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THE BOLERO OF A FAILED MIGRANT: consumption and failure in No quiero quedarme sola y vacía

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Abstract

Departing from an analysis of the novel *No quiero quedarme sola y vacía* (2006), by Angel Lozada, this paper aims at discussing the notions of failure and queer migration. I argue that a queer perspective of the piece allows us to think lines of escape to the neoliberal discourse of the good migrant as the one who helps the country to thrive. In this piece I'm interested on the figure of the bad migrant, the one who contracts debts, does not like to work and does not fit on the local expectations of what it means to be a "good citizen". I believe that the discussions highlighted by this figure allow us to glimpse ruptures in the neoliberal discourse that position work as a personal realization and as a subjective mark.

Keywords

Capitalism; Consumption; Debt; Migrant; Queer.

Introduction

In one lesson from *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Michel Foucault develops his famous conceptualization of homo oeconomicus as the subject who is a “entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings” (Foucault, 2008, p.226). Subsequently, Foucault promotes a curious, albeit brief, discussion of migration within this new neoliberal context of homo oeconomicus as a self-entrepreneur. For the author, migration would represent one of these “investments” on oneself, in which the migrant expects that the consequent expenses that result from his movement will be compensated later. He concludes this relationship with the intriguing statement that “migration is an investment, the migrant is an investor” (Foucault, 2004, p.236). Although this is a proposition that opens a diverse array of discussions, they are never fully developed throughout Foucault’s text.

Furthermore, the migrant evoked by Foucault is extremely demarcated, not including those who migrate for their immediate safety, or those who migrate on extremely precarious conditions. Although we can still see the discourse of investment in these events – since it is through this displacement that the migrant seeks improvements for their living conditions, an argument that seeks to disrupt the framing of the migrant as purely a victim, as warned by Veronica Gago (2017, p.35) – I believe that Foucault's idea of migration as an investment allows us a curious discussion on several points that are important to the contemporary neoliberal discourse. If we develop this discussion further, can we think of the figure of the migrant as one that promotes new possible frames for the idea of the entrepreneur of oneself?

When Veronica Gago criticizes the discourses that position the migrant purely as a victim, she argues that these subjects have a much more ambiguous relationship to migration than to just be the exploited ones, being “able to negotiate partial forms of obedience and strategies of contempt” (Gago, 2017, p.18). Although there are several possibilities to develop this argument, I propose the figure of the queer migrant as a central point in this essay. This choice is due to the possibility of seeing them as a subject that migrates not only for purely economic reasons but also for survival and/or physical security¹. This condition raises an even more ambiguous relationship because it also generates a redemptive report of liberal and progressive countries that would receive those who could not live in their countries of origin, as highlighted by Jasbir K. Puar (2007) through the concept of homonationalism². This issue is also raised by José Quiroga in his discussion on Cuban migration to the United States that are motivated by sexuality. For the author, “the Cuban homosexual rejected by the state becomes the homosexual body desired by capitalism.” (Quiroga, 2000, p.11). Thus, by discussing the queer migrant based on the Foucauldian idea of the migrant as an investor, I aim to explain the negotiation between subjection and disobedience evoked by Gago (2017). I promote, therefore, a discussion around queerness from a key of negativity and unproductivity (Halberstam, 2011), because this unproductivity places them as bodies that escape homonationalism’s required normativity and assimilation. I also argue that this negativity erases the image of the “good migrant” as the one who collaborates for the economic and social growth of the country that receives them.

To elaborate on these questions, I will discuss the novel *No quiero quedarme sola y vacía* (2006), by Ángel Lozada. I believe that this book, even with the low academic attention dedicated to it, brings several possibilities to discuss the subjection demanded by the image of the “good migrant”, potentially provoking

¹ The discussion about this kind of migration is very present within the academic field of queer and gender studies, receiving names such as “sexile” (Guzmán, 2006) and “diaspora queer” (Patton; Sánchez-Eppler, 2000), (Gopinath, 2018).

