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# The Dialectics of the Community: Mexican Production of Death

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The Dialectics of the Community: Mexican Production of Death

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies

by

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## Abstract

This work attempts to provide a discussion of the current waves of violence present in the northern border of Mexico. The country became a neoliberal state during the late 1980s and the early 1990s. The external debt and the historical corruption of the Mexican government placed Mexico in a vulnerable stage leaving its sovereignty with a fissure before the eyes of international circles of power. The adoption of a neoliberal economic system has impacted all the social tissue. The euphoric discourse of advancement and opportunity was spread by ideological apparatus, and people in constant need accepted positively the system. The arrival of transnationals to the northern border were then presented as job and advancement opportunities. However, the results were more complex. The shift to a neoliberal state, and the support from the government to the transnational rather than the domestic affairs have led to an unmanageable crisis of the state. This crisis in the sovereign has allowed for the emergence of a parallel state that is able to govern the country with their own law. There is not an official line of legal and illegal, people live under the law of mere survival. The system has brought other circumstance besides jobs in the assembly lines. There has been a rapid and unplanned urbanization, low wages, uprooted peasants migrating to the north due to the impossibility to compete with international market. The lives of these people have been reduced to their minimum, to bare life. This work then seeks to rethink the discourse of the Mexican Revolution as a platform of the state to build a myth of nationalism, and cultural identity. There has never been emancipation or inclusion of the subalterns, but the state has developed contemporary forms of slavery and oppression under a discourse of democracy. Therefore, this study will discuss the possibilities of the aesthetics in late capitalism, whether they are still a genuine form of resistance or if they contribute to the naturalization and production of death and

violence. It will include a debate of the commodification of the aesthetics, but also of their political work.

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I am honored to have had you as my mentors and professors. That is my biggest treasure.

## Dedication

This work is dedicated to Angelo and Giovanni who did not know they registered with me the day I enrolled in this program. Their support was unconditional and it is because of them that I choose to live now as a strong woman.

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## I. Introduction

A nation supposedly built on the legacy of a people's revolution, Mexico (especially in its northern border regions) has become a land of violence, lawlessness, and death. Since the 1980s, northern Mexico has drifted further from the ideals of the revolution and closer to a dictatorship run by criminal kingpins. This phenomenon has not happened accidentally or in a vacuum, but is in fact the result of certain specific economic and political policy decisions that are part of the global rise of neo-liberalism. I seek in this study to re-examine these results and processes, and to understand the differences between the discourse of the revolution and the reality of present-day Mexico. The government-created myth of the success of the Mexican Revolution has perpetuated a false sense of national pride that has hidden the stagnation from which the country suffers. In other words, the discourse of democracy, justice, freedom, and equality was nothing but a mythical discourse created by the state, though based on a real war with real victims. It is important to recapitulate certain historical events to provide an understanding on the transition of Mexico to a neoliberal country towards the end of the 1980s. The Mexican Revolution then has not accomplish its original ideals, but it has unfortunately been used as a resource to mask the reality of the transformation of the system that has gradually transition into the current neoliberal state. The Revolution did not produce the changes it promised, but, on the contrary, it paved the way for an arrival of more sophisticated forms of slavery and oppression. The facts of the Mexican history prove the constant turns the state takes against a true democracy. The end of the war of the Mexican Revolution marks not for an end but for a continuation of the solidification of the Mexican bourgeoisie and other external forces, nevertheless this time it was disguised by a proud sense of nationalism, belonging and opportunity. The welcoming of transnational forces and the reduction of state power prompted the instability of governance of the country. Over time, corruption in Mexico has not decreased but has become the natural way of government. The division between the state and the criminals was diminishing, and the line of legality and illegality was being erased

constantly with the emergence of a parallel state. The law was and is no longer emanating from the Mexican Constitution, but from those able to inflict violence or power over others.

Therefore, it is important to understand this transformation of the violence as a “metamorphosis” (Villalobos-Ruminott, *Modernidad*) to visualize violence not as a cause or result but as what actually constitutes the neoliberal system Mexico has acquired. The constant violence, waves of crime and constant crisis have allowed for an apparent legal reason for the state to claim for a permanent state of exception, which is, as Rancière has put it, the foundation for a biopolitical state. These terms will be discussed briefly in this section and will be further expanded in the chapters.

Regardless of the pessimistic situation of Mexico, there are still forms of resistance, or noise. The dialectic discussion of the role of the aesthetic in these times remains one of the main debates in the humanities field. The counter power that literature or other cultural texts have executed historically is now in question. Neoliberalism has demonstrated an ability to absorb any form of resistance and turn it into a commodity; raising the question of whether even the aesthetic has become a commodity. However, there are strong traces in the cultural texts that open for a possibility of an actual “noise” and disruption of the state narrative. There is an evident awareness on behalf of the authors and readers of the necessity to acknowledge such complicity with the system to escape it and resist it.

Violence has been present throughout the history of Mexico. Ever since the beginning of its colonization by Spain until current times violence has been a common denominator for the Mexican community. Although violence has not disappeared, its roots, causes, impact, forms and approaches have been altered or adjusted depending on the government, modes of production, and contemporary external forms of colonization. It is crucial to understand the different types of violence and their contexts in order to move forward with our discussion on the current waves of violence in Mexico. Talal Asad refers to Bruno Etienne to establish the different types of violence from the colonial wars of conquests, the colonial violence, the wars of

independence, and the violence inflicted through the dictatorial regimes. The shift of violence in Mexico has increased and it correlates partially with the continuous decrease of power of the nation-state with the empowering of the transnational companies in the decision making of the destiny of the country, among other aspects. The process of the re-articulation of power uses violence to implement a new decentered structure. This restructuring of a decentered power fosters a propagation and contagion of violence in states whose sovereignties are being fissured due to the transition to a transnational world, or the implementation of neoliberal policies. As Hannah Arendt indicated in her theory of violence, pure violence could be mistaken as the only possible resource to interrupt authority or to seek for justice or democracy. She also warns about the possibility to reproduce a violent cycle where the means and ends are interchangeable and in which in order to produce changes through violence, more violence will be produced (80). W. G. Sebald states a similar position when referring to the victims of war who "...are not sacrifices made to an end of any kind, by in the most precise way sense...[but they become]...both the means and the end in themselves" (19-20). The importance to highlight the process of violence is to call attention to the process of oppression that have not been eradicated but readjusted into contemporary forms. At the same time the forms of resistance that have been readapting, have in a way been incorporated into new and different mechanisms of power, and production. Therefore, "[v]iolence does not promote causes, neither history nor revolution, neither progress nor reaction; but it can serve to dramatize grievances and bring them to public attention" (Arendt 79).

