(In)Visibilities of Female Same-Sex Desire in Marilyn Bobes' Short Story "Somebody Has to Cry"

Lena Falk
University of Bonn

Abstract

Marilyn Bobes' short story "Somebody Has to Cry," originally published in Spanish under the title "Alguien Tiene Que Ilorar" in 1995, constructs the queer woman at its centre through the empty space left behind after her self-inflicted death. Her representation is fragmented and heavily filtered through the narrative voices' heteropatriarchal lens, constructing an image of her as much as of the attitudes towards women and queerness that formed her social-cultural context. This paper examines the legal and cultural contexts that have impacted women and queer people in Cuba under Spanish-Catholic colonialism, during the Revolutionary Era, which privileged the heterosexual nuclear family and masculinity in men as a Revolutionary ideal, and during the severe economic crisis known as the Special Period in Post-Soviet Cuba. By contrasting and exploring the different narrative voices that form the story, this paper examines how these influences become visible in the characters' representations of the protagonist, and how the visibility and invisibility of the protagonist constructs an image of machismo and marianismo culture and queerness in the context of Cuba in the late twentieth century.

Keywords Caribbean; Cuba; Lesbian Visibility; Marianismo; Marilyn Bobes; Queer; Postcolonial.

DOI: 10.25364/27.6:2026.1.5

Introduction

> You see us but do not recognize us. You do not see, or choose not to see, those of us who really enjoy winding on and dancing with each other, those of us who have 'roommates' and 'best friends' (*buenas amigas*) for ten, twenty years. Yes, you love us, as long as we don't use the word *lesbian*, and as long as we don't link it to the word - the identity - Caribbean. Then, all too often, we are on our own. (King, "More" 194)

The ambivalence of visibility and invisibility is an issue that pertains to female same-sex desire in a peculiar way: while men who have queer desires – especially if they transgress normative gender presentation – are quickly made the object of homophobic scrutiny, women who share lives and beds with each other pass more easily under the radar as friends, cousins, or sisters. As Rosamund King writes above, it is not only a matter of not seeing, but of choosing not to see lesbian desire. What's more, female same-sex desire may be permissible as a temporary practice – for the length of a dance, for example – but not as an identity-forming characteristic or a permanent state, especially, King writes, in the context of Caribbean identities: "*Caribbean lesbians do not exist*: so it is implied by historians, sociologists, and other scholars, and by our singers and writers […]" (191). The lack of representation King laments in the above quote from 2008 is present not only in media consumed for their entertainment-value but can also be traced in scholarship, although recent years have seen an increase both in novels and research on female same-sex desire in the Caribbean. An earlier example of lesbian representation can be found in Marilyn Bobes' short story "Somebody Has to Cry." The story was originally published in Spanish under the title "Alguien Tiene Que llorar"[1] in a short story collection of the same title in 1995, thirteen years prior to King's essay quoted above. The story centres around Maritza, a queer woman who has chosen to end her life and now becomes visible, posthumously, through the very space she has left empty. Maritza is constructed within and through this empty space through the voices of four people involved in her life who, while remembering and mourning her, convey an image of their upbringing and their attitudes towards gender roles and queerness. Although the trope of a tragic end for queer protagonists is all too familiar – often imposed as a measure to not normalise or idealise queerness, an effect, for example, of the American Hays Code – Bobes uses Maritza's absence to paint a vivid portrait of the attitudes and prejudices of the community she lived in and their part in her decision to end her life.

In order to provide a cultural framework, this paper examines the legal and cultural contexts that have impacted queer people in Cuba during the Prerevolutionary Era under Spanish-Catholic colonialism, during the Revolutionary Era, which privileged the heterosexual nuclear family and masculinity in men as a Revolutionary ideal, and during the severe economic crisis known as the Special Period in Post-Soviet Cuba, during which the story was published and is set. I will also examine attitudes towards female same-sex desire in and around Cuba, focusing mainly on the view of queerness as an identity versus an act, and on the issue of terminology. Through a close reading of the story, I will then trace the influences

of these contexts on the characters' representations of Maritza, particularly of machismo and marianismo culture and of the privileging of heteronormative family structures during the Revolutionary Era, and how the lesbian main character of this story is represented and constructed with and through her absence.

Legislative and Cultural Context: Being Queer/Female in Cuba Before and During the Special Period

The socio-cultural landscape of Cuba has been and continues to be heavily influenced by its history as a nation colonised by Catholic Spain, its Revolutionary Era under a socialist government and its geographical proximity and ties to the United States. Texts that discuss gender equality and queerness in Cuba generally devote limited attention to Prerevolutionary Cuba. While some sources discuss queerness in Cuba from an intersectional viewpoint (e.g. Eastwood; Stout), citing most prominently the intersection of racist and homophobic attitudes queer Cubans of colour must contend with, the texts consulted for this paper make no mention of pre-colonial Cuban understandings of queerness and gender. However, the influence of Spanish-Catholic ideas regarding a binary understanding of gender, patriarchal hierarchies and heteronormativity are evident in colonial and post-colonial Cuba (see Báez and Soto-Lafontaine; Stout 15-16). The combination of machismo and marianismo culture, a specific form of patriarchal structure distinct to the Latin American cultural sphere, and the egalitarian and anti-class government of the Revolutionary Era make for contradictory attitudes between legislative and social conditions regarding gender equality and queerness until today (see Wilk). This section will focus on the standing of women and of queer people in Cuba at and around the time the short story is set, focusing mainly on the impact of machismo and marianismo culture as well as the legislative situation of queer people in Cuba. These legal and cultural contexts will offer valuable insight into the attitudes and anxieties presented by the story's narrative voices.

Patriarchal and authoritarian family structures dominated Prerevolutionary Cuba as a cultural legacy of Spanish colonisation, encouraging men to fulfil the macho role while women were, in those families who could afford it, restricted to the domestic sphere (Kaufman Purcell 260-61). Equality for women was one of the declared goals of the Cuban Revolution: they were to receive access to the job market through the implementation of child-care facilities, allowing them to leave the domestic sphere they were ideologically bound to (Kaufman Purcell 258). Although the number of employed women increased, efforts to disentangle women from the domestic sphere were met with resistance from the communities, and the image of women as the main caregivers and homemakers continued to be perpetuated socially and culturally (Kaufman Purcell 267-68). Regarding the role of women in post-colonial Caribbean states, Yasmin Tambiah notes that

> [...] anticolonial, nationalist movements have charged women with 'bearing' the nation, physically and symbolically. Central to this mandate are women's conformity to particular constructions of the family and their compliance with prescriptions that

> reify female sexual containment through virginity, compulsory heterosexuality, marriage, and motherhood. (144)

In defying the heteronormative role of mother and wife that women are still often expected to fulfil, lesbians and women who desire women defy what is perceived to be a natural order of things, and thus, they are often perceived to defy Caribbean values (see King, "More" 191). While the government of the Revolutionary Era strived towards gender equality, it "idealized the heterosexual, nuclear family as the backbone of revolutionary society" (Stout 38) and as the prerequisite for a more equal division of domestic obligations. Positing the heterosexual nuclear family as a Revolutionary ideal in consequence made "public displays of homosexuality and prostitution [...] a threat to the order of the family" (Stout 38). Hence, gender equality in Revolutionary Cuba was to come at the price of having to adhere to heteronormative and conservative ideas around families and relationships.

