

THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION IN MEXICAN STUDIES:

New Perspectives on Gender, Sexuality, and Culture in Modern Mexico

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DE LOS OTROS: INTIMACY AND HOMOSEXUALITY AMONG MEXICAN MEN.

By James Carrier. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995. Pp. 231.
\$39.50 cloth, \$16.50 paper.)

EASY WOMEN: SEX AND GENDER IN MODERN MEXICAN FICTION. By Debra

A. Castillo. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998. Pp. 275.
\$47.95 cloth, \$18.95 paper.)

IMAGEN DE LA PROSTITUTA EN LA NOVELA MEXICANA CONTEMPORANEA.

By María R. González. (Madrid: Pliegos, 1996. Pp. 158.)

THE MEANINGS OF MACHO: BEING A MAN IN MEXICO CITY. By Matthew C.

Gutmann. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press,
1996. Pp. 330. \$45.00 cloth, \$17.00 paper.)

MEMA'S HOUSE, MEXICO CITY: ON MACHOS, QUEENS, AND TRANSVESTITES.

By Annick Prieur. (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1998. Pp. 293.
\$50.00 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)

MARIA VILLA (A) LA CHIQUITA, NO. 4002, UN PARASITO SOCIAL DEL POR-

FIRIATO. By Rafael Sagredo. (Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 1996. Pp. 227.)

HIDDEN IN THE BLOOD: A PERSONAL INVESTIGATION OF AIDS IN THE

YUCATAN. By Carter Wilson. (New York: Columbia University Press,
1995, Pp. 168. \$29.95 cloth.)

A decade ago, researchers investigating the social and cultural dynamics of sexuality in twentieth-century Mexico would have turned to the largely quantitative studies of population growth and reproductive health for background information. Historians of colonial New Spain and early independent Mexico had published a series of important works on such issues as marriage, sexuality, and prostitution.¹ Political scientists and soci-

1. See *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, edited by Asunción Lavrin (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1989); Patricia Seed, *To Love, Honor, and Obey in Colonial Mexico: Conflicts over Marriage Choice, 1574–1821* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988); Silvia

ologists expanded the studies of labor and social movements in Mexico to consider women as well.² But such questions as how twentieth-century men and women thought about sexual behavior, how society defines particular activities as “masculine” or “feminine,” and how and when men and women define themselves as homosexual or heterosexual in Mexico had yet to motivate a substantial body of research from historical, literary, or anthropological perspectives. Inspired by domestic and international concern over the high fertility rate in Mexico during the so-called economic miracle, work on sexuality in Mexico since the 1960s had been dedicated to analyzing large data sets in an effort to quantify several major issues: to determine why Mexican women were continuing to have large numbers of children despite falling infant and child mortality rates; to identify cultural barriers to effective use of contraceptives; to find ways to improve maternal and infant health in urban and rural areas lacking social services; and to understand the Mexican state’s interest in “the population question.”³ Political

Arrom, *The Women of Mexico City, 1790–1857* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985); Julia Tuñón, *Las mujeres en México: Una historia olvidada* (Mexico City: Planeta, 1987); Ana María Atondo Rodríguez, *El amor venal y la condición femenina en el México colonial* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1992); Josefina Muriel, *Los recogimientos de mujeres: Respuesta a una problemática novohispana social* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1974); Richard Boyer, *Lives of the Bigamists: Marriage, Family, and Community in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995); Juan José Pescador, *De bautizados a fieles difuntos: Familia y mentalidades en una parroquia urbana, Santa Catarina de México, 1568–1820* (Mexico City: Colegio de México and Centro para Estudios de Demografía y de Desarrollo Urbano, 1992); and Steve J. Stern, *The Secret History of Gender: Men, Women, and Power in Late Colonial Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

2. Esperanza Tuñón Pablos, *Mujeres que se organizan: El Frente Unico Pro Derechos de la Mujer, 1935–1938* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1992); Mary Kay Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880–1928* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University, 1982); Shirlene Ann Soto, *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman: Her Participation in Revolution and Struggle for Equality, 1910–1940* (Denver: Arden Press, 1990); Anna María Macías, *Against All Odds: The Women’s Movement in Mexico to 1940* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1985); Lourdes Benería and Martha Roldán, *The Crossroads of Class and Gender: Industrial Homework, Subcontracting, and Household Dynamics in Mexico City* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1987); and Brígida García, Humberto Muñoz, and Orlandina de Oliveira, *Hogares y trabajadores en la Ciudad de México* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1982).

3. See, for example, Arthur F. Corwin, *Contemporary Mexican Attitudes toward Population, Poverty, and Public Opinion* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1963); World Family Survey, *La encuesta mexicana de fecundidad, 1976–1977: Resumen de resultados* (Voorburg, the Netherlands: Instituto Internacional de Estadística, 1980); Amado de Miguel, *Ensayo sobre la población de México* (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1983); *La fecundidad rural en México* (Mexico City: Colegio de México and Centro de Estudios Demográficos y de Desarrollo Urbano, 1983); Luis Leñero Otero, *Investigación de la familia en México* (Mexico City: Instituto Mexicano de Estudios Sociales, 1968); Frederick C. Turner, *Responsible Parenthood: The Politics of Mexico’s New Population Policies* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Inst-

scientists and sociologists also wanted to determine the role played by international funding agencies in shaping population law and policy.⁴

Nonreproductive issues like prostitution, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, and sexual orientation occupied researchers as well. But studies of prostitution, like those of reproductive health, focused largely on women, with most work analyzing the economic and social factors leading women to engage in sexual commerce. They rarely considered male demand for prostitutes in Mexico, much less investigated the large population of male transvestite prostitutes in the tourist zones of Mexico City.⁵ Similarly, research on sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis and gonorrhea explored the spread of disease and the economic burden of disease more than how sexual promiscuity and disease risk were understood in everyday life. Examinations of homosexuality likewise posited questions such as why men engaged in male-male sexual relationships and how they negotiated being homosexual in a society with sharply defined social expectations

tute for Public Policy Research, 1974); Jeanne M. Simonelli, *Two Boys, a Girl, and Enough! Reproductive and Economic Decisionmaking on the Mexican Periphery* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1986); Ana María Chávez Galindo, *Migración, fecundidad y anticoncepción en Baja California: Algunas hipótesis de trabajo* (Mexico City: Centro Regional de Investigaciones Multidisciplinarias, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1987); María del Carmen Elu de Lenero, *La salud reproductiva de la mujer en Oaxaca, México: Reflexiones y recomendaciones* (Mexico City: Instituto Mexicano de Estudios Sociales and La Casa de la Mujer Rosario Castellanos, 1992); and Patrick Livenais, *Comparación entre los niveles de la fecundidad y las características de la nupcialidad a nivel rural, Mexico, 1970–1976* (Mexico City: Colegio de México and Centro de Estudios Demográficos y de Desarrollo Urbano, 1987). A useful bibliographic orientation to the material published between 1968 and 1982 is Montserrat Lines, *Libre elección o fecundidad controlada: 500 referencias bibliográficas sobre la planificación familiar en México, 1968–1982* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1989).

4. Ford Foundation, *Hispanics, Challenges, and Opportunities: A Look at the Demographic, Economic, Social, and Political Situation of Hispanics in the United States Today and at the Ford Foundation's Initiatives to Address the Needs and Impact of This Growing Population* (New York: Ford Foundation Office of Reports, 1984); Paul Balaran, *Refugees and Migrants, Problems and Program Responses: A Look at the Causes and Consequences of Today's International Population Flows and at the Ford Foundation's New Programs to Address the Problems of Refugees and Migrants in the United States and Elsewhere in the World* (New York: Ford Foundation Office of Reports, 1983).

