



YOLANDA VALENTINO: REITERATING AND CRITICIZING LATINA STEREOTYPES THROUGH DRAG PERFORMANCE

*YOLANDA VALENTINO: REITERANDO E CRITICANDO OS ESTEREÓTIPOS
LATINOS ATRAVÉS DA PERFORMANCE DRAG*

*YOLANDA VALENTINO: REPRODUCIENDO Y CRITICANDO LOS
ESTEREOTIPOS LATINOS A TRAVÉS DE LA PERFORMANCE DRAG*

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Abstract: This article explores the drag performance of Yolanda Valentino, a Brazilian woman, who self-identifies herself as white before migration and as racialized post-migration. Yolanda also self-identifies as a drag queen, in Canada, and, more precisely, The Hot Room, a queer and queer-friendly bar and nightclub. I emphasize Yolanda's drag performance as it points to the larger issues that Latinas, as women from Latin America who share racialized commonalities, may experience in the city. Moreover, my interest consists in highlighting Latina stereotypes, as they represent an element of interest for studies on Latin America. I focus on her show based on Latina stereotypes - like the idea of Latinas as women who are only good for domestic work -, to analyze how such stereotypes are taken up in the nightlife of multicultural Ottawa, even in contradictory ways. I claim that the policy of multiculturalism has helped perpetuate Latina stereotypes in Ottawa with implications for queer/non-queer Latinas. Moreover, I use Gloria Anzaldúa's (2012) border theory to analyze Yolanda's drag performance as a performance able to challenge specific dominant social norms related to gender, race, class, and sexuality, as well as capable of contesting specific policies like the policy of multiculturalism and Ottawa's status quo.

keywords: Migration; Labour market; Stereotypes; Multiculturalism; Neoliberalism.

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Resumo: Este artigo se dedica às ações de Yolanda Valentino, uma mulher brasileira, que se identificava como branca antes de migrar e como racializada depois da migração. Em Ottawa, Ontário, Canadá, Yolanda também se identificou como *drag queen*, em um local específico, o Hot Room, uma boate *queer* aberta para a diversidade sexual e de gênero no Canadá. Destaco a atuação de Yolanda, pois de um modo ou de outro, nela se localizam as situações mais importantes que as latinas, como mulheres da América Latina que compartilham experiências raciais comuns, vivenciam na cidade. Além disso, meu interesse consiste em exaltar os estereótipos das latinas como elemento de grande importância nos estudos latino-americanos. Concentro-me no espetáculo de Yolanda baseado em estereótipos - como a ideia de que latinas só servem para trabalhos domésticos -, com o propósito de analisar como estes são adotados, mesmo que de forma contraditória, na vida noturna de Ottawa, cidade considerada multicultural. Também defendo que a política de multiculturalismo ajudou a perpetuar tais estereótipos em Ottawa, o que, por sua vez, teve implicações para as latinas, incluindo as latinas com diversidade sexual e de gênero. Ao mesmo tempo, utilizo a teoria da fronteira de Gloria Anzaldúa (2012) para analisar a atuação *drag* de Yolanda como uma performance capaz de desafiar as normas sociais predominantes em Ottawa ligadas a gênero, raça, classe, social e sexualidade. Tal atuação, simultaneamente, é capaz de questionar políticas específicas como a de multiculturalismo e o status quo da cidade.

Palavras-chaves: Migração; Mercado de trabalho; Estereótipos; Multiculturalismo; Neoliberalismo.

Resumen: Este artículo se enfoca en la actuación de Yolanda Valentino, una mujer brasileña, que se identifica como blanca antes de migrar y como racializada una vez que migró. En Canadá, Yolanda también se identifica como *drag queen* en El Hot Room, un bar nocturno *queer* abierto para la diversidad sexual y de género. Hago hincapié en la actuación de Yolanda ya que, de un modo u otro, en ella se destacan las situaciones más importantes que las Latinas, como mujeres de América Latina que comparten experiencias raciales comunes, experimentan en la ciudad. Mi interés son los estereotipos de las latinas ya que estos juegan un papel importante en los estudios latinoamericanos. Me concentro en el espectáculo de Yolanda basado en estereotipos - como la idea de que las Latinas solo sirven para el trabajo doméstico -, con el propósito de analizar cómo estos se adoptan, hasta de maneras contradictorias, en la vida nocturna de Ottawa, una ciudad considerada multicultural. También argumento que la política de multiculturalismo ha ayudado a perpetuar dichos estereotipos en Ottawa, lo que a su vez ha causado implicaciones para las Latinas, incluyendo las Latinas de diversidad sexual y de género. A su vez, utilizo la teoría de la frontera de Gloria Anzaldúa (2012) con el fin de analizar la performance *drag* de Yolanda como una actuación capaz de desafiar las normas sociales predominantes en Ottawa, vinculadas con el género, la raza, clase social, y sexualidad. Dicha actuación,

simultáneamente, es capaz de cuestionar políticas específicas como la de multiculturalismo y el status quo de la ciudad.

