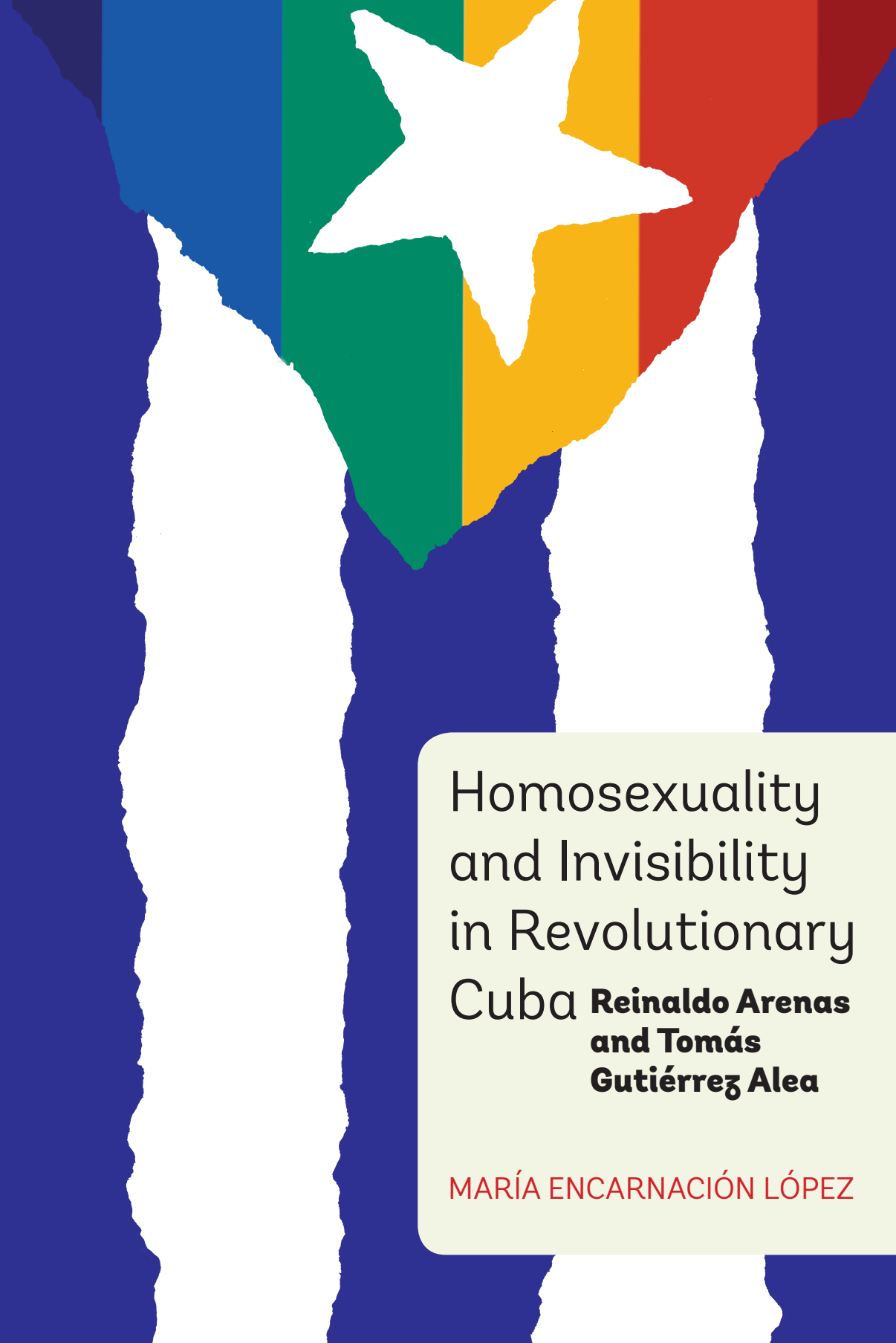

Homosexuality and Invisibility in Revolutionary Cuba

Reinaldo Arenas and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea

MARÍA ENCARNACIÓN LÓPEZ

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HOMOSEXUALITY AND INVISIBILITY IN REVOLUTIONARY CUBA

REINALDO ARENAS AND TOMÁS GUTIÉRREZ ALEA

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A mis padres, José López Pulido y Antonia Díaz Ramos