5. This was certainly true of the first work of this century to investigate prostitution in Mexico. See Luís Lara y Pardo, *La prostitución en México* (Mexico City and Paris: Ediciones de la Vda. de Ch. Bouret, 1908). Work on pimping (*lenocinio*), however, examined male involvement in sexual commerce from a legal perspective. See Mario Arriazola Alfaro, *El lenocinio en el derecho nacional y la represión de la trata de personas y de la explotación de la prostitución ajena* (Mexico City: privately printed, 1965). Sociologists in the 1970s also explored the question of male prostitution. See Francisco A. Gomezjara, Estanislao Barrera, and Nicolás Pérez, *Sociología de la prostitución* (Mexico City: Nueva Sociología, 1978). In his work on “the underground” in Mexico City, Sergio González Rodríguez considered the culture of attendance at male brothels around 1900, although this topic was not the focus of his study. See Sergio González Rodríguez, *Los bajos fondos: El antro, la bohemia y el café* (Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 1992).

for men and women rather than exploring the range of behaviors of a variety of sexual identities.⁶

Within the last five years, however, several publications have broadened the field of work on sexuality in Mexico by examining the historical, representational, and quotidian contours of sexual behavior in Mexican society. Drawing on methods used in cultural anthropology, social history, and literary criticism, researchers have broadened the discussion of sexuality in modern Mexico to include analysis of the intersections of power, culture, and sexuality in a modernizing nation. These authors' approaches reflect a clear appreciation of the quantitative and demographically oriented work of previous decades. Yet these scholars—inspired by Michel Foucault's insights into sexuality and power, Pierre Bourdieu's work on class, practice, and identity, and Joan Scott's prescriptions for studying gender and history—also seek to explore how men and women construct their own sexual lives, how sexuality is understood in popular culture, and how defining and negotiating sexual identities reconstructs power relations from the bedroom to the boardroom, ultimately exerting change on the state.⁷ By focusing on masculinity, homosexuality, and the image of the nonreproductive prostitute, their texts are broadening the field of study of Mexican cultural politics by incorporating marginal figures into analyses of society and social change. In several texts, the author's reflections on his or her influence on fieldwork or data assessment are important analytical factors. This new research, which covers areas ranging from Yucatán and Mexico City to Guadalajara and the U.S. border, raises a number of significant questions and suggests fruitful avenues for regionally based and culturally oriented research on sexuality, national identity, and culture.

6. Two recent volumes on homosexuality that are beyond the scope of this article are Claudia Schaeffer, *Danger Zones: Homosexuality, National Identity, and Mexican Culture* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996); and Ian Lumsden, *Homosexualidad, sociedad y estado en México* (Toronto: Canadian Gay Archives, 1991). See also some of the numerous articles that have been published on homosexuality in the last decade: Clark L. Taylor, "Mexican Male Homosexual Interaction in Public Contexts," in *The Many Faces of Homosexuality*, edited by Evelyn Blackwood (New York: Harrington Park, 1986), 117–38; Ana Alonso and María Teresa Koreck, "Silences: 'Hispanics,' AIDS, and Sexual Practices," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 1 (1989):101–24; Rob Buffington, "Los Jotos: Contested Visions of Homosexuality in Modern Mexico," in *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America*, edited by Daniel Balderston and Donna J. Guy (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 118–31; and Serge Gruzinski, "Las cenizas del deseo: Homosexuales novohispanos a mediados del siglo XVII," in *De la santidad a la perversión: O de por qué no se cumplía la ley de Dios en la sociedad novohispana*, edited by Sergio Ortega (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1986), 169–215.

7. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, vol. 1, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1978); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (London: Polity, 1984); and Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

Homosexualities, AIDS, and Provincial Culture in Mexico

Two of the books under review here use anthropological methods to investigate male homosexuality in Mexican culture: Joseph Carrier's *De los otros: Intimacy and Homosexuality among Mexican Men* and Carter Wilson's *Hidden in the Blood: A Personal Investigation of AIDS in the Yucatán*. Carrier, an anthropologist and AIDS researcher and educator in southern California, conducted his fieldwork in the western Mexican city of Guadalajara over several decades. Wilson made short trips to the eastern Mexican city of Mérida, capital of the state of Yucatán, over a two-year period. Carrier focused on male-male sexual relationships, whereas Wilson sought to understand how AIDS was spreading and being treated in provincial and rural communities in marginal areas of Mexico and how Mayan and mestizo men in the southeast region understood homosexual relationships. Despite these differences, both researchers were similarly interested in understanding local homosexual subcultures and their relationship to local power structures, how Mexican men think about homosexual relationships compared with how men think about them in the United States, and the prognosis for the spread of AIDS and its treatment in twenty-first-century Mexico. Both books are part of Columbia University Press's series entitled "Between Men, Between Women: Gay and Lesbian Lives," and they address questions from the broader field of sexuality studies as well as issues important to researchers working on Mexico and Latin America.

In *De los otros*, Carrier centers his analysis around the question, "How do *mestizo* Mexican men . . . who have sex with men cope with their homosexuality in their everyday lives in a society that censures such behavior?" (p. xvii). Identifying himself at the outset as homosexual, Carrier explains that in conducting his research, he actively participated in Guadalajara's homosexual community in order to understand better sexual behavior among its members. He asserts that his "private sex life with Mexican men helped to reveal important information about their homosexualities" (p. xviii). The book's title comes from a Mexican phrase referring to homosexual men as "the others." Carrier points out that part of the book's purpose was to "present intimate views of some of the Mexican men I have studied and their homosexualities" (p. xix) because these "others" are rarely discussed in more mainstream treatments of Mexican culture. Rather than providing an explicit analysis of homosexuality and its place in Mexican national culture, then, Carrier's work presents his personal impressions and observations of homosexual men's culture in western and northwestern Mexico.

De los otros begins by examining sex roles, family life, and how homosexual behavior is understood in the context of *mestizo* conceptualizations of machismo, manliness, and femininity. After briefly introducing Guadalajara and western Mexico, Carrier stresses that many men who have sexual relationships with other men neither identify themselves as homo-

sexual nor consider themselves part of a Mexican “gay community.” He notes that many of the men he interviewed are not open about their sexual attraction to other men and also maintain sexual relationships with women to conform to social and familial expectations. Carrier emphasizes that the act of penetration in sexual intercourse is what defines one as homosexual or not in Mexico:⁸

The Mexican concept of masculinity (*machismo*) requires that the division between male and female be clearly defined culturally as the division between those things active and male and those things passive and female. The ideal male must be tough, invulnerable and penetrating, whereas the ideal female must exhibit the opposite of these qualities. It follows then that only the receptive, anally passive male is identified culturally as effeminate and homosexual. The active male, the insertor, retains his masculinity and therefore cannot be considered homosexual. (P. 21)

Carrier then examines the factors that facilitate homosexual encounters in conservative, traditional Guadalajara, including the legal context, the urban landscape, male homosociability, and family relationships.

Despite social objections to public displays of homosexual behavior in Guadalajara, Carrier points out, the city has a special reputation for homosexuality in Mexico. In analyzing the reasons why Guadalajara seems to have numerous bars, discos, baths, parks, and neighborhoods where homosexual men can meet with relative ease, Carrier notes that although homosexuality is not illegal in the state of Jalisco, many rural men travel to the capital to undertake homosexual relationships in secret. The city’s large size makes it an appealing site for initiating homosexual encounters in relative anonymity. There rural and urban men alike can escape from familial and community expectations that they be tough, masculine, and “penetrating” and engage instead in what is considered taboo “feminine behavior.” Men who are *activo* retain their masculinity, whereas men who are receptive, or *pasivo*, are seen as feminine. According to Carrier, Guadalajarans describe men who engage in active and passive sexual behavior as “*internacional*,” identifying such behavior with North American and European gay culture.

