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RETRACING HOMOPHOBIC TENDENCIES IN TWO CENTRAL AMERICAN NOVELS: HÉCTOR TOBAR'S *THE TATTOOED SOLDIER* AND JAVIER PAYERAS' *RUIDO DE FONDO*

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RETRACING HOMOPHOBIC TENDENCIES IN TWO CENTRAL AMERICAN NOVELS: HÉCTOR TOBAR'S *THE TATTOOED SOLDIER* AND JAVIER PAYERAS' *RUIDO DE FONDO*

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RESUMEN

Este artículo examina el heterosexismo y la homofobia en dos novelas centroamericanas –*Ruido de fondo* (2006) y *The Tattooed Soldier* (1995)– trazando sus orígenes a la matriz colonial. El heterosexismo y la homofobia crecen de perspectivas sexistas de género impuestas sobre las sociedades indígenas centroamericanas. Antes de la llegada de Colón a las Américas en 1492, organizaciones jerárquicas de los humanos no existían en la región. Sin embargo, después de las conquistas militares españolas, las sociedades indígenas fueron forzadas a adoptar ideales españoles. Al poco tiempo, los españoles usurparon los sistemas legales y penales en Centroamérica y gobernaron la moralidad en la región. A través de su poder, los españoles empezaron a borrar la cultura indígena y a cultivar normas jerárquicas, patriarcales y heterosexistas. Cuatro siglos después, estas normas son analizadas en dos novelas contemporáneas centroamericanas, *Ruido de fondo* y *The Tattooed Soldier.* Estas novelas demuestran cómo representaciones difamatorias de homosexuales y la vigilancia de la masculinidad en la sociedad Centroamericana perpetúan y legitiman la violencia y el odio contra los homosexuales.
Palabras clave: homofobia, América Central, el colonialismo, *Ruido de fondo*, *The Tattooed Soldier.*

ABSTRACT

The research article delves into the underlying heterosexism and homophobia of two Central American novels, *Ruido de fondo* (2006) and *The Tattooed Soldier* (1995), and retraces the origins of these notions to the Spanish colonial womb. These notions grew from patriarchal, sexist views of gender imposed on indigenous Central American societies. Before Columbus' fateful arrival in the Americas in 1492, hierarchical organizations of humans did not exist. However, after the Spanish engineered various militaristic conquests, indigenous societies were forced to adopt Spanish ideals. Soon after, the Spanish usurped the legal and penile systems in Central America, empowering them to govern morality in the region. With this power, the Spanish began to erase indigenous culture and cultivate these hierarchical, patriarchal, and heterosexist norms. Four centuries later, these norms are analyzed in the heterosexism of two contemporary Central American novels: *Ruido de fondo* and *The Tattooed Soldier.* The novels demonstrate how defamatory portrayals of homosexuals and the policing of masculinity in Central American society perpetuate and legitimize violence against and hatred of homosexuals.
Key words: homophobia, Central America, colonialism, *Ruido de fondo*, *The Tattooed Soldier.*

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1. Introduction

Since 1492, European colonialism irrevocably altered the socio-cultural terrain of the region later known as "Central America." Within a few hundred years, the European constructs of gender and sexuality reworked every aspect of indigenous Central American life. Imposing the gender hierarchy of male and female static categories tore down the existing gender systems in the region, which functioned under the acceptance of a plurality of sexes and sexualities in Central America. Under newly imposed gender paradigms, women became "the other": stripped of their humanity, portrayed as animals, forced to comply with strict new social norms, and made inferior to men in every aspect of life (Lugones, 2008, p. 13). In a similar fashion, European Catholicism undermined the social status of homosexuals, who were morphed from a religiously significant blend of male and female under the previous system into subjects of abject perversion equivalent to pedophilia, disease, and crime. In this essay, I explore the ramifications of these heterosexist imposed cultural logics in two contemporary texts from Central America: Héctor Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*, a 1998 novel pertaining to the Guatemalan diaspora in the US and Javier Payeras' *Ruido de fondo* (2006), also a post-war Guatemalan text.

Since homosexuality has been so persistently defamed in Central America, there's a dearth of queer narratives from this region, a problem that –as I have pointed out– has roots in the Spanish colonial system. Even the two texts I analyze here only mention, hint at, or insinuate homosexuality. In these texts queer identities take its most visible form only in derogatory epithets. It is my intention here to displace these enunciations from the texts' margins and bring them to the center of our discussion today by demonstrating how the forced adoption of a heteronormative colonial lens instilled a deep-seated and persistent sense of homophobia in Central American societies.