² For the author, the “national recognition and inclusion, here signaled as the annexation of homosexual jargon, depends on the segregation and disqualification of other racial and sexual imagery of the national imagination” (Puar, 2007, p.2).

some ruptures on it³. Although the protagonist seems to aspire to an absolute integration in the US society by engaging with hyper-consumerism, I argue that there is a rupture in the novel, an implosion coming exactly from this excessive quality brought by the main character. It is as if the character puts themselves into a dispute to see who can be more fluid and ever-changing: their desires or capital. It is by this excess that the protagonist begins to emphasize the artificiality of the neoliberal discourse of the entrepreneur of oneself. What I argue in this essay, therefore, is that the protagonist of the novel ambiguously plays with the hegemonic and the mainstream, sometimes adhering to them and sometimes fully denying them, in a kind of queer game of disidentification (Muñoz, 1999). I believe that a queer reading of the novel allows us to discuss how its protagonist proposes deviant ways to discuss the omnipresent theme of Latin immigration to the United States, tensioning the idea of success and subaltern identification.

No quiero quedarme sola y vacía is narrated by a homosexual Puerto Rican migrant. They are never given a name but give themselves nicknames like *La Loca*, *La Endeudada*, *La Des(loca)da*, *La Profetisa*, etc. Living in New York City in a precarious situation, but not devoid of financial incomings, they narrate to us their vertiginous routine⁴. Even though it revolves around several sessions of casual sex and incessant consumerist fever, it mostly points to their fear of finding themselves alone and empty, just as suggested by the melodramatic title. Due to the narrator's doubly subordinate condition as a homosexual Latinx migrant living in precarious life conditions, we could expect a sharp criticism of the voracious capitalism that oppresses them or the search for a community as a way to escape the racism and exoticization to which they are constantly subjected, but the book subverts all of these expectations. We end up seeing what seems to be a disturbing adherence to these same discourses and practices that frame her as a subaltern body. In one of the few academic discussions on the novel, Ingrid Robyn argues that the narrator's actions are a betrayal of their Puerto Rican origin. For Robyn, the narrator pursues a "continuously frustrated" plan to "assimilate himself into the US mainstream culture, thus denying any kind of discourse that could serve to question the basis of his subordinate condition" (Robyn, 2011, p.33). Although I agree with the author that there is an assimilationist impulse thorough the book, I argue that it can also be perceived as a parodic and potentially subversive gesture. From this initial hypothesis, I plan to question whether the novel allows us to glimpse new lines of flight of the promotion of a neoliberal subjectivity of the entrepreneur of oneself, while still trying to adhere to it.

A queer reading of the work takes on a central role here because it makes it possible to "recognize erotic themes, signs, and symbols in the sources with which we work" (Edwards, 2009, p. 56). Although this description may make it seem that a queer reading is only a matter of finding homosexual motifs hidden in apparently heterosexual works, as if it were a search to "take the text out of the closet", it would be simplistic to summarize it into such a gesture. As pointed out by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, an author closely linked to this methodology, although these readings often focus on erotic interpersonal and homosexual relationships, these are not their only forms (Sedgwick, 1997, p. 2). Based on this, what I recognize as erotic themes and signs in Lozada's novel are not the casual sex sessions of the protagonist with other men, but his voracious and erotic desire for consumerism. I resort to a methodological queer reading of the novel to develop this argument and to seek a discussion focused on the ideas of negativity and unproductivity developed by queer theory.

Therefore, what I promote in this essay as a gesture of queer reading is twofold. In the first moment, I will discuss the relationship of the protagonist of the novel with his subordinate and precarious

³ Interestingly, there is a shortage of academic or critical material related to the work. This absence is also commented on in the little bibliographic material devoted to it. See Robyn, 2011 and Clavell Carrasquillo, 2006.

⁴ I have opted to use the gender-neutral they to refer to the character since in the original novel the gendered pronouns used to refer constantly swift. I also refer to them throughout the essay as *La Loca* since this is their most recurring "name" in the novel.

condition building from the discussions about queer negativity, especially as proposed by Jack Halberstam (2011) and José Quiroga (2000). Secondly, I will then turn to the discussion of two of the novel's central points: hyper-consumerism and debt. By promoting the relationship of consumerism and erotic desire, I engage with Paul B. Preciado (2013) and Sayak Valencia (2010), authors who promote queer theoretical approaches to discuss the enmeshment of economy and desire. I will also engage with the discussions about the figure of the entrepreneur of oneself developed by Maurizio Lazzarato (2017), especially with his argument about the possibility of refusing work as a political gesture. I engage with these quite different authors to promote a discussion of the novel that does not fall into a moralizing interpretation of the protagonist's attitudes, but that, from a queer conceptualization, discuss them as possible ways to tension the images of the entrepreneur of oneself and the good migrant.