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I remember well the day that I met Professor Stephen M. Hart six years ago and told him about my interest in conducting research on the representation of homosexuality and homophobia in Cuban literature and film. I also remember that I did not know what to answer when Professor Hart asked the reason for my interest in Cuba. My emotional link with the island seemed to reside in the remote sense of the Spaniards regarding the former Spanish colonies. Today, I know the answer. What attracts me is the literature of urgency that tells the stories of the invisibles, those stories that come up from repressive systems, regardless of whether they are left or right wing because ultimately the opposite sides are quite similar. This gives rise to my passion for Reinaldo Arenas, Néstor Almendros, Diego in Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's renowned film *Fresa y chocolate* and many others, whose narratives contribute to the formation of the controversial concept of the Cuban national identity. Outside politics, or perhaps because of it (this is also debated), Cuba has been home to many masters of literature and film, ranging from José Lezama Lima to Leonardo Padura Fuentes, Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, Ena Lucía Portela, Orlando Jiménez-Leal and Humberto Solás, to mention a few. My thanks, therefore, must first go to all of them. Their inspiring testimonies and personalities have guided my understanding of the conflict that separates the passionate detractors and supporters of Fidel Castro's regime. My thanks must also go to Professor Hart for his ongoing support and valuable suggestions on the way to developing my research and getting it published.

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Abbreviations

CDR	Committee for the Defence of the Revolution
CENESEX	Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual
ICAIC	Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos
IMCINE	Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografía
UJC	Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas
UMAPs	Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción
UNEAC	Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba

Introduction

It is difficult to determine the origin of homophobia in Cuba. Homophobic attitudes had been entrenched in Cuban political life for decades before the departure of the Spanish and were a central part of the morality of the Cuban Revolution. For Cuban homosexuals, defending their identity has been a challenge that has led to censorship, exile and invisibility, especially during the first three decades of the revolutionary government. Fear and stereotyping were essential in turning this group into a social problem in the eyes of the population. Using social constructionism as a methodology, the authorities dictated that homosexuality was a social problem and developed the idea that homosexuals were marginals with a pathology that could be 'solved'/'treated' (Sedgwick 1990: 61; Almendros and Jiménez-Leal 1984a: 176).[1]

This study is divided into two parts. First, the narrative of homophobic ethos in Cuba is traced from the departure of the Spanish in 1898 up to the beginning of the Cuban Revolution using data present in political texts, films, documentaries and literature before and throughout Fidel Castro's regime. Second, I focus on the way in which homosexuals survived the repressive period after Castro came to power. The essence of the conflict between supporters of the revolution and dissidents in Cuba is embedded in alternative insights into the life and work of Reinaldo Arenas and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea.

As Arenas was one of the fiercest representatives of Cuban dissidence in exile, his feelings reveal the difficulties of preserving identity and social cohesion in a marginal context (i.e. censorship in Cuba first and in exile later). Ultimately, Arenas managed to give a voice back to those individuals who were not allowed to talk during the first three decades of the revolutionary government.[2]

[1] For a more detailed narrative of the social problem and the marginal from a sociological point of view, see Isaacs et al. (2014).

[2] Years later, connecting with a contemporary and younger generation of readers, Pedro Juan Gutiérrez also referred to those individuals in similar terms, within the literary context of *realismo sucio*: 'Esta es la voz de los sin voz. Los que tienen que arañar la tierra cada día para buscar algo de comer, no tienen tiempo ni energía para nada más. Su objetivo único es sobrevivir. Como sea. De cualquier modo. Ni ellos mismos saben por qué ni para qué. Se empecinan en sobrevivir un día más. Sólo eso' (Gutiérrez 1998).

