

Masculinities & Social Change
Volume 13, Issue 3, 21th October 2024, Pages 215 – 225
© The Author(s) 2024
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/mcs.12996>

Femmephobia and Penetration in the Development of Masculinity and the (Anti)Nationalist Identity of Reinaldo Arenas in *Antes que Anochezca*

Javier Ramírez-Franco¹

1) *University of Houston*, United States

Abstract

This article addresses the relationship between masculinity and nationalism, especially in literature of exile. It investigates the militarism of the Cuban national identity that promotes homophobia through a disdain for the feminine in the development of national masculinity. *Antes que anochezca* therefore exemplifies anti-nationalist exile literature as it rejects Castroist censorship and the criminalization of homosexuality. However, while the novel is anti-nationalist, it continues to perpetuate a repudiation of femininity as he valorizes masculinity, showcased in his sexual relationships between men. This is done in the novel through a dichotomy of active and passive roles in men who have sex with men that is established through the roles of penetrator/penetrated. Therefore, femmephobic ideology based on the national development of Cuban masculinity has permeated queer literature in exile, even in an anti-nationalist novel.

Keywords

LGBTQ literature, masculinity, penetration, femmephobia, anti-nationalism

To cite this article: Ramírez-Franco, J. (2024). Femmephobia and penetration in the development of masculinity and the (anti)nationalist identity of Reinaldo Arenas in *Antes que anochezca*. *Masculinities & Social Change*, 13(3), pp. 215-225.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/mcs.12996>

Corresponding author(s): Javier Ramirez Franco

Contact address: JavierRFranco@gmail.com

Masculinities & Social Change
Volumen 13, Número 3, 21 de octubre de 2024, Páginas 215 – 225
© Autor(s) 2024
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/mcs.12996>

Femmefobia y Penetración en el Desarrollo de la Masculinidad y la Identidad (Anti)Nacionalista de Reinaldo Arenas en *Antes que Anochezca*

Javier Ramírez-Franco¹

1) *Universidad de Houston*, Estados Unidos

Resumen

Este artículo aborda la relación entre masculinidad y nacionalismo, especialmente en la literatura del exilio. Se investiga el militarismo de la identidad nacional cubana que promueve la homofobia a través del desdén por lo femenino. *Antes que anochezca*, por lo tanto, ejemplifica la literatura antinacionalista del exilio al rechazar la censura castrista y la criminalización de la homosexualidad. Sin embargo, si bien la novela es antinacionalista, continúa perpetuando una repudiación de la femineidad al valorizar la masculinidad, ejemplificada en sus relaciones sexuales entre hombres. Esto se hace en la novela a través de una dicotomía de roles activos y pasivos en hombres que tienen sexo con hombres que se establece a través de los roles de penetrador/penetrado. Por lo tanto, la ideología femme fóbica basada en el desarrollo nacional de la masculinidad cubana ha permeado la literatura queer en el exilio, incluso en una novela antinacionalista.

Palabras clave

Literatura LGBTQ, masculinidad, penetración, femme fobia, antinacionalismo

Cómo citar este artículo: Ramírez-Franco, J. (2024). Femmefobia y penetración en el desarrollo de la masculinidad y la identidad (anti)nacionalista de Reinaldo Arenas en *Antes que anochezca*. *Masculinities & Social Change*, 13(3), pp. 215-225. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/mcs.12996>

Correspondencia Autores(s): Javier Ramírez Franco

Dirección de contacto: JavierRFranco@gmail.com

Over two centuries, imperialist interventions in Latin America resulted in a struggle for national identities. The literature of exile, as well as political institutions, of the individual colonies fighting for independence and subsequent development grappled with establishing nation identities and canonical histories. Eventually, globalization in the 1960s led to a shift in anti-nationalist literature as writers and intellectuals who were forced into exile criticized the oppressive regimes that created the environments that resulted in their expulsion. *Antes que anochezca* by Reinaldo Arenas is an example of the anti-nationalist literature of exile due to literary censorship for exposing Fidel Castro's myths as well as machista and homophobic rhetoric and policies formed on the preservation of masculine nationalism. However, while Arenas criticizes Cuba, he continues to perpetuate the nationalist ideology of masculinity through the representation of manhood in relation to sexual penetration. *Antes que anochezca* shows how the development of masculinity in Cuba is related to penetration in male same-sex intercourse because the act of being penetrated is attributed to femininity and passivity, which depicts nationalist disdain for the feminine, even in anti-nationalist LGBTQ+ literature.