Pure theater: a queer failure bolero

According to Jack Halberstam (2011, p.89), the idea of success is closely interwoven with a "heteronormative common sense that leads to the equation of success with advancement, capital accumulation, family, ethical conduct and hope". I believe, therefore, that the eminently queerness of the narrator works as a solvent of this ideal, being a central point to the discussions I propose in this essay. I believe that the novel's bitter approach to the idea of success is close to Halberstam's argument about the strong connection between queerness and failure:

This particular ethos of resignation to failure, to lack of progress and a particular form of darkness, negativity really, can be called a queer aesthetic... I propose that one form of queer art has made failure its centerpiece and has cast queerness as the dark landscape of confusion, loneliness, alienation, impossibility, and awkwardness (...) As Lee Edelman, Heather Love, and others have argued, to simply repudiate the connections between queerness and negativity is to commit to an unbearably positivist and progressive understanding of the queer. (Halberstam, 2011, p.96-97)

The possibility of a queer attempt to escape from a rigid identity through the confusion and constant mobility is already given to us in the epigraph of the book: "Being: this performance, a chaotic pastiche of displacements and clichés, always mutant, never fixed" (Lozada, 2006, p.10). By evoking an I as something artificial and performed, the novel establishes a strong connection with canonical ideas to queer theory at the very beginning of the narrative. Thus, I believe that the novel subverts what Halberstam perceives as the assimilation of queerness by its associations to positivity and to a logic of progress and redemption, a narrative in which one will eventually overcome all the shame and negative feelings that queerness can evoke and produce. In the novel, "it won't get better". La Loca is not a proud gay man who would chant Born this Way with pride, but the somber one would prefer the darkness of a bolero show, preferably listening to La Lupe. Ours is pure theatre.

This portrayal of a negative and anti-communitarian queer seems exactly what makes Ingrid Robyn argue that the character is marked by betrayal. For Robyn, the lack of definition of their identity "is due first of all to the rejection expressed by the narrator for their Puerto Rican origin, in other words, their resistance to accepting their minority and/or subordinate condition, and their obsessive desire to merge with the cultural mainstream" (Robyn, 2011, p.36). Instead of a potentially politicized identification with other oppressed subjects, there is the only aversion towards them. The author continues her argument by writing that the few times in which the narrator identifies themselves as Puerto Rican it comes from a place of self-exoticization, in which the protagonist convert themselves into a commodified image for the gringos' consumption. Although Ingrid Robyn sees in this attempt to identify with the dominant order as a complete betrayal for their oppressed condition, I believe that a reading that builds from queer negativity allows us to discuss it in a more nuanced way.

Firstly, we should question whether a “queer community” approach would necessarily be the best way to fracture this oppressive system since contemporary neoliberalism produces a standardized image of the homosexual body and narrative. As pointed out by José Quiroga (2000, p.11): “the translocalized body of the homosexual does not stand at this point so much for personal liberation as for the liberation of global capital to pursue its aims”. Thus, the centrality that some discourses, such as “leaving the closet, the idea of pride and the community – important to North American gay movements – assumes a kind of transnational form of homosexuality⁵. Maybe we should think that by subscribing to the form of protest based on the militant discourse promulgated by North American movements, such as self-acceptance and pride, there is a consequent adherence to this hegemonic epistemology? I argue that it is not through political union or identity that the novel’s protagonist provokes ruptures in the very ideological apparatus to which he apparently aspires so much to be a part of, but through queer negativity, which appears here as a search for other ways to subvert neoliberal subjectivity.

I believe that the character is much closer to what José Esteban Muñoz (1999) calls a disidentification: a way of dealing with the mainstream culture in which one never opposes or adheres completely to it. When discussing this concept, Muñoz evokes his personal experiences to better exemplify it. He especially focusses on his adolescence as a young queer of Cuban descent growing up in the United States and whose favorite musical genre was punk. Even if some of the songs of the genre brought racist and/or homophobic messages, the anger and the anti-establishment ethos present in this musical genre made him find that punk was the genre that better resonated with his feelings and angst. Perhaps we should perceive La Loca's particular interest in boleros and romantic songs as a particular way of identifying with an alleged Latinx sensibility⁶ I believe that the fascination that singers such as La Lupe or La India provoke in the protagonist is an indicator of the importance that negativity assumes in the novel, while also highlighting a much more ambiguous relationship with mainstream culture – a more nuanced one than we might think if we only frame the character as someone who aims for a complete assimilation. The choice of bolero and ultraromantic songs seems quite symptomatic on how the novel approaches the negative vision of an anti-communitarian queerness. After all, it is necessary to be alone to perform a musical genre that regrets, in a simultaneously erotic and melancholic way, the impossibility of love and communion. For having its main distinguishing characteristic in this promulgation of instability, the bolero approaches the ideas discussed by Halberstam (2011) of the queer as the one that destabilizes the continuity and progressive vision necessary to the idea of success.