The transitions and rearticulations of the diverse forms of systematic power, from the colony to the national state, from dictatorial regimes to authoritarian dictatorship and transnational order, have also impacted the forms of infliction and perception of violence. Ideology and the state apparatus have been an essential factor to assure the lack of revolutionary movements and the perpetuations of subjectivities that will guarantee a discourse of peace and the appropriation of wealth. The configuration of the state and its judicial system has entitled them

with the monopoly of vengeance. Thus, the state has been able to decide within the legal frames of its Constitution between legal and illegal violence. This adjudication of power has simultaneously become a double sword as though it protects from violence; it uses the same mechanism of protection in its forms of punishments. Dangerously, this enables the state also to efface the lines between legitimate and illegitimate violence (Girard 15).

From the fight of the formation of nation states race was mainly the reason of oppression as Césaire and Fanon already discussed. The power or tyrants were identifiable as the colonizer in colonial times or the dictators or new bourgeoisie in the postcolonial. The instruments violence used to subjugate and oppress the primitive “other” were methods of cruelty and fear, including the production of precarious life to establish dominance in the new world or in the independent nation. However, the oppressor was identifiable, Europe, for instance, was condemned later for the atrocities inflicted on the natives and the New World. Dictators in Latin America have been charged or held accountable for their acts of genocide to permeate fear for the maintenance of power in a society.

In other words, increasingly the multidimensional critic of race, gender and class (Kellner), and not only one or the other becomes a necessity to be able to comprehend the evolution of the methods of oppression and instruments of violence in a current context. The metamorphosis of the violence, as Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott defines it, is an inherent characteristic that accompanies the new forms of production in capitalism. The one responsible for the violence can't be identified. There is a new form of decentered power. In Mexico, for instance, transnational markets have interrupted the sovereignty of the nation state. These external forces and the privileges prearranged by the local governments provoke a demise of the nation state in a way, since the state is left in a powerless position to protect its people. The rise of transnational capital global sovereignty is empowered rather than the country's wellbeing (Spanos xviii), and this re-articulation of power brings its own methods of violence. Bauman

puts it in the following words "...human vulnerability and uncertainty are the principal *raison d'être* of all political power and all political power must attend to a regular renewal of its credentials" (50). The classical violence of the colonizer, dictator or tyrant that was used to establish forms of government are different to the new mechanism of the recent structures in which it becomes impossible to identify *the one* oppressing. The inability of the state to provide equal opportunities to its citizens and the foundation of the state then is based on the premise of inclusion and exclusion (Agamben/Esposito) of the subaltern. There is not a strengthening of the community in such context, but an undoing of it without anyone accountable to address the situation.

The wounds of the violence of the colonial were difficult to heal, and they were slowing the process of full detachment of the colonizer as "[t]he trauma of colonialism permeates all levels of social subjectivity" (Fanon qtd. by Moraña 3). This is also a process that has taken a toll on the mentality of the people and its acceptance of continuous situations of disadvantage. Mexico is a country that has faced a constant state of crisis and struggle. Evidently the situation of inequality people faced during the colonial era had a different context and therefore a different critique and approach to its analysis was used. However, violence and other forms of segregation have emerged with different forms of extraction of value.

The historical oppression Mexico has suffered since its foundation becomes relevant in the formations of subjectivities that have made it easier for the government to dictate laws and make decisions that act against the interest of their own people and execute a pattern of control with less resistance and more acceptance. The foundations of the nation were gained through violence, however the dictatorship Mexico faced after that and the continuation of single-party rule have continued to marginalize women, the poor, and the indigenous from the community. Regardless of the effort of the process of independence to regain the land from the colonized, and later the war of the Mexican Revolution to establish postcolonial justice, the possibilities to

be integrated and heard seemed nullified. Today we live in a different form of domination which Arendt designates as "...bureaucracy or the rule of an intricate system of bureaus in which no men, neither one nor the best, neither the few nor the many, can be held responsible, and which could be properly called rule by Nobody" (38). Again, as bureaucratic system is the most tyrannical way, violence in a broken society is easily spread and carried on by everyone and no one. Systems "...ruled by Nobody [are] clearly the most tyrannical of all since there is no one left who could even be asked to answer for what is being done" (Arendt 36-7). Just as there is a disconnection of the product and the producer under capitalism as Marx suggested, there is also a disconnection between violence and its creator that prevents the identification of the guilty one, and therefore promote impunity and perpetuation of it.

Violence in this historical context has become a form of language and form of control, since "[f]ear and depression are collectively induced emotions before they can become individual feelings" (Herlinghause 13). The formation of the community is based on the collective fear to become a corpse and part of the subaltern groups. Power, and the fight for the monopoly of power, manifests itself through violence. Violence by the state or the parallel state becomes the inferred form of law; whether legal or illegal it is the way of life understood by the community. No one can determine the boundaries between the legitimate and the illegitimate. There seems to be two different groups, those who can kill and those who 'killable' or as Walter Benjamin designates them "*Homo Sacer*". Agamben later expanded on this figure of the *Homo Sacer* based on Benjamin and the Roman Law. The vengeance of those who can be killed will never be requested; their deaths will remain unpunished. However, a community is founded on "...members that are bound by obligation" (Esposito, *Community* 14). In a capitalist community, the guilt, the debts are common and constantly present. "...[T]his capitalism must invest in bare life of people who cannot provide any guarantee, who offer nothing apart from themselves" (Marazzi 39).

As Arendt indicates, “[t]he extreme form of power is All against One, the extreme form of violence is One against All. And this latter is never possible without instruments” (42). These instruments vary depending on the cultural or political context but they can be embedded into any system to perpetuate structures of power and segregation. These conditions of constant violence and the production of death can certainly create the necessity to forget, as Sebald had suggested. Amnesia or partial amnesia is necessary to be able to continue with a bearable life. The detachment of emotions paves for the absence of rage to the unfairness and injustice of the unequal situations. This disconnection contributes to a naturalization of violence. The naturalization of an illogical situation alone with fear and depression fosters the prevalence of a system where no one and everyone becomes accountable for the atrocities made to certain segments of the society.

Neoliberalism is the key to this phenomenon. David Harvey explains the theory and ideology of neoliberalism thusly:

Neoliberalism is a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and the integrity of the money. It must also set up those military, defense, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit” (2).

