Of the six chapters, I suggest that the reader skip the first two. This history will not be the standard reference for the twenty-first century, but it will be a useful reference among those available.

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Literature and sociopolitical history are intimately connected in a variety of ways that are constantly being reexamined. David William Foster examines approximately two dozen Latin American gay and lesbian novels, plays, and other writings published between 1895 (Bom-Crioulo by Adolfo Caminha) and 1989 (Amora by Rosamaría Roffiel). His survey covers writers from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Colombia, Venezuela, and Peru, and most of the works were written during the military dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s.

Foster is essentially interested in how these works deal with the issue of sexuality in narrative, especially "the problems of writing about a subject that cannot be satisfactorily accommodated within the dominant discourse" (p. 141). Several distinctive themes emerge, including the influence of naturalism and views of sexuality; the linking of male homoeroticism to a decadent upper class or bourgeois, similar to the Dracula myth; the use of writing for the purpose of self-representation; the linkage of sexual discrimination to authoritarian societies; and the desire to construct a sexually free utopia.

Foster justifies the Latin American themes because of the "manifest interest in exploring varieties of social and historical consciousness, as befits texts produced under the difficult circumstances of life in countries where censorship and repressive public morality may inhibit cultural expression" (p. 141). The discussions of texts are rather brief; some are less than two pages long, but others are more extensive. When appropriate, the analyses include references to other critics who have read these works, although they are rarely addressed directly. Historians will be particularly interested in chapter 5, "The Sociopolitical Matrix," wherein Foster deals specifically with homophobic politics in contemporary Cuba as well as during the years of military rule in the Southern Cone.

This book is a useful introduction to a series of gay and lesbian themes treated in the narrative context. Social historians will benefit from the bibliography of primary and secondary works that form a basic core of readings on this topic.

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