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Drugs and capitalism: a cocktail harmful to health



Sources: CTXT [Image: Still from the series Lethal Medicine. / Netflix]

Several books coincide in denouncing, in different ways, the dark interests of the pharmaceutical industry

The Money nests in the heart of society, that is, it inhabits, mediates and It conditions the relationships between people. It was already written by Belén Gopegui in *La conquista del aire*, in whose prologue she herself He said: "This novel raises the possibility that money nests. today in the moral conscience of the subject". In fact, before we start reading The story itself, Gopegui explains that the narrator he has chosen is It raises the extent to which money "tarnishes the hypothetical freedom of the subject." We were then in 1998, there was still the peseta and little did we imagine that, Twenty-five years later, it would be cheaper to service the almost one hundred thousand. inhabitants of [Lugo](#) who buy a Footballer of those who cover the covers and gatherings.

In that Gopeguian line, arguably *A Double Blind* (Random House, 2023), the latest novel of Salamanca Victor Sombra, raises the possibility that money nests today in the moral conscience of the pharmaceutical industry. In tune with what we shows, for example, the miniseries *Lethal Medicine* (Netflix, 2023) about the Opioid crisis in the United States, Sombra proposes that not even the In the field of health, it escapes the most extreme commodification. In the balance of the The pharmaceutical sector, reflects in the key of *a thriller* this author, weighs much more the economic profitability for a Board of Directors that the common good, even if this is measured in millions of healed lives or years of avoidable suffering. Capitalist logic works Here as in almost any other sector: the end justifies the means.

Ultimately, the Money, like any self-respecting divine substance, knows how to hide behind any clothing and work the most unlikely metamorphoses in order to Maximize your performance. Medicines are a veil like any other behind which disguise his true face. The same capital that manufactures and sells Medicines would have no problem marketing cluster bombs, uranium enriched, cryptocurrencies or any other asset in order to measure their Profits in millions of euros.

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The business of chronicling diseases

Dixon and Ben, two of the Central characters of *A Double Blind*, talk at length about these issues in the novel from antagonistic points of view. Ben is a young black programming expert who belongs to a decaffeinated four-person activist group very varied among themselves residents in Oslo. Half-jokingly, Ben and his group They decide to enter an entrepreneurs' contest endowed with a prize of 400,000 Norwegian kroner, and for which they improvise an extravagant draft of Social project.

Despite the fact that his proposal –massively extract data from hospitals and health institutions, treat them and look for unsuspected connections that can help cure diseases – no wins, this manages to capture the attention of Dixon, a kind of headhunter Fifty with the appearance of a hipster of it is not known very well which investment fund.

After a few Preliminary talks, Dixon offers \$200,000 to the group in return to extract information from the web about a medicine. The only thing they have to do to do Ben and his friends is to use the computer spiders they talked about. in the contest for another purpose: to collect the existing information about Noxtro, a effective anti-cholesterol drug (and a fictional invention of Victor's Shadow). Dixon wants to know if the legend

surrounding Dixon is true or false. This drug, of which versions prior to 2002 are said also They cured all kinds of arrhythmias.

According to the pharmaceutical rumorology, the company that manufactured Noxtro modified the molecule to deliberately eliminate those extraordinary properties against Arrhythmias. Instead of marketing a single drug that worked as a global and curative solution", the company that owns the patent opted for "develop various palliative drugs", and chronify and diversify the existing medical response. In short, Dixon wants to know if the company He put his economic benefit before the health of millions of people.

Pharmaceutical trompe l'oeil

Dixon provides the point of view of someone who knows the Hinges and the gears of the sector well enough to make your salary annual has six figures or more

Dixon is such a Loquacious as well as elusive when it comes to giving details about who he works for or the purpose last of the information. However, towards the middle of the plot, Ben manages to Talk alone with him for reasons that it is better not to reveal so as not to spoil reading. For the purposes of this text, what is relevant is that Dixon, very much in his role From a successful and narcissistic man who loves to show how much he knows, he tells Ben how the pharmaceutical industry works. Or, more accurately, it gives The point of view of someone who, like him, knows the hinges and the gears of the sector well enough that their annual salary is six figures or more.

Thus, Ben, an orphan of Working class, computer programmer with low income and no wealth family or high-level network of contacts, listens as Dixon, between paternal and evangelical, he says: "Don't kid yourself, Ben, it's not about two coming together. principles, health and economic benefit, and that from their encounter arises the medicament. Money is the prevalent factor. If they generate money, the Medications are produced, although they do not cure. Listen to me well: even if they are innocuous or harm health. And if they don't generate money, they don't exist, no matter how vital they are."

Hence, the industry Dixon, adds that the pharmaceutical system is a "trompe l'oeil ordered according to the profit-making." In other words: while the *Marketing* and Communication departments They build a *storytelling* of social commitment, the boards of directors decide Shamelessly the purchase and sale of companies, patents or studies fraudulent academics who endorse their products. And all with the same objective: Earn more and more money.

Fact: at a time of the fictional documentary *Lethal medicine*, it is explained that the pharmaceutical company Purdue, manufacturer of OxyContin, A kind of heroin in pills that was sold as a painkiller for pain of average type and that caused the death of 300,000

people, billed thirty million dollars a week. Another fact: in 2022, Spain exported medicines worth [almost 27,000 million](#). Of This is how Dixon talks about the pharmaceutical industry.