The transition of Mexico to neoliberalism has to do with “the restoration or reconstruction of the power of economic elites” that Harvey associates with neoliberalism in general (19). Rapid modernization also brought a re-articulation of the bonds of the community and with it new forms of poverty, segregation and oppression developed. The decisions the Mexican

government made, political and economic, as the country has transitioned to power structures from the government of the same Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) of more than seventy years to a neoliberal state have incorporated the state to a post-national state in the times of late capitalism. However, these transformations are by no means consequences of the random course of history, nor are they the progress that the discourse of modernity has presumed. The country, since the entrance of the PRI has continue to present different forms to preserve power in the elite circles. Although there have constantly along the way, been different forms to fight these forms of authoritarian power, they have not been enough to stop the impact external forces and the reduction of the state have had on the community. These political transitions that have favored only a certain group in Mexico or abroad, have also brought a rupture to the social fabric. Mexico is not exempt and it is certainly suffering the other side of modernity. The compulsive modernization processes produce another side to sustain the development and progress of other places or circles. The logics of the international agreements has another side, the side of the “[re]fugees, the displaced, asylum seekers, migrants, the sans papiers...The ‘economic migrants’... stand for ‘wasted humans’, and ...[are] used to arouse resentment and anger, the object of the resentment and the target on which the anger is to be unloaded remains much the same” (Bauman 58). Many citizens of the Latin American countries, who were never able to be integrated in the economic society or to act politically in their society are forced to migrate to the northern countries until they make their way to the Mexican – US border to wait for the American dream.

The theory and cultural texts used in this work are selected to understand the situation that has taken Mexico into a state of exception. Agamben explains a state of exception as “the legal form of what cannot have legal form...if the law employs the exception—that is the suspension of law itself” (Agamben, *State of 1*). According to Agamben this is a premise to execute other forms of segregation of some citizens who can’t be integrated into the political, and it is a system utilized by many contemporary “so-called democratic ones” a kind of “modern

totalitarianism” (*State of 2*). The state of exception is understood by the “legal” ability of the state to restrain itself and therefore this is the preceded and necessary actions to constitute a government in “exception is the rule” (Agamben, *Homo 9*). These circumstances are the result of decisions executed by the state. It is the legal escape to provide itself a justification to instill fear and execute violence to pacify anything against a new authoritarian system. The state has made decisions that have been instituted through processes of violence, hegemony, and contemporary forms of violence. These acts perpetuate the circles of power and control in the Mexican society. Eventually, with the institution of a state of exception as a law, violence from the state regardless of the fairness might become ‘legal’. The argument of this study attempts to demonstrate the logic of the production of corpses. It attempts to unveil the neoliberal revolution that utilized the development of the superstructure of the Mexican Revolution narratives to serve its achievement. The objective will be to present the arguments that will support the hypothesis of the functioning of the Mexican Revolution as an imaginary representation used to establish a superstructure for the discourse of the state that would allow for the real revolution of compulsive modernization that would culminate in a neoliberal country. The neoliberal revolution that emerged, instead of the promises of the Mexican Revolution, brought with it the production of the corpse of the state, and the undoing of the community turning it too into a corpse. The corpse of the community and the state certainly represent the embodiment of the real process of neoliberalism and the powerless potentiality left visible in the violent consequences occurring in the country.

It is important to have an overview of the context that brought Mexico from a liberal to a neoliberal state. David Harvey presents a timeline to provide a background of the series of steps and motives to arrive at this point. For instance, one of the actions that acted as a trigger for the neoliberal state was the debt Mexico had by the beginning of 1990, due to consecutive corrupt governments. This activated a transformation of the politico-economical practices from a liberal to a neoliberal state. These changes included: the signing of NAFTA and the ‘laissez

faire' policies for the transnational companies, the government of the Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) for more than seventy years, and the consolidation of the right-wing with the election of Vicente Fox (2000) to power with the conservative Party of National Action (PAN). These sets of transitions have impacted the social tissue of the country through events that have affected daily life and that have erased any form of what life used to be before these times (Klein). Poverty has been intensified, post-Fordism implemented, and the increment of violence is without precedent eliciting massive and unplanned migration from south to north. The integration of neoliberalism has allowed the government to abdicate power to large transnational corporations.

Regardless of the promise of the Mexican Revolution and the euphoric and celebratory discourse of the possibilities of economic advancement and modernity for the country with NAFTA, Mexico is still far from being in a privileged global position. The government is still unable to provide equality of opportunities to its citizens in every aspect of life. This contradictory situation portrays the very limit of the traditional Mexican history and the discourse of advancement and opportunity. The intensification of violence, poverty, urbanization and waves of migration unmask another side of the elaborated discourses provided to frame treacherous decisions taken by a group of power in order to perpetrate new forms of expropriation of value. This work will attempt to seek an approach that provides a possibility to rethink Mexican history presented in the traditional meta-narrative of the Mexican Revolution, and understand the role and impact of the aesthetics in current times as form of resistance or accomplice to the state.

The reduction of the state intervention inherent in the neoliberal practices fosters the strengthening of corporate power, and contributes to a fissure of the sovereignty of the country. Thus, in the scope of the incorporation of Mexico into the global market, there is an alignment of its transition to a post-national state. Less and less the promises of the Mexican Revolution become a possibility, and this had already been noted by some intellectuals, activists and a

group of dissidents. This situation has enabled the transition of a centered power, as it was the open or subtler dictatorship in Mexico from Porfirio Díaz. This then evolved to the seventy years of the PRI, and then to a decentered form that finds no accountability and becomes a different form of mythic violence, or the worst form of violence, according to Hannah Arendt. The process of 'legitimization' of the reduction of the state leaves the workers of the many large corporations without an advocate to truly protect their benefits. Along with this, the implementation of post-Fordism as the method of employment has directly impacted the lives of citizens as in the case of the *maquiladoras* (Assembly lines) along the border of the country. Poverty is no longer owning a piece of land with very little production, but it is reduced to having nothing but the body to be able to produce through wage labor (Sassen). The figure of the quasi citizens developing in this context is that described before by Walter Benjamin of *Homo Sacer*. The figure in the Roman law in which life is only included into the political system by its own exclusion (Agamben, *Homo* 8).