Antes que anochezca, the 1992 autobiography of Arenas narrates his struggles with his sexual orientation and nationalist views of the Cuban revolution and the impact they had on key moments in his life, from his imprisonment to his escape in the Mariel boatlift of 1980. Examining this novel through masculinity studies lenses and a narrative research methodological approach that dialogues with current scientific research on masculine identity formation in men who have sex with men will help understand how gender and sexuality operate in complex ways of defining masculinity through nationalist perceptions of manhood. While this article examines how Arenas was able to challenge homophobic rhetoric expressed by the regime of Fidel Castro, leader of Cuba from 1959 to 2008 who orchestrated the Cuban Revolution and ruled under a one-party communist state, Arenas unfortunately further perpetuates masculinist ideology in the dichotomy of penetrator and penetrated roles in sexual relationships between men who have sex with men.

It is crucial to explore how homophobia, the aversion to and prejudice against homosexuality, and femmephobia, the devaluation and repudiation of femininity, operate within this novel. Addressing the distinction between the two in Arenas' work can lead to social change in terms of valuing femininity because while there is significant work in battling homophobic rhetoric, the novel continues to perpetuate femmephobic ideology that others those that deviate from masculine ideals. A study of penetration within *Antes Que Anochezca* will challenge the valorization of the penetrator role that creates a system within male sexual relationships that sees those that are penetrated as less than which fuels the marginalization of an already disenfranchised group. The problematization of femmephobic rhetoric can lead to social improvement as it is crucial to highlight that gay men are not exempt from perpetuating femmephobic ideology and in doing so can lead to positive change in a self-reflection within the gay community that perpetuates masculinist ideology linked to sexual desirability.

Masculinity and Nationalist Identity

According to Nicolás Kanellos (2002), the literature of exile is written by political refugees with privilege, who are unable to return until the conditions that resulted in their expulsion are improved; it is marked by nostalgia and linguistic purity (p. xlix). One of the key components within this understanding of exile literature is political-revolutionary nationalism as those in exile grapple with an identity within their imagined communities. For Benedict Anderson (1998), the nation is “imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible...” (p. 7). The word fraternity alludes to the potential role that masculinity plays in the construction of a nation whose boundaries are framed in masculine terms as a brotherhood.

Historians have shown the correlation between masculinity and the formation of national identities. For example, Joane Nagel (2003) affirms that nationalism and masculinity are intertwined because the nation is a masculine institution that benefits from reaffirming the dominant patriarchal gender relations that emphasize masculine cultural themes. George L. Mosse (1996) underlines the peculiar link between masculinity and nationalism that relies on the assumed warlike and militaristic model of revolutionary citizens as soldiers fueled by new values of respectability of the rising middle class. He asserts that “the ideal of masculinity was invoked on all sides as a symbol of personal and national regeneration, but also as basic to the self definition of modern society” (p. 57). Masculinity thus serves as a fixed tool that nationalists have used to prop up political agendas but also as a marker to the national identity since the subjects that make up their imagined community became a measure of achieving success.

Within the context of Latin America, there is a role that war and militarization had in the formation of national identities. Ana Peluffo (2010) confirms that nineteenth-century militarism was formed around a masculinist and masculinizing concept of national politics which had a profound impact on the formation of Latin American sociopolitical imaginaries. For example, during the Porfiriato period of late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries in Mexico, the arrival of positivism and medical discourse on homosexuality led to the questioning of ideal national masculinity. This resulted in the rejection of the previously accepted traits that included affection and sentimentality, highlighting how twentieth-century national masculinity as impacted by a rejection of traditionally feminine attributes.