A close reading of Arenas's private letters, interviews with him and the manuscripts of his novels, most of which are held in the Arenas Collection at the Firestone Library in Princeton, allows an alternative view of Arenas as a writer and activist to be constructed. The material offers evidence that Arenas was a much more complex character than might be expected, as a result of his determination, ambition, sadness, disappointment and ultimately nostalgia. This is evidenced by the fact that he devoted a considerable amount of his time in exile to reflecting compulsively on Cuba, its past, its present and its lack of a future.

As for Gutiérrez Alea, a new reading is offered of his most celebrated film on Cuban homophobia and dissidence in revolutionary Cuba: *Fresa y chocolate* (1994). This is done on the basis of the unpublished testimony of the Cuban writer Roger Salas, who inspired the plot of the film. This had been long suspected by critics, but he had hitherto refused to confirm it. In view of Salas's testimony, his own account of events in 'Helados de pasión: el cordero, la lluvia y el hombre desnudo' (1998) gains unusual relevance. This short story has received little scholarly attention, but here it becomes essential to determining Gutiérrez Alea's real ideology in reference to the issues of homophobia, homosexuality and intellectual dissidence in revolutionary Cuba.

Fresa y chocolate is identified as having a quite different message from conciliation. In light of the new evidence, it is shown to aim ultimately at justifying the ideological intolerance that operated in Cuba before the 1990s, as it responds to the plan to clean up the image of the regime abroad.

The resistance of Cuban homosexuals, in order to preserve their voice and identity, is therefore explored in this book against a wide theoretical background (i.e. national identity, sexual identity, social cohesion, visibility/invisibility, citizenship, visualisation, censorship and silence). These concepts provide a broader conceptual basis that indicates the central role played by the issue of homosexuality in the definition of Cubanhood after independence from Spain.

However, one cannot talk about culture in Cuba without talking about politics. This explains, for instance, the restrictions imposed on artistic creation in order to preserve the virile element in the (re)definition of the Cuban male (i.e. the 'new man') as essential in the debate on national identity. This also explains the motives that led the Cuban authorities to demand the collaboration of the intelligentsia. Their support was needed to provide a positive image abroad of the new system. Their talent, so to speak, had to meet the interest of the revolutionary cause. The situation reached a peak during the years when Stalinism marked the *tempos* in Cuba, mainly during the 1970s.[3] Many assumed their propagandistic role and supported a rejection of ideological and sexual alternatives. Overall, homosexuals were seen as a

[3] For further discussion of Stalinism in Cuba, see Stubbs (1989); Bergmann and Smith (1995); and Bunck (1994).

destabilising threat to the system, so the government launched an institutionalised homophobic system whose purpose was to keep them under control.

In my approach to 'sexual deviance' in Cuba, special attention in paid to the mechanisms created to control sexual and intellectual dissidence in the years following the success of the Cuban Revolution. Measures such as the setting up of the Comités de Defensa de la Revolución, the UMAPs (Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción, 1965–8) and the law against *vagancia* (1971) demonstrate the homophobic creed of the regime. These laws ultimately show evidence of the campaign to control the perception of the revolutionary project abroad. Time has proved the failure of governmental tactics that tried to present a portrait of a new and revolutionary Cuba with no trace of homosexuals within it. On the contrary they sparked a debate on repression in revolutionary Cuba, a repression which irritated the dissident community abroad. Homosexuality and dissidence in Cuba ultimately turned into powerful weapons against the stability of the island.

The struggle of homosexuals to preserve their sexual identity therefore melds, in this study, with that of the intellectual community to preserve a voice, the latter being the one to articulate the anti-homophobic discourse. Although not well organised, the dissident community abroad – the critical intelligentsia and the homosexual community – managed to articulate a credible counter-revolutionary discourse that testified to the repressive measures taken against homosexuals and intellectual critics of the regime during the first three decades of the revolutionary government. The perspectives provided by Arenas and the character Diego in *Fresa y chocolate* are essential to understanding this point: they gave a voice to Cuban homosexuals in spite of efforts to silence them.

