

Sebreli and Cumbio, an Argentine social developmental stage accomplished

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Years ago reviewing an autobiography of lesbian partners I asserted that "coming out of the closet" should be thought as an Argentine social history developmental stage. Now, fifteen years later, so-called **floggers** is an Argentine teenage vogue, a kind of lifestyle, related to the website Photolog.com, where photographs, commentaries, and personal remarks are logged. The word *flogger* come from "*flog*", Photolog's abbreviated form, whose popularity is founded in daily comments about the photographs.

Agustina Vivero, nicknamed *Cumbio*, is an immensely popular *flogger*, who publishes some 15-25 photographs daily, now with more than a thousand images published, with 30.000 visitors daily. June 2008 the first *flogger's* meeting was called, where 5.000 people gathered in two Buenos Aires pubs. The same year in December Planeta printing house published her autobiography, *Yo Cumbio La vida según la flogger más famosa del país* (I, Cumbio The life of the country's more famous flogger). She has written in the first chapter's three first lines: "They say we must have a child, nurture a tree, and write a book." You have the book in your hands right now. Someday I'll plant a seed, and another day I'll adopt a child. But this sentence missed another point: having a photolog". After a year and half, her photolog has registered eleven million visits: "Our gift has brought people together and make friends."

Her autobiography records her worried grandmother's commentary Cumbio's mother: "Tell Agustina not to speak about these subjects on television—especially that she likes the girls." Her mother replied quickly: "So, Angela, let it be, that's it, the repression is over". And Cumbio's closing commentary: "¡So what, I didn't do anything wrong! She will understand that this is a different time."

In another interview Cumbio said: "To me a person is just a person. I don't label people whether they are straight, homosexual, or whatever." About her girlfriend Marulina, she pointed out: "I think I've shown people that sexual preferences are a personal choice and not something to be ashamed of."

Juan José Sebreli, who in 1970 became a founding member of the Homosexual Liberation Front (Frente de Liberación Homosexual FLH), is from the generation of Cumbio's grandmother, but agrees with the granddaughter. Thus, in January 2009 he said/wrote: "I believe that a homosexual is different from an heterosexual like people with dark eyes differ from blue-eyed people. Neither less nor more." His assertion echoes the conclusion of Michael Ruse philosophical research fostering hope for respect for homosexual persons that if they are treated as normal people "we will realize, to our surprise, that it's true. But both perspectives, that of the acclaimed author and of the teenager flogger, claim that the time is ripe to affirm the right to different sexual orientations and identities, which implies the defeat of heterosexist chauvinism and its spiritual correspondent, homophobia: "The battle has been won, totally", Sebreli claims.

Autobiography would appear to be the proper literary genre for disclosure of one's sexual orientation. In 1995 some of this genre's characteristics were established by Toni McNaron, a specialist in Renaissance lesbian and feminist literature: the remembrance of the first recognition of sexual and emotional difference, the first homoerotic and homosexual experience, short detailed stories itemizing public figures who break the silence regarding "the love that dare not speak its name," the crucial personal event of making oneself known as someone who loves a person of the same sex and coming to terms with run the risk about such an act in a homophobic society, bestowing authority to the authentic humanity of those who make this revelation, challenging the cultural mainline pressures, both implicit and explicit, that repulse the oppression, disavowing the heterosexual evasion, and denouncing the pact of silence about the homosexuality.

In January 2000, after repulsing and overcoming the pact of silence and censure, Sebreli denounced the continuing scandal in which the media exploits grotesque and ridiculous homosexual characters, affirming: "We must educate people and teach that what they are doing is a malicious caricature of sexual liberation." Regarding this liberation, in 1992 sociologist Valerie Jenness analyzed the theoretical and empirical difference between lesbian behavior and lesbian identity into the literature of the last twenty years, asking: What is the substance of the process through which some women obtain lesbian identity? After studying the conflict between social categories and personal identities, Jenness established a process for redefining and evaluating

the lesbian social category, giving it accurate and specific meaning with a positive connotation and personal application.

Fuskóva and Marek demonstrated that autobiography is the historiographical genre par excellence for attesting this process of redefinition and community feeling. One of them remarked: "Without memory there's no mental health." Regarding the memory of minorities, historian John Boswell underlined that homosexual persons are stigmatized by historic rootlessness and differ from other persecuted and oppressed minorities who own a present and past community awareness flowing from historical recollection.

Novelist and journalist Osvaldo Bazán confirms this community awareness, reviewing places and visiting persons over the last seven centuries, from the landing in the Americas of the Spanish conquerors until contemporary Argentine. One of the hinges of his erudite and well written recollection is the political militance of the 70's with the emergence and disintegration of the Homosexual Liberation Front (Frente de Liberación Homosexual FLH). The historical climax of the book affirms: "Coming out of the closet: I am who I am"—thus specifically setting out the political agenda of revealing one's sexual identity, which led to granting legal status to the organization Argentine Homosexual Community (Comunidad Homosexual Argentina-CHA) and later the Civil Union Law approval by the Buenos Aires City Legislature.

The geography of sexual anxiety was then mapped by philosopher Flavio Rapisardi and journalist Alejandro Modarelli, which similarly profiled persons wandering in the streets of Buenos Aires, collecting experiences and testimonies that challenged any sexual identity based only on the genital character.

However, Cumbio's theoretical and political strategy of coming out differed from the historical reconstruction of Fuskóva & Marek ("I, lesbian"), since she rejected the sexual apartheid due to the presumed heterosexual hegemony: "¡Watch out, there's nobody like my grandmother!" Similarly, she scorns the homosexual minority's justification of itself through intellectual accomplishments: "It's true that I've always been with girls. For me, boys aren't so attractive but are rather boring." And she concludes: "Finally, it's nobody's business who I'm kissing."

Among the thousands of messages in Cumbio's photolog someone declares: "I don't say that I like or love you because I don't know you. But I can truly say that I admire you!"

A vertical dialogue between the generations has always characterized human culture. But photolog cyberculture has created a horizontal dialogue that legitimates the younger generations on the rising frontier. From a previous frontier long ago, sociologist Robert Merton sought to pacify confrontations and achieve concord. He thus urged the 'insiders' to unite with 'outsiders,' since they have nothing to lose except their pretensions. He concluded: "Instead you will gain a world of understanding." For homosexuals, as author Sebrelí proclaimed, and flogger Cumbio demonstrates (using adolescent cyberculture with fuzzy images and faltering words), that world of understanding would be acquired.

That is why I insist that the "coming out" process is now an accomplished stage in Argentine social development.

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