

## **THE BUNGE FAMILY** QUEERNESS, KINSHIP, AND MODERNITY

Estuve mirando las fotos de todos nosotros, de mi familia, colgadas en la pared de esta casa y es como si hubiera hablado con ellos y conmigo misma, a lo largo de todos los años pasados, vividos con y a veces sin ellos. Percibí una fuerza rara, única, irremplazable en esos grupos de familia, una energía luminosa y conflictiva si no se atraviesa y se la deja fluir. Por ejemplo, yo iba teniendo caras distintas y no es que fueran cada vez más viejas, más gastadas como temí sino siempre a medias ilusionadas y a medias triste, pero confiando, alegre de estar con ellos, aunque fuera para ese claro momento de la foto.

I was looking at the photos of all of us, of my family, hung on the wall of this house and it is as if I had been speaking with them and with myself, for all these past years, lived sometimes with, sometimes without them. I sensed a force, strange, unique, irreplaceable in those family groups, an energy that is luminous and conflictive if you don't interfere but let it flow. For example, I would take on different faces and it is not that they were getting older, more faded, as I feared but always half hopeful and half sad, but trusting, happy to be with them, even if it were only for that one clear moment of the photo. (Tiscornia 63)<sup>1</sup>

In the scene narrated above family appears implacable, an uncanny feeling of recognition and strangeness. The narrator sees herself reflected in a series of family portraits that look back at her and transform. They take on her expression through a gaze that is at once singular and shared, eternal and ephemeral. Familiar. Subjected to the photograph's queer temporality,

she struggles to disentangle the present of her body from its history as part of a family. The photograph makes present other bodies, bodies “that-have-been,” historically, materially, as Roland Barthes argues in *Camera Lucida*, and yet which, in this moment of their recognition by the narrator, are not quite here, not quite now. This is a moment in which *queer kinship* is made.

Written by Delfina Tiscornia in late 1988, this intimate text takes another intimate text, the family photograph, as the basis for her own account of how kinship is mediated by the objects that connect family members across time. Delfina Tiscornia (1966–1996) was the great granddaughter of her namesake Delfina Bunge (1881–1952), whose portrait hung on the wall along with other illustrious forebears. Family repeats, as one precocious poet looks back at another.<sup>2</sup> A century apart, kinship is oriented by and around the image of one Delfina who becomes multiple, iterative. In recognizing herself as related, Tiscornia connects to these ancestors through what Marianne Hirsch calls the “familial look.” Here, the look projects a futurity that nonetheless depends on the disorientation of historical time. One moment in 1900 is photographed, and then perceived a century later as queerly familiar. Family, like the photograph, emerges through negotiating a sense of self-in-relation, through time rendered historical, through the body as it approximates other bodies, both present and absent. This is the strange, luminous matter of kinship. It lingers. It hides in plain sight and transforms.

*Argentine Intimacies* takes this strange feeling as its point of departure for studying family life in Argentina’s fin de siècle (1890–1910). My sense is that we, like Tiscornia, are still under the spell of that turn of the century, that age of splendor in which the matter of kinship was cast anew as something that had been and could be again but different, modern. I begin with the above passage not simply because it dwells on the matter of kinship over time (as memory) and through the body (as experience), or because it was written by one family member about being related to those with whom she shares kinship. Rather, I begin with it because it performs the paradoxical relationship of kinship as simultaneously idealized and enacted. The passage intends to preserve the memory of family members that the author never met, and yet, as a text, it also creates, performs, those very relationships in the present through its writing. Tiscornia’s essay was published in the posthumous collection *Ella camina sola* (2006), which was sponsored—and introduced—by Lucía Gálvez, Delfina Tiscornia’s mother; Delfina Bunge’s granddaughter. The collection reflects on how family is

made and is itself the result of the love and loss that so often infuse kinship with a sense of enduring capaciousness.<sup>3</sup> Such intimacy is at once quotidian and extraordinary. I, too, as I was researching this book, would find myself in that same living room, looking at those same portraits, holding a copy of *Ella camina sola* that was given to me by Lucía Gálvez as a parting gift, a remembrance of her daughter. The text is more than a lucid reflection on the qualities that give meaning to family, but an object produced through and by virtue of the logics, the affective charge, of kinship over time. Its sentiment crystallizes how kinship operates as both a structure and as a source of artistic and cultural expression that emerges in the late nineteenth century, when the contradictions of modernity were only beginning to come into focus. I tell the story of how I met Lucía Gálvez below, and of how I came to relate queerly to the family photographs, archives, and histories that Delfina Tiscornia describes with such awe. Before that, however, I want to explain concretely what *Argentine Intimacies* is about and how it contributes to ongoing dialogues about queerness, kinship, and modernity.

At its core, this book is about the paradoxes of kinship. It describes how political, economic, and cultural changes in Argentina at the turn of the century mobilized contradictory responses to what family meant, what it could mean, and for whom. In a broad sense, it is about the power of the family as an ideological framework and contradictory set of relational norms. It deals with the development of nationalism, the fear of social and demographic change, economic promise and decline, the relationship between normativity and queerness, and the intersections of sexuality, gender, race, and class. Each of these issues transverses the kinship imaginary as the significance of the family is made and remade.

