Introduction: Towards an (Even More) Queer Hispanism[1]

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A little over 20 years have passed since the appearance of the very first collections of essays within the field of gay, lesbian and queer studies devoted to Spanish-speaking countries. Volumes such as *¿Entiendes? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings* (Bergmann and Smith, 1995), *Bodies and Biases* (Foster and Reis, 1996), *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America* (Balderston and Guy, 1996) or *Hispanisms and Homosexualities* (Molloy and Mckee Irwin, 1998) became pioneer works, in which scholars of great renown discussed issues related to gender and sexuality in contexts quite different from those in which queer theory had been produced. Indeed, one of the early debates centred around the usage of imported theoretical models and methodological tools, conceived in—and for—realities considerably remote from *our* countries (although the seeming homogeneity suggested by the pronoun "our" has always been and still is, inevitably, nothing but a fiction, given the multiple differences, on the one hand between Spain and Latin America, and on the other, between the varied Spanish-speaking regions and countries (or even within them). The corpus of queer-themed academic works pursuing that early polemic—its echoes reach the present moment (Rivas San Martín)—continued to grow; collections of essays written in English were soon followed by those published in Spanish or in both languages. Subsequently, there appeared a significant number of important monographs, such as *Teoría torcida* (1998) by Ricardo Llamas, *Un amor que se atrevió a decir su nombre* (2000) by Norma Mogrovejo, *Tropics of Desire* (2000) by José Quiroga, *Sueños de exterminio* (2004) by Gabriel Giorgi, *La salida del armario* (2005) by Inmaculada Pertusa, *Queer Transitions in Contemporary Spanish Culture* (2007) by Gema Sánchez-Pérez, *Feminismo, género y diferencia(s)* (2008) by Nelly Richard, *El laberinto queer* (2008) by Susana López Penedo, *Deseo y resistencia* (2009) by Gracia Trujillo (2009), *Nación marica* (2009) by Juan Pablo Sutherland or *Poses de fin de siglo* (2012) de Sylvia Molloy, to mention just some of the contributions out of the wide range of publications on varied topics, objects of study, and representing different disciplinary perspectives.

[1] This special issue of *InterAlia: A Journal of Queer Studies* titled "Among Others. Queer Perspectives in Hispanic World/Entre otros/as. Perspectivas *queer* en el mundo hispánico," including this introduction and the other essays published in it, forms part of the project FEM2015-69863-P MINECO-FEDER ("Diversidad de género, masculinidad y cultura en España, Argentina y México"), developed within the Spanish National Plan for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation.

Although there had existed—as pointed out by Daniel Balderston (2004)—an undoubted "conspiracy of silence" within the field of historiography and Latin American literary studies towards the literary representations of sexual dissidence, the research gaps kept being consistently filled, both when it comes to cultural and literary studies, and within the broadly defined humanities, including sociology. In fact, the beginnings of LGTBQ studies were much steadier in such disciplines as sociology, anthropology, historiography or psychology than in literary criticism, still reluctant to adopt these theoretical and critical perspectives. Mérida Jiménez argued that in case of the Spanish universities this reluctance was due to the panic caused by the "patriotic and patriarchal way of thinking" ("Queerencias" 12); this observation could be applied to the Latin American countries as well, beyond the singularities resulting from the *machismo*, misogyny and the different (trans-, lesbo-, homo-) phobias in each of those countries and their institutions, including academia.

The question of terminology has been a matter of much importance to the scholars representing Hispanic LGTBQ studies. Neither the words nor the use we make of them are neutral, which is why the meanings and the interpretations depend on what words we choose. Among the titles of books published in recent years we can find both those that choose to separate, and those that tend to juxtapose the words "gay," "lesbian," and "queer," terms related on the one hand to gay and lesbian studies, initiated in the decade of 1970s, and on the other hand to queer studies, which go back to the late 1980s. Thus, there are authors who prefer "gay" and "lesbian" [*lésbico/lesbiano*] (Foster, *Gay and Lesbian Themes*; Martínez Expósito; Ingenschay), whereas others opt to write about "sexualities" [*sexualidades*], "homosexualities" [*homosexualidades*], "homoerotic" identities and cultures [*identidades o culturas "homoeróticas"*] or "sex-gender perspectives" [*perspectivas sexogenéricas*] (Balderston and Guy; Molloy and McKee Irwin; Foster *Producciones homoeróticas* and *Ensayos sobre culturas*; Balderston; Balderston and Quiroga; Balutet; Sutherland). There is also a third tendency, in which the terms "gay," "lesbian" and "queer" coexist (Martínez), and a fourth one, which involves speaking exclusively about what is "queer" (Foster *Sexual Textualities*; Chávez-Silverman and Hernández; Rodríguez; Amícola; Sibbald and Cornejo Parriego; Martinelli). This diversity of terminological combinations shows the comprehensiveness and the variety of criteria used by scholars to study non-hegemonic sexual identities and their cultural representations.