Nation development therefore became associated with domination, violence, and war, as masculinity derived from militarism became part of the national identity, evident with Cuba in *Antes que anochezca*. Marxist Leninism interpreted in Cuba during Castro was based on the construction of a machista, or hypermasculine, nation. The arrival of Castroism led to the creation of institutions that would reinforce the construction of the masculine nation. When stating that “se desató la persecución contra ellos y se crearon los campos de concentración; precisamente cuando el acto sexual se convirtió en un tabú, se pregonaba al hombre nuevo y se exaltaba el machismo” (p. 127), Arenas illustrates the emphasis of ensuring that the revolutionary man exemplify machismo. Contemporary research within masculinity studies by Andrea Waling (2019) pinpoints traditional study of masculinity that center on the systems of power that perpetuate masculinity but there is little emphasis on the actual lived experiences

of masculinity that engage social institutions with men's subjectivities. Therefore, the autobiography of Arenas addresses the needs of current theorists by exploring Castroist systems of power and how Arenas navigates through his autobiographical account.

For example, since the official national discourse sought to strengthen the masculine elements, militarism formed part of the political indoctrination that Arenas was subjected to when he was enrolled in school to be an agricultural accountant. As he suppressed his homosexuality, Arenas states, "yo padecía todos los prejuicios típicos de una sociedad machista, exaltados por la Revolución; en aquella escuela desbordada de una virilidad militante" (p. 65). Not only does this depict his internalized homophobia, but it highlights how the school was defined by militant virility. This hegemonic masculinity that formed the Castro national identity relied on masculine technologies of othering those with feminine traits in order to exalt machista ideology.

Effeminate behavior, which to Castro included homosexuality, is viewed as a threat to the national identity built on aggressiveness and violence, which is evident in the shift to stronger limitations on same-sex sexual encounters. This is evident in his memoir as Arenas highlights the shift in hotel room accessibility pre and during Castro. He notes that "todavía en aquel momento dos hombres tenían la posibilidad de poder alquilar una habitación de hotel y pasar la noche juntos" (p.83) to describe how easily men could spend the night together in hotels before Castro's revolution. However, after Castro assumed power and started to redefine the nation, "ya los hoteles se hacían muy difíciles en La Habana para dos hombres" (89) which limited the previous accessibility. The repression is understood from the context of the Cuban Revolution that promoted revolutionary masculinity while it devalued feminine traits and labeled homosexual men as perverse and disloyal. Therefore, homosexuality exists in contention with Castro's formation of national masculinity resulting in the limiting of hotel rooms.

Homophobia and Anti-Nationalism

Cuba's post-revolutionary nationalism therefore feeds homophobia, which results in Arenas positioning the novel as anti-nationalist due to the literary censorship he faced and the national criminalization of homosexuality. With the shift in anti-nationalist literature, Kanellos (2002) pinpoints "el enfoque de la protesta escrita se transformó durante el siglo veinte; su propósito ya no era apoyar las luchas de independencia sino atacar las dictaduras modernas y los regímenes autoritarios que se habían apropiado del poder en muchos de los países hispanoamericanos" (p. xlix). Therefore, post 1960s literature of exile focused less on independence and more on attacking modern dictatorships. This parallels literature released around that time of *Antes que anochezca* like *La virgen de los sicarios* by Fernando Vallejo and *Tengo miedo torero* by Pedro Lemebel that resist against oppressive regimes that suppress individual freedom of expression including homosexuality. This form of resistance underscores a challenge of official discourses through the articulation of marginal subjectivities who express their queer reality.

Sophia McClennen (2004) argues that literature of exile contains a series of dialectical tensions revolving around central components of exile cultural identity in which those in exile are omitted from the official national story. This is done through an exclusion from the country's history in the reconstruction of the regime in power that writes the nation's past without those expelled and amplifies their elimination from the future. In understanding anti-nationalism and exile, McClennen demonstrates that there "are two important ways in which exiles challenge official versions of national culture: they provide an alternative/counter national culture, and/or they critique the concept of national culture" (p. 21). This anti-nationalist view attempts to deconstruct the nation by exposing the repressive ideology that is championed by the state.