After considering the legal and social taboos on homosexual behavior and the venues in which men meet and interact sexually with each other in Guadalajara, Carrier turns to issues like courtship, relationships, and flirting among homosexuals in the region. He believes that courtship among homosexual Guadalajarans is relatively aggressive because it is generally expected in Mexico that men will be sexually assertive. Carrier posits that

8. Other authors who have investigated homosexuality in Latin America have reported similar distinctions. See Roger N. Lancaster, *Life Is Hard: Machismo, Danger, and the Intimacy of Power in Nicaragua* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992); and Richard G. Parker, *Bodies, Pleasures, and Passions: Sexual Culture in Contemporary Brazil* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon, 1991).

there are several universal norms that characterize understandings of masculinity in Mexico:

The differences that do exist between homosexual and heterosexual male courting behavior are in part attributable to at least two unique aspects of the Mexican male. First, unlike the Mexican female, he is relatively free to act sexually as he wishes. This means the search by one male for another is not limited by having to deal with a closely watched, cloistered sexual object. Second, by societal definition, the Mexican male is considered to be more promiscuous by nature than the female. The relatively free promiscuous male is thus more likely to develop and find multiple sexual outlets. (P. 31)

Carrier also differentiates between expectations of sexual fidelity among members of long-term homosexual and heterosexual relationships in Mexico, noting that many men do not expect their male partners to be monogamous and that many married men maintain sexual relationships with younger men, often with their wives' tacit approval.

De los otros is notable because Carrier's intense participation in Guadalajara's homosexual community allowed him to present a vivid picture of the culture being described. His discussions of joining friends at discos, birthday parties, parks, bathhouses, and movie theaters and attending male brothels provide a clear sense of the manner and venues in which homosexual activity is negotiated in the city. Carrier's style engages readers in the lives of his informants, who include waiters, drag queens, dance club hostesses, prostitutes, and men who maintain that they do not have sex with men.

The second half of *De los otros* provides in-depth analyses of four men whom Carrier interviewed over the course of nearly twenty-five years of research. This section conveys vividly the problems facing homosexual men in Mexico, how they think about their lives, and what they do from day to day to identify themselves as homosexual or not. Because Carrier communicated with these men for so many years, he provides a sense of how these men's lives have changed over time due to such factors as marriage, migration, the death of a long-term romantic partner, and even AIDS. This illuminating section reflects the lifestyle changes that many men undergo over time, especially in acquiring wealth, sometimes managing to reconcile with estranged siblings, and becoming reintegrated with their families as they help provide for aging parents.

In the conclusion, Carrier turns his attention to "the limited gay subculture" in Guadalajara. He points out that Mexico City and some resort towns along the Mexican Pacific Coast have what many observers consider a more developed "gay scene," thanks to the influence of international tourism and the gay liberation movement:

Based on my study findings to date, *my best guess* is that the homosexual behaviors of a majority of the subpopulation of Mexican men who have sex with men—living in the geographical areas I have studied—have probably not been affected very

much by the gay liberation movement. That is, a large majority of them still prefer and practice anal sex; and many (a large majority?) continue to have a preference for playing one sexual role over the other. The tripartite division of the subpopulation by sexual role preference or by practices into *activo*, *pasivo* and *internacional* thus remains valid. (P. 194)

Carter Wilson's *Hidden in the Blood: A Personal Investigation of AIDS in the Yucatán* appeared the same year as Carrier's *De los otros*, and Wilson too is a "character" in his own study. A professor of community studies at the University of California at Santa Cruz, Wilson had worked as a novelist, screenwriter, and teacher before studying AIDS transmission in Yucatán and Maya attitudes toward homosexuality. As the introduction explains, the investigation turned personal because Wilson became interested in AIDS advocacy, sought to provide a chronicle of his own impressions, and hoped to contribute to the discussion about how specific individuals have experienced the spread of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in Mexico. It was not his intention to present an explicit analysis or policy recommendations on the situation. "While I wanted to learn what I could about all aspects of SIDA (AIDS) in the *provincia*, my exploration also took the shape it did out of my being gay and wanting to get to know more about homosexual men in Mexican culture" (p. xiii). During his short visits over three years, Wilson forged a working relationship with doctors, health workers, members of Mérida's homosexual community, and AIDS patients in order to tell this story.

An exquisite piece of nonfiction, *Hidden in the Blood* paints a haunting picture of how Yucatecans with HIV (at least through 1994) have had to cope with an inadequate medical infrastructure and prejudiced health workers, friends, family, and acquaintances. As in Wilson's previous work in the novels *Treasures on Earth* and *Crazy February*, his writing is fluid. It integrates the stark statistics of HIV infection and other health and social problems in Mexico with poignant portraits of individual AIDS victims. This work shows Wilson's sensitivity to the real problems facing HIV-positive Mexicans and their families in a semi-remote province of a developing country. Thanks to the generosity of the director of the AIDS clinic at a public hospital in Mérida, Dr. Alejandro Guerrero Flores, Wilson was able to interview persons who came to get their blood tested, clinic patients, and their families. He also witnessed the clinic's ongoing struggles with conservative groups and the hospital administration. Through his contacts at the clinic and other friends in the region, Wilson made friends with members of the homosexual community in Mérida, a group also reflected in his book.

Hidden in the Blood is divided into three chapters. "Those Out in Front" examines the AIDS clinic at the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (IMSS) hospital. "The Captain's Touch" seeks to understand the development of a homosexual culture or community in Yucatán. "The Visitors from Wakax" explores the routes of HIV transmission in a small henequen-producing

town with an exceptionally high rate of AIDS-related mortality. These chapters read more like a memoir than a strict experiment in social science, as Wilson intersperses his observations on AIDS with his recollections of anthropological fieldwork in Chiapas in the 1960s, gay bars and nightclubs in Mérida, and his discussions with local activists, priests, and shopkeepers.

Wilson's book will interest those concerned with various issues involving AIDS and public health, Mexican ideas about homosexuality, popular conceptualizations of illness in a multicultural society, and the role of state-provided social services in stemming the spread of sexually transmitted disease. *Hidden in the Blood* also offers a critical window on the frustrations inherent in treating AIDS at one moment in Mexican history. For example, Wilson tells of a couple he met who had to take the overnight bus all the way from Mérida to Mexico City just to get their T-cell counts taken because the IMSS refused to set up such laboratory facilities anywhere in Yucatán. Wilson's accounts of the struggles between the directors of the social security AIDS clinic (the Instituto de Seguridad Social al Servicio de los Trabajadores del Estado, or ISSTE) and the funding directors at state and national agencies like CONASIDA (Consejo Nacional para la Prevención y Control del SIDA) reflect the drama of doctors and social workers dedicating themselves to "social medicine" against seemingly insurmountable odds. Wilson also charts poignantly the range of emotions that individuals demonstrate when told of their HIV status. His descriptions of family members watching their loved ones die of AIDS recall Jamaica Kinkaid's *My Brother*, which chronicled her reaction to her sibling's death from AIDS in an impoverished Caribbean community.⁹

Like Carrier, Wilson raises a series of significant questions about the social acceptability, cultural practice, and diffusion of male homosexual behavior and AIDS in Mexico. These topics frame his discussion of the geography, vocabulary, and psychology of homosexual behavior in the provinces. Wilson too proposes that the idea of penetration is central to Mexican notions of gender and masculinity: a man who is generally an *activo* may not consider himself homosexual, whereas a man who is typically *pasivo* (penetrated) will. Both authors speculate that homosexual relationships among young men in cultures in which the honor of young girls is well protected are fairly common. They concur in their conclusion that many men in Mexico have relationships with other men after marriage to women without ever identifying themselves as "gay" or "homosexual," especially if they assume the *activo* role. Both authors seem to conclude that men's reluctance to identify themselves as gay or homosexual may help explain the spread of HIV to women and family members: men who have sex with

9. Jamaica Kinkaid, *My Brother* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1997).

both men and women may become infected and may then spread the virus to their female sexual partners and to their children.¹⁰

Hidden in the Blood raises important questions about the Mexican AIDS epidemic and provides a vivid account of men and women struggling to come to terms with HIV in a remote area lacking the services that might best help them combat the disease. Although the Yucatecan medical establishment's capacity to treat AIDS may have improved in the few years since the book was published, the essay still illuminates the struggles of doctors, disease victims, and development specialists in the 1990s.