In order to approach these issues, I anchor this book in a particular place and time, and on four related individuals. The Bunge siblings, Carlos Octavio (1875-1918), Julia Valentina (1880-1969), Alejandro (1880-1943), and Delfina (1881-1952), were part of a generation of eight.<sup>4</sup> Each of them crafted a distinct authorial voice and body of work. They all had privileged access to power, access that they would exploit and harness to their benefit. They intervened in nationally and internationally significant ways through continued engagement with critical issues (economics, law, culture, literature, art, politics, etc.) as members of the upper class. In short, they were a family of writers who wrote about family. Their father, Octavio Bunge (1844-1910) was a Supreme Court justice, descended from a handsome Prussian adventurer and politician, Karl August Bunge (1804-1849). Their

mother, María Luisa Bunge Arteaga (1853–1934), was an accomplished painter and came from a commercially successful Basque family who had immigrated to Uruguay in the eighteenth century. The Bunge-Arteaga family was part of the network of landed elite that consolidated power over the course of the nineteenth century through strategic marriages, political alliances, and business savvy that came to be known as the Argentine *oligarquía*.<sup>5</sup> They were a politically influential, socially respected family that formed an essential part of the intellectual elite in Buenos Aires, as they were also connected to the broader network of wealthy landowners in the province of Buenos Aires.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the Bunges are one of Argentina's most prolific intellectual families—which is also to say political families—of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, among the likes of the Mansillas, Guido y Spanos, Villafañes, Ocampos, Borgeses, and Payrós. As a generation of writers who left a vast oeuvre of both public and private texts, the Bunge siblings provide an unparalleled window onto the contradictory period of modernization in Argentina. They enact what Ángel Rama calls the vacillations of power, art, discourse, and signification of “*la ciudad modernizada*” (“the modernized city”; 61).

The two decades that straddle the turn of the twentieth century represent a crucial moment when the state project of normalizing culture demanded specific forms of racial identification, gender performance, and sexuality. The stakes for maintaining the architecture of patriarchal normativity were high at the turn of the century in Latin America, when the concept of family became a battleground for the consolidation of the discourses, institutions, and technologies that shaped modern culture. At the heart of these public debates, the Bunge siblings positioned themselves not only as intellectual leaders of the criollo elite, but as models of a new sociality at the turn of the century that expanded and redefined the family as modern.<sup>7</sup> They intervened in all manner of cultural fields, in society, and in politics, and as such have exerted a tremendous influence over the way that public and private life was understood at that time, an influence that persists to this day. The Bunge siblings wrote lengthy tracts on political economy and education, social psychology and sociology; they wrote school textbooks and literary anthologies; kept diaries and published memoirs; they left family photographs, drawings, and letters. This archive represents a unique opportunity from which to critique the juncture of tradition and modernity, self and other, the normative and the queer.

In seeking to understand what family meant in this particular era, this book engages with queer theory and Latin American studies, interdisciplinary modes of approaching cultural phenomena. In contrast with most queer studies scholarship, however, *Argentine Intimacies* does not seek out alternatives to normative family life as performed by dissident subjects through the channels of minoritarian desire—not new “chosen families”—but rather sees as queer the lived enactment of the orientations that kinship demands, orientations that constantly fail, reshape, and reemerge.<sup>8</sup> It is this queer feeling of a portrait that looks back and smiles your own smile, a portrait as a mirror and a window onto the past-future, that stretches the possibilities of envisioning family as a site of queer scholarship. *Argentine Intimacies* examines the interface of queerness, kinship, and modernity, and argues that the embodiment of what we have come to know as the modern family depends on a constant—often melancholic—negotiation with queerness. By focusing on moments of tension in which the normative family strains to accept its own normativity, rather than on idealized expressions of domestic unity, it broadens the conversation about how cultural and erotic norms are unsettled. It argues that the normativity of kinship is negotiated through its proximity with and desire for the queerness that it takes as constitutive of its own difference.<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that the normative and the queer are irreconcilable, but rather, on the contrary, they are mutually dependent on each other, as a photograph that registers simultaneously identification and estrangement, kinship and queerness, joy and melancholy. This is not a book about queer families, but about how family is queer.

The Bunge family resists easy categorization. They show us how the categories that we tend to use in queer studies often fail to account for the intense negotiation that occurs in establishing what “normative” and “queer” have come to mean. My relationship with this family—mediated, textual—has unfolded over time as a series of disjunctions between theory and text. They have consistently forced me to question assumptions that I did not realize I had made about their lives and desires. The slow process of archival research, the fragile materiality of the objects I have chosen to study, and the difficulty of access have given me time to read and reread, to contradict myself, at times unwittingly. The slowness of this process has also taught me something about how queer studies often seeks a clarity of expression, of difference, that can result in disappointment. We overlook

the queerness of the normative family, or perhaps the search for alternatives has drawn the vision of queer studies away from the normative, which becomes flattened out as an object of study, a caricature of normativity. Rather than seek out queerness in its novel forms, in the formations of alternative kinship arrangements, bodily orientations, or becomings, I have learned to focus squarely on the normative family as a productive site of queerness. The question then becomes: what does such a normative family have to say about queerness? It is this question, in fact, that motivates this book. If we can expand what queerness means to include how the normative curves to incorporate ever more dissonance, more bodies, more desires, then we can begin to imagine what might happen to kinship when it no longer materializes relations on its own but rather necessarily through the mediating forces of the strange and the queer.