Arenas does both by reconstructing his reality based on his experiences and by critiquing the national story. He inserts homosexuality into the official narrative, to the point that exaggerated statements cement the presence of homosexual men in Cuba. While Castro is trying to hide queerness from the official story, Arenas includes hyperboles as he states that not only "había hecho el amor con unos cinco mil hombres" (p. 114) but men were having sex with other men everywhere, in plain view. The exaggeration of having had sex with five thousand men and carnivalesque imagery of those encounters allows for Arenas to reject the silencing of queer voices as he amplifies queer presence in the national history of the country.

Arenas not only adds his version of the national history but challenges it as well by criticizing the triumphs of the regime. One of the greatest myths that he disproves is Castro's retelling of the overthrowing of Batista, which according to him was done with a large support of all sectors of Cuba, to which Arenas recounts a reality that Castro's army was small. This also demystifies Castro who had championed himself a hero through propaganda that depicted him as belonging to working-class people. In fact, his support was from the privileged, educated sector that welcomed him because he was white. Arenas adds that "en realidad, tampoco hubo una guerra, sino la reacción casi unánime de un pueblo contra un Dictador" (p. 57) in order to paint a stark reality that contrasted the official narrative that Castro had created that showcased himself as a great leader of this revolutionary war for Cuban liberation. Arenas criticizes the injustices that the government committed and denounces the lies that Castroism built during the revolution. This feeds into his anti-nationalist sentiment of disrupting propagandist history. This explains why "cubanos exiliados, porque en el destierro no tenemos a un país que nos represente; vivimos como si nos estuviesen perdonando la vida; siempre a punto de ser rechazados. No tenemos un país, sino un contrapaís" (p. 322). The "contrapaís," or anti-nation, exists as a way of rejecting that construct of the nation that has unjustly rejected them.

Femmephobia

While *Antes que anochezca* marks clear examples of anti-nationalist exile literature, protesting discriminatory policies on homosexuality derived from the Castroist view of the Cuban revolutionary man, the memoir continues to perpetuate nationalistic views on masculinity. Arenas continues to glorify masculinity as it exists through virility as exemplified in sexual

relationships between men. This is done in the text through the repetition of imagery that enforces a dichotomy of active and passive roles in men who have sex with men that is established through penetration. While Arenas is anti-nationalist in part because of homophobia that spawns from nationalist interpretations of masculinity, he is not exempt from reinforcing femmephobic rhetoric from that same masculinist ideology.

Rhea Ashley Hoskin (2023) has traced the origins of the term femmephobia to the early 2000s when the word was used to characterize the belittling of femme lesbians. Hoskin defines femmephobia as the overarching tendency to both denigrate and regulate all things feminine. Therefore, femininity is devalued in opposition to masculinity. The disdain for the feminine in the creation of the nation leads to Cuban machismo that reinforces patriarchal institutions. If Arenas' memoir is any indication, the dominant ideas about femininity and masculinity are established in childhood through early gender socializations in families and reinforced in sociocultural contexts like education. This is evident when speaking about his childhood in that "en Holguín se respiraba un ambiente machista que mi familia compartía y en el cual yo había sido educado" (p. 52). This machista indoctrination of how a man is defined had been formed since childhood, as Arenas notes that his family shared those beliefs and in turn educated him with that form of thinking. Arenas demonstrates Hoskin's notion that dominant masculinist ideology is imparted to children as Arenas reflects on the machista environment he grew up in. This machista ideology operates as a target for discrimination that maintains normative gender constructs, and in contrast, highlights a disdain for femininity.

Feminine devaluation illuminates how femmephobia functions as a regulatory power as the perception of femininity is policed across identities. Arenas views his queer sexual awakening molded by "los sentimientos machistas que nuestros padres se encargaron de inculcarnos," (p. 34) confirming the indoctrination of masculinity reinforced by his family. R.W. Connell (1992) believes that "men who have sex with men are generally oppressed, but they are not definitively excluded from masculinity" (p. 737), which defines the constructions of relationships dependent on proximity to hegemonic masculinity. Here, hegemonic masculinity refers to the legitimization of men's dominant position in society, that justifies the subordination of women and other gender identities that are perceived as feminine. Therefore, masculinity is valued and established as the norm which subordinates feminine-coded behaviors.