2. Equality in Pre-Columbian Indigenous Societies

To understand the contemporary homophobia of Central America in context, it is important to first examine the belief systems of indigenous Central Americans before European influence in relation to gender practices. Under pre-colonial paradigms, there was no gender or sexual hierarchy because the European constructions of gender and sexuality had not yet been introduced (Sigal, 2000, p. 7). The concept of gender, as it was understood in colonial Maya culture for example, was much more ambiguous. In that worldview, genders and anatomical bodies did not always agree (Garret and Barret, 2011, p. 1, Sigal, 2000, p. 10). The concept of gender was understood in an "egalitarian light," rather than through the European colonial hierarchical lens (Lugones, 2008, p. 7). Although women and men had very different functions within indigenous societies, these jobs were of equal importance. Mayan men would hunt game and "produce food by agricultural labor," while the women would process, prepare, and cook "the products of the field to make them edible" (Josserand, 2002, p. 127). Without either, there would be no food to eat. Women were even given specific roles within the realm of the sacred: they were taught "how to keep the domestic religious shrines" (Sigal, 2000, p. 19).

The Yucatec Mayan phrase "*In La'kech*" moreover, which translates to "You are the other I", succinctly sums up the inherent equality of pre-Colombian Mayan society. I am you, and you are I. Just as males and females were seen as equal, so were homosexuals and heterosexuals: "in regard to the custom [of homosexuality] itself there seemed to be no reticence

in general and no sense of shame" (Brown, 2007, p. 67). Homosexuals were a fundamental institution in tribal culture (Gilley, 2006, p. 8) and rituals (Lugones, 2008, p. 7) and actually had a traditionally defined role as "individuals believed to possess both blend of male and female spirit" (Garrett and Barret, 2011, p. 131). This concept was a widely held pre-colonial belief throughout the Americas, not only within the Maya. More than eighty Native American tribes, including the Apache, Navajo, Cheyenne, Crow, Shoshoni, Sioux, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole, Yuma, and Aztec, among other nations, accepted homosexuals and recognized them as an integral group of these societies (Lugones, 2008, p. 11). They were revered for their uniqueness and given an elevated status in society within the realm of their religion.

When the Spanish began arriving and proceeding with the colonial project in Central America, this inherent equality was abolished. 1492 served as a threshold. Settler colonialists brought about a new system of logic, which was then perpetuated by imposed, racialized power relations between the colonists and the colonized. So,

> for the first time in the history of human kind [...] there was produced a new mental category to codify the relations between conquering and conquered populations: the idea of race. [...] these relations of domination came to be considered as 'natural'. (Quijano, 2000, p. 216)

This resulted in a racialized caste system, which prescribed value to individuals or groups who showed European traits or values and disenfranchised those that did not (Quijano, 2000, pp. 216-217). During the first 100 years of colonization, the Spaniards decimated –in conservative estimates– more than 90% of the indigenous population in the region (Duverger, 2007, p. 17). The population of indigenous societies would not be restored to their pre-Columbian size for four more centuries. The severity of these militaristic conquests opened the door for Spanish cultural domination over the indigenous peoples of Central America. In an attempt to destroy existing modes of thought, almost all indigenous Central American texts, except for the *Chilam Balam*, The Maya *Rabinal Achí* and the K'iche' *Popol Vuh*, were systematically destroyed in book burnings by European missionaries, who considered indigenous systems of thought to be idolatrous (Stehn, n.d., p. 1). After asserting their militaristic power, the Spaniards imposed a social hierarchy and placed themselves at the top of the order.

Spaniards and the logics of colonialism slowly took control of life in the now called Central American region. The new colonial institution ran the judicial and penile systems and so came to completely govern morality, reworking the moral fabric of indigenous societies (Brown, 2007, pp. 51-72). Consequently, indigenous ideals of equality were uprooted and replaced with a more stringent Catholic doctrine, which had no tolerance for what they termed "deviance." Under the stringency of these parameters, Spaniards began to introduce language that painted homosexuality in a completely different light: the "nefarious sin:" "*el pecado nefando*" as it was known (Brown, 2007, pp. 51-72). And thus, by the 1600's homosexuality had already become synonymous to the perversion of the healthy body and the healthy mind (Tortorici, 2012, p. 163). The Spanish judicial system criminalized homosexuality, and contrary to indigenous beliefs, one *became* homosexual by choosing to stray from God's eternal love.