When it comes to the term "queer," Ricardo Llamas's proposal of translating it as "*torcido*" (xi) was not commonly accepted. David Córdoba García recommended using the original word for four reasons: its popularity among the activists and wihin the field of the Spanish gay and lesbian theory (by that time still not significant); its potential for establishing connections with gay and lesbian communities from other parts of the world, beyond the national specificity; the gender neutrality of the term, which makes reference both to male and female subjects, and in a broader sense to different non-normative identities (bisexual, transsexual, transgender, etc.); and last but not least, its meaning of "strange" [*raro/extraño*], that depicts the intention to disobey the sexual norms. Nevertheless—counscious that the adoption of the English term would entail the loss of its political incorrectness— Córdoba García took into consideration other potential translations into Spanish, such as "*teoría maricona*," "*teoría bollera,*" "*teoría maribollo,*" etc. (21-22).

In the introduction to *Sexualidades transgresoras*, the first reader of North American essays on queer theory translated into Spanish, Mérida Jiménez made the following comment upon the importation of the word "queer": "in Spanish there is no equivalent term that would combine the mix of meanings, nor that would make possible its easy linguistic transformation into a noun, adjective or a verb" (19), which was the reason why he chose to keep the original word "knowing full well that it could turn out to be uncomfortable for many readers." The debate on the translatability and the non-translatability of "queer" was pursued, among others, by Amy Kaminsky and Brad Epps in their respective papers published in an issue of *Revista Iberoamericana* edited by Luciano Martínez (2008). Kaminsky and Epps claimed that the reflection about these linguistic problems had been absent in previous collections of essays, given the fact that they were written in English. Kaminsky suggested the use of *encuirar* as a possible translation for the verb "to queer": "reminiscent of the verb *encuerar* and evoking the act of undressing, *encuirar* means to dis-cover the reality, to remove the coat of heteronormativity" (879). She argued that it was not excessively problematic to adopt this term, although she noted that "the enjambment of adjectives 'lésbico-gay/queer' is a semantic sign of the condensation of a theoretical trajectory which in Anglo-Saxon literary and cultural studies was marked by a much slower process" (881). Her proposal sought to give a name to the intent on bringing the queer to Hispanic studies and Hispanic studies to the queer, as postulated by Molloy and McKee Irwin (xi). Kaminsky explained the difficulties of that project in contexts in which it was still necessary to analyse the gay and lesbian identity categories that queer studies were meant to question and deconstruct. Ultimately, she sought to reconcile queer activism with queer academia in areas where neither the former nor the latter had evolved in the same way as in the countries in which the aforementioned theory had arisen. On the other hand, Epps claimed that the internalisation of the term would be—in his view—doubly effective if not only anglophone and not strictly academic contributions were taken into consideration. Similarly to Córdoba García, Epps argued that the word "queer" used in Spanish loses its history and its original meaning of vindication: "In a non English-speaking context […] the term 'queer' is neither coarse nor informal; it is foreign, strange and even new, and tends to be used almost exclusively by the academics and theorists: it is, in short, a word whose vindicative power, worked out in the United States and other English-speaking countries, *precedes* any memory of its offensive significance (memory, in addition, tied to English language texts and contexts)" (899).

