

The Latino LGBT Community: Responding with  
Poetry

*By Olimpia Carias*

Contemporary Ethnic Literature

Dr. Dietrich



*Bandera by Felix D'Eon*

Poetry by Olimpia Carias

**Misterio de los mayas** ~ *in response to "LGBT Latinos: Despite Challenges, Greater Empowerment, Progress."*

the haze of the sun  
blurs the faces  
of my dream

a moon song over  
the grass court  
while they drink  
red water

macaw balconies  
crumble, vines  
whipping in the wind  
with the far cry of  
the virgin

climbing stairway words  
till I find the  
gods of my  
sleeping mind

18 Rabbit and Akbal  
with jaded teeth  
speak,  
*¿Quién eres?*

the glow of darkness  
wakes me slow  
and I remember  
gringos from yesterday  
asking,  
*What are you?*

**Santa María** ~ *in response to "Religion and Coming Out Issues for Latinas and Latinos."*

wind down the  
haze of roses  
till full blooms  
are on your chest

eat the thorns  
till botflies  
are set free  
from your belly

drip sweet water  
on your tongue  
and carry crushed  
petals in your palm

follow the scent till  
you can see the scratchy  
brown sky of your coffin.

**Suavemente** ~ *in response to "In Songs, Stories, Latino And LGBT Voices On How The Orlando Attack Feels Personal."*

twist of the hip  
and a bite to the neck,  
scoop their sweaty back  
and feel, hear  
the beat of dancing  
lights in their brown eyes.

"I haven't seen you here  
before. What's your name?"

Estefany.

"Qué bella"

count the number of  
wet kisses, wishing  
that their spells  
will never fade.  
yell into their curls  
that you don't want  
the night to fall.

unmask your mother's damnations  
and call this land home.

**Let me tell you about the day the sea became my lover.** ~ *in response to "Gay, Latino and Macho."*

i was still so young and i carried the sun in my skin. My cheeks, streaked with its rays; my hair light as café con leche. Tasting sopa de caracol in my throat, i licked my chapped lips as i slipped off my sandals. i walked out of my tío's house looking for a place where my mind could roam freely, where my body could exist outside of itself.

The dirt of the road dusted my ankles as the flies kissed my ears. i didn't bother swatting them away, i relished in their existence. i kept walking, passing by the community horse and the clay houses that reminded me of pan de coco. i could feel the sweat trickle down my back while the humidity cradled my face. Soon the sand was in my view and the orange glow of day that led me forward.

Bliss was his body, his hair scattered along the shore. i stepped on his teeth, a slight tickle to my feet. He felt warm as i entered him. He enveloped me in his soul and he lapped up the slick sweetness of my shoulder. i ran my fingers through him and he came in waves. Crisp whispers of heat singing along with his sighs. i fell deeper and deeper into him till i couldn't breathe. i drowned in his love.

He pushed me away, far away till I was facing him once more. As if it was the first time. I was dripping in his tears as I turned away, unsure if I'll ever return. I walked back to my tío's house, his splashing cries playing in my mind. I saw my tío's stomach in the hammock before I saw his face, an empty bowl and squeezed limónes on the ground. He smiled at me and said, "You've never been so tan."

## Writer's Statement

Despite the evolving acceptance and love of the LGBT Latino community there are several societal obstacles that continue to be a struggle in terms of embracing their sexuality. Many of these obstacles are inherit to the Latino community such as ideals of hypermasculinity or machismo as well as the strong influence of Catholicism. These cultural values along with the discovery of sexuality and self-identity creates a difficult and often fearful way of life for many Latino-Americans today. The complexities of being Latino-American and queer are often so stark that many of these individuals decide to push away their true selves and live a life that is expected of them rather than living for themselves.

For my first poem, I used Mayan history as an influence for the setting which translates into the narrator's own heritage and ethnicity. Despite the progress that has been made in the LGBT Latino community, many of these individuals face the difficult journey of self-discovery especially when living in America. The double life is hinted at in the end of the poem where not only sacred Mayan gods are questioning the narrator but white people as well. Their questioning is rooted in the fact that many Latino-Americans are trying to figure out who they are or who others want them to be; this becomes more stressful when sexuality comes into play.

Whenever I think of the Catholic religion I think of roses and different saints. I decided to title the piece "Santa María", after the Virgin Mary, due to this virginal withholding of sexuality for those who wish to remain in the closet. The narrator is experiencing different stimuli because of the roses, "thorns" and "botflies" insinuating the pain one feels when hiding their true self. "Sweet water" references holy water while "crushed petals" also symbolize an item meant to ward off some sort of evil, in this case homosexuality. The coffin symbolizes the fact that many

Latinos live their entire lives, and even in death, without being honest about their sexuality due to the societal and religious judgements that they face.

“Suavemente” speaks to the club goers who feel free and safe amongst other queer people. The ability to dance and let loose amongst others gives a sense of empowerment and comfortability that is otherwise unattainable in these queer Latinos’ lives. For many of these queer Latinos, it is the only place where they can express their sexuality without judgment. If the location has a small community of out queer Latinos then some may become regulars and recognize other club goers, as insinuated in the middle of the poem. I chose to have queer women as the main characters of this poem due to the very few spaces that cater to queer women; most events or clubs are lauded with gay men but with time there may be an influx of spaces or events catered to queer women.

My last poem focuses on the personification of the sea but rather than the typical trope of it being a woman, I chose to have it be a man. Often a queer man or woman’s first sexual encounter with the same sex happens undercover or with a sense of secrecy. The narrator of this poem experiences this secrecy and the moment itself is surreal. The sea is often given feminine qualities but there is a sense of intimacy or fluidity that mimics the ocean in a homosexual relationship or any relationship for that matter. This all roots itself down in the exploration of love or sexuality which is often stereotyped in femininity but it is more than that – it is a universal experience that goes past gender norms.

## Works Cited

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