Arenas recognizes that he was conditioned to favor masculinity, which in turn led to internalized femmephobia as he acknowledged that his stubbornness made it very difficult for him to abandon his machista ideology due to his own prejudice. When stating that "[m]uchos de aquellos jóvenes con sus camas a cuestras parecían muy varoniles. Al ver aquel espectáculo me sentía avergonzado y aterrorizado" (p. 66), he has cemented how he navigates interpersonal relationships with men in their presentation of masculinity. This resulted in self-hatred as his time in school was marked by a shame due a lack of virility.

Penetration and Masculinity

This results in his sexual relationships contingent on the presence of masculinity. David Halperin (1990) affirms that the old constructions of sexuality did not revolve around the gender of the person with whom one had sexual relations, but rather the position occupied in the sexual act: penetrator or penetrated. Masculinity is associated with an insertive sexual role, as “the partner whose pleasure is promoted is considered ‘active,’ while the partner who puts his or her body at the service of another’s pleasure is deemed ‘passive’—read ‘penetrated’” (p. 23). This means that the male body is not only impenetrable and invulnerable, but actively dominates and violates other bodies. Therefore, penetration defines the hierarchical positions as the active partner is associated with dominance and the passive partner is associated with femininity that denotes penetrability, submission, and social subordination.

The dichotomy of penetrator, active, and penetrated, passive, in male same-sex relationships is a recurrent theme within *Antes que anochezca*. When “[a]quellos hombres disfrutaban haciendo su papel de macho activo” (p. 128) in which the men he encountered on the bus enjoyed playing the active role, Arenas continuously makes the distinction between active and passive roles in the formation of masculinity. To Xavier Andrew Miralles (2021), “penetration is at times a violent or aggressive act as exemplified by war and the invasion of another country and at other times penetration is more subdued act as in making love but at all times penetration is discursively associated with the phallic and mostly male body” (p. 34), which coincides with this national identity that has been built on war and violence. Masculinity is therefore defined by penetrating, regardless of who is being penetrated. Within the scope of penetration, manliness is not homosexual or heterosexual, per se, but rather the continuous display of masculine values of aggressiveness and domination.

With this concept, homoerotic relationships with men can be tolerated by maintaining the role of penetrator. Arenas highlights this as a culturally accepted notion when he has sex with a military man. Arenas mentions that “quizá, como él era el activo, creía que no había cometido ningún delito” (p. 118). When homosexuality had become severely punishable under the Castro regime, the military man justified same sex intercourse by believing he had not committed any crime because he had been the penetrator. This reasoning is common throughout the memoir as revolutionary men viewed the passive role as a marker for homosexuality. Arenas reaffirms this when he believes that “muchos de los jóvenes que estaban allí becados eran «bugarrones», es decir, homosexuales activos. Para ellos templarse a otro joven no era signo de homosexualidad; el maricón era el templado” (p. 68). Here, Arenas speaks of his classmates that played the active role, and to them, penetrating another man was not a sign of homosexuality because the homosexual is the one that is penetrated. This speaks to this understanding of Cuban virility: penetration marks the distinction between masculinity and femininity.

It’s no surprise that Arenas and his classmates associated the active role in same-sex intercourse with masculinity and proximity to heterosexuality since it seemed to permeate Cuban culture at large. In a country that had viewed homosexual men through femmephobic lenses that criminalized them, the role of active in same-sex intercourse shielded the participant from being fully identified as a *loca*, or an effeminate homosexual man. This is evident when Arenas leaves Cuba on the Mariel boatlift in 1980 at a time when Castro wanted to get rid of

the undesirables, which included prisoners, people with mental health issues, and homosexuals. Arenas states that “al llegar me preguntaron si yo era homosexual y les dije que sí; me preguntaron entonces si era activo o pasivo, y tuve la precaución de decir que era pasivo. A un amigo mío que dijo ser activo le negaron la salida; él no dijo más que la verdad, pero el gobierno cubano no consideraba que los homosexuales activos fueran, en realidad, homosexuales” (p. 299). The line of questioning that establishes whether he fits into the category of an undesirable as a homosexual man reveals how for the patriarchal system of the state, homosexuality is defined through the role within penetration. The fact that he responds passive because a friend that stated active was rejected shows how the Cuban government did not consider gay men that were active as real homosexuals. This heterosexist culture sees masculinity as linked to virility and dominance in sexual relationships. Regardless of same-sex or opposite-sex sexual acts, power is established through the sexual position, in which there is a need to deviate from the feminine act of being the penetrated subject in order to be a man.

