of educating the reader so that the reader is not indoctrinated but led to draw his or her own conclusions, in a way that Paolo Freire envisioned in the process of conscientization. In the projects for liberation signalled in Martí and Ché’s texts, particularly *Man in Socialism,* there is a possibility for this situation in which mistakes can be changed or corrected and for the New Man to evolve to include gender and sexual diversity. The present more inclusive situation in Cuba shows that an evolutionary process has accompanied the revolutionary struggles. The reader/audience has benefited from the discussion led by these authors not only in Cuba but in other countries of Latin America. It is important to note that Latin America has been active not only in nurturing revolutionary heroes but also in opening up discussion around its queer subjects in all their complexity.

In the course of writing this thesis, I have discovered two invaluable strategies for analysis that I will incorporate into future research. Firstly, I have learned the significant benefit to be gained by rereading characters who may appear at first glance as deliberate stereotypes and who may have been studied as such by other scholars. I found that reading against the stereotype is an approach that not only produces an alternate perspective, but that also challenges the reader’s own assumptions and presuppositions which may have contributed to the impression of a stereotype in the first place. This strategy has the potential for a deeper understanding of the social and political implications of discrimination and is an approach that can be applied to a diversity of characters, not just queer. Secondly, I became aware that it was possible and useful to engage contrasting theories of decolonial thinking and queer studies in examining and reconciling the complexity of subjects that are hybrid in multiple ways, including: geographical, racial, cultural, and in terms of gender and sexuality; and that both decolonial thinking and elements of queer studies are complementary, especially when taking a transcultural approach.

The completion of this thesis revealed two main limitations. Due to available literature, the study contemplates mostly male subjects, both historical and fictional. Though Anzaldúa provides an important queer cisfemale commentary and Molina contributes one transfemale's viewpoint, a similar study including the perspectives of Latin American queer women would provide an essential addition to further inquiry. The second limitation is that of space to delve more deeply into the issue of decolonial thinking as it pertains to the various ways in which sex and gender were constructed through colonization in a manner that was different from the metropole. Lugones writes her essay, in large part, to challenge writers on decolonial thinking who appear indifferent to the effect that colonial constructions of gender and sexuality have on racialized subjects, particularly women and queer men of colour. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to include such an analysis, it is nevertheless essential to consider the mechanisms of this construct if further and closer study is to be undertaken.

In considering future inquiry, it would be intriguing to continue investigating the interrelationship between queer artists and Latin American revolutionary projects. Some possibilities might include an examination of Darcy Penteado's *Nivaldo e Jerônimo* (1981), the story of a queer revolutionary's experience under the Brazilian military dictatorship; or one could look at the struggles of lesbian and gay Sandinistas in 1980s Nicaragua and compare them to the academic discourse on homosexuality given by the character Ulpiano in *Sombras Nada Más* (2002) by Sergio Ramírez; and finally, one could analyze Mexico's Zapatista movement's acceptance of gender and sexual diversity and the inclusion of a transgender heroine in the novel *Muertos Incomodos* (2004), co-written by Zapatista spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos (currently known as Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano) and noted Mexican detective novelist, Paco Ignacio Taibo II.

My study analyzed three significant Latin American/Hispanic American texts on liberation, their concept of *el hombre nuevo,* and where they saw the queer subject in the project of revolution. Subsequently, the study showed that the novel, novella, and film instantiated these positions while challenging preconceived notions of sexuality, masculinity, identity and their relationship to political commitment. The knowledge gained from this study contributes to the body of knowledge on gender and sexual diversity in Latin America, particularly as it relates to struggles for social justice. It showed that the complexities of sexual identity categories and the language used to express them has been a topic of interest and concern for Latin American intellectuals going back to at least the early nineteen seventies before the emergence of queer studies. It also showed that Latin American works on queer topics make an important contribution to various fields of study, including history, literature, and sexual diversity studies.

Though the focus of this thesis has been on the past, the issues it addresses are still very much with us. In a quest by once-colonized nations to assert their independence from the continuing hegemonic influence of the North, many queer people find themselves persecuted for a sexuality viewed by some as a Western colonial import. In North America and Western Europe, lesbian, gay and trans issues—as reported in the media—increasingly appear to address the interests of only a White middle class constituency whose concerns may no longer include a position of solidarity with other marginalized groups. Thus, if we are to take away one message from this thesis, we would do well to return to Martí who writes: “Freedom, to be viable, has to be sincere and complete. If a Republic refuses to open its arms to all, and move ahead with all, it dies” (“Our America”).

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