This can be traced back to the underlying patriarchal attitudes that are inherent to machismo and marianismo culture. Machismo culture, like other cultural frameworks that abide by a patriarchal logic, strengthens the rigidity of hierarchical divisions of space and obligations by tying the binary opposition of men and women to a supposedly naturally inherent order, and to behavioural norms tied to these. Social pressure demands that individuals behave according to these gendered norms, which in turn serve as proof of the supposedly natural order of things, forming a self-perpetuating system. As such, machismo culture postulates that men exert aggression and intransigence vis-à-vis other men while women are met with arrogance and sexual aggression (Stevens 90). Within this logic, men view other men as rivals, while women are viewed as inferior and as sexual prey, a sentiment that can be traced within Bobes' short story as well. The female counterpart to this is marianismo, as coined by Evelyn P. Stevens in her 1973 essay "Marianismo: The Other Face of Machismo in Latin America." Stevens defines marianismo as "the cult of feminine spiritual superiority, which teaches that women are semi-divine, morally superior and spiritually stronger than men" (91).[2] What may first sound like a privileging of women over men in reality serves to perpetuate the image of women as virtuous (loyal and submissive to their husbands), as mothers, and as keepers of the household (bound to the domestic sphere). Stevens also writes that the ideal presented within "the stereotype prescribed by marianismo" (96) is contrasted by the *bad woman*: women who do not abide by the feminine ideal, perform stereotypically masculine traits or behaviour and are therefore not considered "real women" (96). In terms of sexuality, Stevens asserts, marianismo prescribes that women are not only meant to be chaste before marriage, but also frigid after, performing sex out of marital duty rather than enjoyment (96-97). Not so men, who are expected to have extra-marital affairs (Stevens 98). The restrictive behavioural ideals postulated by marianismo are regulated by both men and women, a matter that can, like the misogynistic attitude mentioned above, also be observed in "Somebody Has to Cry".

Rigid gender roles are closely linked to homophobic attitudes, with same-sex relations being viewed as transgressive deviations from the feminine and masculine roles ascribed to women and men respectively. Arguelles and Rich describe Prerevolutionary Cuba as homopho-

bic both in rural and in urban communities and as deeply sexist. They write that in Prerevolutionary Cuba, "discrete lesbian or gay male identities in the modern sense - identities that are based on self-definition and involve emotional as well as physical aspects of same sex relations were rare" (688), and that same-sex relationships closely resembled the dynamics of heterosexual marital roles in terms of hierarchy and "erotic loyalty" (688). While bourgeois same-sex relationships after this model existed in private spaces, homosexuality was also commodified in Havana in the context of sex-work. Economic sectors with growth and employment opportunities at the time were comprised of "tourism, drug distribution, gambling and prostitution," areas that were "mostly controlled by American organised crime" (Arguelles and Rich 677) as well as members of the Cuban bourgeoisie connected to Batista's government. Gay men and women proceeded to be hired into the tourism sector to offer "homoerotic experiences" (Arguelles and Rich 687) to both American visitors and members of the Cuban bourgeoisie. Although covert homosexuality and prostitution were tolerated in certain circles because of their capacity to generate capital, this did not entail tolerance towards or acceptance of homosexuality in Cuba's wider society (Arguelles and Rich 678).

In the course of the Cuban Revolution, the regime began to reject issues associated with "American imperialism and organized crime" (Hamilton 38). Due to prejudices that drew a connection between prostitution, drugs, criminality and homosexuality, gay men were especially targeted and often accused of being counterrevolutionary, with artists and intellectuals especially prone to being accused of homosexuality (Hamilton 39). Between 1965 and 1967, people accused of being counterrevolutionary were interned in UMAP Camps to be reformed (Hamilton 40-41), which included the instillation of masculinity as a Revolutionary ideal (Stout 37). Although less women were held in UMAP camps than men, lesbians and female sex-workers were also imprisoned (Stout 37), indicating that queer women were not entirely invisible. Homosexuality was decriminalised in Cuba in 1979 under the New Criminal Code, which no longer declared homosexual acts a social threat. However, public displays of homosexuality remained criminalised until 1987, as was soliciting others with homosexual requests, which was amended in 1997 to requests of a sexual nature (ILGA World Database). In 1980, during the Mariel exodus, approximately 125,000 Cubans emigrated to Florida, a significant number of whom were homosexual and forced into exile by Cuban authorities (Hamilton 128, see Stout 40). Hamilton writes that this mass-emigration, which was accompanied by the "blatant homophobia of the anti-Mariel demonstrations inside Cuba" (44), along with the UMAP camps of the mid-70s, are "the most commonly cited evidence of Cuban revolutionary homophobia and continues to leave a scar on the collective memory of the Revolution" (44). After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Cuba fell into a severe economic crisis referred to as the Special Period in Times of Peace, during which "Somebody Has to Cry" is set. This period brought with it both the return of prostitution and foreign sex tourism, which had been formally eradicated during the Revolutionary Era (Stout 3), and "the return of older forms of homophobic discourse" which viewed homosexuality as a threat to "public morality" (Hamilton 49).[3]

As mentioned earlier, machismo and marianismo culture demand not only heterosexual desire on the part of men, but a lack of sexual desire on the part of women. This supposed

lack of sexual desire logically contributes to the invisibility of female same-sex desire. Arguelles and Rich write that during the Prerevolutionary Era, homosexual and gender non-conforming people were generally subjected to shame and violence, while "Tortilleras (or dykes) – considerably less visible owing to the overall repression of female sexuality – were either ignored or made objects of ridicule" (687). Female same-sex couples can – willingly or unwillingly – be categorised as friends or relatives, constituting an ambiguous dynamic of visibility and invisibility by being visible as, for example, two women living together, but invisible as a romantic couple.