Arenas contributes to this reasoning as he perpetuates this notion of being the penetrator as being a real man. When speaking about one of his various relations, he recounts how:

El joven aceptó. Al llegar a la casa me sorprendió porque, en vez de él hacer el papel de hombre, me pidió a mí que lo hiciera... Después, aún desnudo, me preguntó: «Y si nos cogen aquí, ¿quién es el hombre?». Se refería a que quién era el que se había templado a quién. Yo, quizá con un poco de crueldad, le dije: «Naturalmente, que soy yo porque te la metí». Eso enfureció a aquel hombre, que también practicaba judo, y empezó a tirarme contra el techo; me tiraba y, por suerte, me recibía otra vez en sus brazos, pero me estaba dando unos golpes horribles. «¿Quién es el hombre? ¿Quién es el hombre? ¿Quién es el hombre?», me repetía. Y yo, que temía perder la vida en aquello, le respondí: «Tú, porque sabes judo» (p. 123).

In this scene, it is important to note that instead of referring to the penetrator as the active role, he refers to it as “el papel de hombre”, or the male role, which reinforces this hierarchy in sexual intercourse between two men in which the man is labeled as the penetrator, and it is inferred that the penetrated assumes a female position. This association has been embedded into his understanding of sexual intercourse between two men as one fulfilling the masculine role and one embodying the female role, rather than both being seen as masculine. Additionally, when Arenas replies that if caught, naturally he would be the man because he was the one that penetrated him, the violent outburst by the young man demonstrates how the female role is seen as less than which reinforces femmephobia that exists within homosexual relations. The repetition of “¿Quién es el hombre?” or “Who is the man?” illustrates a disdain for being seen as fulfilling the feminine role within the established gender norms associated with penetration.

Psychological studies by Ben Gerrard, James Morandini, and Ilan Dar-Nimrod (2021) have revealed that gay men value gender conformity and hegemonic masculinity. This corroborates internal femmephobia as aligning with the national understanding of masculinity. It is why Arenas believed that “a la loca que le gustaba otra loca, podía ir con ella y vivir juntas sin ningún problema, pero al que le gustaran los hombres de verdad... Lo normal no era que una loca se acostara con otra loca, sino que la loca buscara a un hombre que la poseyera...” (p. 129). While explaining that two effeminate men can be together, he alludes to the fact that he

wanted “hombres de verdad,” real men. Arenas’s preference of what he deemed as real men ties in with current research of gay men’s experiences with gay dating and hookup applications that indicates that effeminate men experience rejection due to a preference for masculine presenting sexual partners. This is heightened by derogatory anti-effeminacy language within the conversations for sexual solicitation that valorizes masculinity. For example, Emerson L.R. Barrett (2020) research on gay hookup applications Grindr, Scruff, and Jack’ed revealed a stigma caused by femmephobic rhetoric that showcased the importance of recognizing discrimination within the gay community by examining the restrictions of desire guided by masculine standards. Anti-effeminate attitudes like the ones expressed in Arenas’ autobiography reveals the role masculinity plays in how men who have sex with men perceive themselves and the impact it has on the desirability within these interpersonal interactions. This marks a construction of manhood dictated by a disdain for any proximity to femininity. The macho reproduces heterosexist parameters of society while the *loca* represents the horrors of the feminine. While queer bodies are differentiated by deviating from heterosexual norms, there is still a desire to present as masculine for proximity to Cuban masculinity.