Masculinities and Sexualities in the Mexican Capital

Like Carrier and Wilson, Matthew Gutmann and Annick Prieur examine in their studies the cultural construction of masculinity and the intersections of gender and sexuality in Mexican culture. All four of these works gain from their authors' intellectual honesty and commitment to comprehending informants' complex and often contradictory understandings of gender and sexual identity. Gutmann and Prieur are open about the problems that their status as North American or European investigators may have created in gaining accurate information from informants. But neither shied away from asking informants difficult questions about their private lives. Although Prieur and Gutmann also assumed active roles within the communities they studied, they examined an array of male sexual behaviors by interviewing men ranging from sexually promiscuous heterosexuals to men who take female hormones, get breast implants, tuck their penises between their buttocks, and inject oil into their thighs to look like sexually attractive women. Anthropologist Gutmann and sociologist Prieur both focus on marginal communities on the outskirts of the world's largest city. Gutmann's *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City* explores the largely heterosexual everyday lives of men in the Colonia Santo Domingo, a well-developed squatter settlement that grew out of one of the largest land invasions in Mexican history. Prieur examines in *Mema's House, Mexico City: On Machos, Queens, and Transvestites* a community of transvestite men (*vestidas* or *jotas*, as they call themselves) in a poor area known as Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl, also outside Mexico City.

After reading *De los otros* and *Hidden in the Blood*, one is surprised that Gutmann found almost no homosexual behavior among the men of Santo Domingo: "during my fieldwork in Santo Domingo, on only one occasion did I meet someone in the Pedregales who was openly gay." He also states, "of all the men with whom I conducted life-history interviews, only

10. For an informative collection of essays on women and AIDS in Mexico, see *Mujer y SIDA* (Mexico City: Programa Interdisciplinario de Estudios de la Mujer, Colegio de México 1992).

one told of having had sex with other men" (p. 125). Aware of Carrier's and Wilson's research findings, Gutmann explains that it may be that men in the colonia engaged in homosexual behavior but chose not to discuss it with him either because they went outside the neighborhood to meet men or because they viewed Gutmann, living in the community with his wife and daughter, as unsympathetic. But Gutmann stresses, "my definition of male identities focuses on what men say and do to be men, and not simply on what men say and do" (p. 17).

In the first chapter of *The Meanings of Macho*, Gutmann explains that his purpose is to debunk the idea of "the Mexican macho" made famous by anthropologists such as Oscar Lewis, who wrote several influential mid-twentieth-century studies of Mexican culture. Gutmann argues that the internationally recognized stereotype of the Mexican macho Don Juan who drinks, beats women, totes a gun, and has a heart of stone is misleading at the end of the twentieth century. Rather than considering social expectations of "the Mexican male" or "the Mexican female" as static or universal, Gutmann insists that there are multiple ways of being a man or woman in Mexico and that his informants invoke a variety of masculine or feminine identities at different moments.

To introduce the topic, Gutmann describes his initial encounter with a group of informants early in his family's stay in Santo Domingo. When he saw the group of men drinking and arguing, Gutmann expected that he would soon hear them boasting about their sexual conquests, their abandoned children, their wife beating, or their tolerance for hard alcohol. Instead, he was surprised to learn that these seemingly "macho men" were debating the finer points of good fatherhood. Gutman generalizes from this anecdote:

In a variety of surprising as well as more predictable ways, the men and women of Colonia Santo Domingo, as part of the broader society and because of certain specific conditions pertaining to this largely self-built community, show that the *macho mexicano* stereotypes are today inappropriate and misleading. These stereotypes are in fact inaccurate and will help us but little if we sincerely hope to understand large sections of men in this area—how they see themselves, and how the women with whom they share their lives see them, their history, and their futures. (P. 32)

Gutmann's project thus is as much about debunking the myth of the macho Mexican as about showing how Mexican gender identities are changing. He is particularly interested in demonstrating how metropolitan men and women are deliberately challenging social expectations that they act according to "traditional ideas" of masculinity and femininity.

After briefly introducing the history of Colonia Santo Domingo, Gutmann explores in detail the subjects of fatherhood, motherhood, sexual promiscuity, spousal expectations, alcohol consumption, and domestic violence. Interestingly, he situates his analysis of the historical development of the

idea of “macho” at the end of the book. Gutmann’s claims that U.S. anthropologists like Oscar Lewis have been central in imaging the Mexican macho are provocative, as is Gutmann’s observation that although residents of Santo Domingo seem to know what a macho is, neither men nor women seem to consider machismo an ideal. His Santo Domingo informants stated that fathering lots of children and being tough is macho behavior, but Gutmann noticed as well that many Mexican men also participate in raising children, historically not a macho activity. Gutmann insists that the static divisions between male and female behavior long posited by social scientists are no longer useful, if they ever were:

When analyzing changing male identities in *colonias populares* of Mexico City, for example, categories that posit static differences in the male and female populations—the drunks, the loving mothers, the wife beaters, the machos, the sober family men, the submissive women—hinder one’s efforts more than they assist them. Gender identities, roles, and relations do not remain frozen in place, either for individuals or for groups. There is continuous contest and confusion over what constitutes male identity; it means different things to different people at different times. And sometimes different things to the same people at the same time. (P. 17)

The idea that Santo Domingans believe gender relations are becoming more equal undergirds many of the discussions that Gutmann reports in *The Meanings of Macho*.

Gutmann’s concept of “contradictory consciousness,” developed from the insights of Antonio Gramsci, is critical to his hypothesis that a variety of male behaviors, some traditional and others modern, coexist and continue to evolve in all areas of Mexico City, where residents are adjusting to new forms of social relations as *la capital* develops economically and politically. The idea of contradictory consciousness is implicit in Carrier’s and Wilson’s examinations of homosexuality as they describe the different identities that their informants adopt when with friends, with family, or at work to display or hide their sexual orientations. But in using this concept as an explicit part of his work, Gutmann makes his study of men in a poor Mexico City neighborhood as much about Mexico and machismo as about identity formation, gender, and social change at the end of the millennium.

Annick Prieur’s *Mema’s House, Mexico City: On Queens, Transvestites, and Machos* focuses on a community of transvestites in a poor suburb of Mexico City and complements the works by Gutmann, Carrier, and Wilson. Mema’s house belongs to Gerardo Rubén Ortega Zurita, an AIDS activist and former sex worker whom the author met at an Ixtapa conference in 1988. The home in Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl serves as a refuge for young neighborhood men who wish to dress as women, have sex with other men, sniff glue, smoke marijuana, and be wild. Like Carrier and Wilson’s work on homosexuality, Prieur’s study of the social and sexual dynamics of Mema’s household sheds light on how Mexican men think about homosexuality, power, and penetration. The work provides important insights into homo-

sexuality in Mexican culture but is more concerned with the formation of communities and the cultural construction of gender in a marginal urban area than about Mexico per se. Prieur made several trips from her native Norway to the Federal District over a three-year period and lived with half a dozen “vestidas” at Mema’s house for several weeks at a time, participating in their conversations and accompanying them to discos and parties. She also interviewed them about matters such as how they knew they were homosexual; what constitutes feminine behavior for them; what they do to “be women”; their attitudes toward the body, dress, and sexual desire; and their plans for the future.