Differing stances towards sexuality as an act or as indicative of an identity can further complicate matters regarding the visibility of queer women. Keja L. Valens argues against the use of identity politics when discussing female same sex-desire in the context of Caribbean literatures. Valens writes that "knowledge about any woman's desire for any other woman does not carry any special truth about her" (6) and rejects the homo-hetero structure as grounds for understanding desire between women in the Caribbean. Carrie Hamilton makes a similar argument, but adds that Cuba "demonstrates the coexistence of different models and language of sexual preference and identity" (11). While some individuals identify with labels such as homosexual, gay and lesbian, others do not apply such terms, or do not link their identity with their non-heterosexual desire. Scholarship and literature on female same-sex desire in the Caribbean shows that there is a wide variety of terminology and different understandings connected to the matter. Varying terminology and nuance point to equally varying understandings of queer desire and its significance in relation to individual identity across the Caribbean. While the term macocotte, for example, refers to very close friendships between adolescent girls that can involve physical intimacy but are not deemed indicative of same-sex desire (see Mac-Donald-Smythe), related terms such as *zami* carry different meanings in different regions. On Kwéyól-speaking islands such as Guadeloupe and Haiti, zami means close friend, while *making zami* signifies lesbian activities, and on islands such as Trinidad and Grenada, zami has lost this nuance and is synonymous with lesbian (MacDonald-Smythe 228). Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley cites a number of terms relating to same-sex relationships between working-class women of different Caribbean regions, such as "*mati* in Suriname, *zanmi* in Grenada, *kambrada* in Curaçao," (465) and she explains that "these words refer without distinction to female friends and lovers. Mi *mati* is like *my girl* in African American English, maybe *my friend* or maybe *my lover*." (165). While female same-sex intimacy is acknowledged and denoted, its significance varies from being indicative of queer desire or identity, to an act or a preference rather than a personal identity, to being a form of early practice for subsequent heterosexual relationships.

In the context of Cuba, anglophone literature on the understanding of female same-sex desire as a practice versus an identity and related terminology is comparatively sparse. Noelle Stout's interviews in *After Love*, which were conducted between 2001 and 2007, suggest that queerness was and is handled from a more identity-based viewpoint, although queer sexuality does not preclude heterosexual marriage. For example, one of Stout's collaborators is a gay man who spends his younger years in Havana, moving within queer spaces, though

later settling down in a heterosexual marriage while continuing to have same-sex affairs in secret (31-32). Texts that discuss female same-sex desire in Cuba often use the terms lesbian, gay women and homosexual, similarly indicating an identity-led approach. This is also the case in the interviews and portraits presented by Stout, whose interviewees use gay to refer to both men and women and lesbiana to refer to women, as well as bisexual and *travesti*[4] (18, 25). Bobes' short story constructs Maritza's sexuality through insinuations and comments but doesn't use a specific term to denote her desire. I will therefore work, as I have done up until this point, with the terms lesbian (as the English translation of *lesbiana*), female same-sex desire and queer. Queer serves my purpose in multiple ways: rather than forming a certain, distinctive identity category and the ideas and connotations connected to it, such as lesbian, it indicates that which is counter to the perceived norm. This can relate both to desire and sexuality and to gender performance, one of the main aspects I will consider in my reading of "Somebody Has to Cry". Queer can be used as an identity, but it can also be understood as a practice and as an idea: that there is a norm to be disrupted, and, in practice, to disrupt this norm.

Constructing a Queer Protagonist Through the Eyes of Machismo/Marianismo Heteronormativity

"Somebody Has to Cry" revolves around Maritza, a woman who has ended her life after her relationship with another woman has fallen apart. The story is told from the perspectives of four people who were involved in Maritza's life: Alina, Daniel, Cary and Lázara. They portray her from a range of angles and with different attitudes, ranging from sexualisation and crude misogyny to admiration and friendship. The story frequently switches between their perspectives, with brief headlines indicating the narrator of each short section. This results in a patchwork of different perspectives that come together to form a picture of the deceased and her life. In the story, Maritza herself does not have a voice: her representation is filtered through others and their perceptions of her. Notably, the four figures who do have a voice within the story all have a certain degree of estrangement from Maritza. Many of the observations made by the characters are tinged with homophobia and the denial of Maritza's desire for women, although they all present some degree of awareness of her queerness. Even though the story at first seems to reflect a pattern observed in many texts with queer representation, wherein queer lives are tinged with tragedy and end in death, a method of punishing the sexual transgression within the text, I argue here that Maritza's portrayal as a tragic figure does not function as a moral message advocating for heteronormativity, but as an accusation towards Maritza's community and their homophobic attitudes. Moreover, I argue that Maritza is made visible through the empty space she has left behind, and that the story contains more indications of queerness than are immediately visible. Maritza is portrayed as a well-rounded, likable and admirable character, and the reason for her demise can be traced in the faults of the community rather than placing blame on her or her queerness (see Chancy 61).

The information the reader gains about Maritza is second, sometimes third-hand knowledge, and it is heavily filtered through the speakers' different attitudes towards Maritza.

As Persivini-Gebert observes,

> [...] a frustrated housewife consumed by jealousy, the friend who would have wanted to become her lover, the former classmate who could never match Maritza's independence of spirit, and others - build a framework of intolerance and resentment that by implication seems responsible for Maritza's suicide. (447)

Daniel, whose comments frame the story, grants an outsider's perspective to the group of Maritza's supposed friends of which he is not a central part. His remarks reveal a strong misogynistic attitude that is representative of his machismo socialisation. He views the women he describes as commodities, commenting first and foremost on their appearances and their sexual value to him. Alina, the "frustrated housewife", has the largest quantity of text and provides the reader with the most information about Maritza. She has a misogynistic attitude of a different kind: her degrading observations about Maritza indicate that her negative feelings stem from jealousy, and her homophobic remarks seem to be, first and foremost, a vehicle to express her hatred against her former classmate. Her misogynistic comments do not sexualise her friends as Daniel's do, but reproduce patriarchal views of the female gender role as mother and wife, thereby reinforcing the marianismo ideal. Lázara, who is herself a victim of patriarchal gender roles and appears as a kind-hearted, yet naïve and undereducated person through both her own comments and comments by others, reveals a homophobic attitude that is not directly tied to misogyny but reflects the possible outcome of lesbian invisibility and a lack of tolerance in her upbringing. Lastly, Cary, who has the warmest attitude towards Maritza and does not directly comment on her sexual identity, indicates a second layer of lesbian invisibility: remarks by her and others indicate a romantic, yet unfulfilled connection between her and Maritza. I must note here that I first read the above quote – particularly the section on "the friend who would have wanted to become her lover" – to refer to Cary, but realized only upon re-reading it that it refers to Daniel. In my reading, however, Daniel wants to be not so much her lover as receive sexual gratification from her, while Cary is indicated to have had a romantic connection to Maritza, but is ultimately restrained by her heteronormative upbringing and homophobic community.