If the protagonist betrays Puerto Rico, wouldn't that be caused by the sensation that they have also been betrayed by it? In a poignant moment in which they plan a megalomaniac revenge project in which they would bombard the island, we read that one of the reasons for this resentment comes from the homophobic violence perpetrated against them throughout their childhood: "I will sink them completely and finish them from space, because they were so homophobic and wanted to destroy me since I was a child" (Lozada, 2006, p. 77). Although at some moments like this one, La Loca seems completely against their country, at others we see the ambiguity of this relationship: "La Loca is tired of the discourse from the independence movement in Puerto Rico, because they think that many of its members are homophobic, but, in the depths of their heart, they want independence for their island" (Lozada, 2006, p. 23). They have a fractured relationship with their Puerto Rican identity because they perceive the island as a place that has always harassed them. However, this does not result in a complete rejection, as suggested by Robyn, but in an affection that is closer to disidentification. Their passion for bolero and other cultural elements

⁵ This is a recurring discussion among several authors of queer theory that tries to distance it from this homogenization and criticize how this process is closely linked to neoliberal discourses. Some authors who discuss some of these points are Quiroga, 2000; Santiago, 2004; Lopes, 2007; Puar, 2007.

⁶ Bolero had a revival in the 1990s among Latinxs populations. According to the writer Rafael Castillo Zapata, this return is linked to a form of cultural self-recognition (Zapata apud. Quiroga, 2000, p.150).

linked to her Latinx origins suggests that there is not an absolute betrayal, but an attempt for mediation, almost as if La Loca is perpetually dedicating a song to a love that despises them, but for whom she continues to suffer and to dream the possibility of a new chance. La Loca, therefore, approaches Quiroga's argument that

The queer will not hesitate to manipulate the border, to attempt to be recognized by another space beyond the national when the national does not offer the validation that queer people seek. In other words, the queer in the bolero house of essentialism will allow the house to collapse in order to gain the voice that is denied, and this position is predicated on the sadness that the bolero itself will perform. (Quiroga, 2000, p. 162)

This bolero, in which they sing to us their utopian desire to "live in an imaginary country ... to build my nation according to my own desires, without traffic jams, without political parties, without homophobes" (Lozada, 2006, p.54), does not approach the glamour performance of Olga Guillot, but rather the excess of La Lupe. It's almost as if their body could not contain all the energy and antithetical flows that go through it. Although they try to build their nation from an attempt to integrate the hegemonic, they can only achieve it from their financial failure at the end of the novel. If the way to which they try to assimilate to the "good migrant" image is through consumerism, the character ends up functioning as a kind of infiltrated enemy that ends up imploding the same system that they intend to join, as I will argue in the following section. I think that his relationship with the neoliberal discourse of the entrepreneur of oneself and the celebration of success, consumerism and labor functions as a distorted mirror that ends up working as a disruptive force. It is a queer bolero of waste. And it starts with the love and desires produced by consumerism..

Looking for a Jackeline Kennedy-becoming: consumerism and debt

The desire for integration via consumption is not presented here as an unprecedented topic. As pointed out by Sayak Valencia in *Gore Capitalism* (2010), a recurring point that is present in a vast array of contemporary discussions about capitalism is the positioning of consumerism as a form of socialization and pleasure (Valencia, 2010, p. 63). If we think about one of the fundamental texts for the discursive construction of capitalism and liberalism – Adam Smith's *The wealth of nations*, – we realize how consumption is perceived as one of the most efficient tools to flatten class distinctions since, for Smith, the consumption of the produced goods is a demand that is shared by everyone from "civilized and thriving nations". For him,

Among civilized and thriving nations, ... though a great number of people do not labor at all, many of whom consume the produce of ten times, frequently of a hundred times more labor than the greater part of those who work; yet the produce of the whole labor of the society is so great, that all are often abundantly supplied, and a workman, even of the lowest and poorest order, if he is frugal and industrious, may enjoy a greater share of the necessaries and conveniences of life. (Smith, 1999, p.105)