Prieur focuses in *Mema’s House* on the question of “positionality.” The sociologist confesses early in the study that she wondered how her presence as a blonde foreign woman might influence the vestidas’ activities in the house and their responses. She also expresses openly her own feelings about the group she studied, describing her difficulties in reconciling her personal aversion to drug use, unsafe sex, and petty criminal behavior with the vestidas’ activities:

A distinguished but very disagreeable task that fell to me was to be in command when Mema was absent. I was expected to get a group of youngsters, who in any other society would all have been diagnosed as having severe social adjustment problems, to tidy up the house and do the chores—while all they wanted to do was to dance, make love, smoke marihuana, snatch goodies from the refrigerator and test out my limits. . . . It took me some time to accept my position in the hierarchy, and to accept the corresponding behavior that was expected. I had wanted to stay on the outside of their social system, but I could not live with them and still stay outside, nor could I expect them to adopt my democratic ideals and pacific methods. I had to adopt their ideals and methods. (P. 16)

Prieur thus makes her adjustments and reactions to the vestidas’ lifestyle a part of the project. She reports having to squeeze one vestida’s breast implant at Mema’s urging to “see what we can make in Mexico.” She was also required to participate in a “spontaneous breast contest” and had to learn to appreciate the explicit sexual jokes that seemed to characterize all aspects of conversation in the Maiden’s Bower. In this room full of bunk beds at the back of the house, many of the vestidas (who are also sex workers) have anal intercourse with neighborhood men. Prieur also admits that she worried that her presence might inhibit activity between men and the vestidas at Mema’s and that she might attract unwanted sexual attention.

Despite Prieur’s uncertainties on commencing her project, the vestidas living at Mema’s house clearly came to trust the sociologist, allowing her to photograph them and talk with them about the ways in which they manipulate their bodies through surgery, female hormone therapy, and oil injections. The transvestites at Mema’s house also initiated her into the complicated Mexican vocabulary defining who has sexual intercourse with whom and in what position, language that defines the participant’s gender

as male or female. Prieur points out that being a woman made her work easier in some ways because she could participate in the group's parties and conversations without experiencing sexual advances. Just as the vestidas were open with Prieur about their lives, so she is open with her readers. She includes photographs, uses explicit language, and provides direct quotations from interviews to describe the *jotas'* attitudes toward sex and sex work as well as their strategies for achieving the ultimate sexual conquest: attracting a *buga*, a client who says he has sex only with "real women."

Prieur's analysis centers around several interrelated themes in *Mema's House*. One set of questions asks who the vestidas are, how they realized they were homosexual, why they view themselves as women, and what their relationships with their families are like. Another set revolves around finding out how the group is organized, what gives it energy and sustains it, and how this seemingly marginal population interacts with the larger Neza community in the service sector and informal economy. A third series of questions focuses on the men who pay to have sexual intercourse with the vestidas: who are they, and do they see themselves as heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual? Prieur's insights into class, gender, and performance illuminate the vestidas' ability to manipulate gender conventions to suit their needs. She notes that the vestidas adopt an exaggerated version of lower-class conventions of female sexual desirability by donning miniskirts and teasing their hair to attract neighborhood men. Yet these same scantily clad vestidas in high heels will not hesitate to resort to a "male fistfight" to settle differences with a friend or client. Prieur recounts a conversation with an informant named Gabi. When Prieur asked her whether she felt like a woman all the time, Gabi responded, "Feminine? Well, when it suits me." Prieur comments, "What I had to realize was that the gender constructions I observed among the *jotas* in Neza could not be understood in terms of masculinity and femininity. Just as their physical presentation of self is a *bricolage*, so are their representations of masculinity and femininity. Their representations depend on the local perceptions of gender, but these perceptions are readapted, for the *jotas'* particular use" (p. 167).

Prieur's discussion of the significance of sexual position as an index of masculinity in Mexico complements Carrier's, Wilson's, and Gutmann's findings in many ways. According to Prieur, "I would assert that it is not at all unusual for Mexican men from the urban working class to have sexual experience with men, at least during certain periods of their lives" (p. 180). A key question that she, Carrier, and Wilson investigate is whether "bisexual men's homosexual activity is only situational, and not deeply rooted in their psychology" (p. 215). For example, Prieur questions whether the argument is valid that in a culture that protects the sexuality of young girls, men turn to boys and other men for "sexual outlets" (p. 86).

Mema's House analyzes popular conceptualizations of the human body and how surgery and physical manipulation make gender and even sexual

identity fluid and ambiguous categories. In examining transvestite sex work, this study makes an important contribution to the existing work on prostitution by focusing on an understudied dimension of the metropolitan sex trade.

Prostitution in Historical and Literary Perspective

Rafael Sagredo's intimate portrait of turn-of-the-century prostitute-murderer María Villa, also known as "La Chiquita," scrutinizes the cultural construction of Mexican ideas about gender and deviance in historical perspective. A Chilean economic historian, Sagredo wrote *María Villa (a) La Chiquita, no. 4002, un parásito social del Porfiriato* while studying for a doctorate in history at the Colegio de México in the early 1990s. This brief volume portrays vividly the Porfirian capital's upper-class brothels and sexual culture in the years preceding the Mexican Revolution. Unlike the prostitutes that Gutmann's informants visited or the vestidas who shared their secrets with Prieur, La Chiquita was an officially registered first-class prostitute, when Mexico (like many countries throughout Latin America and Europe) still had a regulation system. As Sagredo points out in the introduction, the book is not meant to be the definitive study of the history of sexuality in Mexico around 1900. Rather, Sagredo seeks to provide an impression of sexual morality during the late years of the Porfiriato. Sagredo purposely eschewed any discussion of social theory or methodology and omitted footnotes from the text, opting instead for a bibliographic essay at the end of the work.¹¹

Because Sagredo chose to make his presentation more informal than the usual history text, *María Villa (a) La Chiquita* reads like a crime novel with history lessons thrown in. Sagredo tantalizes readers at the outset by revealing only bits of information about Villa's "disgrace" and her "profession" before discussing Porfirian attitudes toward sexual commerce and the social, economic, and psychological reasons why many provincial women joined the sex trade in the capital. Not until the reader is well along in the text does Sagredo reveal the circumstances surrounding Villa's arrest, imprisonment, and notoriety. He reports that in 1897, Villa was accused and subsequently convicted of killing another prostitute known as La Malagueña. Villa reportedly feared that La Malagueña was trying to steal the affections of her own lover, Salvador Ortigosa. After one outing, Ortigosa dropped Villa off earlier than usual near her brothel-residence, leaving her his gun for protection and saying that he was tired and wanted to go home

11. A recent article examining historians' approaches to the study of prostitutes is Timothy J. Gilfoyle, "Prostitutes in History: From Parables of Pornography to Metaphors of Modernity," *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 1 (Feb. 1999):117–41.

to catch up on his sleep. Villa, suspicious and determined to catch Ortigosa and La Malagueña in the act, proceeded to the other woman's brothel and demanded to be taken to her room in the hopes of catching Ortigosa inside. In the confusion following the discovery that Ortigosa was not there, Villa got into a fight with La Malagueña's chambermaid, and, according to Sagredo, the gun somehow went off and killed Villa's competitor standing nearby.