While the Bunge family played a prominent role in Argentine culture at the turn of the century, they have also been overlooked, for the most part, by its historians and cultural critics. In part, this is due to the politically conservative, white supremacist agenda that was publically espoused by many of the family members. I think, too, that the types of texts they published (and did not publish) have made their work less fashionable, on the one hand, and less accessible, on the other, as a source of literary and cultural criticism. Their creative writing was not avant-garde or formally innovative, while their intimate, private texts have not been made public except in rare instances. One of these instances is the two-volume history of the Bunge family written Eduardo José Cárdenas and Carlos Manuel Payá, which has been an invaluable resource for this project. While Cárdenas and Payá are excellent at weaving historical narrative and primary source materials, they do not question the ideological foundations of kinship, its contradictions, or its fluctuations, as I do in this book. Likewise, intellectual historians such as Oscar Terán, Nicolas Shumway, and Charles A. Hale have flagged Carlos Octavio Bunge, the most prominent figure of this generation, as an exponent of positivist and subsequent eugenic thought in Argentina (and rightly so). But neither he nor the rest of the family has been studied from the perspective of literary and cultural studies, and much less from the lens of queer studies, with one notable exception: Jorge Salessi's *Médicos maleantes y maricas*. Salessi's work is one of the first Latin American studies texts to bring into dialogue queer studies, interdisciplinary archival research, and a critique of foundational national narratives in the Southern Cone. He elucidates how the process of naming deviance has

been essential to late nineteenth-century positivism's taxonomical drive to order, contain, and eliminate bodies and desires that contradicted patriarchal heteronormativity and white supremacy. And while I am indebted to Salessi's work for its archival breadth and incisive interpretation of how a new generation of psychologists and social hygienists, as they were called, came to wield positivist science as an extension of state power, my work differs from his in scope and method. On the one hand, I approach relationality as emerging out of the interaction between bodies, affects, and discourses, rather than relying on a Foucauldian approach that privileges discursivity in the creation of taxonomic definitions. On the other hand, I expand on Salessi's historicism by asking how the very elite who defined normativity also sought to question its precepts, rather than advance an intellectual critique of how it came to interpellate nonnormative bodies and desires as ontologically deviant.

While I expand on this below, most literary and cultural criticism of the turn of the century argues that members of the upper class like the Bunge family sought to maintain their claim to cultural relevance by promoting idealized notions of family life bound to domesticity, social hygiene, and patriotism. It would make sense that the lettered elite saw the normative family as a refuge from what positivist scientists described as the threat of gender and class inversion. *Argentine Intimacies* uses the vast corpus of literary and cultural production by the Bunge family as a framework to examine what is left out of this narrative: the range of queer feelings, desires, and gestures by members of just such an elite family. Rather than imagining the family as a conservative space of identity formation, this book asks what the family's queerness—and what queering the familiar—might mean for contemporary understandings of gender, sexuality, kinship, and nationalism. To riff on Judith Butler's provocative phrase, I want to show how kinship is always already queer.<sup>10</sup>

To do so, I examine family members who are related and who write about being related. This is a choice that allows me to critique horizontally, across a particular generation, and transversally, across genres and forms of performing kinship. Here I diverge from Latin American studies scholarship that has privileged certain types of writing, in particular national novels and essays of national identity, by placing understudied forms of expression, such as the diary, the memoir, and the textbook, in dialogue with (and as) national genres. While private writing and the performance of intimacy are not exempt from the cultural and psychological scripts

that shape human desires and actions, by looking at these minor genres (and private, intimate cultural production) in tandem with major ones we begin to see that the expression of normativity is only possible as a polyvocal, contradictory suturing of discourses, bodies, and desires. This is why I dwell on the *interface* of writing and kinship, and in turn show how the act of writing becomes a queer performance of self-in-relation. In linking the formal demands of writing (in particular autobiographical writing) to the narrative possibilities of imagining oneself as part of a family, I illustrate how the matter of a text (its structure) acts on and is affected by the desire to relate as kin. This allows me to argue that limitations of form become possibilities of kinship, and that kinship is constituted through the formal qualities of literary and cultural production. In this way, *Argentine Intimacies* brings to bear historical understandings and the lived enactment of kinship on contemporary debates in cultural studies, gender and sexuality studies, and queer theory. Highlighting the tension between individual desires and collective responsibilities, this book demonstrates that the study of national identities must take into account the queer potentials of the modern family.

