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# On the Road to Nowhere: A Reading of Franz Galich's Managua, Salsa City (¡Devórame otra vez!)

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## Abstract / Resumen

### On the Road to Nowhere:

#### A Reading of Franz Galich's *Managua, Salsa City* (¡Devórame otra vez!)

This article examines how Franz Galich, in *Managua, Salsa City* (¡Devórame otra vez!), narrates the Central American neoliberal experience from the perspective of the underprivileged. I explore how, beginning with the title, the author positions his protagonists in the neoliberal, fragmented moment. From there, Galich proceeds to document a night in the life of the marginalized. Here, Beatriz Cortez's concept of *cinismo* is used to understand how the role-playing, that is central to the novel, brings into question arbitrary social barriers. In so doing, the role-playing affords the protagonists momentary delusions of being able to achieve something other than what they know, therein giving them the agency they need to survive another day. This cynicism, though, is an object of derision because it is shown to be an inadequate tool of social change since, as the author concludes at the end of his novel, it is ultimately futile because it serves only to perpetuate the current system. Instead, something not yet imagined is needed.

## Keywords / Palabras clave

Franz Galich, neoliberalism, Central American novel

## Cover Page Footnote / Si quiere que su cubierta contenga una nota al pie de página...

Dear Editorial Board, Please read and consider publishing my paper "On the Road to Nowhere: A Reading of Franz Galich's *Managua, Salsa City* (¡Devórame otra vez!)." It is currently not under review with any other periodical. In this essay, I read the novel as an enunciation of the Central American, neoliberal experience from the margin. I analyze the central place "role-playing" has in the text, and I present it as a tool the protagonists use to temporarily dismantle arbitrary social constructs as they imagine an escape to a better life. In the end, I conclude that this approach is written as futile because it serves only to perpetuate the current system. My reading of the novel is mindful of previous interpretations. My contribution is unique in my focus and varied secondary sources. Ultimately, I expect this paper will add to our on-going efforts to understand our global experience in the world we are creating. And I hope that it will contribute to our efforts to imagine a more just world. Thank you for your consideration, Kerri A. Muñoz Auburn University

## On the Road to Nowhere:

### A Reading of Franz Galich's *Managua, Salsa City* (*¡Devórame otra vez!*)

Contrary to the revolutionary literature of the region, a literature that strove to inspire a sense of communal possibility through social commitment, many of the Central American authors writing fiction during the post-war period struggle to come to terms with political defeat and alienating social injustices. With this in mind, Beatriz Cortez has noted that the utopian spirit of the earlier texts that was oriented toward the construction of a communal good has been replaced with what she calls an “espíritu de cinismo” (2), a term that speaks to the social fragmentation documented in the post-war narrative coming out of Central America at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries. Logically, then, the metonymic *yo* of the *testimonio*, the literary genre *par excellence* of the revolutionary period, has been replaced with alienated *yos* that now desperately navigate the sprawling urban spaces unwilling and / or unable to imagine anything beyond the present. While their unwillingness to envision something new stems from a paralyzing malaise of disenchantment with past political endeavors that proved not only fruitless but often times a ruse, their inability to do so stems from their systematic marginalization in the neoliberal world where, as social scientist, Susan George, duly notes, the market reigns supreme as it is “allowed to direct the fate of human beings”. This marginalization results in a comprehensive disempowerment that infiltrates all aspects of life, from the public realm to the private. Along these lines, Néstor García Canclini has commented that to be Latin American during this neoliberal period “is to share with the majorities from other continents the drama and the farce of attempting to be somebody. Somebody who is represented in decision-making circuits, somebody who is able to give rise to memory when a few are able to globalize deprivation and obstruct national, ethnic, urban, and personal projects” (18). Within this context, the aforementioned cynicism of which Cortez writes is not only a “proyeto estético” (2) at the hands of the authors as they use it to critique the

general milieu of their societies, it is also explored on the lived, private plane of the protagonists where it is presented as “una estrategia de sobrevivencia para el individuo” (Cortez 2). Presented in this light, the cynicism that Cortez reads in this literature is an unlikely form of agency in a disempowering world, an interpretation supported by Magdalena Perkowska in her article “La infamia de las historias y la ética de la escritura en la novela centroamericana contemporánea.”