The perpetuation of archaic gender roles and misogynistic attitudes is a central factor in the homophobia that lesbians and women who desire women are faced with. An important contributor to the upholding of gender roles is the performance of gender in a manner that conforms to and reaffirms gender stereotypes, and Maritza's disruption of classic gender performance is one of the central reasons for her ostracisation. Throughout "Somebody Has to Cry", both Daniel and Alina make several harsh, misogynistic comments that reflect their homophobia. As mentioned before, Daniel views women as sexual commodities and frequently rates them by their physical appearance and their sexual appeal to him. In the first segment of the story, he describes a picture of the women taken when they were fifteen years old. He sexualises and objectifies the teenaged Alina who, he describes, "[...] has got enormous breasts. She's the *criollita*, the curvaceous prize [...]" (Bobes 57), only to follow up by asserting

that "twenty-four years later all that will remain of the imposing Alina is a woman who is fat, flabby, and sad" (57). For Daniel, Alina's value, or lack thereof, lies in her appearance and her appeal to him, and his description of Alina focuses solely on her outer appearance and his opinion regarding it. Similarly, he describes Lázara by commenting on her "thin thighs, graceless figure, mousy face" (57) and her "flat and innocuous" (57) chest. Again, only her appearance and her (lack of) appeal to him are of importance. Later in the story, when describing how he came to date Lázara, he comments: "I knew from the way she looked at me that she'd put out easily and that later it would be easy to get rid of her as well" (61). He cites her low self-esteem as a reason for her acceptance of the fact that women who have liaisons with men will be in "volatile, ephemeral [situations], and without roots," (61), suggesting that women are entirely dependent upon men for stability. He states that his interest in her stemmed from the fact that she had resigned to "the fleeting nature of any bond she might make" (61) and been limited to a sexual nature. Daniel's comments are full of disdain for the women he describes and reflect a machismo attitude that reduces women to commodities to be consumed by men. This becomes abundantly clear when Daniel appraises Cary's body, and by extension, Cary, as "something meticulously crafted by a goldsmith: for love, to be kissed, touched, and sipped inch by inch" (62).

In contrast, Daniel describes Maritza's "powerful frame, rising above the group" as "an aggressive presence in the portrait" (57), and as "beautiful, although in a different way. Her face was perfect and mysterious, like no other in the photo" (58). I propose that Daniel's description of Maritza differs so strikingly because she is unavailable to him as a sexual commodity, an idea that is supported by Cary's description of Maritza's physical appearance. Cary observes that even as a teenager, Maritza "cultivated her body for its use-value" (58) rather than in order to appeal to potential husbands as her friends did, who were always "preparing for future auction" (58). A note added to the translation of the story points out that within Marxist economics, use-value is used in opposition to exchange-value: while the former denotes worth in terms of utility, the latter relates to worth in terms of "the price at which it can be bought or sold" (69n1). While the other women participated from a young age in the heterosexual economy of exchange that comes with machismo/marianismo culture, Maritza has extracted herself from this logic by prioritising the cultivation of her body for its function, emphasising traditionally masculine features like strength over femininity. Conveying the differences between the women's attitudes towards their bodies within economic systems of exchange emphasises the commodification of women's bodies beyond the frame of sex-work.

Cary's description of how the other women scolded Maritza for her laxness and her lack of feminine modesty show how the marianismo ideal is upheld and self-regulated among women as much as by men. Cary also notes, however, that Maritza seems happier than the others – although Maritza does not fit into the female role dictated by machismo/marianismo culture, her self-extraction serves her personal happiness. Later, Lázara remarks that "it's true that [Maritza] did a lot of men's things, but to jump from that to saying that she liked women, that's a long stretch" (66). Lázara's comment, although she negotiates the thought and discards it as untrue, reveals the notion that stereotypically masculine gender performance in

women suggests same-sex desire. It also suggests that refusing to be subordinate to men in daily life – by doing "a lot of men's things", for example – is equal to not being sexually available to or interested in them. Interestingly, Noelle Stout recounts in *After Love* that among the Cuban lesbians she interviewed for her volume on queer intimacy in Cuba, she detected negative attitudes towards masculine lesbians (as well as women of colour) within lesbian spaces as well (63). Stout notes that while the transgression of gender norms and racial boundaries was acceptable for men, "women who too radically transgressed gendered norms were considered failed 'men' or *machos*. Hence, women were often confined to gendered norms and racialized notions of attractiveness even among other lesbians" (67). The women interviewed by Stout simultaneously rejected the gender hierarchy present within machismo culture while also reinforcing gender norms by policing the gender presentation of other lesbians. This regulation of gender norms between lesbians, Stout notes referencing Hamilton, was more visible in women who had access to "transnational models of feminism and lesbianism" (63; Hamilton 189). Considering Arguelles and Rich's findings regarding the emulation of heteropatriarchal hierarchies in same-sex relationships in Prerevolutionary Cuba, this indicates that the import of gender-egalitarian feminism also brought with it an increased scepticism of gender roles in same-sex relationships between women. Because Maritza is described only through a heteropatriarchal lens, it is unclear whether Maritza was penalised for her masculinity both inside and outside of queer spaces.

Centrally, using Daniel for the physical descriptions of the women also has the effect of showing women's worth within a machismo society, although his perception of Maritza is counter-intuitive in this regard. Ironically, Maritza's lack of availability for Daniel coupled with her non-feminine appearance seem to result not in disdain but in something akin to respect from the others, but especially from Daniel. He sets Maritza apart from the rest of the group, her difference being that in the patriarchal hierarchy that Daniel abides by, she is not as subjugated as the others: she is outside the realm of Daniel's commodification of women. Daniel's admiration for her may well stem from the fact that she has never shown any interest in attracting his advances, and he notes that although she is "the most beautiful, [...] she didn't know it then. She didn't even dare imagine it" (57). To say that he respects her as his equal, however, would oversimplify the matter. Especially when compared to Daniel's disdainful stance towards Lázara, Daniel's admiration of her supposedly singular non-conceited self-perception is further proof of his misogyny by making Maritza deserving of some measure of respect specifically because she is not like other women.

Alina, who always carried with her a "shoulder bag full of perfume, tissues, lipsticks, eyeliners, and all the other makeup imaginable," (59) performs femininity in a 'traditional' sense. Through spiteful comments, Alina shows bitterness and jealousy towards Maritza and reveals a considerable amount of internalised misogyny. Her understanding of gender roles is heavily shaped by machismo/marianismo culture and covers the disappointments that have come with her situation in life by positioning her fulfilment of the woman's role as wife and mother as morally superior. In Alina's worldview, women must have children and families in order to achieve happiness and completion, reflecting the idea of women 'bearing the nation'

and being naturally inclined towards domestic duties. She asserts that men's infidelity, an unfulfilled sex-life and disappointment are commonplace in marriages and a fair price to pay for the title of wife (60). Again, this closely reflects machismo and marianismo culture: men are expected to have extramarital affairs, while women are expected to engage in sex with their husbands out of marital obligation, not enjoyment. Alina similarly shames Lázara, who also defies her ideal of chastity and heteronormative nuclear families by being a single mother. When describing the picture in the beginning of the story, Daniel recounts "the tragedy" (57) that has ruined Lázara's life: impregnated and abandoned by a forty-year-old man when she was only fifteen, Lázara was forced to drop out of school and consequently denied opportunities the others had. However, none of the characters blame 'The Old Man' for this, let alone accuse him of predatory behaviour towards a teenager. Instead, both Daniel and Alina blame Lázara for her situation, ignoring entirely the societal constraints that have contributed to her situation.