The terms 'visibility' and 'invisibility' are central concepts in the approach of this book to the struggle of homosexuals to recover their place in the design for contemporary Cuba. The issue of the visibility/invisibility of homosexual literature relates to the impact of their message among the cultural elite and the great efforts to make homosexuals disappear (for example by censoring their work and, in some cases, imprisoning homosexual writers). The term 'visibility/invisibility' is used to refer to the dual status of artists when they achieved popularity abroad but continued to suffer the stigma of invisibility and censorship in Cuba. The invisibility of the homosexual intelligentsia (for example Arenas and Diego in *Fresa y chocolate*) is therefore indicative of their status as *personae non gratae*. In a wider context, the invisibility of homosexuals and dissidents in revolutionary Cuba is also linked to the concepts of censorship and ostracism, which often marked the lives of those who failed to respond to the initial expectations of the revolution.

However, the question of visibility/invisibility is a complex issue that needs to be explored from different perspectives. To paraphrase Epps in his article

'Proper Conduct: Reinaldo Arenas, Fidel Castro and the Politics of Homosexuality', discussing the issue of homophobia in revolutionary Cuba is to discuss visibility in the public sphere as related to the concept of physical appearance.[4] Epps goes straight to the point when he says that social response to homosexuality varies according to the appearance of the individual (Epps 1995: 242). Epps is suggesting here that, in order to survive institutionalised invisibility, the Cuban system invited the homosexual to hide his sexual tendency and pretend to have adapted to the demands of the revolutionary project. When referring to the appearance of the homosexual, we are talking about the stigma associated with homosexuals in Cuba. Here, Goffman's theories on spoiled identity and stigma are essential to understanding that, in order to be accepted, homosexuals are driven to pretend that they have adjusted to the norm and to hide their 'imperfection' from public view (Goffman 1990).

During the 1990s, it was obvious that the repressive mechanisms for sexual behaviour in Cuba had had the opposite effect: that of calling attention to the existence of an alternative discourse on sexuality. Within a complex ideological context, the idea of stigma associated with homosexuals arguably resulted in a code of implicit meanings and silences that included the (surreptitious) presence of homosexuals in the portrait of the nation. It was then that, despite the many efforts of Cuban institutions to silence their voice, homosexuals in Cuba started to claim their right to 'come out of the closet'.

The 'closet' is another key element. It is not, though, used as a catch-all phrase. To summarise Sedgwick, being 'out of the closet' means entering another closet that implies further cultural and social clichés that serve to isolate the individual (Sedgwick 1990: 71). Regarding the issue in Cuba, from the mid-1960s until the first half of the 1980s, coming out of the closet made the stigma of homosexuality visible and paradoxically catapulted individuals into the most recondite levels of invisibility. In this sense, to suffer invisibility in Cuba was to suffer double invisibility. Once the individual is labelled, the invisibility also becomes physical, as the person is isolated and ignored by former colleagues who deny his existence. Arenas's testimony in this regard is crucial. In the same vein the opening scenes of Almendros and Jiménez-Leal's documentary *Conducta impropia* (1984) may be recalled. It is not by

[4] I rely here on Arenas's testimony when describing his invisible status in Cuba: 'Yo utilizo la palabra invisible. Porque yo paso y no me ven. Me volví invisible, era un hombre invisible' (Hasson 1985: 54). See also Estévez's testimony, this time framed in the context of fiction, on the issue of the physical invisibility of homosexuals and dissidents in Cuba: 'Victorio trata de pasar inadvertido, que es lo más cerca que puede encontrarse de la invisibilidad. Descubre el modo eficaz de lograrlo y consta de dos pasos; primero: hablar solo si le preguntan, de ser posible con monosílabos; segundo: nunca mirar a los ojos del prójimo. Boca cerrada y mirada baja' (Estévez 2002: 63).

chance that the documentary opens with close-ups of the blank faces of the ten members of the Cuban National Ballet who defected in Paris in 1966; most of them, it is implied, were homosexuals.[5] Ultimately, clear evidence of the existence of homosexuals makes unnecessary any efforts to simulate adaptation and go unnoticed in the system.