The mechanism of the formation of the community is affected and restructured through a process of immunity where the ones who are not included in the system, the subalterns, are reduced to bare life and segregated to a terrain where the law is suspended. According to Esposito this "...violence inherent in a community is related to the incapacity of community merely to preserve the life of its members" (*Community* 3). The body is where politics can be executed, and thus, to state Foucault's thoughts, government is transformed into biopolitics. According to Agamben, a biopolitical state assumes the right "...to decide the point at which life ceases to be politically relevant" (Agamben, *Homo* 142). The incorporation of the Mexican government and the set of steps taken throughout history have facilitated the transition of power to be able to continue the perpetuation of the elites and masked forms of contemporary slavery. The state of exception that has legally excluded some citizens to live outside the law, and whose subalternism has been used to reiterate the construction of the community through its own immunity, have certainly called for a restructuration of the ways of life. In other words,

“...bare life of the citizen [is] the new biopolitical body of humanity” (Agamben, *Homo* 9). The promises of the Mexican Revolution and the celebratory offers of advancement of NAFTA have not been translated to anything but exclusion—a continuation of exclusion, violence, uprooting and fear—for most the people. The segregation of these groups that are not able to be a part of the economic flow pushes them to live in the margin of the community where their only relation to it is precisely their expulsion, and their lives’ conditions are reduced to the negation of life itself or bare life (Agamben). These lives become the new subject of the biopolitics.

The current situation regarding neoliberal violence allows for the state to justify the use of a disciplinary system of surveillance or militarization to maintain control or “reestablish peace” of the chaotic circumstances. This is especially evident with the militarization during the presidential term of Felipe Calderón that appeared natural in his declaration of the war on drugs. The situation of a broken sovereignty with the reduction of state intervention and the entrance of the transnational power has also provoked a rupture in the community visible in the new mechanism of socialization, perpetuation of poverty and intensification of power and violence for instance. The current context of the inherent violence that constitutes a neoliberal state and a biopolitical government demonstrates that what is at stake is the fragmented sovereignty and a state that produces of death. The failure of the Mexican Revolution has not just unaccomplished ideals of inclusion and equality; but its mythological discourse was contributing to the undoing of the community, and the emergence of an authoritarian system and later a neoliberal state. Currently, a broken system governs the broken body of the community, by a state and a parallel state with the heads of the cartels embedded in it or the other way around. The neoliberal violence such as the femicides, migration, and the like, has made evident the logics of this system of the production of corpses, the production of death. The series of violent events permit a visualization of the corpse of the Mexican Revolution with the end of its community with a powerless state before large corporations. The purpose of this work is to analyze and research in depth the relationship of the increment of violence and the neoliberal practices in

Mexico in the northern border after 1990 that have led to the rupture of the community through the reduction to bare life in a biopolitical state. The focus of this discussion is based upon the importance of the awareness of the inherent violence that constitutes the neoliberal policies. Events such as the femicides, drug traffic, massive waves of migration and the missing bodies, among others are part of a systematic economic and political practice that is taking a toll on the most vulnerable groups of the community. These processes of rapid modernization and neoliberal policies function with an undoing of the community under a discourse of inclusion. Therefore, there must be a possibility to create an authentic political activity by rethinking and reassessing the impact of historiography, meta narrative and the work of the aesthetics. This work will try to expand from an expository or denunciatory statement of the waves of violence and corruption in Mexico. It will also provide a case that will support the hypothesis of the failure of the Mexican Revolution and its promises. The theoretical background is solid to establish the suggestion of the state's and other circles of domestic and foreigner powers that took premeditated steps that have contributed purely to the construction of the current neoliberal Mexican state. This includes theories that have enriched ways of thought but have prevented the complete unmasking of the celebratory theories within the narratives of the Mexican Revolution, or that have been expropriated in the discourses of the modernity throughout the Mexican history. The goal will be to demonstrate that the conventional, humanistic or classic version of the narratives of the Mexican Revolution fail and limit the concept of the revolution, only to prove that the real process occurring was the neoliberal revolution producing at the end the corpse of the community and the corpse of the state.

The unprecedented waves of violence experienced in the recent years call for the rethinking and questioning of the humanistic narratives of the Mexican history and the ability of capitalism to use any forms of resistance for its own benefit and strengthening, including literature, language and the aesthetics. Death, violence, poverty, segregation, femicides, drug wars and migration are surrounding Mexico's everyday life. These have also become the topics

presented in much of the literary work in Mexico. Contemporary cultural texts incorporate the production of death on behalf of the state. Texts such as *narco novelas*, *narco corridos* or *narco* films are some examples. This work includes the works of Orfa Alarcón *Perra brava*, *Trabajos del Reino* by Yuri Herrera, *Fila India* by Antonio Ortuño, *Sicario* by Denis Villeneuve and *2666* by Roberto Bolaño. They present the problematic of the lack of state intervention in the transnational era and what this represents to the country. The fracture of its sovereignty has opened for an increment of violence and the complicity of the state as a powerless organ to defend its citizens constitutionally. The state has become a “killing machine”. The corpses and body parts present in the cultural text provide an argument of the complicity of the aesthetics with the state and its lack of autonomy as a separate counter power. Therefore, it seems pertinent to continue questioning the processes of production, the transitions of power and the history itself to create an accurate assessment of the current situation.

There is a pessimistic view of the future of the country. The ability of the market and the system to absorb counter powers and use them to fortify a capitalist system is the reality. However, the role of the aesthetics is still a matter of importance, and a permanent discussion must prevail to survive as a genuine form of opposition. Certainly, the efficacy and autonomy of the aesthetics have diminished by the forces of the state, since everything can be turned into a commodity. Nonetheless, the cultural texts reflect the aspects society is facing. They continue to perform a political activity by presenting to an audience what is not supposed to be evident or visible. They, as a form of resistance can disrupt the discourse and manufactured narrative of the state. Nevertheless, they are also in a contradictory position of a counter power since the aesthetics have not been exempt of the process of commodification in neoliberal times. Cultural texts, language and narratives also function as organism that neutralizes the unaccepted forms of violence and segregation. However, the reading of the texts allows the audience to sense an awareness of this situation, and the evidence in cultural texts of an understanding of a certain impossibility and their lack of power is not just a pessimistic approach, but a call to reactive and

re think from different categories the production of knowledge. The danger relies in the illusion that the forms of resistance are effective, or accurate, that there is actual freedom to fight, or freedom of speech, when they could be only a mirage. The awareness on behalf of the aesthetics is what opens for an emergence of an authentic political movement that is hoping to activate different groups of the community to seek a true democracy in Mexico.

The first chapter, "The Logic of the Corpse," will provide a background to the process of compulsive modernization in Mexico. It will argue the premeditated steps the Mexican state has taken to transform the country into a neo-liberal state. It will refer to the Mexican Revolution as a mythical revolution that provided Mexicans with a perfect mirage of inclusion, justice and freedom. It will describe some of the organized movements society developed in an attempt to search for an egalitarian language and a true democracy. The response of the state to movements or any type of opposition throughout history has ended in repressive actions, mainly involving pure violence. The failure of the promises of the Mexican Revolution continued to be visible to the government up to the early nineties when the *Ejido* law was revoked and land was opened for sale to foreign investors. This had been one of the most important fruits of the Revolution. The signing of NAFTA and the consolidation of the right wing in the federal government paved for a road of a celebratory discourse of advancement, modernity and opportunity. Nevertheless, the system had different results for the most vulnerable groups of the society. The arrival of the transnationals and the assembly lines made it difficult for the domestic enterprises and businesses to survive. The impossibility to compete left them with no choice but to migrate to the northern area seeking job opportunities or hoping to cross to the United States. The lack of infrastructure of the northern cities to incorporate these unexpected massive waves of migration changed the dynamics of the community. The lives of Mexicans, especially those who had been historically segregated due to their race or gender, were reduced to their minimum, bare life.