Palabras-claves: Migración; Mercado laboral; Estereotipos; Multiculturalismo; Neoliberalismo.

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1 Introduction and Methods

The research was conducted from June 2020 to December 2021, during the Covid-19 global pandemic, and took place in the Byward Market in downtown Ottawa, Canada, and more precisely at The Hot Room Bar and Nightclub, a space where gender non-conforming people meet. The research was conducted in Ottawa, a city where the patterns of migration are constantly challenging the landscape of the city as it continues to be perceived as both a socially conservative space and a town with a predominantly white-European population (WELLS, 2010, np). This work is based on people who self-identify as women, as those who defy both normative femininities or the gender binary as well as normative sexual identities and/or expressions. At the same time, while it is not my intention to assume a unitary Latina identity, I use Latina because it is a term of self-identification used by most of the women I spoke with since it provided them the opportunity to share the collective experiences of racialization and migration faced in Ottawa.

One of the methods used to collect information was participant-observation in The Hot Room. During fieldwork, I attended The Hot Room every second weekend, on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, while following the Covid-19 regulations of the city. My interest was to analyze how such a space was used as a setting for Yolanda Valentino to

perform and express his/her² gender and sexuality in a public space. The other method used was semi-structured private interviews with twenty-six queer Latinas who migrated from various Latin American and Caribbean countries, and now live in Ottawa, Ontario, and were interested to participate in my study. The interviews were conducted via Facebook and the age of participants varied greatly as I interviewed people who were eighteen years old to people in their fifties and all participants in this study have been presented under pseudonyms to ensure their confidentiality and anonymity. While in this article I focus on Yolanda, I still acknowledge women who participated in the interviews because besides all of them, self-identifying as Latinas shared with Yolanda the experience of being positioned under specific stereotypes in Ottawa, like the stereotype of the Latina as an individual only good for domestic work. I begin by mentioning Yolanda's drag performance and her references to Latina stereotypes, like the stereotype of the Latina as a domestic worker. I use this space to mention Yolanda's self-identifications and participation in the workforce. Then, I theorize the domestic industry to address the role that some Latinas, like Yolanda, played in the labour market. This section is followed by a segment on Brazilian migration and the effects of language as sites of workforce exclusion. Subsequently, I address racial profiling and racial identity in Yolanda's drag performance, as well as illustrate the playful ways in which in her show, she performed other Latina stereotypes, like the stereotype of the erotic, desirable, and promiscuous Brazilian woman. I end the article by mentioning Yolanda's attraction and participation in neoliberal patterns of migration, and her drag show as a space able to challenge Ottawa's dominant social norms.

² Yolanda Valentino self-identified as both a man and a drag queen depending on the context.

2 Yolanda Valentino: Drag performance and the Latina stereotype as a domestic worker

On a sunny afternoon during September 2021, and the time when the Covid-19 regulations had eased, Yolanda Valentino, wearing a black leotard covered by a fishnet style see-through sequin dress with straps hanging down the sleeves, black high heels, and a long-braided hair, made her triumphant entrance onto the stage while holding a microphone in her right hand:

Yolanda: Hello everyone, how is everyone doing today?

While the audience responded by cheering and clapping, Yolanda walked through the tables until she stood in front of me and a precise tone, she acknowledged my presence by saying:

Yolanda: Hello immigranntttsssss! Oh, I have a present for you.

Yolanda left the stage and returned with a broom,

Yolanda: This is for you, now you can go and do your job.

I accepted the broom graciously while Yolanda moved on with her show.

Self-identifying as both a man or as a drag queen depending on the context, and a racialized immigrant originally from Brazil, Yolanda worked as a drag queen at The Hot Room Bar and Nightclub since the summer of 2018. Yolanda mentioned that when not in drag, she is also identified by the masculine name of Luiz. Because of his/her self-expressions, Luiz/Yolanda was able to move 'in-between' various identifications as he/she stated he/she thought of himself/herself as male by nature and woman because of the preferred gender roles in which he/she engaged daily along with his/her participation in drag queen performances. Moreover, while acknowledging gender and sexuality as not intertwined at all times (despite its common assumptions), simultaneously in his/her case, Luiz/Yolanda indicated that he/she as well self-identified as an 'effeminate gay man.' Luiz/Yolanda's self-identifications, or gender play, demonstrated

the fluid ways in which some queer individuals navigated their racialized experiences as migrants, in this case, as migrant Latinas in Ottawa.

