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Dementia Nefanda Studies on Homosexuality in Guatemala from the 17th to the 21st Century

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Abstract

A review of the book *Dementia Nefanda* studies on homosexuality in Guatemala from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century is presented.

Opinion

History is written by the victors. They decide what we will remember and what we will hide. So, it has been with male eros. Looking at any history textbook, we might believe that no society ever celebrated love between men, that no painter, poet or pope ever opened his bed or his heart to another man. Evidence of homosexual love was either discreetly suppressed, as was done with the Greeks and Romans, or quickly destroyed, as is being done today with the Inca and Mayan art that has recently been found. The result of this deception has been the unnecessary polarisation of society and the unacknowledged suffering endured by people who fall in love with others of the same sex. In general, love between men was part of the social and religious fabric. From the city-states of ancient Greece or from Rome and its emperors to Siberian shamans or North American Indian two-spirit healers or African tribesmen to emperors or Chinese scholars, people all over the world understood and respected the existence of male vulnerability to the beauty of other men. Eros circulated with equal intensity in the kingdom of Guatemala, leaving the Kingdom of Guatemala as an exception to these customs, as evidenced by the cases we will discuss in this topic from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century: The case of Agustín de Vargas, aged twelve, apprentice to Pedro de Liendo, aged twenty-five, presented to the oidor of the audiencia, Doctor García de Carvajal Figueroa, in December 1611; the case of Don Juan Joseph Quintanilla, accused of inciting two young boys in the city of Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala to the torment of sodomy in 1775; "Delito nefando y otros excesos cometidos por José Victoriano Ambrosio contra Joaquín" in 1806; that of José Miculax Bux, "El Estrangulador" in 1946 and the case of Jared, in the 21st century.

There is no better way to get to know an era and a culture than by delving into the archives, into that perpetual source of knowledge hidden in the annals of history, digging into its curiosities; not in the "great events", but rather in the minor ones, in those which in the eyes of the great compilers do not mark the evolution of a civilization; In those little twists and turns of everyday life, in which what we call in good chapín we find what we call "dirty tricks", and which teach us that everywhere and at all times, beans are being cooked and will continue to be cooked. For this reason, and with the aim of presenting everyday life and how each era and its vicissitudes were faced, these cases are brought up, that of homosexuals, cases which since colonial times and still to this day have caused rejection in the best of cases and violence in the most common. Such an approach allows, at the same time as an approach to homosexuality, to contrast, from our century-vintage perspective, the vision of such behavior that was held more than three hundred years ago.

As will be seen in the approach to each case, psychosis and perversion will be two terms that will thread our analysis, since: Madness is the verdict. Madness can be understood under the concept of psychosis. Lacan says: "Psychosis corresponds to what has always been and still is called madness, there is no reason to deny oneself the luxury of this word". Thus, far from seeing it as a derogatory term, he values its poetic resonances, approves of its use, on condition that it is assigned the precise meaning of psychosis. Psychosis is defined as a structure characterized by the operation of foreclosure. In this operation, the Name-of-the-Father is not integrated into the symbolic universe of the psychotic (it is forecluded). As a result, a hole is left in the symbolic order. To speak of a hole in the symbolic order is not to say that the psychotic has no unconscious; on the contrary, in psychosis the unconscious is present but does not function. So, the psychotic structure results from a certain dysfunction of the Oedipus complex, a lack of paternal function; more specifically, in psychosis the paternal function is reduced to the image of the father (the symbolic is reduced to the imaginary).

From the above it is clear that homosexuality is not a psychosis, it is not madness, but rather a perversion. According to Freud's definition, perversion was any form of sexual behavior that deviated from the norm of heterosexual genital copulation. However, this definition is problematized by Freud's own ideas about the polymorphous perversion of human sexuality, which is characterized by the absence of a pre-given natural order. Lacan overcomes this impasse in Freudian theory by defining perversion, not as a form of behavior, but as a clinical structure. Perversion is not simply an aberration in relation to social criteria, an anomaly contrary to good morals, although this register is not absent, nor is it something atypical according to natural criteria, i.e., that it disregards to a greater or lesser extent the reproductive purpose of sexual union, it is something else in its very structure. A perverse structure remains perverse even when the acts associated with it are socially approved.

Thus, Lacan considers homosexuality to be a perversion even when it was practiced in ancient Greece, where it was widely tolerated. This is not because homosexuality or any other form of sexuality is naturally perverse; on the contrary, the perverse nature of homosexuality depends entirely on the fact that it violates the normative requirements of the oedipus complex. The analyst's neutrality forbids him to take sides with respect to these norms; rather than defending or attacking them, the analyst seeks only to expose their incidence in the history of the subject. It is the wish of this intervention to point out the question of homosexuality, since it is at the heart of the current debate on perversions, their social recognition, the new presentation of their symptoms. As we move towards recognition, the subject is confronted more directly with the para-



doxes inherent to his or her position in terms of sexual desire and love. The symptom finds a much clearer terrain on which to formulate itself. And the fact that the symptom has an increasing weight in the presentation of the demand makes it all the more necessary to have clear criteria to differentiate different modalities of homosexuality - the properly perverse and the non-perverse.

All these cases can be consulted in depth in our book "Demencia Nefanda Estudios sobre la homosexualidad en Guatemala del siglo XVII al XXI" which can be purchased on Amazon both in digital and paper format at: <https://www.amazon.com/Demencia-Nefanda-Estudios-homosexualidad-Guatemala-ebook/dp/B082T31JFR>