The second chapter is titled “The Corpse of the State.” This chapter includes the works *Trabajos del reino* by Yuri Herrera and *Perra brava* by Orfa Alarcón. It analyzes their possibilities of political work and counter-hegemonic forces within the context of late capitalism. It raises the discussion of the role of aesthetics and the double-bind of the narratives. These narratives serve as a symbolic act that offers a resolution of what wouldn't be resolved in real life. Simultaneously, they portray an evident awareness of the texts and their complicity with the state and their inability to escape the system completely. The context of the novels depicts the inability of the characters to comprehend the duties of a state whose sovereignty is broken, or in a permanent state of exception. The lines of the licit and illicit have become indistinguishable. Therefore, crime and government are intertwined. The only possible way for them to survive is to move back and forth between the law and lawless. However, the law is no longer a written code such as the constitution, but the force of the most powerful. Neoliberalism, as a natural form of capitalism, has been able to absorb any form of resistance. This does not exclude the aesthetics, the *narco*, as it has become a culture, and the state itself.

The last chapter, “The Corpse of the Community,” is geared towards the production of death, the undoing of the community and the complicity of language as a form of segregation and a mirage of resistance. It proposes a debate to rethink the forms of production of knowledge such as language and the aesthetics. They aim to produce genuine outcries that disrupt a system and seek authentic democracy. The section includes the film *Sicario*, directed by Denis Villeneuve, *2666* by Roberto Bolaño and *Fila India* by Antonio Ortuño. It focuses on the production of corpses on behalf of the state. The community has developed into its very opposite, since its foundation is based on the premises of segregation and immunity. Corpses and death are what the community currently have in common. On one side, the novels do account for those corpses that are becoming part of the common city landscape in the north of Mexico. The texts present the horrific imagery of mutilated bodies and detail the torture they undergo before they die. They display the co-belonging of horror and aesthetics. The destiny of

those corpses in the outskirts of the cities, abandoned lands or dumpsters proves the constant production of death as an inherent part of the processes of compulsive modernization.

However, the novels are aware that regardless of the efforts taken to account for these bodies, these corpses cannot speak. The texts reiterate the importance to maintain the debate of the role of language as a form of power. The texts continue to suggest language as a contributing factor of segregation and their inability to narrate what can't be narrativized.

## II. **The Logic of the Corpse**

The Mexican Revolution was, by the terms of its own rhetoric, a great landmark in the history of modernization and democratization worldwide. Unfortunately, that same rhetoric has since been used to justify a movement toward neoliberal oppression, thus betraying the presumed ideals of the revolution. In this chapter, there will be an overview of the events that have taken Mexico in the direction of becoming a neoliberal state. It will discuss the circumstances, steps and premeditated decisions the state has made since the period of Porfirio Díaz, (Porfiriato), which have influenced Mexico to adopt a neoliberal economy. There were gradual changes that affected individual citizens in their everyday private and public lives. A complex group of strategic actions, whether they were narratives, ideology or just brute force, have been executed to arrive to such economic system. Mexico went from a dictatorship during the Porfiriato to an authoritarian system. This virtual dictatorship of a single party lasted more than seven decades under the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI). Finally, under the Party of National Action (PAN) in 2000 the country arrived at the consolidation of neoliberalism and the militarization of the country. These policies and actions taken by with the complicity of different groups of powers have left the majority of the inhabitants in the most vulnerable conditions, without possibilities to survive and invisible to the law. These negative decisions, which act against the principles of justice and equality, have been implemented with little or no resistance on behalf of Mexicans. Thus, it is relevant to our field to investigate and rethink the reasons for such reception.

There is a dialectical argument of the Mexican Revolution and its historiographical narrative; since certain events unveil the evolution to modernization and advancement as asymmetrical to justice and equality for all as the Mexican Revolution promised. The collusion of the government, the media and other powerful entities has helped reinforce the state's version

in regard to a discourse of inclusion. However, a mixture of fear, crisis and violence is what seems to continue to work successfully as a tool to perpetuate a myth.

The goal is to visualize the changes and adjustments the government has made in order to perpetuate a system of oppression. The political system of Mexico has had different political moments, which have been able to incorporate different systems under the same common denominator of exclusion. These systems include a dictatorship, and a government of *police*, as well as the foundation of a *permanent state of exception* and a *biopolitical* government. All these forms of power have continued to foster the production of *bare life*. These terms—using the theories of Giorgio Agamben, Michel Foucault, Roberto Esposito, and Jaques Rancière—will be addressed in the following sections of this work. The aim of this chapter is then to understand the use of the precepts of the Mexican Revolution to disguise the readjustments of different forms of power that have developed into sophisticated forms of oppression.

This system has worked in manner diametrically opposed to the ideals of the Mexican Revolution. The Revolution originally sought for equality and justice. However, the country transitioned to continue with forms of exclusion and oppression. The marginalized citizens have then as their only liaison to the community the production of wealth for others than themselves; meanwhile, they serve the symbolic purpose of instilling in other citizens the fear of what not to be, of what not to become. The economic realities, crisis and 'uneven development' Mexico has faced constantly unveil the versions and the purposes of the state actions. They make visible the real outcomes of the Mexican Revolution, its possible failure altogether and the processes of gestation of the true revolution that was born with the opposite ideals but protected by a historiographical legitimization. Thus, the fight for equality and justice for the subaltern functioned as a platform to perfectly cover another revolution that was preparing to take place instead: the neoliberal revolution.

The objective is not to demonstrate how the country moved from the Mexican Revolution to neoliberalism, but to understand that the current political moment in Mexico proves its failure. The situation today evidences the narrative constructed throughout history and shows the aftermath of the compulsive modernization. The Mexican government has been able to adjust, transform, and incorporate different economic and political practices that foster a system that keeps the majority of citizens in impoverished conditions.