The Spanish first introduced these changes to indigenous beliefs by forcing Mayans to adopt Christianity. Yucatec Maya leaders, and subsequently the Maya people, were forced to begin to conform with Spanish-Christian concepts of proper and improper behaviors rooted in Christianity, especially concepts of strict adherence to sexual and gender roles (Sigal, 2000, p. 10). These attempts to erase indigenous culture demonstrate the crushing cultural domination of the Spanish.

Queer narratives are almost nonexistent outside the colonial legal system, which has preserved examples of the changing perspectives of indigenous Central Americans towards homosexuality. For example, scholar Tracy Brown finds an interesting case to study the changing role of gender in indigenous society in the legal proceedings of a trial of two homosexual, indigenous men in colonial Central America. These two men, Asensio Povia and Antonio Yuba, were to be exiled after their boss happened to find them in midst of a homosexual act. Brown investigated the language in defense of the homosexual men and found that, in justification of being found in a compromising situation, the men invoked normative European gender roles in order to assert their masculinity. He assures the jury he is "not a woman for doing such a thing," effectively admitting the sodomy did occur, but qualifying the confession by stating it "did not make him any less of a man" (Brown, 2007, p. 64). Although these indigenous men are fighting in Spanish courts with Spanish lawyers to not be exiled, it is clear these indigenous men have had to adopt traditional European gender norms. Passivity in sex was womanly, and in most cases was actually kept a secret in order to protect the partner's masculine identity (Brown, 2007, p. 67). As Brown explains, after Spanish influence,

> indigenous societies did not prohibit or denigrate same-sex sex as long as it occurred between a masculine and feminized male (or *berdache*), with the *berdache* assuming the passive position. Sex between two 'masculine' men (i.e., neither inhabiting the social role of a woman), or sex where a *berdache* was 'on top,' however, was not always acceptable. (Brown, 2007, p. 67)

This qualification demonstrates the growing influence of Spanish colonialism within the now occupied societies. Indigenous peoples then began to turn away from their acceptance of homosexuality to accepting it only if there was a feminine man in the passive position and so began to adopt normative European sexual practices. Povia and Yuba, and other indigenous men around this time, were the exemplified new indigenous views of homosexuality. Thus, by the 17th century, homosexual sex had clearly become a feminized deviation from masculinity (Tortorici, 2012, p. 163). The European colonial hierarchical view of gender and sexuality, which initially seemed so foreign to the indigenous peoples (Sigal, 2000, *xvi*), had by then become the dominant mode of thought. The imposition of European gender roles radically reworked the moral fabric of indigenous society.

It is during these initial moments of the colonial womb, that we first can see homophobic rhetoric take form in Central America. The same questions and worries that dominate contemporary moral debate in Central America over what is now known as "the homosexual lifestyle" can be found in the rhetoric of the 16th century.

3. Contemporary Homophobia in *Ruido de fondo* and *The Tattooed Soldier*

3.1 Homosexuality as Moral Deviation in Javier Payeras' *Ruido de fondo*

In modern Central America, homophobic rhetoric has relegated homosexuality and LGBTQ people to the margins of society. The intersection of masculinity and sexuality has created a culture of homophobia, which can be clearly seen in Javier Payeras' *Ruido de fondo*. Published in 2006, the novel deals with the erasure of war memories in a contemporary, postwar Guatemala. It depicts a generation of young Guatemalans who separate themselves from the war, who ignore the fact that 200,000 people were massacred and thousands more disappeared. The unnamed protagonist takes the reader on a journey through urban Guatemala

that shows a country rife with self-suppression, gratuitous sex, and drug addiction. This constant dissonance desensitizes and normalizes the heterosexist norms of Central American society. Throughout Payeras' novel, homosexuality is only touched upon marginally, and when it is, it is labeled clearly as an amoral choice. Homosexuality is introduced in the novel when the anonymous protagonist describes his family's values:

> Si lo de la universidad fastidió a mi padre, que me fuera de la casa lo mató. Tuve que escuchar a mi madre y su extensa diatriba paulista sobre la obediencia de los hijos. Es una familia conservadora y un hijo que se va de la casa sin haberse casado, terminado sus estudios, o al menos mostrar una habilidad para abrirse camino: era una catástrofe. Ellos me veían en las calles o en la cárcel, pidiendo limosna, vendiendo drogas: traficante/homosexual/tocaniños. (Payeras, 2006, p. 22)

In this section, the protagonist subtly highlights the stereotypical associations of homosexuality by creating his own portmanteau word of "*traficante/homosexual/tocaniños*" and strategically placing *homosexual* at the center: the root of the worst deviations imaginable by a Guatemalan mother. Unifying these three words equates homosexuality to a perverse livelihood. This quote also shows what is deemed to be the proper path for a young man in Guatemala City: get an education, marry a woman, and show interest in starting a traditional family. A young man who is perceived to be straying from this so-called proper path is assumed to be a homosexual, and therefore is placed outside the margins of acceptance. These stereotypical constructions of masculinity and homosexuality are instilled in the mind of the fourteen-year-old character and presented to him as a path in life he should avoid at all cost.