The archaic and misogynistic attitudes reflected in the comments made by Daniel and Alina are indicative of a larger issue of societal disadvantages women face. In reference to the men in Cary's life, she remembers Maritza telling her that "women by nature are the ones who lose. We've been brought up, she told me once, to facilitate the triumph of men" (63). The statement is proof of Maritza's awareness of the patriarchal restrictions put on women while also revealing a heavy dose of cynicism on her part. Moreover, Alina remembers Maritza complaining of men not listening to her, feigning interest in her work when really, they want her for sexual gratification (63). Besides being reflective of heteronormativity in assuming that Maritza would be interested in the first place, this also again reflects a machismo society in which women are viewed as sexual commodities rather than equals, even in a professional setting. Maritza proves her heightened awareness for these grievances in several instances, such as when she points out that Alina's husband introduces her merely as his wife instead of by name, reducing her from a person to his asset. Being a woman who does not desire men, Maritza is exposed to misogyny on different levels than the other characters, and her heightened awareness of these matters is consequential. Ultimately, she is ostracised and deprived of social support for not fulfilling the roles a misogynistic environment demands of her.

Homophobia within the short story takes on two central forms: the reproduction of lesbian stereotypes and the consequential othering of women who desire women. The character who most prominently displays homophobia is Alina, but Lázara, too, expresses homophobic views. However, the two differ: while Alina is blatantly and unapologetically homophobic, Lázara represents a more subtle and normalised form of homophobia that she cannot merge with her high opinion of Maritza. Interestingly, both women do not use identifying terms or phrases when speaking about Maritza's sexuality; they do, however, find creative ways of discerning and describing Maritza's otherness, and both reproduce an array of stereotypes and prejudices.

Alina repeatedly alludes to her presentiment of Maritza's sexual orientation, which she frames as predatory when she muses that she should have warned Cary about Maritza, adding: "I don't know why we didn't discover it in time. We were *normal*, *we dressed well*, *we thought*

the way women think." (59; emphasis added). Her heteronormative attitude is centrally tied to gender performance both in feminine appearance and in the notion that there is a correct way to think as a woman. To her, Maritza and other women who desire women are marked by their discernible otherness not centrally because of their queer desires, but because they collectively perform their gender incorrectly in other ways. She presumes that they all dress a certain, incorrect way and that they do not *think* like real women, and therefore, *are* not real women. This incorrectly performed, or non-conforming, thinking may refer to their desire for the same sex, i.e., thinking of other women with desire, but it may as well be tied to their presumed withdrawal from patriarchal power structures and lives as subservient wives and mothers. Alina assumes that the reason Maritza did not want to get married is her desire for women (59), which demonstrates her assertion that marriage is reserved for heteronormative couples, and that lesbians are not interested in the stability marriage is presumed to offer. However, the reader learns that Maritza was in a long-term relationship with a woman who had a child, both of whom she lived with. Although Maritza was part of a nuclear family unit, the queerness of this family and the legal exclusion from marriage prevent Alina from seeing that Maritza was part of a family, and may have wanted to marry if the option of same-sex marriage had been available. Alina's assumptions of what indicates a lesbian border on the ridiculous when she asserts that Maritza "didn't seem like what she was. You would have had to be very suspicious to notice those few details. For instance, I never liked her manner of dragging out her *s*'s – the way they do." (64). It is entirely possible that this is a linguistic distinction that has been lost in translation, but going by the translated version of the text, this reads as a demonstration of the arbitrary details used in order to other queer sexualities – such as the supposition of a common speech variance among lesbians. Later, Alina asserts: "a woman like Maritza, with no children, no man, and her pathology, what does she have to live for?" (64). Not only does she pathologise homosexuality, she again reduces women's lives to their roles as mothers and wives, suggesting that the lives of women who do not conform to the female gender role are worthless.

Lázara's form of homophobia is subtler and delivered with more restraint, but she is homophobic, nonetheless. In grieving for Maritza, she declares her belief that Maritza did not "like women that way" (64); that if she did, it would have been her private matter and that she did not harm anyone. These statements in themselves seem harmless enough. However, her declaration that she never saw Maritza "look at us with any improper intentions or anything like that" (65) alludes to the homophobic prejudice of predatory lesbians and discloses her own belief that they present a threat; similarly, Alina cites Maritza's "nerviness about going around naked" (59) as indicative of her desire for women. Toward the end of the story, while grieving Maritza's death, Lázara decides that "somebody has to show that [Maritza] wasn't this *pervert* they're saying she was, and so I am going to cry [...] and I'm going to tell the world that she was my friend" (68; emphasis added). This quote, which supplies the title of the short story, speaks to the question of the intersection of grievability and subjecthood posed by Judith Butler. Within a misogynistic framework, Maritza is already at a disadvantage in relation to men because of her sex – but in her sexual deviance of not being available as a commodity to

men, Maritza has defied the objective that would have given her worth within a heterosexist framework. As a 'sexual deviant,' Maritza's life is not grievable – but by Lázara's reasoning, if she grieves for her, it shows that Maritza's life is grievable, and therefore, she must have been sexually normative. Lázara repeatedly emphasises Maritza's good character and her admirable traits, and she cannot conjoin this positive picture with the prejudices she holds against lesbians. Rather than adjust her picture of lesbians, though, she insists that the person she so admires must be heterosexual, and that Maritza's long-term ex-partner must have been merely a friend. Lázara constitutes an ambiguous combination of reproducing homophobic prejudice and proving an understanding of discrimination and social injustice directed towards people who do not conform to the norm, even though she herself is unable to overcome these notions.

The (In)Visibility of Queer Desires and Death as Catalyst

In *Island Bodies*, Rosamund King examines the near-invisibility of Caribbean women who desire women. She explains that "Caribbean law and custom have [...] established that women who desire other women are (or should be) outside of the public sphere and are definitely outside of respectability" (102). She also notes, however, that women who desire women are not entirely invisible because, in order to be erased, their existence must first be acknowledged. King writes that the structures and circumstances that make women who desire women invisible and allow for them to be ignored by broader societies and cultures include "the heteropatriarchal assumption that all women's sexuality, if it exists at all, is 'a nothingness, a lack, an absence,' and the commonplace reality of women-headed households in the region," (99) and she further explains that "these social structures and anxieties work from one angle to create the supposed invisibility of Caribbean women who desire women and simultaneously work from another angle to punish them for the existence of that desire." (100). This coincides with the marianismo ideal that women have no sexual desire of their own but participate in sexual relations only in their obligation as wives in heterosexual marriages. Same-sex desire between women thwarts this two-fold: by having desire, and by experiencing it not (exclusively) with men but (also) with women. The attempted erasure of same-sex desire does not have the desired effect: women who desire women continue to exist, despite a lack of representation and in spite of the threat of physical harm and social ostracisation (King *Island* 108). Regarding the near-invisibility of women who desire women in "Somebody Has to Cry", King writes that