In *María Villa (a) La Chiquita*, Sagredo uses the drama of Villa's life and trial to maintain the reader's interest, but he also provides substantial background information on Porfirian sexual and social mores. After reporting what is known about Villa's birth and childhood as a mestiza in western Mexico, Sagredo describes how the Porfirian press dealt with the scandal and speculates as to what *capitalino* expectations might have been for a woman of her background. He skillfully integrates the observations of contemporary Mexican criminologists like Luis Lara y Pardo, Carlos Roumagnac, and Julio Guerrero with details from Villa's own prison diaries to portray Porfirian mentalities on crime, deviance, and sexuality. In Sagredo's view, "María and others like her represented what was abnormal for a society that liked to characterize itself as civilized, cultured, moral and at peace. Just by existing, they contradicted the feigned progress, well-being and economic success that the Porfirian 'científicos' made so much fuss over. They were marginal because they did not form part of the dominant bourgeoisie" (p. 26).

Sagredo's *María Villa* is intriguing for several reasons. In shedding light on the cultural, moral, and sexual expectations of young women in the Porfiriato, the study contributes to a growing body of literature on Mexico City and on power, culture, and social change in Mexico during that period.¹² Second, Sagredo uses historical sources in intriguing ways, searching for "silences" in official documents to perceive where subaltern groups like prostitutes have spoken or acted and inferring information from criminological tracts, the media, and even literature to speculate on the pressures likely faced by María Villa on a day-to-day basis. Sagredo's informal presentation of the information keeps the reader engaged in the drama of Villa's trial and life, although it is somewhat unfortunate that he chose not to use footnotes, which would no doubt assist researchers wanting to in-

12. See, for example, William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987); William French, "Prostitutes and Guardian Angels: Women, Work, and the Family in Porfirian Mexico," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 72, no. 4 (1992):529–53; Pablo Piccato, "'No es posible cerrar los ojos': El discurso sobre la criminalidad y el alcoholismo hacia el fin del porfiriato," in *Prensa, criminalidad y drogas durante el porfiriato tardío*, edited by Ricardo Pérez Montfort (Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés, 1997), 75–143; and Guadalupe Ríos de la Torre and Marcela Suárez Escobar, "Reglamentarismo, historia y prostitutas," *Constelaciones de modernidad* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Unidad Azcapotzalco, 1990), 127–50.

investigate the matter further. Sagredo's way of writing about the history of crime almost resembles that of a trial judge assessing several different perspectives on the events of March 1897 to determine Porfirian attitudes about crime, deviance, and "truth."

María Villa will be useful to historians of culture, law, and medicine around 1900 in Mexico because Sagredo's treatment of the Villa scandal reveals how Porfirian attitudes on gender, sexuality, and the social order shaped official institutions and regulatory agencies. He has expertly woven information from trial transcripts, newspaper articles, memoirs, art, and literature into an illuminating story. His reliance on Federico Gamboa's novel *Santa* (1903) for details about the world of high-class brothels in Mexico City, however, raises a number of questions. Drawing parallels between Gamboa's famous fictitious prostitute and the real Villa, Sagredo embellishes his discussion of Villa's brothel existence with details from Gamboa's realistic novel. Because Gamboa was familiar with the Villa case, some strong parallels are likely between the two, but one wonders if using a post-trial source to describe Villa's life might also demonstrate how the trial influenced literary culture. This methodological device raises important considerations regarding representations of deviance, fact and fiction, and Porfirian society and points toward avenues for future research.

Two other recent publications deal with the figure of the prostitute in Mexican literature, although from different angles. The first is María González's *Imagen de la prostituta en la novela mexicana contemporánea*, published in Spain. The other is *Easy Women: Sex and Gender in Modern Mexican Fiction* by Debra Castillo. These two studies complement Sagredo's investigation of the life and times of María Villa because both begin by analyzing Federico Gamboa's *Santa* and then consider the role of the prostitute in other works of Mexican fiction.¹³

María González's *Imagen de la prostituta* examines the role of "la mujer pública" in twentieth-century Mexican literature. González begins with a historical overview of the legality and politics of prostitution in Mexico from the precolonial period through the 1980s. She explains that she was motivated to study the image of the prostitute because "in the world of Mexican culture, power is still absolutely masculine," and she is interested in representations of women who flout that authority (p. 39).

González organized her study chronologically. She opens with a comparative first chapter on Gamboa's *Santa* and two less-known novels, *María Luisa* and *La Malhora* by Mariano Azuela, a doctor and the author of the classic novel of the Mexican Revolution, *Los de abajo*. Here González con-

13. Other analyses of this popular novel include Jean Franco, *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); and Carmen Ramos, "Del cuerpo carnal: *Santa* y *La Calandria*, o el inconsciente político de una sociedad reprimida," *Signos: Anuario de Humanidades* 5, no. 1 (1991):193–223.

siders the historical conditions characterizing prostitution in early-twentieth-century Mexico. She also explores the literary styles, narrative structures, and gendered expectations found in these novels. González observes that both Gamboa and Azuela used the figure of the prostitute to condemn sexually adventuresome women and that all three novels set a punitive tone. She finds that *Maria Luisa* and *Santa* may be considered naturalistic in style, but in presenting detail about the inner workings of the Porfirian sex trade, *Santa* is more successful than *Maria Luisa* in conveying a more realistic sense of sexual commerce. She argues that Azuela's *La Malhora* represents an unsuccessful attempt at a surrealist depiction of one woman's descent into prostitution in the 1930s.

In the second chapter of *Imagen de la prostituta*, González examines the work of twentieth-century novelist Miguel Nicolás Lira. He wrote *Una mujer en la soledad* as an existentialist novel, but González concludes that it "fails to be truly existentialist, despite its title" (p. 77). The novel follows the life of a married woman named Rita from her adolescence in San Miguel de Allende and the city of Puebla through a journey to Mexico City, her descent into its underworld, her work as a prostitute, and her reconciliation with the realization that her life has turned out rather differently than she expected. González notes that Lira, unlike Gamboa and Azuela, does not judge Rita's descent into prostitution as ending with death or a horrible old age. Readers never learn Rita's fate, although that approach does not imply that Lira was celebrating the prostitute. González observes, "As an author, Lira coincides with the naturalist narrators in the negative vision of the female prostitute, and it even seems that he treats her with less sympathy than the others" (p. 89).

Next González examines three mid-twentieth-century novels that present more positive perspectives on sexually promiscuous women. She examines Homero Arijidís's *Perséfone*, a classic of "the Boom." The subjects of the fifth chapter, *Del oficio* by Antonia Mora and *Las muertas* by Jorge Ibarguengoitia, González calls "pseudo-documentaries" because they purport to present information about real events. Mora was the first Mexican woman to treat the theme of prostitution, but her novel is not well known, which is the reason González included it. Mora arrived in Mexico City in 1930 and lived as a street child. The narrator of the novel, also called "Antonia," is a prostitute's daughter who becomes aware of and eventually joins her mother's profession when she matures. González concludes that the text is meant to be read as the author's memoir and thus represents the first instance in which a female narrator is open about her sexuality and her "deviant lifestyle." In the final section, González assesses *Las muertas* by Guanajuatan writer Jorge Ibarguengoitia. Based on real events, this novel renders a fictitious account of the famous white slaver sisters known as Las Poquianchis.

González's *Imagen de la prostituta en la novela mexicana contemporánea*

provides a useful introduction to the national literature on sexually promiscuous women and raises important questions about the popularity of the prostitute as a protagonist in that body of work. The book also offers a helpful orientation of the literary styles used by authors who have written about prostitutes over the course of the twentieth century.