Conclusion

Masculinity is shaped and maintained by different socializations as it is a social construct. Within Latin America and the 20th century development of how a man is defined, nation formation plays a key role as a result of the many political upheavals that attempted to re-define the nation and the men they govern. Nationalist masculinity relies on othering that creates and maintains hegemonic masculinity in the name of the nation, which in turn subordinates femininity. The other is dehumanized and demasculinized through homophobic rhetoric which led to the exile of many homosexual Cubans like Reinaldo Arenas. The exiled have been expelled from a historical time in Cuba as they are absent from the daily process of building the nation. By inserting his story in the narrative, Arenas demystifies Castro's official story as he presents an anti-nationalist view of Cuba. However, while challenging the national narrative for its homophobic policies, Arenas unfortunately props up femmephobic ideology showing how marginalized masculinities can still perpetuate this hierarchical system. It is ironic that this emphasis on a masculine identity that resulted in his exile has manifested itself with internalized femmephobia as this disdain for the feminine has permeated the queer struggle for freedom. This showcases how homophobia and femmephobia can go hand in hand but are not mutually exclusive. Machista ideology resulted in his anti-nationalist views of Cuba, but Arenas is unable to overcome the machista culture that he had been indoctrinated in since childhood. This is evident in his reaction to sexual intercourse as he seeks masculine acting men, because to him, a real man is one that represents national hegemonic masculinity, or proximity to it. This heterosexist culture sees masculinity as linked to virility and dominance in sexual relationships through femmephobic rhetoric to establish a masculine hierarchy. To Cuba and to Arenas, masculinity is defined along the lines of effeminate subordination, exemplified through sexual intercourse and valuing the penetrating role. Machista and femmephobic ideology based on the national development of Cuban masculinity has permeated queer literature in exile, even in an anti-nationalist novel.

References

- Anderson, B. (1998). *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*. Verso.
- Arenas, R. (1992). *Antes que anochezca*. Tusquets.
- Barrett, E. L.R. (2020). “Sexing the Margins: Homonationalism in Gay Dating Apps”. *Gender, Sexuality and Race in the Digital Age*. Springer, pp. 115-136. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29855-5_7
- Connell, R.W. (1992). “A Very Straight Gay: Masculinity, Homosexual Experience, and the Dynamics of Gender.” *American Sociological Review*, vol. 57, no. 6, pp. 735-751. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2096120>
- Gerrard, B., Morandini, J., & Dar-Nimrod, I. (2021). “Gay and straight men prefer masculine-presenting gay men for a high-status role: evidence from an ecologically valid experiment”. *Sex Roles*, vol. 88, pp. 119-129. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-022-01332-y>
- Halperin, D. M. (1990). *100 Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love*. Routledge.
- Hoskin, R. A. (2023). “Critically Feminizing Family Science: Using Femme Theory to Generate Novel Approaches for the Study of Families and Relationships”. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, pp. 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12499>
- Kanellos, N. (2002). “Introducción”. *En Otra Voz*. Ed. Nicolás Kanellos et al., Arte Público Press, pp. Xi-liv.
- Lemebel, P (2001). *Tengo miedo torero*. Seix Parral.
- Miralles, X. A . (2021). “Nación y masculinidades: reflexiones desde la historia”. *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, vol. 43, pp. 121-144. <https://doi.org/10.5209/chco.78174>
- Mosse, G.L. (1996). *The Image of Man: the Creation of Modern Masculinity*. Oxford University Press.
- Nagel, J. (2003). *Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality: Intimate Intersections, Forbidden Frontiers*. Oxford University Press.
- Peluffo, A. (2010). “Introducción”. *Entre hombres: masculinidades del siglo XIX en América Latina*. In Ana Peluffo et al. (Eds.), Iberoamericana Editorial Vervuert.
- McClennen, S. A. (2004). *The Dialectics of Exile: Nation, Time, Language, and Space in Hispanic Literatures*. Purdue University Press.
- McKee Irwin, R. (2003). *Mexican Masculinities*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Slootmaeckers, K. (2019). “Nationalism as Competing Masculinities: Homophobia as a Technology of Othering for Hetero- and Homonationalism.” *Theory and Society*, vol. 48, pp. 239-265. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-019-09346-4>
- Vallejo, F. (1994). *La virgen de los sicarios*. Alfaguara.
- Waling, A. (2019). “Rethinking Masculinity Studies: Feminism, Masculinity, and Poststructural Accounts of Agency and Emotional Reflexivity”. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, vol. 27, p. 89-107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1060826518782980>