Apart from its meaning of "strange" or "bizarre," "queer" also used to function as an insult or slander aimed against homosexual people; for this reason, its resignification would turn out to be unfeasible in Spanish. Given these circumstances, some of the queer-identified groups chose to use the term *transmaricabollo*. Additionally, the word *transfeminismo* is becoming widespread, as Miriam Solá explains in a recent collection of essays on this topic: "This 'new' word materialises the political need to deal with the great multiplicity of the feminist subject. But it is also a term that seeks to position feminism as a set of practices and theories in motion, reflecting the plurality of oppressions and situations, the complexity of the new challenges that feminism has to face and the need of group resistance as far as gender and sexuality are concerned" (19-20).

The question of terminology and its translation is only one aspect of the challenging discussion on the convenience or inconvenience, adequacy or interest in importing and adapting to Spanish-speaking countries of theoretical models conceived in other geographical regions, whose political, social and economical axes are necessarily very different. One of the first scholars to draw our attention to this issue were Emilie Bergmann and Paul Julian Smith, who argued in the introduction to the collection *¿Entiendes?* that: "[a]ny appropriation of European or North American theory will therefore always also be an incorporation: a process in which the alien is drawn into and absorbed by the body of Hispanic texts and interpreters" (2). The idea of incorporation of European and North American theory was problematised by other scholars. According to Alfredo Martínez Expósito, bringing Hispanic studies into gay studies was still a pending issue, beause "one proceeds deductively and one applies a prefabricated theory to any kind of cultural objects" (48). Robert Richmond Ellis, similarly, claimed that "queer theory has been constrained by its focus on Anglo-American and European paradigms of gender and sexuality" (3). The need of a queer analysis of Latin American literature and culture found expression in an earlier collection, *Hispanisms and Homosexualities*, edited by Sylvia Molloy and Robert McKee, who declared, even in the very title, their intention to adopt a plural perspective: "This collection would like to bring hispanisms into homosexualities and homosexualities into hispanisms, would like to propose queer readings of Spanish and Latin American literatures and cultures" (xvi). One could say that after almost two decades, during which the dialogue between hispanisms and homosexualities kept evolving, the reflections of foreign origin served as a general framework to think about issues that were typically Latin American. This point of view was shared also by José Javier Maristany, who reached the following conclusion in his article dedicated to Latin American uses of the term "queer":

> the massive appropriation of the word 'queer' in different areas and works is not due to a mere desire of imitation spread among intellectuals and activists, or to a fashion restricted to certain privileged groups—white gays and lesbians with middle-class background—; just the opposite, this term allows to preserve a certain kind of embarrassment that in our socio-cultural context becomes strategic for the development of academic projects and activist campaigns: a 'queer' space is, in a way, a screen that allows to smuggle a coefficient of abjection burdened with a disturbing ambiguity in every single expression, for its signifier is empty for the Spanish-speakers; it is a signifier for which we are adapting and working out contents each and every time we make use of it. Sometimes we do not fully know what we are talking about when we do it, but we are aware that it is not just a sum of all meanings likely to be reposing in its shadow (109).

The frequency and intensity of the uses and (re)appropriations of the word "queer" in Spain and Latin America suggests that at this stage it has become a part of our critical and activist vocabulary, regardless of certain resistance or tensions that may remain, and despite the need, as argued by Felipe Rivas San Martín, to examine and to question "the establishing of the queer as a standard reference and a parameter for the analysis of practices and critical discourses of the Latin America's peripheral sexualities" (60). In line with that, in the preface of a recent collection of essays on Latin American art Lucas Martinelli warns against the risk of the queer becoming a secure place within

the academia. Consequently, he encourages scholars to "create new Molotov concepts in order to blow up the lesbian and gay studies, queer studies and any intent upon imitating the straight culture. […] It is no longer a matter of visibility, but a matter of vitality" (20). This special issue of *InterAlia* shares the willingness to incorporate gay, lesbian, trans* and queer perspectives as a strategy of critical resistance—both in the academia and on the streets—to the pressures, oppressions and acts of violence triggered by the thoughts of the straight mind. Following the previous collections and publications, we wish to offer a series of reflections that continue to examine bodies, discourses, phenomena and representations against the heterosexual imperative, to keep a register of its contradictions and blind spots, and to conceive and encourage the potential breakouts or takeovers.

