

Book Review: Gore Capitalism by Sayak Valencia

“To be in love with a psychopath and to say so with a smile,” (Valencia & Pluecker, 2018) is an opening sentence within the second chapter of *Gore Capitalism* by Sayak Valencia, which encapsulates the entirety of its subject. While Valencia mentions the psychopath only twice, both times in reference to her hometown of Tijuana, the personification of the psychopath, gore capitalism, and society’s love affair with it, can be felt throughout the entirety of the book.

The overall purpose of Valencia’s book is to “present evidence of the failure of neoliberal discourse to explain” gore capitalism while interpreting the violence seen throughout all aspects of hyperconsumerism, which feeds the phenomenon (Valencia & Pluecker, 2018). It is, as it were, a “guide map for understanding the realities of gore capitalism,” and while much of the book focuses on its relation to the Third World, specifically Mexico, it is an important lens that can be held up to policies of the First World and how it operates on a global scale.

Valencia explores the mafia, professional and unprofessional criminals, violence and murder, and the global drug trafficking seen in both the Third and First World. In addition, the book looks at the creation of “pirate” criminals through the machismo—strong, aggressive male—archetype, which is glorified and desensitized within society, particularly through media such as movies and videogames. This non-professional criminal has become an endriago subject—meaning monster—who strives for power and wealth without any regard to life, often using death and violence as a means toward that power.

Tijuana, featured heavily in the book, is a border town between First and Third World countries making it a transactional space where gore capitalism is manifested in a complexity not always seen in other places. The author, as a native to Tijuana, sees the intersectionality caused by wealth and poverty, power and disempowerment and the frustration that takes place in our

society of hyperconsumerism. No longer are the poor connected as a social class, but are, instead, individuals seeking their own goals to obtain those privileges that the wealthy have—often with the easiest route being through the violence and criminality offered within gore capitalism.

Valencia, as a transfeminist poet, essayist and performance artist, has a unique lens to hold up to the violence within gore capitalism that is illustrated in the chapters of her book. She continues her study of the phenomenon through the breakdown of the state, capitalism as a cultural construction, the new mafia and necropolitics, exploring each topic in consecutive chapters. In addition, her exploration of feminism as a resistance tool due to its very nature as “comparable to a single drop of mercury that bursts and becomes many,” (Valencia & Pluecker, 2018) shows the diversity of feminist discourse, including queer, Black, Latinx etc., and how important it is in these discussions. Feminism, as a tool, can offer “sustainable practices to move away from it [gore capitalism].” (Valencia & Pluecker, 2018)

One minor critique of the book is that Valencia repeats herself frequently, especially in regard to the violence and the creation of the endriago subject. This repetition, while integral to supporting her points, has the negative effect of desensitizing the reader. The violence becomes just another background noise amongst the overwhelming force of gore capitalism within both the First and Third Worlds, and leaves the reader to doubt their own capacity to enact change.

However, Valencia does an excellent job of pulling the reader out of hopelessness by highlighting that gore capitalism can be transformed through the use of “education at all levels, and principally through language” (Valencia & Pluecker, 2018) to redefine gender, society and to minimize the glamorization of violence. By doing so, we not only find paths away from gore capitalism, but we can begin the “re-semanticization of the body” that will aid in extricating the

body from “media discourses that spectralize” it and finally shifts the power of death away from gore capitalism (Valencia & Pluecker, 2018).

Valencia’s book, along with her conclusions, is that our way forward is through discourse that brings transfeminism to the forefront while also redefining masculinity in an effort to dismantle the hold that both gore capitalism and hyperconsumerism has on society. In the end, it is time that we all realize that, while we may not all be in love with a psychopath, we need to say that he, gore capitalism, no longer has a place within our lives.

References

Valencia, S. (2018). *Gore capitalism*. (J. Pluecker, Trans.). Semiotexte/Smart Art.