Luiz arrived in Canada and lived in Toronto for three years before moving to Ottawa. During his time in Toronto, he worked in the maintenance department of an apartment building during the day and as a drag queen in a nightclub at night. By the time I met Luiz/Yolanda in Ottawa, he/she was working as a pizza deliveryman during the daytime and drag queen at The Hot Room at nighttime. In an exploratory study among Brazilian immigrants in Newark, New Jersey, Simone Buechler (2014) mentions that since gender represents a fundamental aspect of a variety of social structures like the economy and places of work, the two sectors where many Brazilian immigrants usually found employment when they arrived in the USA were in the domestic service industry, mostly house cleaning, but also babysitting and home care, primarily for women, and construction for men. While some individuals, mainly men, were able to succeed as entrepreneurs, many others ended up in low-skilled jobs like construction, labourers, janitors, dishwashers, drivers, waitresses, and landscapers (BUECHLER, 2014, p. 599). In Luiz/Yolanda's case, because he/she was able to move in fluid ways of male and female identifications, he/she had the opportunity to engage either in the domestic service industry or in more masculine gender roles, such as a pizza delivery man during the day while at the same time combining this job with her performances as a drag queen at nighttime.

With the broom scene, Yolanda used mockery to point to how she perceived the Canadian system welcomed some newcomers to the country, among them Latin American people, and more precisely Latin American women. At the same time, by accepting the broom, I played along with the stereotype of the Latina as a feminine figure who engaged in docile domesticity. Based on Yolanda's performance and comments, I consider that Yolanda's act hints at how Latinidad is held in Ottawa and, by extension in Canada, as from conversations I had with her, I was able to

understand how she connected such perceptions to forms of employment. My understanding is based on the fact that Yolanda even told me that every time she met someone in Ottawa, someone outside her circle of friends who was not from Latin America, that individual usually ended up referring to Latinas as people who knew how to clean. In this article, I consider how Latinas are imagined in Ottawa, particularly with the intersectionalities of gender, race, class, sexuality, and nationality; in other words, as individuals suitable to participate in specific areas of the labour market, like domestic work, and a subject to which I now turn.

3 The materiality of domestic work for Latinas

In an exploratory study done in the USA, Cati Coe (2019) states that some professions like domestic work have functioned as tools to maintain particular subjects (or workers) in the same position since the 1970s when migrant Latinas began to predominate in the domestic service industry in the USA (COE, 2019, p. 45). By predominating in the field, Latinas also became positioned as people of colour and migrants, particularly in an employment sector considered as an entry-level and unskilled occupation that lacked upward mobility or rewards for seniority (COE, 2019, p. 42). In line with Coe, Caroline Andrew (2003) also argues that since in a capitalist system domestic work has been usually performed by women, particularly women of colour, it is through domestic work that the intersectionalities of gender, race, and class come to light in structuring the labour market as such labour has been perceived as devalued not only in the privacy of the home but also as a form of employment. In addition, because domestic work has been mostly occupied by specific groups, non-English-speaking working-class women, women of colour, and especially immigrant women, race and nationality also come to play as axes of intersectional approach (ANDREW, 2003, p. 14, 159). Andrew suggests that in a capitalist society like Canada one of how ethnicity has been constructed, particularly women's

ethnicity, has been through labour relations. Andrew claims that women's ethnicity has been associated with a form of labour to distinguish women not only from men within the group, and those outside the group, but also from other groups of women, including white, middle, and upper-class women to carefully secure their access to privileges and their privilege position in society (ANDREW, 2003, p. 161, 162). As an example of such differences among women, Andrew refers to Sedef Arat-Koc's (2016 [1989]) work to illustrate how middle and upper-class white women have been able to negotiate some of their domestic demands, especially concerning housework and childcare by hiring help from women from the Global South. Thus, while white middle and upper-class women have been capable of enjoying the benefits of the female-paid labour force, working-class women of colour have become positioned in more disadvantaged roles (ANDREW, 2003, p. 118, 119). Workforce hierarchies, joined with racial and ethnic stereotyping, also have impeded or delayed workers' advancement to obtain positions of more responsibility and status and, with it, access to higher pay. Referring to studies based on companies where migrant workers dominate, Coe (2019) mentions that employer stereotyping plays a crucial role in job recruitment, which explains why certain groups congregate in a particular field. According to the author, this scenario reveals that being a migrant from a particular country or region may even determine people's inclusion or exclusion to certain labour markets (COE, 2019, p. 43).