In Smith's idyllic liberal vision, all citizens of these "civilized and thriving nations" would be able to have access to the goods one needs and/or desires as long as there was a general labor dedication. If we follow Valencia's argument, we realize that there is a crucial difference between the contemporary capitalist discourse from Adam Smith's canonical text because now the discourse about consumption no longer stems from the need of a frugal simplicity that should be exercised by the workers, but rather under the sign of hedonism and excess. If for Smith consumption is a supposedly egalitarian action, something that would pervade all classes, it now is strictly connected to the idea of an alleged fluidity and mobility among these classes. "The discourse of the new capitalism (...) considers the body as an eternally desirable, stimulated, interconnected and mediated device" (Valencia, 2010, p.65). This transformation of capitalism

into a form of libidinal economy – which Bernard Stiegler (2011) calls psychopower – is what prompts Paul B. Preciado (2013) to argue that contemporary capitalism is close to a masturbatory and pornographic logic. For him, it evokes a kind of frustrating satisfaction, where "the goal is not the production of pleasure, but the control of political subjectivities through the management of the circuit excitation-frustration" (Preciado, 2013, p. 304).

If Smith subscribed to the adoption of a Protestant restraint as a condition for everyone to have access to the produced goods, now we are approaching a ceaseless creation of desires. If we follow this line of thought, we perceive that the modern workers evoked by Smith could have access to his living conditions through their work, now the contemporary precariat must be created from this supposed consumption accessible to all. There would, therefore, be "the integration of the working class and the population in general into capitalist valorization through mass consumption" (Lazzarato, 2017, p.132). And it is from this key that we can see the burgeoning of neoliberal discourses such as that of meritocracy and the idea of the entrepreneur of oneself, the creation of a narrative in which happiness and "success" would be closely linked to consumption. Capitalism sells frustration, as Valencia reminds us (2010, p.74).

It is exactly in the center of this libidinal logic of consumerism in which the protagonist finds themselves in the novel. "It is that all the appliances I have are already obsolete every six months and, therefore, I HAVE to buy new ones to be able to feel complete" (Lozada, 2006, p.68). Throughout the novel, we see thoughts like this, in an expiatory tone, as if La Loca was constantly trying to find reasons and justifications for its incessant desire to consume. For Ingrid Robyn (2011, p.37), this addiction would be an effort to distance themselves from their positionality of a subaltern subject, a way of differentiating themselves from others. However, paradoxically, this addiction is exactly how the protagonist provokes small implosions in the ideology to which they seem to adhere. In this configuration, in which desires and bodies are almost totally co-opted by the logic of capitalism as a force moved by frustration, it does not seem surprising to us that Deleuze and Guattari (2010, p.325) diagnosed that "our society produces schizos as it produces shampoo Dop or Renault cars". According to the authors, capitalism needs to transform these schizophrenics into patients, because schizophrenia would be "the external limit of capitalism itself, or the term of its deepest tendency... Schizophrenia is not, therefore, the identity of capitalism, but, on the contrary, its difference, its deviation, and its death" (Deleuze; Guattari, 2010, p.325-326). By bringing this up, I am not trying to find a link between the protagonist and the schizoid revolution proposed by the authors - since in the novel there is no room for ideas about revolutions. I am proposing that La Loca highlights the paradoxes of the neoliberal promotion of consumption, and, by doing so, they also provoke ruptures on it. If capitalism produces schizos, it also produces locas.

When thinking about the narrator's constant need to consume useless things in a feverish and repetitive way, it is important to remember that these acquired objects do not seem to bring them any pleasure or benefit; there is only the compulsion for consumption. This resonates with the quite polemical reading about the classic character Madame Bovary promoted by Avital Ronell in her book *Crack Wars* (1992)⁷. For the author, Madame Bovary is, above all, a book about addiction since its homonymous character is addicted to the act of consuming. Curiously, many of the arguments brought by her deeply resonate with Ángel Lozada's novel. For Ronell, "the 'objects' of her [Madame Bovary] intoxication consist of non-contained substance ... structures of repetition and substitution take precedence over the real qualities of the other. A question of transference that disturbs the order of things" (Ronell, 1992, p.100). But how can we see a disturbance in this supposed order of things if, at the end of Lozada's novel, the protagonist declares bankruptcy and does not engage in any clear critical discourse against capitalism and hyper-consumerism? For this last segment of the essay, I propose some possible ways to imagine this supposed disturbance.