#### REVISING THE FAMILY ROMANCE

As I note above, understanding the ideological alignment between the fictional representation of family and the nation has been one of the central preoccupations of Latin American studies over the past thirty years. However, much of this scholarship has tended to take for granted the role of normative kinship ideologies as a foundational regime in the narration of possible national identities. For example, Doris Sommer's claim that the shape of the modern national community in Latin America was highly influenced by fictional accounts of heterosexual love and marriage, particularly as seen through allegory, is now ubiquitous. Combining insights from Benedict Anderson and Michel Foucault, Sommer links erotic rhetoric and allegorized fiction to propose a foundational "erotics of politics" that is based on at least potentially procreative marital unions, which provide models for nonviolent national consolidation following the wave of independence movements in Latin America (6). The romantic attachments that Sommer highlights posit the only viable outcome of the allegorical romance plot as the ideological imbrication between heteronormative desire and the nation. Learning to love the correct romantic partner and learning to love the nation become one and the same ideological



project. While I agree that the channeling of desire to uphold normative sexual, gendered, and racialized formations is central to nation-building projects, as I demonstrate in this book, that desire, that force, must also reckon with queerness in order for it to materialize through the embodied practice of becoming or making kin. The national romance wrestles with a level of anxiety and ambivalence that Sommer does not account for in her work, an instability through which the structuring of desire comes to make sense of the eroticized landscape of modernity in Latin America.

Gabriela Nouzeilles, for her part, shows how the literature of the late nineteenth century can be seen as “*re-escritura escéptica*” (“skeptical rewriting”) of the foundational romance novels analyzed by Sommer (15). Nouzeilles shows the continuation of the family model as a vehicle of literary expression as it moves from the Romanticism of the mid-nineteenth century into the Naturalism (in particular) of the turn of the twentieth century. The narrative structure of these turn-of-the-century family romances is quite different from that of their predecessors: rather than utopian unions, we see intrinsic conflict, unavoidable incompatibility, “*familias fallidas*” (“failed families”; 15). Texts such as *Sin rumbo* (1885) and *En la sangre* (1888) by Eugenio Cambaceres, if partially modeled on French naturalism’s objective description of reality, were written in a pessimistic tone regarding what the author saw as a national culture lacking a moral (read ethnic) compass. These novels deal specifically with the multiplicity of possible romantic unions in an age of rapid population growth and shifting class and racial categories. In this literature, as Nouzeilles argues, “el casamiento ya no es, como en *Amalia* de Mármol, el final deseable de una historia de amor ideal. (. . .) En el espacio de la intimidad donde la cópula entre amantes de diferentes clases/razas se consuma, la tragedia (real o probable) casi siempre interviene (“marriage is no longer, as with Mármol’s *Amalia*, the desirable ending to a story of ideal love. [. . .] In the intimate space where copulation between lovers of different classes/races is consummated, tragedy [real or probable] almost always intervenes”; 15–16). If during the mid-nineteenth century the challenges to the union of two idealized protagonists were consistently configured as external to the couple itself, that is, as the product of forces beyond their control (Nature, Destiny, the State, etc.), then after 1880, the year that Buenos Aires became Argentina’s federal capital, allegorized romance is no longer immune from internal conflict. Instead, lovers who are identified as biologically incompatible, rather than simply ill-fated, are made

examples of what must not be allowed. For naturalist novels the union between different races, classes, or economic interests is no longer situated within a narrative framework that typically leads to reconciliation and the consummation of the ideal pairing; instead, the sexual union of different types of people, read through the biological determinist lens, almost always results in death. At the turn of the century, tragedy operates from the very cellular level of individual characters, who are unable to overcome their own (biological) destiny. Especially for those characters who attempt to forge a union that is not “ideal,” the consequences are inevitably harrowing, as in Cambaceres’s *En la sangre* or, not coincidentally, in Carlos O. Bunge’s *La novela de la sangre*. This naturalist literature reveals a new “somatic epistemology” as Nouzeilles calls it, which seeks to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy bodies, constantly classifying, diagnosing, and treating perceived physical and psychological abnormalities.

The taxonomic ordering of bodies would provide the point of departure for major interventions in Latin American studies by marking an epistemological juncture through which scholars identify a persistent desire to construct an ideal national family, a perfect society based on eugenic principles.<sup>11</sup> This perceived threat of racial and cultural decadence, taking seriously the theory of degeneracy made popular by Max Nordeau, led to a sense of pessimism often referred to as the *mal du siècle*.<sup>12</sup> In this regard, literary scholar J. P. Spicer-Escalante claims that toward the turn-of-the-century authors sought to express the notion of family

como paradigma de continuidad en relación con los valores nacionales ante la crisis moral de la sociedad argentina finisecular. Es decir, la familia unida—especialmente entre los miembros de la élite—se asocia, más bien, como baluarte de estabilidad ante los cambios sociales y bastión ante la corrupción de los valores sociales tradicionales en un período de transición, producto de los negocios turbios del patriarcado liberal, la oligarquía argentina finisecular.

as a paradigm of continuity related to national values (when) faced with the moral crisis of turn-of-the-century Argentine society. That is, the united family—especially among members of the elite—is associated, rather, with a bastion of stability in the face of social change and a bastion from the corruption of traditional social values in a period of transition, a product of the shady dealings of the liberal patriarchy, the turn of the century Argentine oligarchy. (116)