The question of visibility/invisibility is also analysed from the perspective of the institutionalised censorship of those suspected of not supporting the revolutionary Cuban project, and in the context of reaction abroad. Cultural institutions like UNEAC (Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba) developed homophobic and restrictive policies that halted the publication of texts that, it was said, did not sympathise with the ethos of the revolution. Evidence of such policies provoked international protests, in many cases backed up by artistic productions by the homosexual intelligentsia abroad. Together, they spread a narrative strong enough to destabilise the official discourse of the nation at key moments in its evolution. Going back to Almendros and Jiménez-Leal's 1984 documentary *Conducta Impropia*, it is worth noting that it managed to cause a stir among supporters of the regime in the US and Europe for the first time since Castro came to power. The same applies to Arenas's work. Overall, the issue of homophobia and resistance in Cuba had long aggravated the conflict between the two ideological blocks: the detractors and the supporters of the regime. This may explain the harsh criticism of *Fresa y chocolate* emanating from the dissident community in exile.

The issues of invisibility and visualisation provide evidence of one of the biggest paradoxes accompanying totalitarian systems: repressive measures ultimately give prominence and visibility to those who suffer the pains of silence. In Cuba, the official hard line and Castro's denial of the existence of homosexuals ultimately failed in its attempts to minimise the importance of this group within the revolutionary project.[6] The success of *Fresa y chocolate* in Cuba, for instance, evidences that Cubans (in Cuba and abroad) were eager to discuss publicly the issues of homophobia, censorship and resistance.

The implications of the silence of dissidents and the invisibility of homosexuals trespass the frontiers and lead directly to the issue of citizenship. Citizenship is a legal and social status that in the end guarantees legal visibility. It is also the ideal status for a community that suffers exclusion in its home country;

5 This reveals the importance of visibility and visualisation to the issue of homophobia in Cuba. The documentary gathers the testimonies of two of the men: Lorenzo Monreal and Jorge Lago. It is interesting to note that the defection of the dancers initially inspired Almendros to make a film called *Diez bailarines*, which ended up as part of the documentary *Conducta impropia*. See Gras Miravet (2013: 213).

6 Franqui states that Castro literally said that 'in the country there are no homosexuals' (Franqui 1984: 151).

Cubans are no exception to this.[7] In revolutionary Cuba, those individuals who could not prove their revolutionary credentials – including homosexuals – were invited to leave the country. Such is the case of the well-known Mariel exodus (1980), during which homosexuals were labelled *escoria*, together with what the government considered extravagant people, criminals, 'apátridas con caras de susto ex presos contrarrevolucionarios, testigos de Jehová, guapetones, oportunistas (santeros y pederastas)' (Yúdice 1992: 211).[8] The exiled community typically addressed the problem of gaining full legal status abroad with deep bitterness, concerned as they were with the issue of a sense of belonging and the right to participate in the political life of their host country.

In this sense, the case of *Fresa y chocolate* (1993) is remarkable. Regardless of the understanding between the homosexual/dissident and the 'new man', the lack of any change in the political situation forces the homosexual protagonist in Gutiérrez Alea's film to leave. The homosexual can only find a (legal) place in exile.[9] This is one of the reasons why the film failed to fulfil the high expectations of the exiled Cuban community. Overall, the commercial success of the film led to a reopening of the debate initiated by *Conducta impropia* a decade before, with the added dimension that this time the Cubans living in Cuba could express their opinions on the issue, whereas before addressing the issue of homophobia and censorship publicly had been illegal.

By this point, the other protagonist of this study, Arenas, had died. In the decade before his death, his literary works had become visible abroad. They had been translated and published in France, the US and some Latin American countries. In Cuba, however, most of the population remained unaware of his work and his success abroad. From a wider perspective, his status was that of visible/invisible: he was popular abroad but virtually unknown in Cuba.

In this analysis of narratives of homosexuality and resistance in Cuba, the term 'homosexual' is used to refer to a piece of literary work that has a place in the struggle of homosexuals to preserve their identity under a repressive

7 Regarding the issue of citizenship, it is worth pointing out that exiled Cubans normally continued to hold Cuban nationality after leaving the country, even after adopting other nationalities.

