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Sandra Ortiz Valencia

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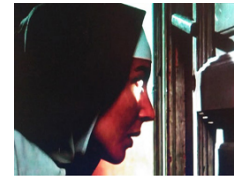
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Sandra Ortiz Valencia

Unidos University of Colorado Boulder, Colorado, Estados Unidos

saor4040@colorado.edu

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6604-3933>



INDISCREET FANTASIES

Iberian Queer Cinema

EDITED BY
Andrés Lema-Hincapié
y Conchita Domènech

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Indiscreet Fantasies: Iberian Queer Cinema perfectly encapsulates what the book offers to its readers: it is a compelling and pedagogical collection of essays written by many different scholars about how Iberian filmmaking portrays issues concerning queer and dissident gender identities and sexualities in recent history. In doing so, the compilation addresses three major academic fields: Queer Studies, Iberian Studies, and Film Studies. Moreover, these essays set aside traditional categorizations of cultural production that associate one nation to one language and frequently tend to overlook the inner diversity of the nation-state, especially in a case such as the Iberian Peninsula that stands out for its nationalist pluralism. By rejecting this conventional paradigm, the text challenges hegemonic academic epistemologies of study, adopting a more progressive perspective of the Luso-Hispanic world. More precisely, *Indiscreet Fantasies* showcases the label “Iberian” as a multi-linguistic, multifaceted and hybrid territory that deserves to be understood holistically, rather than organized by the current nation-state framework. Additionally, the organization of the collection has a clear pedagogical purpose: the fifteen chapters comprise a whole academic semester and present monographies ranging from cinematic genres, and historical periods, to fundamental themes from Queer Studies. In general, the compilation of essays displays current topics and theoretical approaches of Queer Studies and, in particular, provides a varied illustration of Iberian queer filmmaking from the last half century. *Indiscreet Fantasies* constitutes a coherent depiction of the territorial context it comprises, because the essays include films from all the national and subnational identities of the Peninsula. This major pedagogical objective is achieved thanks to the thoughtful structure of the text.

The book is organized in five parts with an overarching theme that employs multiple theoretical frameworks, and it also comprises multiple historical and geographical contexts, exemplifying the complex history and nationalist diversity of the Iberian Peninsula. However, the trait that makes *Indiscreet Fantasies* a special collection is its unrestrained structure freed from limitations of length, temporal, and geographical expectations. Each section's length is defined by the theme it represents, resulting in varying section lengths, but the coverage of topmost issues in Queer Studies such as sexuality, gender, and politics is thorough. The number of essays in each part ranges between two and four, as happens in part one and part three, respectively, while the remaining sections contain three essays each. This slight imbalance in quantity is an asset because, regardless of the number of essays, each part articulates the overarching theme coherently and provides examples of critical analysis that could be useful in the higher education classroom.

Further, in *Indiscreet Fantasies*, time plays no role in the structure, because the selection of the corpus only cares for the subject matter of the section: the grouping of the texts disregards the historical moment when each film is set or released. For instance, part one, which is dedicated to sexual provocations on the screen, contains two monographies about two Spanish films set in the same period (late Francoism) but released in two completely different historical moments: *La residencia* (1969) and *Torremolinos 73* (2003). The first essay interprets the iconic yet neglected piece of Narciso Ibañez Serrador's filmography as a queer and Gothic expression of heterosexual and lesbian desire, evidencing the film's subversion of heteronormativity. The second critiques Pablo Berger's comic revision of late Francoist period (1960-1975) as a contestation to the hegemonic cultural image that Spain aimed to normalize, although the argument overlooks that the film is a contemporary revision of the past. Both analyses, by exploring how these films portray sexual tensions, bring coherence to the sexual provocations evoked in the section's title and display a major trend in Iberian queer cinema.

In contrast, part two includes three interpretations of films from the first decade of the twenty-first century to discuss issues of queer desire and sexualities within the private sphere, more precisely the household. This time the release dates of the objects of study are closer in time, but the monographies, following the general line of the collection, employ different theoretical approaches to interpret each piece and illustrate differently the overarching topic of the section. As such, "Turning Around Altogether: Gyrodynamics, Family Fantasies, and *Spinnin'* (2007) by Eusebio Pastrana" shows that the role of female figures and femininity in the film is centered on reproduction, affection, and inclusivity within the private sphere of the family. Similarly, "Framing Queer Desire: The Construction of Teenage Sexuality in *Krámpack* (2000) by Cesc Gay" demonstrates how the film exploits the coming-of-age trope to display a clear political agenda: to naturalize queer desire by avoiding explicit sexual content and depicting non-traditional sexualities as a regular practice. The

final essay in this section about sexual provocations reads the cinematic adaptation of Almudena Grandes's namesake novel *Castillos de cartón* (2004) as a subversive challenge to heteronormativity and monogamy and as a bridge to reconfigure sexuality beyond traditional structures. Despite boldly representing the overarching theme of the second part, this group of essays also points out the major shortcoming of the book: the theoretical approaches are varied and insightful, but sometimes the analyses become cryptic if the reader lacks certain foundational knowledge about theory. This is particularly evident in the analysis of *Spinnin'* that blends basic physics with Feminist theory by invoking Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and R. W. Connell but might be complex to understand if readers lack certain theoretical foundations.