This ideological contraction, this introspection, deserves special attention. As Spicer-Escalante puts it, family becomes a closed space, a “bastion of stability,” sealed off from the changing times. The ideological construction of family, he claims, becomes perhaps the last unspoiled territory for the elite. I propose, however, that this vision of the family as the only remaining space within which the *oligarquía* would be able to preserve its hegemony may not be as straightforward as Spicer-Escalante suggests. To be sure, in naturalist fictions “appropriate” unions are sanctioned—or violently proscribed. And in this sense, it would seem that there are only two available types of families in turn of the century Argentina: those that uphold the *habitus* of the elite and those that with their very being violate the security and comfort of the symbolic nation. There is no room for ideological dissidence in this formulation, as the primordial goal of the positivist episteme is the scientific division of subjectivities: healthy/unhealthy, civilized/barbaric, productive/unproductive, and so on. My analysis of the complex interplay between intimate, private texts and public demonstrations of nationalism by the Bunge family calls into question the above accounts of a singular ideological contraction by the turn-of-the-century criollo elite. Instead of retreating behind the walls of nuclear patriarchy, the Bunge siblings open toward a plurality of ideas about kinship and even aim to undermine normative orientations of family. We can see this opening precisely because of the breadth and diversity of the literary corpus that the Bunge family provides; because of how this archive links the public national imaginary with the private expression of sexual, gendered, and historical ambivalence. In summary, rather than consider the family as the last bastion of upper-class stability in the face of new, often radical, modes of political action and social organization, *Argentine Intimacies* demonstrates how the modern family became a space of ambiguity, instability, and fluctuation.

While the allegorical function and pedagogical appeal of the family has been firmly established in Latin American studies, the national family is frequently antimodern, an idealized tribute to family as it must have been before. “Founding fathers,” “motherlands,” and the “fraternal bonds” of citizenship overlay the language of kinship onto the imagined community of the nation.<sup>13</sup> Family thus engages the intimate proximities of kin and projects them scopically as a mimetic representation for the benefit of the nation imagined as utopian potential. The futurity of kinship becomes indistinguishable from the futurity of the modern nation, which itself

returns the image of the ideal family, shaded by political contingencies, colonial histories, racial, and tropic imaginaries, as an expression of their shared utopian promise, and their shared contradictions.<sup>14</sup> Family and nation are better understood as an entanglement of desires, cultural ideologies, and temporalities.

With this in mind, there are two issues that make a revision of the family romance both crucial and possible today. First, Latin American studies has relied on an understanding of erotics, kinship, and subjectivity that emerged in nationalist writing, which itself depends on a presumably stable normative family ideology. In other words, normative kinship is often assumed to have existed precisely because it was normative. What I propose in this book, however, is that familiar normativity emerges through a process of constant negotiation with desires, bodies, and ideologies that resist the very normativity with which the family has been prescriptively characterized in such accounts. This approach to family is made possible by bringing Latin American studies into dialogue with queer studies, whereby the latter provides new tools for understanding how the erotics of kinship is enacted through discursive, corporeal, and performative logics, rather than ideology. Second, what is almost an inversion of my first point, by returning to a moment of prior “crisis” (the turn of the twentieth century) and to the contradictory process by which the taxonomic ordering of bodies and desires became legitimated by discourses derived from positivist science *in Latin America*, we can begin to question the predominance of queer studies as it has been formulated *in the US academe*. Queer studies in the US has consistently sought alternative forms of making kin, but has seldom looked beyond the US to do so. Latin American studies has engaged in extensive cultural critique of the contradictions of modernity, but rarely questions how modernity is based on a supposedly normative understanding of kinship. In bringing these two fields into conversation, I expand what normative kinship can mean to queerness, and at the same time, what the trajectories of Latin American cultures can mean to queer studies.

#### QUEER STUDIES AND THE MODERN FAMILY IN LATIN AMERICA

I am not the first to chart an interdisciplinary approach linking Latin American studies and queer studies. My book follows such groundbreaking work as Salessi’s *Médicos maleantes y maricas* (1995), David William

Foster's *Sexual Textualities* (1997), José Quiroga's *Tropics of Desire* (2000), Licia Fiol-Matta's *A Queer Mother for the Nation* (2002), and Gabriel Giorgi's *Sueños de exterminio* (2004), among others.<sup>15</sup> Importantly, these interventions have called into question the presumed universal applicability of Anglo-American queer theory and the possibility of its translation to other languages and epistemologies, advocating for a deeper engagement with the particular geopolitical effects of normativity in Latin American contexts, a trend that continues today and which I elaborate on further in the epilogue. What links these early critical texts, in a broad sense, is an insistence on how Latin American societies—in the plural—do not construe particular sexual acts or identities in the same way as North American or European societies by virtue of the particular forms of colonization, and thus racial and sexual political economies, that have been enacted, reinforced, and maintained throughout the modern era. Pursuing research agendas related to patriarchal discrimination, responses to constrictive political and social mores, and the ideological bases of normative embodiment, these early essays tend to frame the study of gender and sexuality in Latin America as a way of eroding the predominance of stigmatized identities. This is to say, much of this pathbreaking scholarship sought to resist the enduring marginalization of LGBT communities in the late twentieth century by historicizing the hegemony of the family in Latin American societies, a move that returned to the mid- and late nineteenth century, when discourses of illness and criminality became attached to nonnormative sexual subjects. Particularly for literary and cultural studies, these interventions dwell on the discursive invention of “sexual deviance” and the subsequent harnessing of its scientific and political utility to maintain regimes of colonial domination. And they often do so by focusing on perversion and deviance as a foil for the normative, or else as activating the processes by which the normative comes to be understood as such. In what follows, however, I propose a revision of this approach, one that interrogates the hegemonic family ideal as harnessing the affective and aesthetic appeal of the deviant, the perverse, and the queer (these are not necessarily synonymous), in order to project itself as modern. By paying attention to the way family emerges as mediated by the structures of kinship and as refracted through the formal possibilities of its expression, I argue, contemporary scholarship can better grapple with the ambiguity of the modern family. Imagining queerness not as anathema to kinship, but rather essential to its modern expression,