Debra Castillo's *Easy Women: Sex and Gender in Modern Mexican Literature* explores the same topic. Yet except for *Santa* and *Del oficio*, Castillo analyzes a different set of novels, suggesting that Mexican fiction is rife with images of sexually promiscuous females. But whereas González's study focuses almost exclusively on the novels and the novelists, Castillo broadens her examination of sex and gender in modern Mexican culture to consider such issues as female readers and the question of how prostitutes narrate their own lives. Like González's *Imagen de la prostituta*, Castillo's work complements Sagredo's observations on Mexican mentalities on sexuality and order while assessing several noteworthy pieces of literature.

Castillo, a professor of comparative literature at Cornell University, uses Oscar Lewis's observations on gender and machismo in Mexican culture as a springboard for her study of attitudes toward sexuality and sexually promiscuous women. She cites a passage from Lewis's *Pedro Martínez, a Mexican Peasant and His Family* (1964), in which a woman recounts that a group of men used to take women who were considered to be sexually "loose" out to the fields where they would rape them and then kill them slowly in order to set an example: "They didn't kill her at first but stuck her onto the point and there she sat until she died. Then they would undo her braids and put a sombrero on her head and a red kerchief around her neck, like a man. They would put a cigar in her mouth and cross her shawl on her chest the way a vagabond does, to show that she tried to revel and make merry like a man" (p. 1). Castillo then employs the testimony of a single-mother and prostitute to establish the parameters of the book. This woman states that she did not set out to be a prostitute but eventually began engaging in sexual commerce after being forced into uncomfortable sexual relationships with male co-workers who assumed that she was "loose" because she was an unmarried mother. Castillo comments, "both these anecdotes describe a national culture in which presumed gender boundaries for women and the transgression of these boundaries are deeply imbedded features of the social fabric. It is precisely this area of slippage between boundaries and their transgression that concerns me in this book where women—through the force of circumstance or personal choice—step outside such dominant culture codings of female behavior and thus enter a sliding category: loose women, easy women, public women, 'locas,' prostitutes" (pp. 3–4).

Castillo thus uses her study of fictitious prostitutes, whether protagonists or marginal characters, to argue that the narratives reflect social observations on the sexually active woman in Mexico. By looking at "the dis-

cursive construction" of sexually promiscuous women in Mexican fiction, Castillo seeks to examine how stereotypes "structure both authors and readers" and to understand "the transgressive woman's own response to society's fascination with the myth and marginalization of real women" (p. 7). Like Gutmann, Castillo is less concerned with determining what is "real" than with analyzing what observers say or think is real: "Thus, while I ground my readings in the most reliable surveys and socioethnographic studies available, I am inevitably less directly concerned with what is objectively true about the loose woman than with how Mexican writers have positioned her in their works" (p. 5).

Castillo starts with *Santa*, Gamboa's popular novel about an upper-class courtesan that inspired Mexico's first silent movie, a talking movie, soap operas, and even a pornographic magazine in the 1930s. Castillo comments that although prostitutes appeared in earlier popular literary works, this novel is a fitting place to start because *Santa* "serves as the forerunner for other texts in which later authors can rethink and revise the manner in which female sexuality will be understood in Mexican culture and represented in Mexican fiction" (p. 62). Castillo argues that *Santa* represented an important breakthrough in Mexican literature as the first novel to portray a woman celebrated for her vice and not for her virtue, contradicting the Spanish and Mexican literary establishment's traditional representations of female protagonists as good wives, devoted mothers, and heroines. Castillo characterizes Gamboa's painstaking depiction of the physical and social world of the brothel in turn-of-the-century Mexico City as "gritty verisimilitude." Influenced by Emile Zola's naturalistic novel *Nana*, Gamboa reportedly visited brothels and even attended the autopsy of a prostitute (possibly La Malagueña, María Villa's homicide victim) to gather information for his own novel. Like Sagredo and González, Castillo uses Gamboa's *Santa* to elucidate information about the practice of commercial sex in Mexico City around 1900. Castillo explains that although Gamboa's novel may be read to analyze "a late-nineteenth-century/early-twentieth-century masculinist aesthetic," she has chosen to "read against the grain" in order to explore what she calls the "Porfirian gestural economy" and the "deeply disturbing links between poverty and the fantasized erotic object" (p. 41). Castillo's analysis of *Santa*, like Sagredo's text, contributes to the scholarly literature on sexuality and culture in turn-of-the-century Mexico by providing a sense of the historical landscapes in which men discussed, regulated, and enjoyed women's sexual promiscuity. Referring to other Porfirian observers of sexual deviance like Luis Lara y Pardo and Carlos Roumagnac, Castillo provides a helpful guide to the masculine world in which prostitution proliferated in a rapidly changing metropolis.

In the third chapter of *Easy Women*, Castillo turns to two novels that "cede narrative point of view to a loose woman" (p. 63). Her consideration of Juan Rulfo's novel fragment "Un pedazo de noche" (1940) and Elena

Garro's *Los recuerdos del porvenir* (1963) focuses on how these "fallen women" tell their own stories, creating an alternate view of the prostitute's inherent deviance and "a feminized narrative" (p. 65). Subsequently, Castillo investigates such topics as how female narrators negotiate the complicated terrain of sexual desire and national identity in the work of Federico Campbell and Ana Castillo and then considers the growing number of female readers of romance novels and the soft-porn *historietas* popular in Mexico today.

In the last two chapters, Castillo explores the question of sexuality and class in the work of Mexican novelist and cultural critic Sara Sefchovich and prostitution "memoirs" like Antonia Mora's *Del oficio, A calzón amarrado*, and *Sin pelos en la lengua* as well as *Una loca en la polaca* by Irma "La Tigresa" Serrano and Eduardo Muñozuri's *Memorias de "La Bandida."* These densely packed chapters demonstrate the breadth and depth of Castillo's exhaustive research on prostitution, sexuality, and literature as well as the sociology, history, philosophy, politics, and anthropology of crime and deviance in twentieth-century Mexico.

The conclusion and appendix to *Easy Women* present Castillo's illuminating discussion of current debates among Mexican feminists regarding AIDS and solidarity with sex workers. In this section, Castillo critiques some prominent middle-class feminists for seeking to speak for sex workers. Castillo advocates instead research that enhances prostitutes' agency, emphasizing that "a number of women see in prostitution the opportunity to live an independent life, in which they are no longer dependent upon an abusive, unreliable or unfaithful partner" (p. 229). The appendix seeks to do just that by providing readers with partial transcripts of two interviews conducted by a sociologist and a public health worker with prostitutes. One interview is a longer version of the account of single motherhood and sex work that Castillo used to introduce *Easy Women*. Castillo thus provides unfiltered sex workers' testimony that allows readers to form their own impressions of how promiscuous women's sexuality is discussed, read, and represented in modern Mexico.

Conclusion

In recent years, social scientists, historians, and literary critics focusing on Mexico have investigated the cultural construction of sexuality and gender identity. Books like *De los otros*, *Mema's House*, and *Hidden in the Blood*, for example, broaden scholarly understanding of how Mexican men negotiate being homosexual in a culture that ostensibly condemns male-male sexual relationships. *The Meanings of Macho* asks researchers to reconsider the analytical value of the concept of machismo and offers fresh insights into how heterosexual men and women in Mexico City think about masculinity, social and sexual relationships, parenting, aging, and violence. The

examinations of prostitution in Mexican cultural and literary history by Sagredo, González, Prieur, and Castillo similarly explore a variety of perspectives of men and women on the promiscuous woman's nonreproductive sexuality. Sagredo and González examine the prostitute as an object and how the broader Mexican society has represented or rejected her, while Prieur and Castillo demonstrate how prostitutes think about their life and their occupation. Prieur's work on transvestite sex workers broadens the field of sociological research on prostitution, and both she and Castillo urge researchers to explore the agency of marginal sex workers themselves.