8 The issue of exile is central to the analysis in this book, as it is conceived as something that was painful for the population in Cuba, mainly due to the fact that the granting of visas was very much subject to official approval. This issue is therefore central to Cuban studies and much has been written about it. Gutiérrez constantly revisits the issue in his novels, as do Portela in *Cien botellas en una pared* (2002) and Guerra in *Todos se van* (2006), among others.

9 Almendros and Jiménez-Leal's documentary *Conducta impropia* (1984) and Arenas's testimony in most of his books and private correspondence written in exile make detailed references to the topic of Cubanhood, a 'sense of belonging' and tradition. The issue of exile and citizenship is also very present in Gutiérrez Alea's film, as is clear from a detailed analysis of it in view of Salas's short story (Salas 1998). In real life, the two protagonists of the story took separate paths too: one decided to stay in Cuba and the other one lived in exile.

system.[10] Arenas's literary work, as well as Salas's 'Helados de pasión' (1998) are good examples of homosexual narratives. Authors of homosexual pieces may portray their characters gathering with other homosexual friends and may even portray sexual encounters in an explicit way. Such writers usually endorse homosexuality when the homosexual character shares his/her fears with the audience or with the reader. They adopt the role of spokesmen for the marginals. On the other hand, a homosexualist piece of work uses the homosexual cause as a collateral element to expose another conflict (i.e. the repression of the intellectuals in Cuba, many of whom were homosexuals). The authors of these pieces do not consider themselves spokesmen for homosexuals. Gutiérrez Alea's *Fresa y chocolate* (1993) and Padura Fuentes's *Máscaras*, for instance, are good representatives of homosexualist literature.[11]

The first chapter of this book looks at the effects of homophobia on Cuban culture from the beginning of the twentieth century until the mid-1990s in an attempt to show that Cuban homosexual discourse survived the economic intervention of the US; the governments of Gerardo Machado, Fulgencio Batista and ultimately Fidel Castro; the shift from socialism to communism; and, above all, Che Guevara's concept of the 'new man'. It also survived the influence of the Soviet Union throughout the 1970s and the financial difficulties of the *Periodo Especial* during the first years of the 1990s. The representation of homoerotic characters in drama and literature after the mid-1990s happened because the government began to accept the inclusion of the homosexual community in the definition of Cuban national identity. The number of novels and poetry dealing with the issue of homosexuality increased to the extent that some critics have referred to a 'gay euphoria' among young Cuban writers who felt an urgent need to recover the homosexual subject within the definition of Cuban national identity (Jambrina 2000). Abilio Estévez, Senel Paz, Francisco López Sacha, Marilyn Bobes León, Ena Lucía Portela and Jorge Ángel Pérez are some examples of the many writers determined to reflect on the place that homosexuals occupied in Cuba at the time. This demonstrates that the experience of censorship, and the concrete experience of exile for many, did not detract from the tradition of representing homoerotic characters in Cuban literature.[12]

10 The distinction between homosexual and homosexualist pieces of work is taken from Santí (2001).

11 The list of 'homosexualist' literature is long and the term applies to every single text that refers to the issue of homophobia and resistance in contemporary Cuba too; for example, in works by Abilio Estévez, Ena Lucía Portela, Senel Paz, Francisco López Sacha, Marilyn Bobes León and Jorge Ángel Pérez, to name just a few.

12 It is important to highlight an obvious point here: not all homosexuals left Cuba. Some decided to stay and contribute to the revolutionary project, even if some kept their sexual identity private.