To present the cynicism as a form of agency begs the question as to how it is used and to what end. Perkowska distinguishes between two types of cynicism that are linked to economic class. The privileged, or the “few,” mentioned by García Canclini (18), practice “un cinismo descarado y seguro de su propia impunidad, un modo de ser y hacer protegido por las estructuras criminales, y a su vez cínicas, del estado” (Perkowska 9): it is an effort to maintain the status quo. In the hands of the underprivileged majority, this cynicism challenges the said status quo that has served to disempower them in the neoliberal world; it is a tool with which social constructs are momentarily destabilized because they are approached with “una actitud irreverente, desafiante, insolente” (Perkowska 15) that underscores their arbitrary, and therefore malleable, nature. This is not to say, however, that the characters are able to transgress social barriers because that would indicate that they are able to maintain a vision of something beyond the present moment: an impossible luxury for the marginalized in the neoliberal world for whom, as Misha Kokotovic has noted, “survival... is the best that can be hoped for” (21). Instead, these characters, as well as the privileged, are stuck in what García Canclini has called the “hyperpresent” (19), a term he uses to approach an articulation of contemporary Latin American societies within the neoliberal context where the past is forgotten and the future is irrelevant.

Of course, the privileged and the underprivileged experience this “hyperpresent” differently. For the privileged few, it is a question of actively partaking in the fast-paced hyper-consumerism that makes our global world go around, a world dependent upon policies that “make electric appliances

useless every five years, or computers obsolete every three years, and advertising strategies that put clothing out of fashion every six months and songs every six weeks” (García Canclini 10). The underprivileged, however, exist in a radically different realm, in one that Mary Louise Pratt calls the “zonas de exclusión,” where the people

son, y saben que son, completamente superfluas al orden histórico global. A lo largo del planeta enormes sectores de la humanidad organizada viven con la conciencia de ser redundantes e innecesarios al orden económico, de haber sido expulsados de todas las narrativas de un futuro colectivo o individual que el neo-liberalismo ofrece, y sin esperanzas de entrar (o volver a entrar) en el orden de producción y consumo.  
(400)

In the pages that follow, I will examine how Franz Galich, in *Managua, Salsa City (¡Devórame otra vez!)* (2000) ventures into these “zonas de exclusión” to give voice to a perspective rarely heeded in the neoliberal moment. In so doing, he documents a night in the life of the excluded where the aforementioned cynicism allows for momentary delusions of something other than what they know, giving them the agency needed to survive another day. This cynicism, though, is an object of derision in the novel because even though it certainly brings into question the stability of social structures, it is shown to be an inadequate tool of social change since, as Galich concludes at the end of his novel, it is ultimately futile; something more is needed.

Beginning with the title, *Managua, Salsa City (¡Devórame otra vez!)*, Galich sets the scene. In their essay, “Rebellions of Everynight Life” Celeste Fraser Delgado and José Esteban Muñoz trace the origin of salsa music to New York City in the 1970s, a time that witnessed the movement of large populations of Caribbean immigrants to that American city. As the authors point out, coinciding with this immigration were advancements in technologies that made musical production available to more people and facilitated the labor of transnational distribution. Salsa music made in

New York City started to radiate from this global, consumer metropolis throughout the United States crossing into Latin America.

Mayra Santos Febres underscores the transnational influences contributing to salsa in her essay, “Salsa as Translocation,” where she writes of how the genre evolved from the historical encounters of various Latin American cultures and their musical traditions, pointing out “[t]he impossibility of attaching fixed boundaries to the musical form [because at its core is a] “fusion and confusion of musical traditions” (179). The inability to limit salsa through definition alludes to the constant movement that Santos Febres shows to be characteristic of the genre. She writes:

The salsa community is not a sedentary one; it never stays in one place for very long and is often on the run. Salsa, not to mention salseros, cannot afford to get stale and formulaic. If they stop moving, improvising, and inventing new ways of carrying on, they become a target. If they stay put, they get towed away. The only way out of the conundrum is to keep moving, keep dancing, but this time to their own beat, their own clave. (186)

The literal, geographical movement seminal to the genre’s origin as well as the movement that is popularly associated with salsa’s quick music and dance patterns is also read on a figurative level in the shift in subjectivity that takes place in the final sentence of the above quote. This shift corresponds to the traditional purpose of salsa lyrics, that “of narrating historical events, local situations, and stories from the point of view of the marginalized...[speaking] to the collective realities of Latinas/os in the United States and Latin America” (Aparicio 82).