The resultant neoliberal policies contributed instead to the transformation of the interactions of the community, fostering its own undoing, working precisely through its very opposite concept of “immunity,” as Roberto Esposito suggests. In other words, it reproduces the evil from which the community must be protected (Esposito, *Immunitas* 17)<sup>1</sup>. The changes have also transformed the types of violence the country faces, a violence that does not respond to a fight for rights, independence, revolution, or justice, as was the tradition in Latin America in general, but to a neoliberal violence responsible in its complexity for the production of corpses including the corpse of the Mexican Revolution.

### **Project of the Mexican Revolution**

In order to have a comprehensive perspective of the current economic and political context Mexico is facing it is necessary to understand the historical events that have preceded the current situation and impacted directly or indirectly the transition to neoliberal state. There is not space enough in this section to provide a complete review of the history of the Mexican Revolution or to recapitulate the sufferings of the Mexican people or the violence inflicted on these people dating since 1876, since President Porfirio Díaz began to rule. However, it is within this context that we find the creation of a narrative that has been a premise to constitute a historical myth. On one side, the ideals the revolution proposed the possibility of change,

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<sup>1</sup> Translation mine

change long wanted and desired, originated in the deep necessity and thirst for justice and equality of the majority of the population. On the other hand, there was a contradictory outcome thus disguised with a mirage of a revolutionary positive and democratic transformation.

Although this fake discourse did not go unnoticed for a group of dissidents that reacted against the system, the power to control every narrative was on the side of the state. Therefore, it is from this historical event that we take as a point of reference to analyze and rethink the convenience of the historiographical discourse of the Mexican Revolution. The well-elaborated narrative of such a relevant national event certainly presented a real war with real victims. Unfortunately, the ideals that were originally proposed were not exactly the result of this war.

Díaz created a discourse of modernity. However, for many Mexicans, the consequences were not a matter of celebration in any aspect of their life; this was the case especially for the indigenous groups and inhabitants of the rural areas. There was no democracy and Díaz had complete monopoly of power. His decision to allow foreigners to buy land and the exemptions he provided for them made it easier for the foreign enterprises to develop and strengthen their business in Mexico, while for the indigenous it was the opposite. Díaz held control of both the ideological and the repressive state apparatus, and if they didn't work, he had full military power and was willing to execute it if necessary as a reaction to any questioning or refusal to obey him. He was not by any means respecting the law itself. For instance, as he wasn't observing the *Reforma* laws, which had been previously passed.

According to Knight referring to the Díaz government and his agenda of modernization, "...the economy and the state had grown apace; but these processes, as is often the case, had had divergent effects, and the country side, particularly the rural poor, had carried the burden of Díaz..." (par.10). Even though the cities seemed more prosperous there was always the other side since majority of the population was being negatively impacted, especially in small villages and the rural areas. In general people were struggling to acquire primary products: "while the

cities prospered, the great estates swelled to meet world and Mexican demand for primary products (sugar, cotton, coffee, henequen, tropical fruits), absorbing the lands of villages and small holders, converting once independent peasants into landless laborers, who often worked under harsh overseers” (Knight par. 9). The people who used to own rural lands lost their lands, their dignity and freedom. Díaz’s government had become a form of oppression and virtual slavery. Only a few, mainly foreigners, benefited from the modernization of the country and this led to the monopolization of power of the land owners and caciques that rural communities were facing.

In 1883 Díaz passed a law that permitted foreigners to obtain abandoned or empty lands, but in reality, these were properties of indigenous groups who were becoming the slaves of their own land. This law would also enable the president to create companies that received one third of the land free, as for the rest of the land; the companies’ owners could buy with few difficulties. These companies had access to extended privileges and benefits, such as tax exemption and rights to import their own machinery needed for the companies. This new law became an irresistible offer to wealthy foreigners who began to take advantage of the land on sale. In 1900, one third of the Mexican land was property of Spanish or American company owners. In other words, “[i]t has been calculated that 97% of Mexico was the private property of 830 landowners. They were the owners of Mexico, and that was not even one percent of the population...” (Rius 14)<sup>2</sup>. Mexicans and Mexico were being owned by foreigners and were becoming slaves in their own nation.

The issue was not limited to the matter of the owning of the land and losing the Mexican land to foreign investment, but the lives of the indigenous people. Most of the population who previously inhabited these areas ended up being uprooted from these places into the southern plantations to become virtual slaves or workers in the mines or textile commerce if they were

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<sup>2</sup> Translation mine

lucky, or exterminated in the worst scenario (Rius 15-17). During this time, Díaz could maintain an image of peace and order in the country regardless of the atrocities happening, due to the monopoly of control he had of the judicial organs, educational system, congress, army, etc. This context triggered an enormous sense of injustice and discontent among the first opponents of the Díaz's government. Among this first group of dissidents who envisioned the necessity of a change, possibly in the form of a revolution, were the Camilo Arriaga and the Flores Magón brothers. Their ideas were radical; they envisioned a transformation and defeat of the system that maintained most of the population segregated and close to starvation. They envisioned and wanted a true revolution. These people as leaders and a few others wanted not just a change in power but also a total eradication of the system and order. They organized for the first time a new political party, The Mexican Liberal Party (*El Partido Liberal Mexicano, PLM*) and proposed an action plan, which focused on the protection of the vulnerable workers. They also demanded equity and justice for all, along with human rights. A summary of the relevant points included a demand for no reelection of the president or the governors and the creation of a public-school system. As far as working conditions, they requested better hygiene, disability protection, prohibition of physical punishment, and equal salaries. They also sought protection for the indigenous race among other rights (*Programa del Partido Liberal 1906*), which was written while they were exiled in the United States (Rius 33). Díaz had exiled them immediately; nevertheless, they kept working and writing their ideals and demands while they were away.

It is during this time when laborers became aware of their own exploitation. This caused waves of strikes throughout the country. President Díaz addressed this with extreme violence by executing workers and instilling fear and shock in the community (Rius 36). The instability the country was experiencing put pressure on the government of President Díaz. However, he appeared confident of his power and proceeded to express during an interview with the American journalist James Creelman for the *Person's Magazine* in 1908 that he wasn't going to

accept reelection for himself and that he had no desire to continue as President of Mexico. The interview was later printed in the journal *El Imparcial* and the landowner Francisco I. Madero had access to it. This is one of the most relevant turn overs in the history since although Madero was clearly against Díaz, he also had a different vision than that of Camilo Arriaga and the Flores Magón brothers and other pioneers of the ideals of the revolution.