The seven works reviewed here represent part of a growing body of work that deems it necessary to integrate the study of sexuality and gender into the broader field of Mexican studies concerned with political processes, collective action, economic development, and social organization. The numerous articles and conference papers on sexual politics appearing in recent years attest to the fact that many researchers are finding that studying sexuality offers them a fascinating window on cultural politics and social change. The works on masculinity, homosexuality, sexual promiscuity, and femininity discussed here will encourage future researchers to reconsider the historical, social science, and literary focus on family and reproductive health of earlier decades and will challenge scholars to investigate issues such as how couples think about partnership and marital infidelity; parenting, motherhood and fatherhood; historical perspectives on male and female homosexuality; and sexuality in an aging population. Such topics are only some of the provocative issues raised by these compelling studies of cultural politics and sexuality in twentieth-century Mexico.

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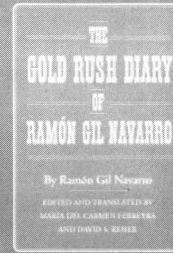
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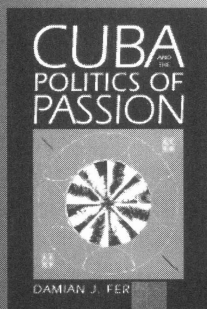


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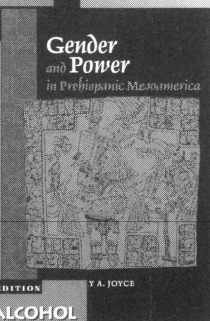


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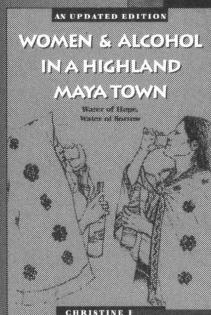
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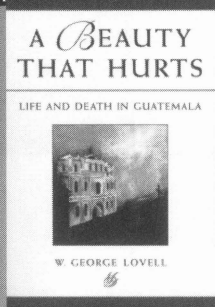
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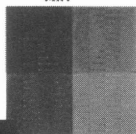
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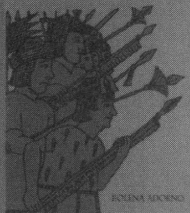
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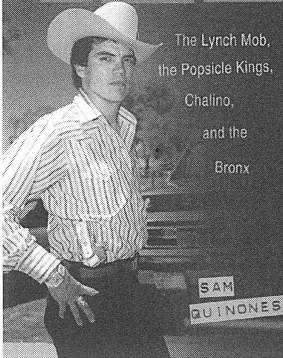
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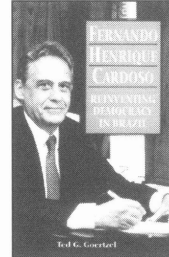
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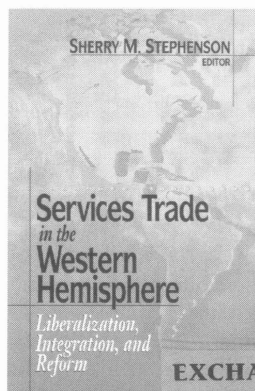
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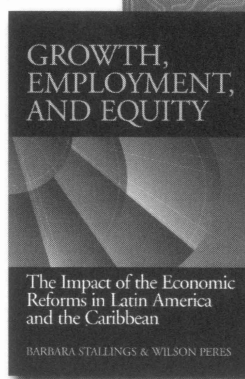
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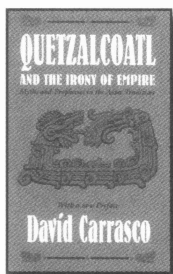
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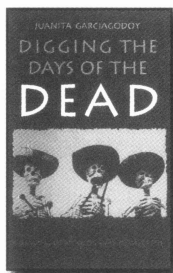
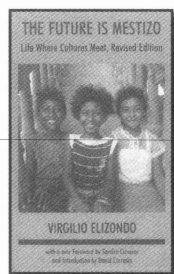
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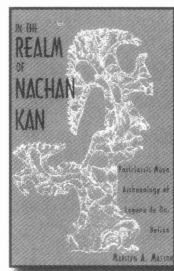
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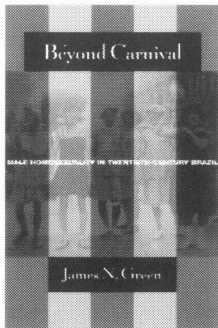
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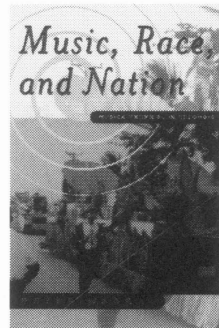
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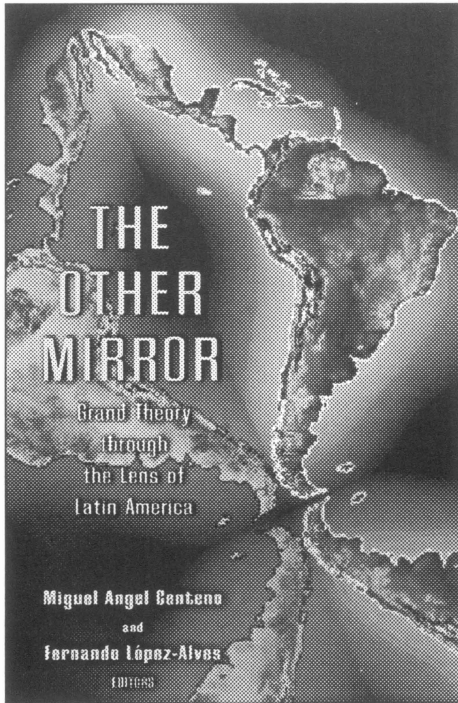
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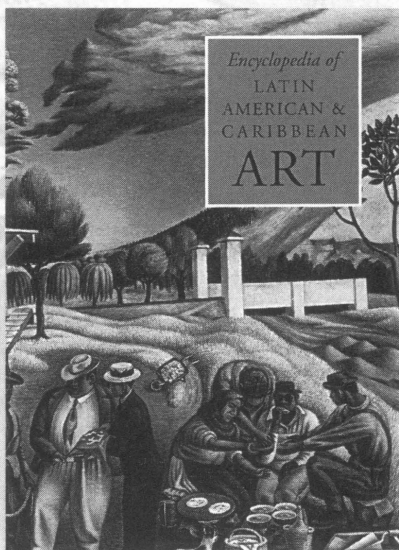
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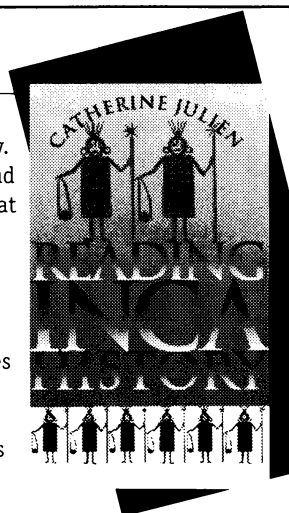
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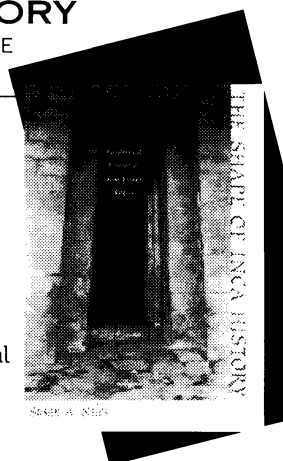
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