In line with Coe, David Theo Goldberg (1994) claims that multiculturalism represents one of the main venues used to minimize the possibilities and conditions for the racialized Other. More precisely, according to Goldberg, multiculturalism serves as a powerful instrument through which the racialized Other will be accepted as long as they help to produce supplies, deliver their racialized bodies up for further exploitation, and preserve the status quo (GOLDBERG, 1994, p. 30). Goldberg then argues that multiculturalism is well-promoted among the powerful merely under the premise of being willing to share power only and exclusively on

their own terms (*idem*). Based on Coe and Goldberg's claims, specific labour markets, like the domestic service industry, represent a crucial racialized space as they reveal a high rate of Latin American employees, especially migrant Latin women, and some migrant Latin men. As a result of the racialization of some workplaces, some migrant individuals have become positioned in unskilled and subordinate, low-paid jobs without the option to obtain a better-paid and higher-status occupation since better-paid jobs require an obligation to attain more education, an aspect that for many is very expensive and time-consuming. Coe, Andrew, and Goldberg's argument is well-reflected in Luiz/Yolanda's story who, because of his/her place of origin, was stereotyped as someone who knew how to clean, and with her drag shows also as someone who knew how to entertain. Luiz/Yolanda's experience demonstrates the racialized division of labour and political economy in which he/she became confined. At the same time, his/her story confirms what scholars, like Goldberg, have argued about multiculturalism and how the policy has laid the ground for the exploitation of specific groups of people, like Latinas. In the following section, I briefly refer to Brazilian migration to Canada.

4 Brazilian migration and language as sites of exclusion in the labour market

Brazilian migration to Canada follows the wave of Latin American migration that took place in the 1970s as a result of a change in immigration policies in which people from Latin America and the Caribbean, for the first time, were allowed to enter and reside in the country (STATSCAN, 2016). Anthropologist Maxine L. Margolis et al. (2013) states that Brazilian immigration to Canada increased in the second half of the 1980s because of the political and economic crises in Brazil, and continued to be on the rise during the 1990s and afterward. Margolis' argument is reflected in Luiz/Yolanda's experience as he/she shared with

me having migrated to Canada in 2017 while motivated by socio-economic and political hardship. Although Canadian immigration policies concentrated on promoting the entrance of highly qualified immigrants, most of the Brazilian population in Canada have consisted of people, like Yolanda; people from different socioeconomic strata allowing them to participate in the informal sector, mostly in Portuguese businesses, and predominantly in low-skilled jobs such as civil construction, cleaning services, beauty services, restaurants, and other areas of activities considered as low-paid occupations (as cited in MOTT MACHADO et al., 2020, p. 6, 12).

In the events where the current Canadian immigration policies became successful at attracting highly qualified Brazilians, some of them even saw themselves in the position of accepting underemployment once they arrived and settled in the country. In this case, the option for Brazilians to accept a low-skilled-paid job has been perhaps caused, too, by perceptions of linguistic incompetence and/or the lack of recognition of professional credentials and work experiences attained in the home country (MOTT MACHADO et al., 2020, p. 6, 12). In a study done in Southwestern Ontario, Stacey Wilson-Forsberg (2014) mentions that, even for those individuals who enter Canada as skilled immigrants³ from Brazil, they still face barriers to finding employment in their field of study. The lack of recognition of international credentials and work experience has been identified as one of the most significant financial obstacles that Latin Americans have dealt with after their arrival in Canada. Even though they have been accepted into the country because of the professional skills acquired in their homelands, skilled workers still struggle with socioeconomic integration, as Canada does not recognize their credentials and prior work experiences. Since there are no requirements of Canadian experience for occupations that are not highly desired by Canadian-born

³ As professionals who enter the country under the Federal Skilled Worker Program. Skilled workers are those individuals who have been selected under the Express Entry Immigration system based on their skills, education, work experience, knowledge of language (English and/or French) and other social factors like socioeconomic status in their home country. Once in Canada, skilled workers are able to apply for permanent residence.

residents, skilled immigrants usually end up participating in low-skilled occupations once they are in Canada. Furthermore, skilled immigrant professional women, particularly those who enter as their husbands' dependents, often become relegated to the space of the home as housewives as a result of the barriers that they also face when trying to access their field of studies (WILSON-FORSBERG, 2014, p. 471, 472).