“Salsa,” with its connotations of international and constant movement, and its strong affiliation with the marginalized sectors, is positioned as a symbol for the “new social consciousness” (Delgado and Muñoz 26) borne out of the grave social disparities created by the transnational machine of neo-liberalism, disparities that create entire sectors that are excluded from

the benefits and protections ideally afforded by national infrastructure. So, when Galich replaces “Nicaragua” with “*Salsa City*,” the author speaks to said exclusion because the Central American nation in effect disappears and in its stead, is a powerful signifier for the neoliberal place of the “losers” (George), those for whom the nation is, for all intents and purposes, non-existent.

The parenthetical component of the title, (*¡Devórame otra vez!*), is necessarily read within the context developed by the preceding part of the title, and it can be approached by two avenues. The first, and most obvious, entails recognizing it as the title of a tremendously popular salsa song released by Lalo Rodríguez in 1988. Doing this, the parenthesized words bring to mind nocturnal images and sounds by evoking nighttime music that spills over from the dance clubs into the city streets with its characteristic rhythms. The result is two-fold. On the one hand, the parenthetical title is an embellishment of the geographical setting previously created as it positions us temporally: the time is night. On the other, upon reading “salsa” as a symbol for the aforementioned “new social consciousness” (Delgado and Muñoz 26), the aural image of the salsa music seeping into the urban landscape becomes a metaphor for neo-liberalism’s unrelenting and unchecked reach.

The second avenue with which to understand the latter half of Galich’s title intersects here in order to question the identity of the interlocutor. Werner Mackenbach writes that in Galich’s work, “las voces subalternas toman la palabra, se vuelven el pilar de la narración” (“Franz Galich”); and in an interview with the same critic published in 2007, Franz Galich said that Central American literature was becoming “la voz de una sociedad” (“Literatura Light”). Accordingly, the first-person speaker of the parenthetical half of the title represents the subaltern society, the “losers” (George), that dwell in Pratt’s “zonas de exclusión” (400), a place Galich constructs when he substitutes “Nicaragua” with “*Salsa City*.” The *yo*, however, is not a metonymic figure; on the contrary, this is the neoliberal *yo*, it is alone in its efforts with no pretensions of community. To this end, with the words, “(*¡Devórame otra vez!*)” the speaker pits him/herself in an incessant and futile struggle against

an oppositional figure understood, in this very particular context, to be the neoliberal society of Managua, “*Salsa City*.” And powerfully, the parentheses that enclose the words, by extension also enclose the speaker of said words, therein visually reiterating the character’s isolation and lack of options posed by this opposition.

Like salsa lyrics, *Managua, Salsa City* (*¡Devórame otra vez!*), is told from the margins of society, a positioning laid out in the title and cemented in the very opening pages of the novel. As has already been discussed, the time of the novel is night; indeed, the action begins as the sun sets, therein setting up an unavoidable dichotomy between day and night that necessarily corresponds to the parallel dichotomies of good and evil, and life and death, when Galich incorporates the figures of God and the Devil: “A las seis en punto de la tarde, Dios le quita el fuego a Managua y le deja la mano libre al Diablo” (*MSC* 1). The author’s figurative use of nocturnal darkness subverts these dichotomies in order to characterize the dire quality of life in the margin, a place abandoned by God, absent of good, and peopled by the living dead: “Es como si miles y miles de muertos resucitaran y empezaran a invadir el mundo de los vivos, como una venganza de ultratumba donde participan hombres, mujeres, viejos, jóvenes y niños” (*MSC* 1).

Galich opens the text with a male, first-person, narrator. He is written as having a distanced, bird’s-eye view as he comments, in passing, on the devastating earthquakes of 1931 and 1972, on the consistently inadequate infrastructure, on the failed social revolution, on the rampant drugs and prostitution, the crooked politicians, and all the rest that he considers to be key to his cityscape of Managua (*MSC* 1-2). This distanced perspective literally positions the narrator as a peripheral figure, as standing on the outside looking in, a condition that is further developed through his cynicism that reaches its theoretical apex in the following quote where he completely disassociates himself from any social agenda:

los ladrones y las policías (que son lo mismo que los políticos, sean sandináis o



liberáis o conservaduráis, cristianáis o cualquiermierdáis, jueputas socios del Diablo porque son la misma chochada). Yo por eso no soy nada, ni chicha ni limonada, como dice la canción que tanto oímos en aquellos años de runga, cuando creíamos en lo que nos decían, ahora creo solo en lo que cargo entre las bolsas....o sea que no creo en nada....” (MSC 2)

