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Crossing Borders '99: Autobiography and Testimonials by Lesbian and Gay Latino/as and Latin Americans

Oscar Montero

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Crossing Borders '99: Autobiography and Testimonials by Lesbian and Gay Latino/as and Latin Americans

On March 13-19, 1999, the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies will revisit an important theme that emerged at the ground-breaking *Crossing Borders* conference. *Crossing Borders '99: Latino/a and Latin American Lesbian and Gay Testimony, Autobiography, and Self-Figuration* will focus on autobiographical writing, testimony, and self-figuration by Latin American and Latino/a lesbians and gay men, inviting artists and scholars from different geographical areas and diverse academic fields to share and discuss their works and lived experiences.

The conference is made possible through a generous bequest from the Michael C.P. Ryan Fund, which also contributed to the 1997 *Crossing Borders* conference.

Narratives of self-figuration have figured prominently in the development of gay and lesbian identities in the United States. These stories — “histories” and “herstories” — characteristically include topical chapters, for instance, on a tortured (often lonely) adolescence, strained family relationships, the need for role models, and the invariably liberating experience of coming out. The notion of a newly-defined gay and lesbian family and community has played a significant role in this empowering narrative of progress. On the other hand, contemporary works by gay men and lesbians, powerfully cutting across traditional disciplines, are showing the complex local inflections of what is often perceived as monolithic, hegemonic — and at times reductive and exclusive — notions of gay identity and community. Such works take a critical look at the familiar narratives of the liberationist tradition. For example, at CLAGS, the theoretical and ideological implications of the economic, political, and cultural tensions that attend the intersection of global and local conditions for lesbians and gays have been fruitfully discussed at various colloquia. Most recently, such tensions were central topics of discussion at the *Queer Globalization/Local Homosexualities* conference in April.

Crossing Borders '99 will consider the tension between narratives of the liberationist tradition and their subsequent critiques across the disciplines. The conference will focus on the way that texts and performances of self-figuration by Latino/a queers reflect, inflect, misread, translate, or reject the traditions of self-representation associated with the development of contemporary queer identities in the

United States. *Crossing Borders* hopes to offer a space where diverse texts of Latina/o queer self-figuration may convene, if only to leave their mark before the certainty of future questionings and reconfigurations.

Oscar Montero
CLAGS Board Member
and Conference Co-Chair

CROSSING BORDERS '99 SCHOLARSHIPS

Two scholarships are being offered by the Michael C.P. Ryan Fund of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies to assist individuals interested in participating in *Crossing Borders '99: Latino/a and Latin American Lesbian and Gay Testimony, Autobiography, and Self-Figuration*.

The conference committee is interested in supporting the work of emerging scholars working on the topic of testimony, autobiography, or self-representation by gay and lesbian Latino/as and Latin Americans. A critical approach to the topic, as suggested in the article above, is welcome. Proposals from writers, critics, performers, filmmakers, and video/graphic artists are welcome.

The scholarships will cover travel expenses and hotel accommodations in New York City.

Interested applicants should submit a proposal (no more than three pages in length), curriculum vitae, and any other pertinent materials (e.g., videos, graphics) to:

Elena Martínez and Oscar Montero
Conference Chairs, *Crossing Borders '99*
Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies
33 West 42nd Street, Room 404N
New York, NY 10036.

All applications are due September 25, 1998.