Drawing on Harald Bauder (2003), Wilson-Forsberg (2014) states that in order to reserve the most highly desired occupations for Canadian-born and Canadian-educated workers, diverse sectors of the dominant society, like employers, professional associations, and the state itself, have excluded immigrants from the highly skilled Canadian labour market. Wilson-Forsberg links the lack of recognition of skilled immigrants' credentials and experience to Foucault and his work on power since Foucault argues that there is an intrinsic relationship between power, knowledge, and social relations. Consistent with Foucault, Wilson-Forsberg discusses the ways in which diverse sectors of the dominant society use knowledge as a tool to keep the unwanted, unwelcome, or 'undesirable' out of the highly skilled Canadian labour market (WILSON-FORSBERG, 2014, p. 471, 472). Nonetheless, it is also important to note that while skilled immigrants, in this case Brazilians, perhaps join low-skilled, low-paid jobs, some of them, as individuals who in their place of origin mainly belonged to the middle-class sector of society and self-declared largely as white, may have better and faster opportunities to entrepreneurship and economic rise in Canada than those without skilled credentials (MOTT MACHADO et al., 2020, p. 3, 6, 7, 14).

Agreeing with Wilson-Forsberg (2014) and Mott Machado et al. (2020), Patricia Tomic (2013) mentions that language represents another site of exclusion and power in the labour market in Canada. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Tomic states that language has not only represented a mechanism of knowledge and communication but also a tool of power as it has helped perpetuate work inequalities. The author mentions that language, indeed, represents one of the main projects of

multiculturalism since through this policy English is enforced and nonstandard English undermined (TOMIC, 2013, p.6). Tomic claims that English Canadians have been able to use the politics of language as an instrument to construct a language discourse where English has been reaffirmed as a worthwhile form of communication and English as a Second Language (ESL) a worthless linguistic form of interaction. Tomic draws on Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1988)'s concept of linguicism, defined as "the ideologies and structures which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and non-material) between groups which are defined on the basis of language." (p. 5). More specifically, Tomic uses this concept of linguicism to underline the close relationship prevailing between power and language and, thereby the formation of a binary opposition between Self and Other. In Tomic's words, linguicism then has been perceived as a platform where the Self, as the native speaker, has become the self-evident norm for which the non-native speaker, the Other strives (TOMIC, 2013, p. 2-3, 5).

In the vignette that opens this article, readers may recall how Yolanda underlined my presence as an immigrant Latina — by giving me the broom. I consider this moment as one in which her performance referred to the stereotypes and the position of Latinas in the gendered, racialized political economy, and division of labour in Ottawa and more broadly in the Canadian context. Luiz/Yolanda's experience demonstrates how he/she was able to participate in the labour market, which only became possible through a low-skilled-paid housekeeping occupation and as a result remained at the lowest level of the social class hierarchy of Ottawa and by extension, Canada. Based on Yolanda's experiences, and scholarly literature, I argue that by attaching domestic work to Latinidad, Latinas are placed in specific ways within the labour market to the point that as soon as they arrive in the host country — taking into consideration that this is a new context for them, a new system with a particular set of rules, behaviours, ideas, language, etcetera — domestic work is the type of employment that they can find more easily.

In a sense, I consider that Yolanda's performance suggested the persisting encounters that Latinas face with stereotypes and the fact that by attaching domestic labour with Latinidad, Latinas become excluded from a wide range of job opportunities. Such a suggestion is significant as this may be how employers engage, consciously or unconsciously, with ideas about Latinas and Latinidad in Ottawa and with detrimental consequences of employment available to them. The fact that Yolanda finds easy access to domestic work upon arrival may imply the attachment of domestic labour with Latinidad and one may say that Latinas, including queer Latinas, then become involved in this type of work even before they arrive in Canada. In this way, through easy access to domestic work, Latinas are shown the imaginary place that they are supposed to occupy in society as well as the role that they are presumed to play in the country. Therefore, with the broom scene, in this case, by giving me the broom, Yolanda mocked how she perceived that the labour market received Latinas once they arrived in Canada. Moreover, while Yolanda called into question the stereotypes of Latinas as women suitable for domestic work, simultaneously in this act, she also produced and reproduced, in the process, the position of Latinas as domestic workers in the political economy of the city, and in the country at large. In the following section, I address other scenarios in Yolanda's performance; scenarios in which she referred to more Latina stereotypes, like the stereotype of the Latina as the erotic, desirable, and promiscuous woman.

5 Yolanda's Performance: Stereotypes and the space of 'in-betweenness'

By September 2021, Covid-19 regulations had slowly eased in Ottawa because of the massive vaccine campaign taking place not only in the city, but in the whole country. Thus, on an evening of approximately twenty-one degrees, and The Hot Room at its maximum capacity, Yolanda lip-synced,

to the tune of the song *Dancing Queen* by ABBA, a Swedish Europop group, while also dancing on the patio stage,

Ooh

You can dance

You can jive

Having the time of your life...