> On the surface it would seem that protagonist Maritza is, in fact, invisible because she has committed suicide. And yet near-invisibility applies here as well because she is very present in the thoughts and words of the friends and acquaintances who have gathered for her wake. Each person reveals how their interactions with or observations of the dead woman affected their lives. (*Island* 109)

The invisibility of women who desire women becomes apparent on several levels within "Somebody Has to Cry". Not only do none of the characters who speak of Maritza and her

sexual orientation use any identifying terms, even though Alina and Daniel clearly see her sexuality as an identity-forming factor. Maritza herself, the protagonist of the story, does not speak at all: after her self-inflicted death, she is unable to tell her own story or decide the level of disclosure she deems appropriate. The choice to not transmit Maritza's voice through letters, flashbacks or through an omniscient narrator also means that every piece of knowledge gained is filtered through the other characters' perception. This indirect and filtered representation frames Maritza's queerness within the heteropatriarchal environment she lived and died in. It also shows in how far Maritza's queerness penetrated the heteronormative veil by depicting which aspects of her queerness registered, or didn't register, with the people surrounding her. The reader is presented with an image of Maritza that is fragmented, missing, for example, her self-identification, common tropes of queer storytelling such as first queer experiences, or the nature of her and her partner's life and breakup. The opinions the reader does receive through the perceptions of Daniel, Alina, Cary and Lázara put together an image of Maritza that imperfectly fills the void of the character that is at the centre of this story, heavily tainted by their prejudices. It certainly shows that although Maritza is absent from the story as an agent, she has left a resounding presence in the form of memories of her.

When speaking about Maritza's relationship, Lázara is convinced that Maritza's partner must have been merely a friend and completely dismisses the idea of a lesbian relationship (66). Similarly, Alina declares that when the two began to live together, "everybody thought it was a relative or a very close friend" (64). This exemplifies King's assertion that the commonplace reality of female-headed households contributes to the invisibility of lesbian partnerships. Similar to her awareness of misogynistic social structures, Maritza also reveals an awareness of the lack of diverse representation, which she ties semi-metaphorically to non-diverse cityscapes. Alina, recalling a conversation that took place during a party, recounts: "Something Maritza said seemed to [Lázara] like the height of genius: that getting up every morning and looking at identical buildings makes people intolerant, predisposes them against differences." (60). Lázara also recalls this conversation later and remarks that being in her home in Old Havana and seeing different buildings enables her to see "that people are very different too" (65). Maritza's effort to integrate diverse architecture into the public sphere of Cuba through her profession as an architect reveals an underlying wish to simultaneously gain more visibility, and thus more acceptance, for human diversity.

Reading the subtext of the story closely, it becomes apparent that Cary, too, does not entirely conform to the heteronormative standard of her community. In her essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", Adrienne Rich writes that the "erasure of lesbian existence (except as exotic and perverse) in art, literature, film, [and the] idealization of heterosexual romance and marriage" (133) are obvious forms of heterosexual compulsion. In the two previous sections, Alina's idealisation of heterosexual romance and marriage has become clear, as has the characters' heteronormative view of sexuality and relationships. Rich explains that "the lesbian trapped in the 'closet' [and] the woman imprisoned in prescriptive ideas of the 'normal' share the pain of blocked options, broken connections, lost access to self-definition freely and powerfully assumed" (140). As I have illustrated in the previous sec-

tion, these imprisonments and blocked options can be observed in both Maritza and in Lázara, who are marginalised for different reasons. With Cary, the story provides an example of a character who, imprisoned in the idea of 'normal' and perhaps cautious of the consequences of transgressing normativity, experiences same-sex desire, but does not act upon it and possibly suppresses it to the extent that she will not even acknowledge it to herself.

Throughout the majority of the story, the relationship between Cary and Maritza can be read as a very intimate friendship, and the romantic or sexual component to it is merely hinted at in comments made by Daniel. However, reading the story closely reveals more clues that point towards a romantic connection between Cary and Maritza. Cary closely scrutinises and appraises Maritza's body as she undresses in the locker room during their years in school: "Her legs and torso, their muscles strong and well-knit, whirled compulsively before our eyes [...] completely nude, [she would] disappear into the showers with the stride that was so much her own: long, confident, slow." (58). Her close observation and appraisal of Maritza's body are not only entirely contrary to the other characters' comments regarding bodies. While Alina and Lázara mainly comment on Maritza's lack of femininity as a shortcoming, Cary seems to admire Maritza's strength and poise. In contrast to Daniel, who generally sexualises women and reduces them to their value to him as sexual commodities (though not so in the case of Maritza, as I have illustrated in the previous section), Cary adopts a female gaze that seems to admire Maritza in more than her corporeal form. More than this, her narration speaks to a certain fascination with Maritza's nude body. Regarding their interpersonal relationship, Cary speaks of "a sincerity I never felt with the others" (62) between Maritza and herself, an observation she repeats again only some lines later, setting their relationship apart from their other friendships. Cary remembers showing Maritza her diary and expresses surprise at this disclosure of private thoughts: "until then I'd considered my diary sacred and inviolable" (63); she explains that Maritza understood her. This speaks to a closeness between the two that exceeds the friendship with the others; a level of intimacy that may, but does not have to, exceed platonic friendship. Perhaps their relationship can, at this point, be framed in the context of female intimacy from other parts of the Caribbean I illustrated at the beginning of this text: their closeness includes intimacy and desire but does not exceed friendship to the point that Cary would classify it as a queer relationship. She also, however, mentions that Maritza was critical of her relationships with men and "had a hard time accepting that [Alina] could convert [her] relationship with Alejandro into something central and decisive" (63). This could be due to jealousy, or it could indicate that Maritza classifies desire in the binary of hetero- and homosexuality and believes Cary to be a closeted lesbian. It could also, however, speak to a certain degree of scepticism regarding men on Maritza's part, or be evidence of her cynical stance towards love and co-dependent relationships. The reason for her cynicism may well lie in her futile situation: with her sexuality erased by the heteronormativity and homophobia around her, she herself cannot live out the fulfilled relationship she may have wished for without subjecting herself and her partner to increased precarity and ostracisation.