Payeras further develops this image of the deviant homosexual in his depiction of the protagonist's friend, Elliot.

> A medio año Elliot dejó su casa. Su padre era un psicólogo muy respetado, al parecer lo echó, había algo entre Elliot y su madrastra. Elliot empezó a fumar piedra con avidez. Empezó a cambiar. Prácticamente ya no llegaba al colegio y sabíamos poco de él. Siempre que yo iba a dejarle cosas a Hermógenes, Elliot estaba allí viendo Head Bangers Balls con una pipa de vidrio en las manos. Eran puto y padrote [...] Hace 15 días me enteré que Elliot murió de sida. Fue algo penoso, realmente penoso. (Payeras, 2006, pp. 41-42)

According to the protagonist, Elliot grew up in a stable and traditional family: a devoted mother and a respected psychologist for a father. And all was well until he skipped school one day and ran away from home. Elliot then begins to smoke crack, and the protagonist loses touch with him. Elliot is only seen at the house of his pimp, Hermógenes', watching metal concerts on television (Payeras, 2006, p. 41). Within the framework of the narration, from a series of unfortunate decisions in his life –leaving his home, smoking too much crack, falling into addiction, and subsequently prostituting himself to feed his drug addiction–, Elliot *becomes* homosexual. Later, Elliot dies *una muerte "penos[a]" del SIDA*, a "[pitiful]" death of AIDS (42), which introduces another stereotype: the ostensibly inevitable cause of death of all homosexual men. In using the word "*penosa*" to describe Elliot's death, the protagonist conveys an element of disgrace as well as pity in one simple word. The reader feels as though his death could have been avoided and his life could have been more fulfilled had he not strayed from the proper path.

The medico-legal discourse surrounding homosexuals "consign[s them] to the realm of the abject:" the queer belongs with "the sick and the pitiful" (Montero, 1997, p. 109). Fear of homosexuals is tied to the stereotype that all gay men get AIDS. This logic validates the staunch vilification of gay men. In his death, Elliot represents nothing more than the consequences of homosexuality and a disease ravaged, drug-addicted body. The language

describing Elliot effectively deprives him of his humanity. His quiet, glossed over, almost forgettable death within the narrative also reflects the overall erasure of homosexual identities. He is but a marginal character, an aside in this novel.

Although only fourteen years old, it is clear that the protagonist is keenly aware of the necessity to suppress facets of his identity in order to conform to this strict construction of masculinity. In another vivid example of this, our nameless main character has an uncomfortable first sexual encounter with the mother of his friend Ivan, and later lies to his friends about what happened in order to maintain the perception of his virility and to avoid raising any suspicions of him being homosexual:

> Después de la experiencia de 'mi estreno' pasé seis noches sin dormir, atormentado, preguntándome si era justo que yo, que no quería serlo, fuese un homosexual; creía que jamás se me iba a parar, me imaginaba caminando a la iglesia y mis amigos –¡mis amigos!– riéndose de mi imitándome, y yo haciéndoles muecas afeminada de 'que me importa'. Qué podía hacer, a quien podía preguntarle, si mi papa lo sabía me iba a matar, ¡cómo su hijo en una casa de putas barata!; mis maestros me odiaban [...] Quien más. Entonces me recordé al doctor Palacios. Él no se lo contaría a Iván y quizá hasta me recetaría algo que no permitiera que me volviese maricón, así que fui a buscarlo. (Payeras, 2006, p. 30)

What is most puzzling about the situation is the protagonist's language, which implies that he is homosexual himself. He glosses over this subtle insinuation, and instead speaks extensively about his love for Ivan's mother. It is clear he fears being labeled gay, but it becomes unclear why because he speaks so in depth about his love of Ivan's mother while simultaneously wondering what his father would think of him if he were homosexual. The mere thought of anyone thinking he is homosexual haunts the protagonist and keeps him up for six days without sleep. Interestingly, he does not consider what anyone would think of him if he were to be found to have committed adultery, since his sexual encounter was with his friend Ivan's mother. Clearly there is a hierarchy among various sins, and homosexuality is the most evil of all, even more evil than adulterous, premarital sex.