Madero, as well as the national bourgeoisie, was not satisfied with the politico-economic policies that Díaz was pursuing. These policies were leaving out some of the wealthiest families of Mexico. Unlike the previous opponents Díaz had, Madero was different. Madero represented the middle and upper class, the people who could contribute to make a change in power possible. He was a strong opponent of reelection, and his voice was heard, especially through the book he wrote, *La sucesión presidencial*, in 1910. Unlike the writings and other criticism of the Flores Magón brothers, this book had the power to circulate among other spheres, regardless of the poor style. As Madero starts his campaign and loses the presidential elections to Díaz, he was targeted to be assassinated, thus he was forced to flee to San Antonio, Texas. However, Madero, interested in being the president and restoring wealth to Mexican bourgeoisie, sought support from some of the American capitalists who helped him gain power. These acts and decisions demonstrate Madero's interest, which was far different from Flores Magón brothers and the original ideals of the goals of a revolution needed in Mexico.

It is important to consider both testimonies that remark the change in the motives of the revolution, although this was kept from the masses. They went from wanting a change in the order to another system of segregation that wanted power again for a certain group of people only. Henry L. Wilson, former U.S. ambassador to Mexico, wrote in his book *Diplomatic Episodes in Mexico and Chile*, that Madero had promised foreign capitalists to provide privileges of different kind in exchange for monetary help. It was evident that Madero was receiving support from Washington and private businesses in the United States. For instance, the

Department of Justice of the US had documents that prove that Madero maintained through his brother Gustavo, liaisons with the oil companies Standard Oil and Water Pierce. They also maintained relationships with a weapons company that had headquarters in Washington (Rius 64).

Mario Gill states that “[o]ne of the first government acts of Madero was to sign a check for \$685,000 to Waters Pierce Co. to repay a loan obtained for the revolutionary movement” (142)<sup>3</sup>. This evidence allows for questioning of a true radical change of the action Díaz was performing previously. The situation continued to privilege foreigners over Mexicans. Díaz was overthrown; unfortunately, this did not seem to be any guaranty of an actual change in the system. This change was not seeking to provide true well-being for the Mexican people, and it was certainly not aligned with the principles the revolution was trying to accomplish.

In conclusion, it seems that Madero’s interest was to attain the presidential chair and to restore the wealth to the bourgeoisie. The war of the Revolution did defeat Díaz; however, it did not eradicate the inequality and oppression Mexico had been facing. The old ideals of the revolution were buried along with their original fighters. The help and support Madero asked and received from foreign investors of the American power corroborates his authentic intentions of no reelections. Nevertheless, he did not appear concerned by the intervention of foreign investment and the consequences that scenario had brought in the past. These actions of Madero are to be reassessed as actions that are incongruent to the original project of the Mexican Revolution. The war continued, but not as a revolution. The war’s hidden objective was to change the distribution of power, but the system remained and even became worse as the oppression and violence were adjusting to the transformations of power and modes of production concealed under a narrative of justice and equality for all.

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<sup>3</sup> Translation mine

### **End of Díaz, continuation of a system**

There are historical cases and artifacts that portray arguments that support the thesis of contradictory outcomes and possibly the failure of the promises of the Mexican Revolution. These failures were already being questioned in some artistic work, depicting the rupture of the narrative and the persistence of the celebratory discourse of the Mexican Revolution. Villa and Zapata were some of the original and authentic fighters. However, they were not capable of acquiring the political leadership of the country and they were lacking a holistic vision for the nation. As a matter of fact, their very strengths as "...guerrilla fighters often disqualified them from subsequent political careers: they were too provincial, ill-educated, wedded to a traditional, rural way of life which in many aspects, was on the way out" (Knight par. 22). Therefore, the movement was lacking a leader who would carry out the original ideals of the revolution; the movement also lacked a strategic plan and the resources to accomplish it. As Knight states, this movement "...gradually lost their impetus. Defeated, or simply war weary, the peon-soldiers returned to village and hacienda; the surviving leaders reached deals or accommodations with the new 'revolutionary' government" (par. 18). It was this weariness that was causing the semblance or appearance of peace; the war of the revolution was over but the system of oppression mutated and was strengthened. The outcome was more of a change in the heads of the system rather than the system itself. People were convinced to fight for a possibility of a life of dignity; however, they received in return a myth that would later legitimize for a worse situation.

As the power of Díaz decreased a mirage of success arrived although in reality the ideals of the Mexican Revolution were decreasing until they faded away and were forgotten and replaced by a stronger myth of a false successful revolution. The members of the old regime, Díaz and Huerta, were defeated, while the original writers of the ideals of the Revolution were executed along with the project to revolutionize Mexico. Madero, who was a liaison to continue

the system Díaz had begun, continued to open the borders to international power. And the only rebels remaining, Villa and Zapata were known more as warriors than political leaders. However, the new force that arrived had a different vision, the Constitutionalist. They certainly understood the country's political context and were able to take advantage of the time and necessities to gain power and redistribute wealth to the new bourgeoisie. This group of Constitutionlists, as they are known, did not all have a formal education, nor were they intellectuals as Flores Magón; neither were they community leaders as Villa or Zapata. However, they certainly had enough understanding of the need of the people for a shared memory and inclusion in the Mexican history. They understood the longing to be able to hope for peace and a better life, however unrealistic this longing turned out to be. This was a critical moment politically and the Constitutionlists took advantage of the moment to acquire and monopolize power with a popular discourse that included the ideals of the revolution although they were never seriously pursued. They could capitalize on the suffering of the people and their needs at the time to take the country in the direction they wanted.

It was not a revolution, which ended in an accomplishment of justice and freedom, but in a peace that had a narrative and a façade of a revolution that gave birth to more severe outcomes and more contemporary forms of oppression and slavery. The country had grown weary after the Mexican Revolution because of the impossibility to defeat a system. Nonetheless, the mythical revolution had given the people a strong celebratory discourse of inclusion, modernization and national pride. Inclusion is a key word here. As Roger Bastra puts it: "In contrast to other countries, our revolutionary myths did not emerge from the biographies of heroes and tyrants, but from the idea of the fusion of the masses with the State, of the Mexican people with the revolutionary governments..." (188). Therefore, the government that existed for over seventy years continuously developed the effacement of the idea of the separation of the state and the masses. First, they had to develop steps that constructed this narrative of

inclusion. Second, it had to be clear that the government was sovereign and therefore any contradiction to this system would be repressed, as it would harm the state or the society, which were perceived as one. Muralism was an example of the efforts to construct the idea of togetherness of the state and the masses.