Besides this temporal liberty, *Indiscreet Fantasies* presents a geographical freedom that may mix multiple nationalist contexts to illustrate the particular theme of each section, providing a more realistic and complex description of the Peninsula. This is patent in part three, which provides a political reading of queer films that deconstruct social normativity by explicitly or symbolically transgressing and questioning hegemonic discourses of democracy, gender, nation, and family. This section illustrates the subversive potential of films such as *El diputado* (1978) or *Mi querida señorita* (1971). The first essay in this part examines the former, Eloi de la Iglesia's drama about a closeted homosexual politician, as one of the first post-dictatorship expressions defending homosexuality. The analysis of Jaime de Armiñán's commercial comedy explains how the film bypassed Francoist censorship by showing the transgenerness of the protagonist as natural. In addition, the other two essays interpret *A esmorga* (2014) and *Ander* (2009), Galician and Basque productions, respectively, and lay bare the interplay between national identities, non-hegemonic sexualities, and familiar structures. The interpretation of the former demonstrates that the film establishes a connection between queer practices and Francoist repression, positing that the LGBTQ+ marginalization stems from stereotypes about morality. Then, the close reading of *Ander* proves how the film links Basque identity with masculinity and homosexuality but debunks an assumed independence between homophobia and misogyny. All in all, the essays in part three demonstrate the fruitfulness of applying Queer theory to political readings of texts and provide a holistic depiction of the linguistic and nationalist diversity of the territory by decentering the dominant presence of Spain.

However, *Indiscreet Fantasies* acknowledges that framing cultural productions into national contexts can be also useful to examine contemporary issues, so the collection dedicates part four to Catalonia. This prominence in comparison with the other sub-nationalisms (Galician or Basque) in the Iberian Peninsula is probably caused by the recent presence of the Catalan nationalist movement and activism in the political arena. Still, it is laudable that the only moment the collection chooses to follow the traditional framework of the nation-state is by employing a sub-national culture. First, the

comparison of two films of Ventura Pons —*Amic/Amat* (1998) and *Forasters* (2008)— demonstrates the filmmaker's preoccupation with the difficulty of cultural transmission and maintenance. Then, the reading of *Sévigné* (*Julia Berkowitz*) (2004) focuses on discerning which film devices contribute to constructing lesbian subjectivity and sexual tensions, suggesting that intertextuality and autoreferentiality are crucial in this process. Finally, the last essay in this section presents a post-structuralist analysis of *Pa negre* (2010) to explain how the award-winning piece by Agustí Villaronga portrays the Francoist dictatorship as a nationalist and gendered political body. All in all, this section presents thoughtful discussions on film narrative and studies the work of different Catalan filmmakers and how they engage with definitions of the nation. The analyses in the essays suggest that these artists perceive Catalan identity as essentially fluid.

After showcasing its progressive and inclusive structure, *Indiscreet Fantasies* closes with three readings of films that depict the clash between religion and queerness and represent the hegemonic national cultures of the Peninsula. Interestingly, part five only includes one essay on the internationally famous Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar, *Entre tinieblas* (1983), and dedicates more space to the Portuguese films *O ornitólogo* (2016) and *A raiz do coração* (2000). This choice follows the overarching line of the collection and de-centers Spain by giving more prominence to Portugal. Firstly, the essay about the evocative drama of a scientist studying black storks in Portugal argues that the film is a symbolic expression of the filmmaker's transcendence, rather than the mythological allegory that critics have highlighted. Then, the interpretation of Paulo Rocha's anti-dictatorship drama set in Lisbon argues that the capital of Portugal is portrayed as a constantly changing modern space but remains proud of its tradition and history. Lastly, the final essay of the anthology argues that Almodovar's story about lesbian desire in a convent is neither an example of "nunsplotation" nor a rejection of Catholicism, but rather a proposition to reformulate Catholic religiosity and faith.

In conclusion, the five parts in this anthology combine different geographical and linguistic contexts to reject a structure determined by nationalist identities except to address one so-called peripheral nationalism (Catalan). However, *Indiscreet Fantasies* also takes advantage of national frameworks and employs them to provide a representation of hegemonic national cultures, and it is still able to minimize Spain's dominant presence. The book foregrounds the productiveness of employing Queer theory as an analytical tool of cultural products, a tool that the essays combine with other theories, such as post-structuralism, Marxism, or feminism. The analyses not only present compelling arguments but also exemplify different ways to bridge theory and praxis in Cultural Studies. However, the most important achievement in *Indiscreet Fantasies* is pedagogical, since the compilation showcases an all-encompassing portrait of the Iberian Peninsula, one that is very much needed to disrupt the restrictive understandings of the territory. With these characteristics, it is fair to

affirm that the collection addresses the needs of higher-educators and students, as well as Film and Hispanic scholars, who are willing to apply new pedagogical approaches and epistemologies of the Luso-Hispanic world. All in all, *Indiscreet Fantasies* contributes to the discussions on Iberian queer cinema and is a thoughtful and valuable contribution to the field.