this book, too, lingers in moments of awkwardness, disciplinary ambivalence, and the fragility of the intimate. Normativity and queerness are not opposed in the modern family, but rather mutually constitutive forms of alignment between bodies, norms, and desires, which shift across time and space.

In both Latin American and US-based scholarship, queerness has been imagined as a destabilizing force that differs from or reshapes the norm, is outside the norm or resists categorization, and is thus pathologized by colonial taxonomies as deviant and disruptive. In most of the aforementioned scholarship, subjectivity is framed as part of a national project in which dissident identities and subversive desires are held up as queer responses to social marginalization. Although I agree with much of the scholarship noted above, for example, Giorgi's claim that the aberrant body of the homosexual paradoxically gives shape to normativity as that which it is not, as that which must be eliminated from the social sphere (*Sueños* 18-19), I still insist that the queer is more than the abject against which the normative gains relief. Rather, by looking closely at the internal negotiations with and through the queer, we glean how the kinship structures that are so often held up as the fundamental building blocks of normative cultural formations are in fact constantly extending beyond the limits of normativity, stretching toward a desire that is at once of the body and that also exceeds it.

Much of my thinking on this matter follows feminist and queer revisions of structuralist anthropology and psychoanalysis. Typically, this line of critique takes as a point of departure the Lévi-Straussian argument that the matter of biology acquires meaning insofar as it is an expression of the demand that men exchange women in marriage, which, according to *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, is the fundamental basis of human culture. That is, the exogamous marriage tie, which extends the family through a symbolic civic/religious rite, rather than blood relation, becomes the basis for the notion of modern kinship, and thus for recognition of the heteronormative family as the fundamental unit of society. According to Lévi-Strauss, nature becomes culture through this reciprocal exchange. This understanding of culture is coextensive with the division of labor within the domestic sphere and the development of capitalist economies and co-constitutive racial and class distinctions. What Lévi-Strauss would later theorize in anthropology as the structural basis of kinship, late-nineteenth-century Latin American literary and cultural production

allegorized as a normative model of social organization that could (and should) be extrapolated to a larger national context.

Feminist scholars such as Gayle Rubin and Eve Sedgwick convincingly argue that this reciprocal exchange leads to the subjugation of women as objects of real and symbolic commerce and to the development of “homosocial” bonds between men. The latter, according to Sedgwick, is an effect of sublimated homoerotic desire that is channeled through the position of women in heteronormative society. In general, poststructuralist critiques of kinship such as these have sought to denaturalize the gender norms undergirding anthropological accounts of belonging—what Rubin describes as the “sex/gender system” through which the dualistic identity positions of woman and man, on the one hand, and the binary opposition of hetero and homo sexuality, on the other, are required for kinship in Western modernity (“Traffic” 169). Likewise, queer critiques of kinship have shed light on how linguistic theories of culture, in particular, those derived from Lacanian psychoanalysis, deepen kinship’s reliance on a preconceived, eternal, or “structural” notion of gender within a system of symbolic expression. This symbolic referentiality allows Judith Butler to propose in her influential work *Gender Trouble* (1990) that gender itself is not “natural” but part of the repeated and compulsory enactment of gender within symbolic systems as a “*stylized repetition of acts*” (140), which she would continue to develop in *Bodies that Matter* (1993) as a theory of gender *performativity*.

I am indebted to these feminist and queer interventions, as well as more recent work such as Richard T. Rodriguez’s *Next of Kin* (2009) and David L. Eng’s *The Feeling of Kinship* (2010), which examines fundamental lacunae in queer theory’s early mobilizations of poststructuralist gender and sexuality studies, namely queer theory’s silence on racialized, colonial, and globalized embodiments of desire. This being said, it is striking to me how even in these important interventions, queer theory has often eschewed normative kinship as a site of interrogation precisely because of its normativity. In doing so, it often repeats the very primacy of Oedipal socialization that scholars have sought to undermine. While it is no surprise that the Oedipal model has dominated anthropological and psychoanalytic accounts of what kinship means, by seeking out non-Oedipal kinship arrangements queer theory has left little room for expanding what queer kinship could mean as a form of norm erosion and reformulation. The axis of anthropological accounts of kinship, psychoanalytic understandings of desire,

as well as queer critiques of those normative regimes is usually Oedipal. This focus on filiation (the vertical lines of heredity) underestimates and often ignores psychic and social relationships established along horizontal planes, in particular the sibling. While it is now common to assert that the cultural demands of kinship depend on the successful negotiation of certain “structural” taboos, in particular regarding incest and patricide, the influence of siblings, sibling rivalry, and the affective demands and possibilities of horizontality remain underappreciated by queer theory.