⁷ Curiously, La Loca thinks of Bovary when they are close to declaring their bankruptcy, "la Loca pensó en Emma" (Lozada, 2006, p.88).

I believe that La Loca destabilizes one of the main pillars of neoliberal subjective construction: that of a meritocracy based on the image of the entrepreneur of oneself. As we have seen from Adam Smith's quote, labor appears as the privileged action of the capital to enable consumption. However, this centrality already seems quite worn out in the latest stages of capitalism. For, as stated by Lazzarato (2017, p.14), "the new class composition that has emerged over these years is composed of a multiplicity of situations of employment, non-employment, intermittent employment ... It is dispersed, fragmented and precarious". For the author, the central relationship of this new capitalist formation is that of the creditor/debtor, and it is from this central argument that notions of credit and debt assume privileged positions in contemporary capitalism. Thus, for Lazzarato class identification is no more the central political strategy to prompts revolts that would then result in the gain of new rights or the improvement of living conditions. Lozada's novel does not attempt to replace this class consciousness with an identity politics of subaltern subjects since, as previously said, the idea of a queer community in the novel is ambiguous at best. The narrator is so inserted into this neoliberal logic of capital that the only way in which they can create lines of flights is by engaging with these same codes in an excessive manner by adopting the same instability that marks the rhythm of capital flows as we can perceive when character declares that "only NASDAQ survives me (only the void)" (Lozada, 2006, p.111). La Loca is the outer limit of this very configuration, the distorted portrait of the capital's fluidity.

In the novel, we can see the material representation of this new configuration in the centrality assumed by the credit card, a crucial object when discussing the credit and debt relationship within the logic of consumption. For Lazzarato, the credit card "opens the doors of the consumer society and, requesting, encouraging, and facilitating the purchase, it involves the consumer/debtor in the vicious circle of excitement/frustration" (Lazzarato, 2017, p.68). Once again La Loca seems to understand perfectly the neoliberal logic in which they are inserted, hence its statement that "credit entry finally makes them a citizen... And La Loca, for the first time felt as if they were Jacqueline Kennedy and left... spent the three thousand dollars on clothes" (Lozada, 2006, p.63). However, if Lazzarato states that this new composition would bring with it a new technique of power, which would cause the indebted subject to begin to manage her life to be able to repay the debt, in Lozada's book there is an emptying of this tension since there seems to be no moral longing here raised by debt and that is expiated by the exaltation of work. Approaching the vision defended by Lazzarato of the possibility of thinking of the denial of work as a way to combat these new subjective neoliberal constructions, La Loca appears in the novel removed from any idealization of their work. At a certain point in the narrative, they seem to adhere to the idea of meritocracy and the discourse of working as the best way to achieve success. In the midst of a discussion with other Puerto Ricans, La Loca begins a discourse full of commonplaces that perfectly fit into the neoliberal logic of the entrepreneur of oneself: "The Cubans, dearest, have triumphed on YOUR island, because they work to death, they rise at the dawn of God while your compatriots [The Puerto-Ricans] want the government to give them everything they want on a plate" (Lozada, 2006, p.23). Although in this quote we can see the idea of success as intimately linked to sacrificing yourself to work, La Loca does not seem to believe in their own discourse. Later in the book, they narrate a long list of small unethical gestures that they do in their workplace, thus highlighting how far removed they are from this discourse that connects the "good migrants" as the ones who work to death.

In thirteen years, La Loca had changed jobs twenty-seven times... She lasted six months at work, couldn't stand it and got bored quickly. They were tired of getting up every day at seven in the morning, working eight hours, which made them tense. And theft. Pencils, magic-markers, blocks of paper, diaries. From time to time I take something from work. Scissors. Even some flowers. And the worst of it. The most criminal. Photocopying. I photocopy 'unrelated to business' documents... Calls sick each other Friday. Misses work for anything. Arrives late. La Loca almost always takes for themselves two hours of lunch and from time to time take breaks and goes

Although these rebellious gestures are minimal, since we know that stealing these small objects will not cause any harm to the company, it is exactly in this characteristic that they acquire their disruptive character since they reinforce how ridiculous it would be to attribute any specially dignifying and important value to work. These petty and disrespectful attitudes displace the protagonist of the image of the good migrant - since "the meekness/submission of migrant labor is announced as the key to its productivity" (Gago, 2017, p.115). La Loca produces their body as completely non-productive, almost parasitic: living off loans and debts that they do not intend to pay later. Thus, the protagonist provokes lines of flight both from the vampiric logic of capitalism as posed by Marx⁸, as from the infinite debt of contemporary neoliberalism (Lazzarato, 2017).