Although LGTBQ critical studies appeared in Latin America practically at the same time in Spain—David W. Foster's pioneer analysis of Latin American texts (1991) and Paul J. Smith's essays on Spanish literature and films (1992) were published just one year apart—there are quite a few divergences between the two modes of activism and academia, practiced respectively in Spain and Latin America. For this reason, our call for papers laid so much emphasis on the need to reinforce the dialogue and the exchange of ideas across all the Spanish-speaking regions, beyond the specific geographic borders. The term "Among Others" present in the title of this issue makes reference to the (desired) plurality of views, even though we knew from the very beginning that this aim was quite utopian: the papers we gathered provide an overview of just a few of the questions, texts, debates, and representations. Nevertheless, we do believe these contributions will enrich our field of study by virtue of their variety and commitment, both intellectual and ethical.

This volume is subdivided into four main sections. The first one collects articles selected out of the submissions received in response to our call for papers; the second one—a series of short "notes" by scholars whom we, as the editors, invited to take part in the project, convinced that their contributions would be valuable for the issue; the third one offers a possibility to abandon for a while the strictly academic considerations in order to discover, along with **Elena Madrigal**, some of the literary nooks of the lesbian desire; to taste three examples of deliberately "twisted" Latin American chronicles: two of them written in Spanglish by **Susana Chávez-Silverman** and one in a campy style by **Alejandro Modarelli**; and finally to take a trip, guided by **Javier Sáez**, through the imaginary underground LGTBQ stations in the city of Madrid, conceived as a way of paying tribute to the figures that—in different times and places—made a significant contribution to the dissident communities of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans*, intersex, and queer people. On that score, this map could have equally well been spread out in Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile or Mexico City: its goal is to remind (us) about some passages and some fights that concern all of us, regardless of our particular location. The last part of the issue gathers several reviews of books on topics related to gender and sexuality studies in Spain and Latin America, offering a survey of the recent publications.

As luck would have it, the submissions obtained in response to the call for papers coincidentally polarised around Argentina and Spain. Thus, the accepted articles do not reflect the immense diversity of queer perspectives in Hispanic world, but they concentrate on the realities and expressions specific to these two countries. However, this partial focus has its bright sides, for it brings closer together two thriving milieux of thought and action which have been—and still are—in touch with each other, and which have been exchanging ideas on culture, academia and activism.

Some of the articles look closely at broadly defined cultural texts. **Romina Smiraglia** considers the potentialities of an Argentinian queer cinema, analysing two films that (re)present intersex sexualities: *XXY* (Lucía Puenzo, 2007) and *El último verano de la boyita* (Julia Somolonoff, 2009); **Jorge Pérez**, explores the motif of the queer child in the films of Carlos Saura and Jaime Armiñán released in the 1970s. The theme of queer childhood is also present in the study by **Francisco Lemus** on the works of three visual artist attached to the Centro Cultural Ricardo Rojas in the city of Buenos Aires. The children and adolescents analysed in these two papers challenge and dispute the heterosexist logic. It is revealing that the next two pieces—although in diverse ways—deal with the question of a gender-sensitive education: whereas **Irene Escudero Ledesma** proposes the development of alternative pedagogies based on queer theory, **Juan Péchin** drafts a political genealogy of the Argentinian appropriations of this theory, in order to make visible the interconnections between the social activisms and the circuits of production and legitimation of knowledge about the gender and sexuality.

The papers of **Elena Castro** and **Marcin Kołakowski** focus on literature to demonstrate that it can become a fairly unstable ground when the bodies and desires described in it do not obey the sex-gender norms: **Castro** takes a closer look at the works of two Spanish poets, José Infante and Txus García, who "insert" into their poems subjects who reject not only the norms imposed by the heteronormative dualistic thinking, but also the naturalisation of gay and lesbian identities, backed up by the LGTBQ community itself. **Kołakowski**, on the other hand, examines the feminist, lesbian and queer presence in two novels by Lucía Etxebarria, with a detailed description of their main characters, not only the "lesbian" ones, but also the "heterosexual" ones, who challenge the patriarchal norms and position themselves beyond the hetero-homo binary.