Chapter 1 therefore offers a chronological account of the representation of homosexuality in Cuba from the departure of the Spanish in 1898 until the mid-1990s. Throughout the years between 1898 and Castro's rise to power in 1959, the Cuban intelligentsia were absorbed in a process of elaborating a notion of national identity grounded in the concepts of machismo, *pudor*, Catholicism and the virility of the Cuban male, which acted as the ideological pillars for a restrictive morality that stigmatised effeminate males. The ideological foundations of José Martí's nineteenth-century pro-independence discourse prevailed in the debate on Cuban national identity and manhood conducted by Enrique José Varona, Benjamín Céspedes and Pedro Guiralt, as well as US congressmen. Martí's discourse ultimately provides a good source of information on the ideological foundations of the construction of the revolutionary discourse. Extensive reflection on the existence of effeminate Cuban males ultimately shows the significance of the representation of homosexuality in the design of Cuban national identity in pre-revolutionary times. Catá's novel *El Ángel de Sodoma* (1928), Montenegro's *Hombres sin mujer* (1938) and Piñera's essay 'Ballagas en persona' (1955) are examples of attempts by some writers to bring to light the issue of homosexuality in pre-revolutionary Cuba. Piñera's essay in particular represents the first steps in a critical discourse on homosexual literature in the years before the revolution (Piñera 1955: 41–50).

The political commitment of members of the Cuban intelligentsia throughout the first months of the revolutionary government is examined. Their attempt to redefine culture and identity under new revolutionary parameters led them to be immersed in a cultural atmosphere of joy, freedom and a sense of comradeship. Before long, however, homosexuals began to find it difficult to fit into the national ethos. It would take a bit longer for intellectuals to realise that their work would be acknowledged only if it supported the new system. Meanwhile, the magazine/institution *Casa de las Américas*, the journal *Revolución*, the Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC) and the editorial work of independent newspapers and magazines such as *Diario Libre*, *Diario Nacional*, *Excelsior*, *El País*, *Diario de la Marina* and *Prensa Libre* contributed to what Montaner called the 'escalada cultural' in revolutionary Cuba (Montaner 1976: 127). Guillermo Cabrera Infante promoted the literary work of homosexual Cuban writers like Virgilio Piñera, José Lezama Lima, Antón Arrufat and Calvert Casey in his literary magazine *Lunes de Revolución*. The Cuban intelligentsia, headed by Carlos Franqui, gained the support of the intelligentsia abroad. The revolutionary cause counted on the support of renowned international literary figures like Jorge Luis Borges, Pablo Neruda, William Faulkner, Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, André Breton, Le Corbusier, Henri Lefebvre, K. S. Karol and Pablo Picasso, among many others. The first signs of change arrived with the closure of *Lunes de Revolución* in 1961 due to problems with

the government. *Granma* was launched instead (Cabrera Infante 1995: 64). Within a few years, revolutionary leaders controlled the media in Cuba.[13]

As for the visibility of the topic of homosexuality during the 1960s, it is worth noting the negative response of cultural leaders towards Lezama Lima's novel *Paradiso* in 1966, Arenas's novel *El mundo alucinante* in 1968 (Arenas 1968c) and Prats's book of poems *Lenguaje de mudos* in 1968. Arrufat's dramatic piece *Los siete contra Tebas* (1968) was also censored and he was ostracised. José Lezama Lima, Virgilio Piñera, Mirta Aguirre, Raquel Revuelta, Antón Arrufat and Rodríguez Feo, among many other intellectuals, also experienced what critics call 'the interior exile' of the Cuban intelligentsia (Negrín 2000: 32; Arenas 2003: 110).

It was not by chance that these works were censored and their authors silenced. Their initial rejection is evidence that any reference (fictional included) to homosexual discourse was taken as a threat to the stability of the Cuban Revolution. There was some relaxation though towards the end of the 1980s. The Código Penal was modified, and this improved the situation for homosexuals. Two texts broke the initial barrier of silence regarding homophobia in Cuba in 1988: Uría's short story '¿Por qué llora Leslie Caron?' and Espinosa's 1988 poem 'Vestido de Novia'. In 1989 Espinosa's book of poems *Las breves tribulaciones* (Espinosa 1993) was awarded the Premio Nacional de Poesía El Caimán Barbudo. In 1990, *Casa de las Américas* published Estévez's homosexual poem 'Desnudo frente a la ventana' (1990). In the same year, Paz's novella *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo* won the prestigious literary Juan Rulfo Award.[14] This inspired Gutiérrez Alea's *Fresa y chocolate*. In a conciliatory gesture, the ICAIC held out a hand to homosexuals by promoting Gutiérrez Alea's film. Its apparent message of reconciliation has been interpreted as the climax to an attempt to recover the homosexual subject for Cuban culture. Here again, it is important to be clear on defining whether a piece of work is homosexual or homosexualist. The difference between them speaks volumes about a work's true aims. *Fresa y chocolate*, did not help to make the ICAIC's message of reconciliation crediblee for it is a homosexualist film.