As the action begins, the narrator disappears only to return in the very closing paragraph once all is said and done, signifying the practical culmination of his disassociation as he washes his hands of the atrocities that transpire. Fittingly, this noncommittal approach with which the novel opens is central to the cynicism developed through the characters that come into being: Pancho Rana, an ex-Sandinista working as a chauffeur for a wealthy family; la Guajira, a prostitute and gang leader; la Guajira’s gang of ex-Contras; and Cara de Ratón and his unnamed partner. All, without exception, are disconnected and disillusioned individuals who just so happen upon each other as they lie, steal, cheat and improvise in their struggles to merely survive another day.

In a nod to the fast pace of the neoliberal moment, Galich begins the action of the novel in *media res*. The place is a nightclub, and the title song is playing. The opening figure is a nameless prostitute, perfectly symbolizing the reduction of human life to an objectified commodity in the consumer-driven world. In line with Pratt’s observations, this character knows of her situation as is seen in the following quote where, contemplating to herself about potential business with Pancho Rana, she places a price tag on her life, and she continues on to liken her body to a meal, something to be literally consumed: “a ver si vamos a parar a la pensión o al motel o por último en la orilla de un cauce, vale verga, lo que cuenta son las cincuenta o cien o ciento cincuenta vara que me va a soltar, pero ojalá que el pendejo se deje poner el capote porque si no chiva con el, sida para una cosa no da para otra y si quiere los tres platos ¡le sale más caro mister!” (MSC 3).

Immediately following the above quote, Pancho Rana seems to respond in kind when he

approaches this woman as a mere object from which to derive pleasure:

Vamos a ver si la maje soca, si aguanta el ácido y no se gasea antes de tiempo porque en cuanto mire la nave que cargo no se va a aguantar las ganas, menos cuando me la lleve a la quinta, que por supuesto le voy a decir que es mía, lo mismo que la máquina y como los rocos no vienen hasta el lunes de Miami, me la daré grande con esta cipota que está bien buena.... (MSC 3)

It turns out, however, that he is looking through her to la Guajira, the only other female character in the novel who is a prostitute as well. By limiting the female roles to that of prostitutes, Galich not only reiterates the objectification of humanity in the current context, he also introduces the theme of redundancy about which Pratt writes, and being redundant, one becomes unnecessary, “[superflua]” (400). To this end, the unnamed woman disappears without any consequence whatsoever.

Pancho Rana then approaches la Guajira feigning to be something he is not: a man with money. Likewise, la Guajira responds to his overtures pretending to be something she is not: a naïve young woman still living with her parents. This roleplaying, at first, is about nothing more meaningful than the need for the instant gratification about which García Canclini writes: for Pancho Rana, it is about the sex; for la Guajira, it is about the money. As the novel progresses, though, the roleplaying becomes a tool with which Galich articulates the cynicism that has been analyzed above: the tacit questioning of socio-economic borders through the willful attempt to shed one identity for another. Through these efforts, the characters briefly convince themselves to believe in a future that just might differ from their present. As an example, this following quote where la Guajira says to herself as she ponders a future: “Pero ya me empieza a dar pena, pues se oye sincero, es claro que le gusto, pero sólo para jincarme porque no me va andar entre su gente, pues no soy de su clase, aunque en la telenovela sale un maje rico, de reales y de lo otro, que se enamoran de una jaña pobre como yo, y se casan y viven muy felices.... ¿Por qué, entonces, yo no?” (MSC 14). And

later, in the house she believes is Pancho Rana's but really belongs to his employers, she thinks: "Muy posiblemente podría llegar a ser la señora de la casa" (*MSC* 62).

Then, there is Pancho Rana who, though less sentimental than la Guajira, also falls victim to the tempting delusion of being able to remake himself. In his mind, it is as easy as absconding with the bounty stolen from his employers to a place where nobody knows him and he can dictate who he is: "sentía que con esa mujer se la podía pasar bien sus años, por lo menos mientras estuviera joven, bonita y hermosa. Le molestaba un poco la idea de que fuera de la vida alegre, pero de acuerdo a los planes que tenía, nadie tendría por qué enterarse" (*MSC* 63).