The last two articles of this section adopt a theoretical point of view in order to shed light on very concrete questions: **Blas Radi** leverages on trans* studies and the decolonial theory to rethink one of the most influencial and frequently quoted hispanic queer texts, i.e. *Testo Yonqui* (2008) by Paul B. Preciado. The author points out the colonial pattern that can be perceived between the lines of this book and that brings about an abuse and erasure of trans* people. This particular point of view allows the author to rethink as well—and in a broader sense—the limits of "emancipatory queer politics." **Moira Pérez** writes from the position of a queer history philosopher to analyse how—and for what purposes—the images of the past are being shaped. Specifically, the author examines how the representations of the victims of state terrorism were produced during the latest Argentinean dictatorship. Her intention is not to find a solution to all the political anxieties caused by the past,

but to go deeper into its complexity, to comprehend the differences and ambiguities proper to its protagonists and to ourselves, in our capacity of their historical inheritors.
The short "notes" section covers topics and perspectives as diverse as the authors presenting them. Theory is taken into consideration from a double point of view: on the one hand, **David W. Foster** reclaims Samuel Rawet's *Homossexualismo: sexualidade e valor* (1970) as a pioneer Latin American essay on sexuality, and on the other hand, **José Amícola** analyses constructionist perspectives on identities and sexualities from the past. The historical overview of the sexual dissidence is also present in the paper by **Carlos Laiño Domínguez** and **José Antonio Ramos Arteaga**, whose reflection focuses on the queer counter-archives on the Canary Islands, starting from the traces of sexual dissidence on the islands left by the Irishman Roger Casement in his travel diaries.

The abundance and the vitality of the queer cultural expressions can be seen in many other contributions: **Juan Vicente Aliaga** acquaints us with the Spanish transfeminist scene from the first decade of the 21st century, analysing its performances and video art productions; **Chris Perriam** reads Juanma Carrillo's series of short films through the notions of "shame" and "vindication;" **María Teresa Vera Rojas** and **Antonio Caballero Gálvez** examine the filmic representations of childhood and adolescence that do not meet the norms: the first essay shows the queer uses of time and space by two Chicana protagonists of the film *Mosquita y Mari* (Aurora Guerrero, 2008); and the second one reveals how the figure of the queer child is constructed in *Pa negre* (2010), a film by Agust Agustí Villaronga. **Brad Epps** and **Alberto Mira**, in turn, revisit two "classics" of Spain's LGTBQ literary counter-canon: Esther Tusquets and Terenci Moix. **Epps** describes the fluctuations of the reception of Esther Tusquets' first novel, *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* (1978), and shares with the readers his own emotional and intellectual relation to this pioneer text; whereas **Mira** draws two possible axes of analysis of both volumes of Terenci Moix's autobiography published with the title *El peso de la Paja* (1990-1998), i.e. the process of growing (or becoming) gay, just as it is represented in Moix's writings, and the possible influence on that process of the filmic references and identifications. Another essay on literature, by **Humberto Guerra**, invites us to Mexico, to have a closer look at the representations of trans* identities. After a short overview of the trans* issue in different artistic expressions and academic works, **Guerra** comments on the novel *Travesti* (2009) by Carlos Reyes Ávila, in which he notes a questioning—but also a reaffirmation—of the patriarchal values and of the symbolic violence.

The "notes" section also includes two essays that comment on the state of affairs when it comes to the achievements and challenges of the LGTBQ studies. **Mauricio List** offers a survey of the Mexican publications on gender and sexual diversity, and he outlines the theoretical frameworks worked out within a wide range of disciplines (sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc.). This survey allows him to notice the prevailing trends, past accomplishments, and challenges to be faced; it also allows him to highlight the possibilities and limitations of this kind of studies in the academic circles that are not always in favour of its progress. Last but not least, **Alfredo Martínez Expósito** draws a map of studies on homophobia, both in Spain and Latin America. In his view, it is one of the most pressing issues of the present times, yet one that is rarely addressed in the academic agendas. The persistence and the upsurge of homophobic attitudes—even in places

where LGTBQ rights are legally protected—urge the scholars to deal with this problem in line with the previous academic investigations on this topic, scrupulously presented by **Martínez Expósito**. His cry for attention to this multifaceted and socially important issue corresponds with another need expressed in the rest of the short essays and articles of this collection—the need to keep closing the gap between the academia and activism, between the intellectual reflection and the engagament on the streets; in other words, an invitation to imagine and make possible other modes of being together.

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