Spectators followed Yolanda's enthusiasm by clapping and laughing. Yolanda continued to lip-sync, dance, and engage with the audience until she saw a police car entering Jones Street. To approach the police car, she walked towards the street, and once the car was closer to her, she went into the street and stopped it, by positioning herself in front of the police car. As soon as the male police officer inside the car saw her, he stopped the car. Yolanda then walked towards the car and, while still performing the song, she opened her arms and placed them on top of the hood of the car as if she were hugging it. Once in this position, her dancing became more sensual and provocative. Everyone around, patio customers as well as passersby, many of them now standing on the street as they stopped to watch the show, started to cheer in excitement. Once Yolanda realized that she had been holding traffic for a while, she decided to move from the street to allow the police car to continue its way out and, as soon as the song ended, took the microphone to say:

You know, this is the thing, when police officers are looking for a suspect:

Act one: A police officer knocks at my door. My husband, who by the way is white, answers the door. The police officer looks at him and he says: Oh, I am so sorry, sir.

Act two: A police officer knocks at my door. I answer the door with the Bible in one hand and a plate of cookies that I just made for the charity event taking place across the street, on the other hand. The police officer looks at me and... he shoots me.

Alluding to her experiences as a queer mestiza on the USA/Mexico border, Anzaldúa (2012) sets the foundation of border theory with the concept of borderlands as " 'a vague and undetermined place created by

the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary,' and a boundary that acts 'as a constant state of transition' " (ANZALDÚA, 2012, p. 7). For Anzaldúa the border theory represents an individual struggle not only at the borders of two geographical sites, but at the borders of two or more physical, cultural, social, psychological, and sexual sites; an inner encounter between two or more worlds and the place where rigid boundaries become an impossibility (ANZALDÚA, 2012, p. 99-105). Thus, using border theory, as the space of tolerance for contradictions, I explore how Yolanda uses her location within the borderlands to negotiate her racial identity, as a result of her failure to self-identify with the two dominant racial constructions of White vs. Black.

Shane T. Moreman and Dawn Marie McIntosh (2010) describe Latina/o as the 'Brown race,' as someone "falling somewhere between White Eurocentric and Black Afrocentric racial categories" (p. 119). I draw on Moreman and McIntosh's (2010) categorization of brown, also addressed as a concept that incorporates 'cultural hybridity', to demonstrate how through border theory Latinas, like Yolanda, learn to manipulate a cultural 'in-betweenness', that is the in-between space full of possibilities (McINTOSH, 2010, p. 110). Yolanda used the scene above to identify herself outside of whiteness, while simultaneously not culturally identifying as Black but as Latina. She used the drag space, as a place of 'in-betweenness,' to address her racial identity and in the process, also negotiate his/her gender identities as a male by nature and woman because of the preferred gender roles and her performances as a drag queen as well his/her sexuality as a man/woman sexually attracted to other men. Under the articulation of racial identity, as an identity recognized through the discourse of the body, Yolanda then used the multicultural landscape of the Byward market to allude to George Perry Floyd Jr.'s⁴ case. She saw her interactions with the police officer, who was driving the car, as an opportunity to highlight the current racial tensions taking place between the police institution and civilians in the USA, and Canada too. In the same

⁴ George Perry Floyd Jr. was an African American man killed by a police officer on May 25th, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, during an arrest after a store clerk called the police because he suspected that Floyd may have been using a counterfeit \$20 bill when purchasing a package of cigarettes.

vein, she used these racial tensions to highlight key stereotypes, such as being church-minded, holding a Bible, and engaging in actions of domesticity, in which she felt she had been categorized during her time living in Canada, including Ottawa. She perceived these stereotypes as resulting from her race ethnicity and migration from South America.

Thus, under the construction of White versus Black, and where Black represented the Other, I saw Yolanda positioning herself as Black, not because she identified as such, but because this category provided her the space to self-identify as Brown and as a person who has been stereotyped because of her Latina's background. In other words, through her act, I saw her using this category to identify not only as non-white but as someone outside of white and whiteness, therefore, as the Other. At the same time, her drag show uncovered mainstream discourses based on stereotypes, like the stereotype of a Latina as primarily confined to domesticity; a discourse that because it has prevailed in Ottawa for long, has even been perceived as normal.

In relation to Yolanda and her engagement with the police force, and while this represented a pivotal moment in her act, during her drag queen performance such an institution was not the only one featured in her shows as the firefighter department also engaged in her drag performance when driving by Jones Street. The firefighters' involvement consisted of turning the truck's lights on while also beeping the horn and/or spraying water toward the patio for the amusement of all customers. For her part, Yolanda's engagement with the firefighters and their truck consisted of running towards the truck and jumping on the ladder on the co-pilot's side. Once on the co-pilot's ladder, Yolanda used one hand to hold herself to the handle placed on top of the co-pilot's door, to stand still when the truck was moving, while with the other hand, she was waving at the audience as a sign of saying goodbye to make all assume that she was leaving with the firefighters, and in turn, playing with the stereotype of a promiscuous Latina. Clients on the patio, passersby, and/or night-goers, particularly those who were able to witness the whole scene, laughed in unison.