These aspirations of self-reinvention, possible only through their cynicism, are what keep the characters moving, yet they prove to be futile for both. La Guajira has her gang in tow throughout the novel because the original plan was to lure Pancho Rana, thought to be a man of economic means, into her lair to rob him. Upon developing feelings for him, or, rather, for whom she thinks him to be, her plan changes: she no longer wants to rob him; rather, she wants to escape with him to a better life where she will be "somebody" (García Canclini 18): "me dará mi lugar de persona" (*MSC* 36). To this end, she initiates a game of cat and mouse as she tries to leave her gang behind, but she cannot; they are always waiting on the sidelines and inevitably catch up with her.

Underscored in this multi-faceted chase is la Guajira's ultimate inability to become someone else. First, try as she might, she is unable to move into that future she has narrated for herself; she is stuck in the present, symbolized by her gang that is not likely to let her go: "Estos jodidos me pueden arruinar la gran oportunidad de mi vida" (*MSC* 43). Second, her attraction to Pancho Rana is grounded in her desire for the social mobility he seems to promise. This ruse, however, is Galich's point: Pancho Rana, as la Guajira understands him to be and what he represents, does not exist for her. This message is made particularly clear upon Pancho Rana's death, an event that spells out what la Guajira will never really have: "Al pasar por el porche, vio el cuerpo de Pancho Rana, le pareció

que estaba dormido.... No lo creía: el mismo cuerpo que había acariciado ¡y que la había acariciado! Hacía apenas unas horas” (MSC 90-91).<sup>1</sup> Here, the focus on the caressing that they shared reminds the reader that their relationship, at best, was always only going to be skin-deep, a condition reflecting the superficiality of this consumer-oriented world. Further, the act of caressing brings to mind the image of a hand, a traditional symbol of power. The fact that Pancho Rana essentially slips through her fingers, in that one minute he is there and the next he is not, leaves her empty-handed, and she is understood to be powerless in the neoliberal context.

Regarding Pancho Rana, the fact that the material goods he has taken have given him a sense of agency speaks to the power obtained through possessions in the neoliberal world. This causal link between possessions and power is also read in Pancho Rana’s relationship with la Guajira. He knows she is from “la vida alegre” (MSC 63) and as such she is a possession, an attitude articulated in the following where Pancho Rana contemplates her as a good to be literally consumed: “...esta mamacita que está paco...mársela” (MSC 7). That he feels power through this particular possession is first evoked in terms of memory: “[el] contacto de los labios medio finos de la Guajira...le gustaba porque no sólo lo hacía recordar una época en la que sentía poderoso con su AKa plegable, los magazines y su Makarov, sino que le daba cierta confianza” (MSC 26). Later, after he has taken her to his bosses’ home, Pancho Rana physically possesses la Guajira as sex ensues, during which he is catapulted back in time to when he was a Sandinista, a period when he felt powerful enough to direct the course of history, not only his own but that of his nation as well: “La penetración fue brutal, la fortaleza cedió ante el empuje del ariete sanguíneo en el muro de la retaguardia, pero se porta con gallardía y estoicismo, aguanta el embate, la columna incursiona y se retira, entra y sale, avanza y retrocede con furia y seguridad, adelante, atrás...gime gitana, manda refuerzos

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<sup>1</sup> At the end of the *Managua, Salsa City (¡Devórame otra vez!)*, Pancho Rana is dead. However, due to the popularity of the novel, the character was resuscitated for a planned trilogy. The second book is *Y te diré quién eres (Mariposa traicionera)* (2006) and the third is *Tikal Futura*, published posthumously in 2012.

contraataca...” (MSC 64). By narrating the sex act through *guerrilla* vocabulary, Galich correlates possession and power in no uncertain terms.