Other examples of homosexual literature in Cuba during the 1990s are, for example, Bernaza's documentary *Mariposas en el andamio* (1996), Sacha's short story 'Mi prima Amanda contada otra vez' (1992), Bobes's short tale *Alguien tiene que llorar* (1995), Padura Fuentes's *El cazador* (1991) and *La puerta de Alcalá y otras cacerías* (2000), Pérez's story 'Locus solus o el retrato de Dorian Gay' (1999) and Portela's book of stories *Una extraña entre las piedras* (1999).

[13] Many books recount the events of these years. However, accounts vary depending on the ideology of the author. Those of Stubbs (1989) and Chanan (1985, 2004) are radically different from those of Montaner (1976) and Cabrera Infante (1995), for example.

[14] References to Paz's story are throughout taken from the 1994 edition of the novella.

Since 2000, the situation has changed in favour of the Cuban dissident community. Some cultural leaders in Cuba (for example Miguel Barnet) have expressed an interest in publishing Arenas's books: an idea that is still waiting for approval from the guardians of Arenas's work.[15] Delfín Prats, who did not go into exile, engaged in reconciliation with the revolution some years later. In 2011 the Cuban publishing house *Editorial Cuadernos Papiros* edited *Lenguaje the mudos* (Prats 2011). Antón Arrufat has also become reconciled with the system and was awarded the Premio Nacional de Literatura en Cuba in 2001. Today, he remains one of the most acclaimed and valued authors in the country.

The second chapter of this study focuses on the eventful life and intense literary work of one of the main representatives of the Cuban homosexual community, Reinaldo Arenas. With his extraordinary literary talent, Arenas turned his difficulties in surviving the moral structures of Batista's and Castro's societies and, finally, capitalism in the US into a powerful literary weapon against all dictatorial systems. Writing against Castro's regime and having homosexual encounters were Arenas's main obsessions in Cuba and in exile (Hasson 1994: 115–27; Cabrera Infante 1995: 413; Sánchez 1999: 42).[16] It will be demonstrated that the evidence supports the hypothesis that the censorship and invisibility imposed on Arenas and his work only acted as a spur that compelled him to do everything in his power to get his books published and to publicise the repression inflicted upon the homosexual community in revolutionary Cuba. His rebellious character caused him a good deal of trouble in Cuba, where most of his books were censored and he was quite unknown to the vast majority of Cubans. His temperament concealed an element of nostalgia, which contrasted with his public image, and made him deeply disappointed that he would never return to Cuba. Arenas's correspondence before his death shows evidence of a strong sense of nostalgia and disappointment. His intense homosexual and creative activity in the US did not therefore heal the trauma of censorship and prison that had marked his existence in Cuba.[17]

The second chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, Arenas's eventful life, especially after his arrival in Havana in 1960, is discussed. His intermittent presence in the Cuban cultural panorama during the second half of the 1960s is referred to as a penumbra status, moving between visibility and invisibilty. Despite being expelled from intellectual circles, Arenas's work

15 I rely here on personal communication with Margarita Camacho, guardian/executor of Arenas's literary work.

16 I also rely here on my private correspondence with Jésus Barquet (February 2009) and Abilio Estévez (February 2010), as well as conversations with Liliane Hasson in Paris (November 2009) and with Tomás Fernández Robaina, Miguel Barnet and Enrico Mario Santi in New York City (April 2011).

17 Olivares (2013) is particularly enlightening here.