Yolanda's act as a promiscuous Latina tie in Buechler's (2014) comment in relation to the role that some Brazilian women play once outside the home country. According to the author, the exchange and celebration in which some Brazilians take part in the host country very often becomes possible only through the adoption of some practices, among them, the acceptance of stereotypes and their relationship to Latinidad. Nonetheless, drawing on Bernadete Beserra (2008) and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas (2008), Buechler also suggests that while some of them like to refer to themselves as Latinas, they also frequently decide to accept and promote stereotypical images of themselves as erotic, desirable, and promiscuous Brazilians mostly because they believe that by doing so, they would be set apart from other Latinas as they often perceive this group of people of an inferior category, or backward. Based on this, particularly Brazilian women promote marketing practices for themselves; practices that produce and reproduce their images as erotic and, consequently, desirable, and promiscuous (p. 604-606). In the following section, I address how Yolanda engaged in the stereotypes of the desirable and promiscuous Latina to increase her revenue.

6 Yolanda's drag performance in Jones Street

Buechler (2014) proposes that most Western cities have been strategically designed to exalt the promotion and commodification of ethnic and cultures to facilitate the participation of immigrant minorities in specific and crucial areas. As part of the neoliberal agenda, cities have been organized in ways in which specific ethnic and cultural characteristics have been assigned to particular geographical areas for the attraction of customers to consume and spend their money in such places (BUECHLER, 2014, p. 597, 599). As previously mentioned, the author also suggests that Brazilians in New Jersey, USA, follow similar strategies of settlement as the ones adopted by those who move to other places, like Toronto, Canada.

According to the author, among the strategies used is the way in which this population participates in the neoliberal agenda of the city. Buechler states that the participation of Brazilians, particularly women, in low-skilled jobs, for instance, is also very much connected with the popularity, desirability, and attractiveness of neoliberal economic patterns of growth, as the main motivation for them consists of class mobility in both the home and host country (BUECHLER, 2014, p. 606). Once abroad, in New Jersey for example, Brazilian women tend to embrace and engage in the multicultural discourses of the city by fully participating in the exchange of cultural products and practices for money, even if their participation implies playing along with the stereotypes of the erotic, desirable, and promiscuous woman. Drawing on Buechler, I propose that similar patterns may be at play in Ottawa, and with the drag performances of Latinas, especially Brazilian drag queens. Besides playing with the stereotypes of the erotic, desirable, and promiscuous woman with the firefighter team, Yolanda also engaged in diverse scenarios involving these stereotypes while working at The Hot Room.

Pretending to suck on two penises, one on the right side and another one on the left, Yolanda lip-synced 'It's all coming back to me now' by Celine Dion. On stage, everything about Yolanda was feminine, her gracious dance steps, and sexy gaze. Her delicate and emotional body movements resembled the passion with which Celine sings. Then, when the audience was entranced, she left the stage, grabbed her pink box, which passed from table to table, and walked towards the crowd on the street. Holding the pink box with her right hand and the microphone with the left one, Yolanda continued to lip sync while walking:

Baby, baby

If I kiss you like this...

On the street, Yolanda stopped in front of some girls and showed them the box as a sign to request a tip for watching her show for free since they were not part of the inside crowd and were not consuming at the bar.

In response, the girls deposited some change. Moving on, Yolanda turned around and faced what looked like a family of four (mom, dad, and their two children). When in front of them, she flirted with the guy, gave the mom a depreciable look, ignored the kids, and forgot to ask for a tip. Yolanda elegantly eased her way into the crowd while continuing to request tips for her performance. She continued walking until she got lost in the crowd. By then, customers at the bar lost track of her and it was not until the song was over, that she made her way back to the stage⁵.

Based on the ideology of multiculturalism in Canada, I claim that Yolanda used *The Hot Room* to promote herself as an “exotic landscape of consumption” and capitalize on it (BUECHLER, 2014, p. 602, 603). Through her show, the bar also had the opportunity to expand its business while, at the same time, providing her the option to work, and her drag show was used as a commodity forming part of the capitalist market. Yolanda’s performance then became part of the Canadian marketing of queer spaces as places following national discourses, like multiculturalism. I suggest that Yolanda’s drag show at *The Hot Room* was possible because it did not pose a threat to the status quo of the city. Instead, Yolanda took this opportunity to play the role of an exotic sensual Brazilian woman, and with it, capitalize on the gendered, racialized, and sexualized stereotypes to her advantage. Moreover, Goldberg’s argument on multiculturalism as an instrument through which the racialized Other is accepted so long as it entertains, is also well-reflected in Yolanda’s drag queen performance as she understood that she could make money by performing racialized femininity in the nightlife of the Byward market where passersby looked for entertainment.