While I engage in a reading of Oedipal socialization in the fiction of Carlos Octavio Bunge in chapter 1, my aim in subsequent chapters is to show how relational models of sociality can benefit by paying closer attention to how the symbolic and social position of the sibling—what I call horizontality—can offer a new perspective on how kinship negotiates with its own normative precepts. I do this by turning to the work of feminist scholar and psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell, who provides tools for incorporating the constituent otherness of the sibling as part of the self that is multiple. The sibling need not be neglected by queer theory, and part of what I am attempting to demonstrate in my methodological approach to this archive is that the intimacies that make siblinghood matter often involve queer acts of collusion and conspiracy; collaboration and community.<sup>16</sup> The restrictive psychic and social renderings of kinship through the Oedipal paradigm are well established, and yet, there is a way in which siblinghood can undermine kinship from within, from the very position of normativity on which the family depends.

As a working definition, *queer kinship* is a form of orienting the body and its desires through the structural norms that adhere to kinship over time, and yet also question or eschew those norms in order to gesture toward a different form of relationality that may not yet exist. This queerness is found in kinship’s incitement to normativity that nevertheless opens up possibilities for eroding, refashioning, or adapting the norm from within the logics of family. I am trying to advocate for a more capacious understanding of queerness, one that does not tether itself to a particular subject position or disciplinary logic, but rather exists as the reverberating interface between surfaces, forms, and bodies. This is a potentially erotic orientation that is psychic and corporeal, historical and immediate, uncanny and comforting. Thus, in this book I link the expressive demands of performativity, what Foucault calls “technologies of self,” to the structural demands of kinship. By bringing to bear these formal mechanisms



on the lived experience of relationality, we can better understand how queerness becomes integrated into the possibility of expressing the self as potential.<sup>17</sup> This is why focusing on the particular lived experiences of the Bunge siblings allows me to make the claim that the modernization of kinship is not only about identifying deviance as outside the norm, but rather negotiating what symbolic charge queerness has for the process (as a process) of aligning the norms of the family with the norms of the state. *Argentine Intimacies* proposes a deeply contextualized reading of the technologies, discourses, and symbolic representations that shed light on the contradictions of queerness in normative accounts of kinship relations.

This position takes family as queer in the expression of its own internal logics. I am thinking about this in relation to Butler's theorization of a more recent crisis of normativity, the one posed by the debates around gay marriage in the United States and France in the early 2000s. Thus, once more a century apart, what counts as a cultural demand, a cultural expression of possibility is framed through the family. Butler writes:

On the one hand, it is important to mark how the field of intelligible and speakable sexuality is circumscribed so that we can see how options outside of marriage are becoming foreclosed as unthinkable, and how the terms of thinkability are enforced by the narrow debates over who and what will be included in the norm. On the other hand, there is always the possibility of savoring the status of unthinkable, if it is a status, as the most critical, the most radical, the most valuable. As the sexually unrepresentable, such sexual possibilities can figure the sublime within the contemporary field of sexuality, a site of pure resistance, a site uncoopted by normativity. ("Kinship" 18)

The two options that Butler offers have to do with possible imaginaries of desire. In the first, she notes that the extension of rights by the state depends on the ability to imagine specific bodies as endowable with a particular legal standing, and consequently what forms of expression (of desire, of politics, of embodiment) those bodies can produce as legally sanctioned subjects. In other words, this option brings previously deviant bodies and desires into the purview of the state through the mechanism of bestowing rights. The second option, then, is the unthinkable outside, the "sublime" that is "pure resistance." But from what source does this resistance draw its energy? How does it activate itself as resistance? Butler figures resistance as an unrepresentable force with no outside—no form—and what already

has form—the norm itself—as a totalizing energy that will only diminish through an apocalyptic collision with the equally totalizing force of “pure resistance.” My sense here is that Butler overlooks the magnetism of queerness, or perhaps the fuel that queerness provides the normative as that which becomes incorporated in order for the normative to burn so brightly. Butler does not account for the undoing of normativity from within, for the possibility that in the accumulative exercise of norm expansion, certain rifts may emerge, and may even be necessary in order for that expansive process to release the pressure that builds up in the tectonic accommodation of normativity.

This argument marks the radical potential of queerness as existing constitutively outside of culture and thus subjective intelligibility. It asks what is that, there, on the other side of desire? But I want to ask about the this, the here, the inside, for I can only desire something that is within the realm of knowledge—my own realm of knowledge. The desire of the unknown is, in a sense, another way of expressing the desire for myself-as-different-than-I-am. The unknown is not nothing, not emptiness, but a placeholder for what might be and what I might become when I find what I seek. So to desire the queer (or to desire queerly) I need not already know what I seek, but rather sense its movement, its potential. Thus, to incorporate myself into the flow of desire is to become aware of what I thought I knew, what I might have thought, or what happens unexpectedly, to interrupt or reorient my search. This desire is sensational, intuitive. We often think that there is an outside of the norm, a threshold. But if there can be no way of thinking that which is unthinkable, or knowing that which is unknowable, then the queerness that is said to mark the limits of normativity was never actually outside, but always already within, lingering. And yet, *queer kinship* emerges when that imagined outside that is actually inside synchronizes, vibrates the desiring subject who either disavows or accepts that moment in order to maintain the normative or experience its undoing.