3.2 Policing Masculinity in Héctor Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*

These deep-seated heterosexist norms are also perpetuated in the military, an institution that plays an integral role in both *Ruido de fondo* and Héctor Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier* (1995). In *The Tattooed Soldier*, Tobar explores the function of institutionalized homophobia in the military, although marginally. The novel centers around two men, Antonio Bernal and Guillermo Longoria, subjected to the Guatemalan diaspora. Both men come to Los Angeles after escaping a repressive, violent Guatemala. After Bernal lives homeless in Los Angeles after being unable to pay rent, he crosses paths with the murderer of his wife and child: Longoria. I here focus my analysis on Longoria, an ex-sergeant of the Guatemalan military forced to leave Guatemala. Born to a peasant family of Maya descent, he was abducted by the Guatemalan military at the age of seventeen and forced to enlist. He distinguished himself for his violence and attained a low level of authority in the military. He ultimately made his way to Los Angeles and got a job as a hired arm at a remittance mailing service.

Longoria's time in the military presents a unique case to study how heterosexual boys utilize what scholar C. J. Pascoe refers to as "the specter of the fag" to police the grounds of masculinity. In *Dude, You're a Fag* (2012) she researched homophobic discourse among students of approximately the same age as the unnamed protagonist in Payeras' *Ruido de fondo*

as well as Longoria in *The Tattooed Solider* when he was first involuntarily admitted into the army. In the novel, Longoria looks to sex as a reinforcement of his own heterosexuality, just as the fourteen-year-old protagonist of *Ruido de fondo* does. To this end, Longoria is unable to maintain a healthy relationship with a woman because these notions of masculinity have infiltrated his personal life.

Longoria refers to his relationship with Reginalda, his female lover, as a series of "meetings" (Tobar, 1995, pp. 31, 32, 86) between them. Although the two *meet* once or twice a week due to their conflicting schedules, they are incapable of carrying on basic conversation when they do, and instead the moment they walk into the house, they begin to have sex, as Tobar describes, ritualistically and like animals (p. 32). The complete lack of emotional connection in their relationship shows that Longoria views sex with Reginalda as merely a necessity to maintain his masculinity. With this necessity in mind, Longoria avoids any perceived deviations from masculine, heteronormative sexual practices, even when engrossed in a highly sexualized environment:

> At night, [...] an orgiastic chorus of Spanish lovemaking radiated [...] around him. [...] It was enough to drive a single man who was alone in his room to touch himself, a moral weakness Longoria occasionally succumbed to, even though he always remembered the admonition of the Lieutenant Colonel Villagrán, who once told him it was a "faggot's habit. Don't play with yourselves, soldiers. It weakens the spirit, Think like warriors, not like faggots. That's why we take you to the brothels. To attend to these needs. Do it the right way, the natural way. The army will see to everything. There will be no 'self-service' in the barracks. (Tobar, 1995, p. 33)

Longoria calls masturbation "a moral weakness," while recalling the admonitions of his Lieutenant Colonel who focused on the ostensibly emasculative nature of masturbation, warning the soldiers to not engage in the "faggot's habit" of masturbation. He reproves them to "do it the right way" (p. 33), reminding them that they are taken to brothels to "attend to" their needs for a reason. The pejorative rhetoric surrounding homosexuality no longer reflects the influence of Christian sexual morality imposed by the Spanish in 1492. Morality, however, is now based on constructions of masculinity and policing masculinity. Masturbation is admonished for being perceived as a deviation from "proper" masculine actions, not as a "nefarious sin" as it was in colonial times. Sex is still clearly seen as a necessity to maintain masculinity, however, now sex is rigidly defined, just as it was in colonial times. According to Longoria's Lieutenant Colonel, vaginal intercourse is "the right way, the natural way" of maintaining a man's masculinity, while masturbation is merely a shortcut or rather the deviation from the natural. Longoria uses vaginal intercourse also to draw a simple line between what will distinguish his men as soldiers: "think like warriors, not like faggots." Masturbation is for the weak spirited, the "faggots" who would never be true soldiers, because true "warriors" engage only in vaginal sex.