For its part, I suggest that *The Hot Room* benefited from Yolanda’s skills. Like the Brazilian immigrants from New Jersey addressed by Buechler (2014), Yolanda played with the stereotypes of the erotic, desirable, and promiscuous Brazilian women to promote the bar, and its consumable drinks to passersby, while also successfully maintaining the

⁵ On other occasions, when one of her friends was around, a white, middle-class, middle-aged looking guy and who, along with his partner were regular customers at *The Hot Room*, instead of Yolanda going through the crowd, she gave her friend the pink box and sent him into the street to collect her money from passersby.

bar at its full capacity. In the same prospect, Yolanda was very skilled at using outdoor performance as a space to make money for herself by engaging with people on the street who were walking leisurely and had no intention of stopping by but were caught up in the moment of her performance. She could stop cars not only to request tips from drivers and passengers, but also to promote her performance and the place as a potential option for social gathering, leisure, entertainment, and consumption. Moreover, Yolanda did not only use stereotypes as tools to play with for her benefit while feeding into the multicultural ideology, but used these stereotypes in ways that assured her positioning as the safe, unthreatening Other, and as someone with no interest in political demands. Nonetheless, in the following segment, I demonstrate how Yolanda used her drag performance to engage, indeed, in discourses outside of multiculturalism.

7 Yolanda's drag show as the 'in-between' space from which she challenges multiculturalism

In her show, Yolanda used the space to acknowledge her multiple sites of identification. Drag performance then for her served as a space where the representation of the body was used as a negotiation to illustrate what José Esteban Muñoz (1999) refers to as the meanings of identification/disidentification by identifying while, at the same time, not identifying with normative identity structures. Muñoz suggests that the space of 'in-betweenness' offers the possibilities for disidentification also referred to "as a process of resistance that counters the expected response to dominant social norms" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 161). According to Muñoz, while an individual has been compelled to perform in a socially accepted way, the act of disidentification offers an individual the opportunity to exercise social agency by performing in ways that challenge dominant social norms. For instance, in line with the author, even though the male Latino is required to

act according to specific standards of race, gender, sexuality, and even citizenship, Latina drag queens use their male bodies to challenge and critique dominant social norms of masculinity, and heterosexuality.

That is, in her drag performance of 'in-betweenness,' Yolanda was able to simultaneously use this space to identify as a woman while disidentifying as a man, and in turn, capable of criticizing dominant hegemonic identity scripts, and his/her identities then becoming placed at the borders of gender, race, sexuality and nationality. Drawing on Muñoz and his accounts of drag performances as spaces of 'in-betweenness,' Moreman and McIntosh (2010) emphasize that instead of perceiving a drag performance as a frivolous parodic act in mainstream society, a drag performance must be acknowledged as a powerful tool; in other words, as a cautiously staged show able to hold resistant potentialities in which performers, in this case a Latina's performer, enact their everyday lives (p. 11, 119, 120). As Yolanda's drag show reveals, her drag performance as an 'in-between' space, was also used to position her identities at the borders of gender, race, sexuality, and nationality by not only calling into question mainstream binary discourses of race, but also discourses of men and women.

8 Conclusion

This article represents a contribution to Canadian and Latin American studies. Furthermore, because it considers issues of gender, race, social class, sexuality, migration, and neoliberalism — topics often mentioned in queer studies but still not all analyzed in depth — this piece also represents a contribution to queer and queers of colour scholarship. The article has sought to underline the Byward market in Ottawa as a space and the drag show as a practice. I used Yolanda's drag performance to analyze how the drag show engaged with multiculturalism and ethnic marketing in the city. Her engagements with such discourses were done through her

representations based on stereotypes, like the exotic Brazilian woman, and her references to the stereotype of Latinas as domestic workers. At the same time, in her show, she addressed the challenges of multiculturalism; for example, with the broom performance, she highlighted economic inequalities, and with the script related to the police force, she referred to racial violence. Overall, through her performance as the exotic Latina Brazilian woman, Yolanda entertained and reached an audience of local residents, night-goers, and tourists alike, on their night out for leisure and consumption, to make money for herself, and with it, participate in the neoliberal landscape of Ottawa. At the same time, by following the scripts of a multicultural city, through acts like the good multicultural subject who conforms with the idea of the exotic Latina, Yolanda maintained and perpetuated the status quo in Ottawa, while simultaneously, she challenged it.

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