Yet, just as his agency obtained through his affiliation with the Sandinistas proved to be fleeting, so, too, is this power he feels when he is with la Guajira. This is so because she is approached from the beginning as a possession, and Pancho Rana, try as he might, he cannot cross over to the other side, he will always be a “loser” (George) without “esperanzas de entrar...en el orden de producción y consumo” (Pratt 400). To illustrate this, Galich narrates the following. While the two are at his boss’ home, not only does her tenacious gang not-surprisingly show up, but another duo of men, Cara de Ratón and his nameless partner, enter the chase as well after having spotted Pancho Rana and la Guajira in a bar and been attracted by the possibilities they see in her. The unnamed figure says: “Está buena, ¿verdad? / Buena es babosada, ¡riquísima, para hincarla toda la noche! / ¿Y, qué hace la cal que no pela? / Vos estás loco; no ves que anda con su hombre. / ¿Y eso, qué? Acaso es la primera vez que lo vamos a hacer... o decime, ¿no te gustaría echarle un polvito allí? / Sí, pero ese tipo me da repelo, le miro cara de malos amigos. / ¡Pato es lo que sos! Cuando se vayan los seguimos...” (MSC 54). Like Pancho Rana and like her gang, they see her as a possession to be taken. As such, she becomes a centripetal force around which the novel chaotically culminates and tragically ends. In this regard, la Guajira’s role as prostitute / object escalates to the point where she comes to symbolize the omnipotence of material goods in the neoliberal world.<sup>2</sup> This said, she is the reason for which people live and people die. Fittingly, Pancho Rana is literally stopped dead in his tracks when he is killed by a maniacally jealous Mandrake, a member of la Guajira’s gang who then tries to repossess her through rape, feeling entitled to her goods if only because he remains as the “único dueño, pues los demás estaban muertos” (MSC 87). Unbeknownst

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<sup>2</sup> Along similar lines, Silvia Gianni in “El turno de los ofendidos: Territorialidad de la exclusión e identidades múltiples en dos novelas de Franz Galich” reads the figure of la Guajira as “la riqueza codiciada.”

to him, however, Cara de Ratón is also a player in all this and he stops Mandrake by hitting him on the back of the head with a lamp, giving la Guajira the opportunity to find Pancho Rana's pistol and shoot and kill her rapist. Then, in an act of what resembles human compassion, "El cara de ratón...llegó hasta donde ella la abrazó y empezó a consolarla" (*MSC* 90), suggesting to the reader that perhaps la Guajira might have better luck in the future after all.

Shortly after the embrace, Cara de Ratón demands a bag of jewels that la Guajira has taken from the house. She acquiesces, but only in part, having put some aside for herself. The two then get in a car and head out of town "por la Carretera Sur" (*MSC* 91) trying to escape not only from the impending legal ramifications of the night's outcome but toward a better life. As they do so, day breaks. Whereas the symbolic tradition uses the sunrise to portend a new beginning, Galich subverts the symbol to present it as a mere harbinger of more of the same. Indeed, nothing changes. To communicate this, the kind embrace from above is promptly mocked as Cara de Ratón is shown to be just as incapable as the rest of the characters of seeing la Guajira as anything other than an object to be had: "debo reconocer la razón que tenía mi amigo en querer violarla, mientras su mirada se desplazaba de las piernas a la cara bonita y de ella a los pechos erguidos que respiraban" (*MSC* 91). Further, la Guajira's ruminations regarding Cara de Ratón, her new partner, merely echo her initial thoughts about Pancho Rana: "Tal vez con éste si me salga la cuenta, pues se mira buenote, y hasta baboso" (*MSC* 91). And finally, the futility of their efforts is most poignantly read in the soundtrack of neoliberalism they carry with them in the car, confirming that, for them, as things stand, there is no escape to something better: "En la casetera, Lalo Rodríguez se desparramaba sobre la ciudad: / Cuántas noches en mi cama he llorado, recordándote, En mi cama nadie es como tú...\" (*92*). With this image, instead of signifying mobility, the car comes to be a rewriting of the parentheses from novel's title and the protagonists, instead of fleeing, are embarking on a road to nowhere.

So, the questions central to the novel are these: Why does nothing change? Why are Pancho

Rana, la Guajira and the rest unable to project themselves into a new reality? Why are these characters limited to experiencing life through exclusion? The answer to all these questions lies in the fact that they represent the marginalized, neoliberal *yo* about whom Susan George writes, and without whom the neoliberal system would fail. In their attempts through cynicism to become someone else they are unwittingly perpetuating the system because their would-be success is dependent upon another's struggles: there will always be another Pancho Rana, another la Guajira to replace the one that gets away. And so, the novel ends without a solution but not necessarily without hope: "El bullicio y la acción se instalaban de nuevo como signo de vida, y eso era lo importante: estar vivos..." (92). With these words followed by the ellipses, Galich closes his story open-endedly, wondering of possibilities not yet imagined but perhaps within reach.

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