Multiple sclerosis as an example

At that point, fiction that presents *A double blind* can connect with the reality of which several speak Books on multiple sclerosis, a neurodegenerative disease whose Origin is unknown and for which there is no cure yet. Thus, in *Elephant Feet. A (very) personal chronicle of multiple sclerosis* (Ariel, 2022), journalist Anita Botwin, diagnosed since 2013, states: "The Pharmaceutical industry has many vested interests and is more profitable make the disease chronic, because that assures them a client for life."

According to a European study which echoes [the website of Sclerosis Multiple Spain](#), the cost of treating this disease rises, by patient, at € 20,600 per year in the mildest stage, € 48,500 in the moderate phase and €68,700 per year in the advanced phase. To that we must add, for example, 2050 € for each relapse or outbreak (each person has an indeterminate number of outbreaks). Since there are about 50,000 people diagnosed in Spain and 2.5 millions in the world, it is not difficult to get an idea of the volume of business.

In addition, as he points out Botwin, the only alternative that the State has to pay these prices is to leave Side to people. Botwin explains this by quoting the following reflection from the also journalist Bruno Cardeñosa, author of *Life was twisted: my day to day with multiple sclerosis* (Cydonia, 2021): "The treatments are so inevitable to be able to live that States cannot refuse to purchase the treatments and pay for them what is necessary, Because, if not, the sick will suffer all kinds of problems and, finally, the death."

According to the also journalist María Paz Giambastiani, author of *142.942. Sclerosis multiple in the first person* (iMedPub, 2012), diagnosed since 2005, this disease is a Very lucrative business for many companies. By videoconference, Giambastiani details that he takes, "in addition to a daily pill of [Aubagio](#) to try slow the progression of sclerosis, more than a dozen drugs To combat the multiple symptoms associated with the progression of the disease: dysarthria, dysphagia, COPD, optic neuritis, insomnia or acute pain."

Also, in these almost Twenty years as a sick woman, she stresses, she has suffered ten outbreaks, she has been hospitalized more seventy times in various hospitals and have performed more than a hundred of medical tests between magnetic resonances, lumbar punctures, studies of evoked potentials and other similar. "Not to mention," he adds, "that I am a dependent person since 2022, which involved not only buying everything an

orthopedic trousseau – crutches, walker, wheelchair (manual and electric), articulated bed, oxygen therapy machine, etc.–, but hire assistants personal."

To what extent does the pharmaceutical industry have true Interest in curing some diseases?

While Giambastiani has not had to pay for everything, because he has had the help of Osakidetza – health Basque public –, the City Council of Getxo –the municipality where he resides–, the Provincial Council of Bizkaia and the help of friends, her case exemplifies that the disease is a business that moves a lot of money (public and private). Since the logic of capitalism is implacable, the question falls by its Self-weight: to what extent does the pharmaceutical industry have a real interest? in curing some diseases?

Finally, one more detail about this unstoppable monetization of multiple sclerosis. In his diary *Días simétricos* (Alfaguara, 2023), Bop Pop recounts who received an unexpected call from an advisor at your bank to ask "if he suffered from a chronic illness" and offer "disability insurance to cause of a degenerative disease". He, who until that moment had Managed with great discretion his multiple sclerosis, he was *shocked*: how had he found out? that lady? To which he himself replies: "The private company that manages the Public hospital where I am treated for multiple sclerosis would have happened my diagnosis and my data". Anyway, again: money as an essential ingredient of any health-related matter.

A new type of criminality that pursue

Chronifying diseases is a very lucrative temptation for the industry. This way of acting illustrates the "diffuse criminality of our days"

Both the examples previous on multiple sclerosis as what counts *A double-blind* about other diseases It leads us to the same point: chronifying diseases is a very lucrative for the pharmaceutical industry. That way of acting illustrates what Michel, a former Geneva commissioner, calls it "diffuse criminality of our day," A type of *murder* that proliferates, among Other reasons, because as a society we look the other way or prefer not know about certain facts. However, it would be necessary to persecute and punish These business behaviors, because they mean that millions of people suffer more of what they should or even die prematurely.

Nested with that form of Criminality, according to the novel, emerges a second: the derivative of the capitalist game that allows and stimulates the market, that is, the purchase and sale of companies pharmaceutical companies to appropriate patents or grab market share with the Sole purpose of obtaining as much money as possible. We talk little, it's

coming to tell us *A double blind*, how it affects Our health the virulent and ever-changing flow of capital in its attempt for shaping the pharmaceutical market in the image and likeness of their interests Economic. So much so that the Ministry of Health should oblige boxes of medicines carry notices such as "Pharmaceutical capitalism can be harmful to your health" or, better yet, "Pharmaceutical capitalism kill."

Note. The diffuse criminality mentioned in this article corresponds to what English is called *crowdkilling*, a concept that Víctor Sombra addressed in his trilogy "[Black Summer](#)", "[The Walks of the Lover Pass](#)" and "[The Orangutan is the Victim](#)", and in this recent [interview](#) about *A doble ciego*, all published in CTXT.

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