In fact, this seems to be the way they found to subvert the neoliberal system to which they want to integrate in such a passionate way: to transform into this parasitic, vampire-like being. When they reflect that they want "to send a big fuck you to Citibank and Chase (...) the best bomb that one can apply to investors was to borrow and then not to pay them. That was to be radical and subversive these days" (Lozada, 2006, p.93), they approaches almost literally the idea of Lazzarato (2017, p.84) that "it is not an act of payment, but by a political act, by a refusal that we can break the relationship of debt domination". It is as if their desire to become the embodiment of the racist myth of the Welfare Queen was their way of subverting and exploiting the very system and society that excluded her throughout the narrative: "I want to suffer and be very expensive to taxpayers" (Lozada, 2006, p.114). The success of their revenge is therefore based on their financial failure. And it is this ambiguity, based on the centrality of the contemporary model of credit, that makes the character expose their own failure and schizophrenia of some of the pillars of this system and its financial and subjective crises.

By trying to assimilate themselves to the hegemonic system while rejecting the very subjective and behavioral creations of neoliberalism - the primacy of labor, meritocracy, subject as entrepreneurs of themselves - the protagonist highlights the fractures of this discourse. They become the vampire who desperately tries to suck capital as a way to reverse its flow. If at the beginning of the novel they are desperately afraid of a possible HIV contamination, at the end of they face a probable infection as possible way to generate exorbitant debts to the State: "Let the hospitals to use their body to profit from Medicare, which in the end, as granted by law, will have to pay millions for it. With machines all over their body while the medical system finally takes charge of paying the Loca's bills, which is now a burden" (Lozada, 2006, p.114). If the State would be responsible for defining the lives worthy of living of those who would not be - and HIV contamination in the United States appears as a clear case of this biopolitical governance - La Loca reverses this very logic as a way to damage the same State that would classify them as a disposable body. Here, the investment in oneself as one's own capital suffers its final mutation due to the denial/obliteration of oneself, the annulment of one's own body, converted from a source of income to a source of debt, a burden..

Final considerations

In the end, La Loca declares their bankruptcy and ends up escaping any punishment for their addition and excesses. Unlike Madam Bovary, there is no suicide, just a legal subterfuge that seems to nullify any consequence we thought was coming towards La Loca. Therefore, the novel proposes failure as a possible solvent to the neoliberal vision of success. In this essay, I have argued that the centrality

⁸ "Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the labourer works, is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has purchased of him" (Marx, 1967, p.224).

of the question of credit and debt, that culminates in the final failure of the protagonist, enables an instigating approach to a queer vision of failure. It would be "an implosion that does not go through the discourse of tolerance, acceptance or rebellion" (Robyn, 2011, p.48), but one that seeks this subversion on its negativity. *La Loca* seems to indicate to us that the discourse of success built by contemporary neoliberalism already carries in itself its possibilities of deviations and lines of flight. That we seek ways to fail that can be increasingly harmful to this system. Finally, this brings us dangerously close to the very code that subdues us, as we can see from the ambiguous disidentification exercised by the protagonist.

I believe that one of the reasons for the notable lack of academic interest in the book may arise from the uncomfortable and ambiguous way that it and its protagonist engages with the neoliberal ideology of hyper-consumerism, as well as how this character denies their subaltern position. However, if we subscribe to Jack Halberstam's statement that if "we want to make the antisocial turn in queer theory (...) we should be open to leaving the comfort zone of educated exchanges to adopt a policy of negativity (...) fail, make a mess, shatter, shock and annihilate" (Halberstam, 2011, p.110). From this opening to negativity and feelings that some might perceive as not noble, I have argued that *La Loca* shows us some possible ways to think about this opening to failure and negativity within a contemporary queer policy. And I believe that this gesture is the novel's main strength since queerness is increasingly closer to a complete co-optation by the discourse of the good citizen and the entrepreneur of oneself.

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