Cary recalls Maritza, who did not usually disclose personal matters, telling her that she was attracted to a person who loved another, explaining that "she didn't see any way that

a relationship was possible, because, even if her feelings were noticed, Maritza was prepared to sacrifice herself. She wasn't going to make herself into a problem for someone she regarded so highly" (66), which again points to the argument made previously: that a fulfilled queer relationship seems out of reach under the given circumstances. Maritza explains that she believes in pleasure, not love, because love as it is understood by most is "something complex, responsible, and in a certain sense representative: a social commitment" (66). State-sanctioned homophobia and a lack of legal and social recognition of same-sex relationships render Maritza unable to live out same-sex relationships openly or to access the benefits of social commitment. Thus, instead of compromising her ideals or subjecting her potential partner to social scrutiny, she decides in this case to not pursue her attraction, and to reject the idea of love altogether. While it is not entirely clear whether Maritza's secret affections are directed at Cary, their nonverbal communication indicates that this is likely the case. When Cary falls silent and nervously begins gathering their things from the beach, she looks up again to find that Maritza's eyes "had a devastating expression. They reflected a bitterness so great that I felt sorry for her" (66). She explains that while she wanted to help Maritza, she experiences helplessness herself, unable to fully understand what is happening and overwhelmed by the situation. Due to their close friendship, it is improbable that Cary is unaware that Maritza is attracted to women. Although Cary does not mention Maritza's sexuality directly, it is probable that she knows of it and does not deem it an identity-defining factor. In the second to last segment of the story, Lázara remembers Cary telling her "something [Lázara] didn't understand about [Maritza's] need to fulfill herself" (68), indicating Cary's awareness regarding lesbian invisibility and homophobia and the emotional toll these issues took on Maritza, and possibly on herself. During their conversation on the beach, Maritza explains that "pleasure is loaded with guilt," (67) which may point, in addition to the issues regarding publicly lived same-sex relationships mentioned earlier, to some measure of internalised homophobia.[5]

The strongest indicators for Cary and Maritza's relationship, however, can be found towards the end of the story, in Cary's strong reaction to Maritza's death and Daniel's closing comments. During Maritza's funeral, Cary is catatonic with grief, and Alina observes that "she seemed like a zombie, completely transformed. I have never seen her like that, not even over men, which is the problem that destabilises her most." (64). Alina voices her fear that Cary's physically discernible grief would give "people grounds to think badly of her. And by association, of us." (64). She is afraid that people will interpret Cary's immense grief as a sign that she is mourning a lover, rather than a friend, and given her pronounced homophobia, Alina's fear of being associated with the issue is a further indicator that she is referring to female same-sex desire rather than anything else. Here, Alina contradicts the notion that intimacy in female friendships is permissible; instead, she fears that even the public display of grief may indicate queer desire, and implicate her by association. Notably, this is the only instance in which Alina indicates any notion of Cary's possible queerness; because she does not conform to the stereotypes connected to queer women, Cary's queerness is largely invisible to Alina and Lázara.

The last segment of the story, which is told by Daniel, contains the most straightforward indicators of the relationship between Cary and Maritza. He asserts that "Cary always

had someone, one of those men who made her feel like everybody else. And Maritza... who knows? Both of them lived in worlds quite different from this one, even if they seemed to inhabit ours." (69). His comment suggests that Cary maintained heterosexual relationships in order to fit into the heteronormative and patriarchal context, a circle Maritza was excluded from. Whether this was done knowingly or out of compulsive heterosexuality is unclear, presumably both to the reader and to the characters. His assertion that Cary and Maritza were part of different worlds, since the most prominent difference about Maritza is her sexuality, seems indicative of Cary also not conforming to heteronormative standards. Daniel observes that Cary's eyes have "lost their shine" (69), and he muses that "Cary's thoughts were headed elsewhere, to some uncertain time, perhaps, some private time – someplace where I too, together with Maritza and together with her, would have liked to be" (69). This last remark seems to allude to a past intimate relationship between Maritza and Cary, and it can be read in two ways. It can be read as Daniel, in keeping with his attitude towards women, sexualising women who desire women, and framing them as consumer goods for the male gaze. Or it can be understood as Daniel acknowledging the strains and restrictions put on queer women, and as his wish to live in a society with less restrictive attitudes concerning sexual variety – a reading that is supported by his more measured comments about Maritza in comparison to his otherwise disdainful remarks about women. Probably, both readings of Daniel's comments apply to some degree; as this paper has shown, the misogyny, restrictive gender roles and heteronormativity intersect and overlap to negatively impact queer lives. The silence and erasure that surround female same-sex desire stem from homophobia; it is a mixture of not wanting to show or see what should not exist, and not wanting to be seen for fear of repercussions. Although Cary and Maritza's feelings for each other are subtly indicated throughout the story, they are never fully acknowledged, and their possible shared history is merely hinted at. Ultimately, the two women were too inhibited by their homophobic surrounding to address their connection, and it appears that Cary continues to live a closeted life.

Conclusion

Machismo/marianismo culture was introduced to Cuba through Catholic-Spanish colonisation, and its legacy persists into Post-Soviet Cuba. Efforts by the Revolutionary government to install gender equality were overshadowed by heterosexist ideals tied to machismo/marianismo culture as well as the government's denouncing of homosexuality as counterrevolutionary. Queer women in marianismo culture occupy a space that is ambiguous due to the supposed lack of female sexuality on the one hand and the idea of women as the sexual objects of men on the other. In Marilyn Bobes' short story, the reader is presented with a queer protagonist whose sexuality is largely conveyed through speculation, accusations and denial, but nonetheless conveyed in a manner that makes her same-sex desire clear despite never being denoted in terms of identifying labels. Although "Somebody Has to Cry" is set after the formal decriminalisation of homosexuality in Cuba, the attitudes and prejudices presented in the story show the constraints put upon queer people even within close social circles. Bobes' story illustrates the ambivalence of lesbian visibility and invisibility: the absence of the protagonist

from the story means that readers are introduced to her through the perspectives of those around her, gaining insight into the life of Maritza through the fragments contributed and filtered by others. These fragments reveal as much about Maritza as they do about the community she was surrounded by and about the legacy of homophobic attitudes and legislation in Cuba. The construction of a queer main character through her absence shows how much a community's handling of its marginalised individuals says about the community itself, how ingrained and multifaceted homophobia can be, and how the gender binary, especially in its most hierarchical forms, influences and reproduces heterosexism and homophobia.

Notes

[1] This paper works with an English translation of the original Spanish text, edited by Dick Cluster in 1998 and published in the 2008 volume *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing in the Antilles*, edited by Thomas Glave. As Naomi Lindstrom observes, "Bobes's writing [...] often depends on precise imitations of the speech of recognizable types of Spanish speakers" (352), intricacies that may be lost in the English translation and consequently may not be adequately represented here.

[2] Stevens, who herself worked within a North American context and specialised in Latin American Studies, also claims that although machismo and marianismo culture have their roots in Southern Europe, specifically Italy and Spain, they have manifested as a "fully developed syndrome [...] only in Latin America" (91), an assertion that carries in its phrasing the questionable notion that patriarchal power structures are a truly serious problem only elsewhere. Concluding her article, Stevens classifies machismo and marianismo culture as a "reciprocal arrangement" (99) that may disadvantage some individuals but benefits many; a sentiment I do not agree with.