The Lieutenant Colonel's use of derogatory and homophobic language also merits comment. Since heterosexual officers in the military insult other heterosexual officers by calling them faggots, it's clear that the word, in this case, has little to do with sexuality. It instead deals directly with *patrolling* masculinity. Longoria's military superiors treat the word as a pejorative term to show contempt for their subordinates. Since there is no tangible means of asserting their heterosexuality, they take to admonishing each other. They shore up contemporary definitions of masculinity and divest their fellow soldiers of their masculinity.

One can look to Longoria and his relationship with his superiors in the military to examine the emasculative, shameful nature homosexuality from lens of Central American

masculinity. When his Lieutenant Colonel forces Longoria to dance with his peer, the reader garners an interesting perspective on how homophobia has evolved.

> Well, what are you waiting for, you *maricas*? [...] "Are you refusing an order, you faggots?" The captain grabbed the man nearest him y the shoulders. "Dance you faggot, dance." When the conscript only stood in place, trembling, Captain Elías picked him up off the ground and threw him against the flimsy barracks wall [...] Longoria wrapped his arm around Alvaro's waist, feeling deeply humiliated, because he was acting against nature by holding a man the way you were supposed to hold a woman. (Tobar, 1995, p. 62)

The introduction of oppressive, homophobic language by the Spanish has clearly left a lasting mark on Central American perceptions of homosexuals, as homophobia has clearly been fully absorbed into Central American society. When Longoria states he feels as though he is "acting against nature by holding a man the way [he was] supposed to hold a woman," he inadvertently invokes heterosexist norms and demonstrates how deeply ingrained they are in Central American society. Homosexuality is "deeply humiliate[ing]" and worthy of contempt.

4. Conclusions

By remapping these two canonical Central American novels, I intent to place the marginalized topic of homosexuality at the center of discussion. Analyses of these two novels have generally focused on the erasure of memory, diaspora, and impunity in post war society. I redirect focus to underlying heterosexist norms that go unnoticed in Central American society.

These cases of explicitly harsh homophobia in Payeras' and Tobar's works are not isolated. The homophobic discourse of the protagonist's family in *Ruido de fondo* and of military personnel in *The Tattooed Solider* reflect vestiges of the ancient, culturally homophobic tradition imposed by the enterprise of Spanish colonialism. Spanish colonists cultivated heterosexist ideals and planted them in the ideals of indigenous culture, which previously had no hierarchy for sexes nor sexualities. These seeds of homophobia and the constructs of masculinity and sexuality survived and flourished in Central American society. Not only have these heterosexist traditions persisted in the Central American legal systems, they have also trespassed institutions like the military, day-to-day discourse, and peoples' imaginaries. They linger in casual dialogue and in the structure of the nuclear family. These notions are perpetuated in nearly every aspect of daily life. As Nobel laureate Mario Vargas Llosa notes, this idea of homosexuality is

> se enseña en las escuelas, se contagia en el seno de las familias, se predica en los púlpitos, se difunde en los medios de comunicación, aparece en los discursos de políticos, en los programas de radio y televisión y en las comedias teatrales donde el marica y la tortillera son siempre personajes grotescos, anómalos, ridículos y peligrosos, merecedores del desprecio y el rechazo de los seres decentes, normales y corrientes. (2012)

Homosexuals must be "tenidos a una distancia preventiva de los seres normales porque corrompen al cuerpo social sano y lo inducen a pecar y a desintegrarse moral y físicamente en prácticas perversas y nefandas," (must be kept at a distance from normal people, so they won't corrupt healthy society and lure people into sin, moral and physical decay, and perverse and nefarious practices, translation mine). Homosexuality is criticized from nearly every venerated institution throughout all of Latin America, not only Central America society.

These defamatory portrayals of LGBT individuals pervade contemporary Central American society and have created sociocultural justice systems, "sistemas de limpieza social,"

or social cleansing systems, that work against "emisores de desorden" (Tábora, 2001, p. 15), a broad term that encompasses any individual who strays from normative logic. This complex sociocultural framework legitimizes the use of violence, allows for all kinds of violations of human rights, and leads to social hatred and fear of any marginalized subject (p. 15), in this case homosexuals. It is for this reason that violence against homosexuals is justified and continues unabated. The violent harassment and murder of Central American LGBT individuals today mirrors the same erasure of queer identities of the Spanish colonial project, which exiled and executed "deviants." Most harrowing, though, is the fact that many of these LGBT murders are not even investigated and are "often underreported" by local authorities (Dyer, 2014). Even in death, the heteronormativity of Central America refuses "to allow homosexuality to even be a distant echo" (Montero, 1997, p. 104) in contemporary social discourse.

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