The development of queer theory in the US has drawn on alternatives to “the norm,” on reimaginings and creative refashionings, on campy and parodic iterations. For queer theory the norm has been a site of pleasurable undoing, appropriation, and *twisting*. Queer theory gets off on queering those norms to which we are beholden for our difference. As Kadji Amin astutely observes, this has put pressure on queer studies to excavate alternative lives and lifeways for its theoretical matter in order

to produce knowledge as a field (182). If queer idealization of the nonnormative is an ethically complex and historically variable process, then this is also so for the lives, sexualities, genders, and desires that are held up as ideal advocates of normativity. But this does not mean that these normative enactments of corporal and affective dispositions—normativity itself—is perfect in its execution of such a mandate. The normative constantly fails. Thus, I want to insist on the queerness of the normative family. As I argue in this book, family implies feeling the pressure of queerness and either pushing back against it or becoming part of its flamboyant instability. As a researcher I am not exempt from this feeling, from this form of relating across time to people whose intimacy I seek to understand, or even to disrupt. As I have set out thus far, my approach to queer kinship is informed by the archival materials that I analyze in this book, materials that exist as evidence of this queerness, and which produce the effects that I am theorizing with their very physical presence. Before providing an overview of the chapters that follow, in the next section I describe how I came to relate queerly to this archive and its contradictions. I am not a disinterested surveyor of texts and images, but rather engage the archive in its lingering materiality as part of an ongoing dialogue with its temporalities and desires. The queerness of the archive resides not in its capacity for ideological documentation, but in its continuous repercussion in the field of desire.

#### THE BUNGE FAMILY ARCHIVE

As an embodied subject I reach out toward this archive in what can only ever be an incomplete approximation of the attachments that it produces. The texts that I analyze here constitute an intimate archive that records a public presence—desired, staged, performed—that is fading from memory. I, too, am implicated in this process as I construct an archive in hopes of re-membering pieces of the past. As a scholar positioned in the United States academe, having grown up in South Texas and completed my graduate work in the United States, I have often questioned my own investment in researching a family that was so different from my own, and yet, also, recognizable in its very banality. To research the family as a historical structure and lived experience is also to imagine one's own forms of enactment of kinship, one's feelings of likeness and of incommensurability. I relate to these subjects as I imagine what I might have done in their place and time. I

open myself to the possibility of becoming entranced by these archives and the secrets they bear. What is more, in writing this book, I invite you, the reader, to do so as well. At times I have felt more than a bit of voyeuristic pleasure, imagining that I am the only person in decades, perhaps ever, to read a confession or to see a gesture, a smile that was meant for someone else. My presence interrupts the intimacy of the archive, as my interpretation orders it in a new way, perhaps betraying the very intimacy that drew me to it in the first place. I have often wondered if the Bunge siblings could have imagined my presence, a century later, an interloper in the field of family secrets. To be clear, I mean that the archive is intimate in three distinct ways: (1) the diaries, photographs, and other materials I study reveal intimate (private) thoughts and gestures; (2) the person who keeps the archive, Lucía Gálvez, does so in the privacy of her home (and is related to the people whose archive she keeps); and (3) as a researcher, I am also implicated in the process of organizing, framing, and interpreting materials that document the conflicting desires of a period distant in time and place, and yet familiar, intimate.

I first came in contact with the Bunge family archive in 2011, when I made an exploratory research trip to Buenos Aires. I had received a grant to consult the collection of Argentina's Biblioteca Nacional, where I hoped to find a novel titled *Mi amigo Luis* that was supposedly written by Carlos Octavio Bunge under a pseudonym (Hernán Prinz) and published in 1895. Cárdenas and Payá mention *Mi amigo Luis* in their work, and in addition to referring to Carlos Octavio directly as "homosexual," claim that the novel presents a transparent reflection of his feelings of isolation and inner torment as a young man (*Familia* 250). My initial research impulse was motivated by a desire to discover just what this angst looked like, and what textual evidence there might be for making such a claim. As I scoured the novel, which is in fact held at Argentina's Biblioteca Nacional, I recognized many themes of Bunge's later writing: class anxiety, a fascination with masculine intimacy, and ambivalence toward the future of the nation.<sup>18</sup> But I did not find any clear evidence of homoeroticism that would satisfy my own (naive) yearning to rewrite literary history.

However, while I was in Buenos Aires, I was also able to contact Lucía Gálvez, and make an appointment to visit her in her home. I explained that I was conducting research on the Bunge family, and that I had read with great interest her edited volume of Delfina's diaries. I think the novelty of my interest was a major factor in her agreeing to see me. I think, too, that