[3] The Cuban government has taken some significant steps towards the recognition of same-sex desire. Cuba's National Center for Sex Education, founded 1988, combats inequalities based on sexual orientation and gender identity, but also religion, disability and skin colour (Cubadebate, Reed 9). In September of 2022, same-sex marriage was put to a vote in Cuba as part of a referendum of the Cuban Family Code and passed into law with 66,87 percent of voters for and 33,13 percent against ("Código"). Notably, participation in the vote was at a historic low ("Código"), and there has been some criticism for putting equal rights to a popularity vote at all (Pappier and Cabrera).

[4] Unlike the English term transgender, *travesti* does not indicate a transition from one binary gender to another and is used as a self-identificatory term specifically to differentiate oneself from transfeminine women who have had genital surgery (Stout 26). Regarding the term bisexual, Stout notes that it was likely not yet used in Cuba in the early 90s and was stigmatised later due to perceived ties to sex-work (66-67).

[5] Maritza ends the conversation by insisting that Cary has to write, telling her that "writing would free me from the need to cling to some man who would represent me" – an appeal reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's seminal essay "A Room of One's Own."

Works Cited and Consulted

Alexander, M. Jacqui. "Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas." *Feminist Review*, no. 48, 1994, pp. 5–23.

Arguelles, Lourdes, and B. Ruby Rich. "Homosexuality, Homophobia, and Revolution: Notes Toward an Understanding of the Cuban Lesbian and Gay Male Experience, Part I." *Signs*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1984, pp. 683–99.

Báez, Antonio Carmona, and Melisa Soto-Lafontaine. "Sexual Self-Determination in Cuba: The Epistemic Decolonial Turn." *Sexualities*, vol. 18, no. 7, 2015, pp. 775–97.

Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* Verso, 2009.

"Código de las Familias: Cuba Aprueba el Marco Legal Para el Matrimonio Entre Personas del Mismo Sexo". *BBC News Mondo*. 26. Sept. 2022, www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-63038003. Accessed 21 Nov. 2023.

"Cuba Cancels Annual Conga Against Homophobia March". *BBC News*. 1 Jan. 2019, www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-48199835. Accessed 14 Mar. 2020.

Bobes, Marilyn. "Somebody Has to Cry." Glave, *Our*, pp. 57–69.

Chancy, Myriam J. A. "Subversive Sexualities: Revolutionizing Gendered Identities." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2008, pp. 51–75.

Cuesta, Mabel. "Other Islanders on Lesbos: A Retrospective Look at the History of Lesbians in Cuba." Glave, *Our*, pp. 132–41.

"Defending Sexual Diversity". *Cubadebate*. 1 Jan. 2018, en.cubadebate.cu/news/2018/12/13/defending-sexual-diversity/. Accessed 14 Mar. 2020.

Eastwood, Emma. '*¡Homofobia No! ¡Socialismo Sí!' Identity, Culture, Gender and Sexuality in Today's Cuba*. Minority Rights Group. 2016, minorityrights.org/homofobia-no-socialismo-si-identity-culture-gender-and-sexuality-in-todays-cuba/. Accessed 1 June 2024.

Glave, Thomas, editor. *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*, Duke UP, 2008.

Hamilton, Carrie. *Sexual Revolutions in Cuba: Passion, Politics, and Memory*, U of North Carolina P, 2012.

ILGA World Database. *Cuba: Legal Frameworks*. The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association. database.ilga.org/cuba-lgbti. Accessed 31 May 2024.

Kaufman Purcell, Susan. "Modernizing Women for a Modern Society: The Cuban Case". In: *Female and Male in Latin America*. 257-272.

Kempadoo, Kamala. *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race and Sexual Labor*. Routledge, 2004.

King, Rosamond S. "More Notes on the Invisibility of Caribbean Lesbians." Glave, *Our Caribbean*, pp. 191–96.

---. *Island Bodies: Transgressive Sexualities in the Caribbean Imagination*, UP of Florida, 2014.

Lindstrom, Naomi. "Review of Alguien Tiene Que Llorar by Marilyn Bobes." *World Literature Today*, vol. 71, no. 2, 1997, pp. 351–52.

Works Cited and Consulted

MacDonald-Smythe, Antonia. "Macocotte: An Exploration of Same-Sex Friendship in Selected Caribbean Novels." Smith, *Sex*, pp. 224–40.

Pappier, Juan and Cristian González Cabrera. "Political Rights for Cubans Should Not Start with a Marriage Equality Referendum". *Human Rights Watch*. 15 May 2022, www.hrw.org/news/2022/05/15/political-rights-cubans-should-not-start-marriage-equality-referendum. Accessed 21 Nov. 2023.

Paravisini-Gebert, Elisabeth. "Unchained Tales: Women Prose Writers from the Hispanic Caribbean in the 1990s." *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2003, pp. 445–64.

Pescatello, Ann, editor. *Female and Male in Latin America*. U of Pittsburgh P, 1973.

Reed, Gail. "Revolutionizing Gender: An Interview with Mariela Castro." *MEDICC review*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2012, pp. 6–9.

Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." In: *Feminism and Sexuality: A Reader*, edited by Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott, Columbia UP, 1996, pp. 130–41.

Smith, Faith. "Introduction: Sexing the Citizen." Smith, *Sex*, pp. 1–20.

---, editor. *Sex and the Citizen: Interrogating the Caribbean*, U of Virginia P, 2011.

Stevens, Evelyn P. "Marianismo: The Other Face of Machismo in Latin America". In: *Female and Male in Latin America*. 90-101.

Stout, Noelle M. *After Love Queer Intimacy and Erotic Economies in Post-Soviet Cuba*. Duke UP, 2014.

Tambiah, Yasmin. "Threatening Sexual (Mis)Behaviour: Homosexuality in the Penal Code Debates in Trinidad and Tobago, 1986." In: *Sex and the Citizen*, pp. 143–56.

Tinsley, Omise'eke Natasha. "'This Sudden Silence'": A Brief History of the Literature of Caribbean Women Who Love Women." *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature*, edited by E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen, vol. 9, Cambridge UP, 2014, pp. 363–77.

Valens, Keja L. *Desire Between Women in Caribbean Literature*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Wilk, Melissa. "Progressive Policy Versus Conservative Norms: A Paradox of LGBTQ+ Rights in Cuba." *Journal of Public and International Affairs (Princeton, N.J.)*, 2022.

Biography

Lena Falk holds a B.A. and M.A. in English Literatures and Cultures from the University of Bonn, where she is enrolled as a PhD candidate. In 2022, she received the Queen's Prize, awarded by the British Council, for her master's thesis titled "Queering the Binary: Genderqueer Representation in Selected Contemporary Speculative Fiction." She was a co-organiser of the 2022 Postcolonial Narrations Forum titled "Postcolonial Matters of Life and Death." Her research interests include Queer and Gender Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Posthumanism and Speculative Fiction. Her PhD project examines queer embodiment in contemporary speculative fiction and explores the promises of reading genderqueerness through a posthumanist lens. Lena Falk is employed as a research assistant and lecturer at the University of Hannover.