### **The construction of a narrative of a victorious revolution: Muralism**

The Constitutionals knew about the need of the people to have a shared memory of the past. They understood the deep necessity of the masses for belonging and recognition. The moment was politically critical and made perfect room for them to take over the nation bringing the historical and unified sense of nationalism people desired. After the war and suffering the revolution had caused, there was a necessity to create a sense of unified history, to invent a new nation, a history different to the Mexico before the war. Now it was one that portrayed the ideals of the revolution as if they had been accomplished and we were all part of the triumph and the positive legacy. Therefore, there was a need to develop different symbolic and cultural values and to present images of the past that would provide Mexicans with a common cultural identity (Ortiz 154). It would be a homogeneous construction of the image of the world, which would consist of "...mental images constructed through visual representations" (Pérez, V. 51)<sup>4</sup>. José Vasconcelos, who at the time was involved in the new administration, responsible for cultural and educational areas, called different artists to tell them about a potential project to restore and create the new shared history of the nation and develop a common cultural identity aligned to the values the revolution promoted. Some of the artists included iconic names such as Diego Rivera, Jean Charlot, and José Clemente Orozco y David Alfaro Siqueiros, among others. They would have the task to design and construct the public cultural identity, targeting as the audience the masses, but especially those who were illiterate. Therefore, the

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<sup>4</sup> Translation mine

administrators would make available some of the walls of public buildings for them to present such projects and make them visible and accessible (Ortiz 156).

Muralism was used as a means to elaborate and portray images with a cultural message, converted into an instrument to convey the official version of the revolution. The purpose was to construct a national identity stressing the victory of the images that portrayed inclusion and democracy, aspects the revolution had supposedly achieved. The state was behind the paintings of the murals, encouraging the artists to build a narrative of the new Mexican History after a presumably successful Mexican Revolution. The murals would present a history that included others who had been marginalized throughout the historical timeline and who were now free because of the revolution. Murals would prominently include groups that had previously been relegated to subaltern positions, such as indigenous, proletarians and women. Murals were to have a strategic place in the cities and public places. The objective was to make the common and ordinary people the audience of this art, and provide them a common sense of identity as the nation's majority. These artists received monetary support, encouragement, and approval from the Mexican government, mainly led by Vasconcelos, who oversaw the cultural and educational sector, giving the murals privileged and strategic access to public spaces. However, these murals merely served the ideological function of legitimating the power of the new government and promoting a false sense of justice and vindication of the oppressed, a sense of success and triumph of the precepts of the revolution. In other words, the murals were a "powerful instrument of production of a collective imaginary" (Pérez 50). The works of muralism constructed a discourse that would translate into an apparent success of the revolution, "justice and social cohesion, work for everyone, auto determination and progress" (Ortiz 159). This way, history would affirm that the revolution had accomplished the objectives

people had been seeking, except for the attempt to interrupt the narrative of the state whether cultural texts or political movements<sup>5</sup>.

Once the new history of the revolution was assimilated, poverty after the revolution was taken more with pride than an act of injustice, since the battle had been fought and won. There was nothing but to celebrate the inclusion of people and welcome modernity. Gareth Williams states: "Modernity in Mexico was orchestrated by a total state that strived at all times to suppress the duality of state and society" (*The Mexica Exception* 12). It was true Mexico did not have a dictatorship any longer; however, after the revolution Mexico implemented the sovereignty of the Mexican Constitution of 1917. It was the law created by the state and for the state, which was the same as the society. Nobody could object it. Based on this mentality, there was almost no possibility for a true democracy; the state had the last word. The state acted more as a *police*. Rancière uses this term and explains that it is often confused with *politics*. He states *police* "...is first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and tasks" (*Disagreement* 29). This is the political system Mexico acquired after the overthrow of Díaz.

### **Disruption of the narrative, and the confrontation of the *status quo***

Despite the efforts of the state to create a sense of the triumph of the revolution, there were events, movements and cultural texts that proved otherwise. If the revolution had overthrown Díaz, it had kept the system that maintained a large vulnerable group of citizens in new forms of oppression. Movements that presented the incongruence of the system and government began to be present as a challenge to the state narrative. Any form of movement

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<sup>5</sup> Cultural Texts could include but are not limited to Juan Rulfo, Mariano Azuela's work for instance. The movement of 1968, or Tlatelolco as well. I intent to expand in this area later in time.

striving for justice and equal rights was then and will continue to be translated as a threat to the system. Therefore, anything possible would be done on behalf of the state and power circles to conscript such movements for its own purposes. According to David Harvey “[a]ny political movement that holds individual freedoms to be sacrosanct is vulnerable to incorporation into the neoliberal fold” (*The Brief* 41). Nevertheless, it was impossible to sustain a narrative of the state of stability, justice, inclusion and peace.

Different cultural events and artifacts were demonstrating another side of the story. Contradictions between the artificial discourse of the state narrative and the actual results of the revolution caused movements whose objectives were to confront the *status quo*. Some of these subversive events and texts include, but are not limited to, the literature of the revolution<sup>6</sup>. In addition, political riots and movements such as the Tlatelolco, are part of this list. Even though they would not succeed, they brought to light the failure of the government’s narrative of peace and freedom. They evidence a system of repression. These actions embody the establishment of sovereignty through the force of law. In Jacques Derrida’s words, “there is no sovereignty without force, without the force of the strongest, whose reason- the reason of the strongest- is to win over everything” (101).

For instance, “[t]he worldwide political upheavals of 1968... were strongly inflected with the desire for greater personal freedoms. This was certainly true for students” (Harvey, *The Brief* 41). Movements that began in Europe but that ended in the cruelest manner in Mexico City in 1968 to perpetuate the narrative and present the world a peaceful Mexico during the Olympic Games that took place in the country. The movement of 1968 in Mexico, or “Tlatelolco,” had as one of the main goals social justice. On October the second of 1968, there was a large gathering of mainly students in the neighborhood of Tlatelolco. They “...demanded a democratization of Mexico’s political system that would match the country’s rapid

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<sup>6</sup> This will be expanded in future work.

industrialization...” (Greeley 18). They were seeking a political change not just in the leaders, but also in the system. Students mainly “...demanded freedom from parental, educational, corporate, bureaucratic, and state constraints” (Harvey, *The Brief* 41). This moment especially in Mexico could be identified as a subversive movement against the system and the *status quo* of the state. This was a moment of actual politics and resistance to the police government that existed. Students were seeking democracy. This event ended in a massacre; the government troops opened fire to thousands of students in the plaza. This happened under the orders of the interior minister Luis Echeverria and former President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. These actions of the state reiterate the system of police Mexico was under, as “[s]tate violence is the product of sovereign commands issued as a result of specific interests just as much as it is a response to the police allocation and regularization of ways of doing, being, and saying” (Williams, *The Mexican Exception* 13). The riots and the way people were mercilessly assassinated presented a disruption to the narrative the state had been elaborating with a successful discourse of inclusion and democracy after the Mexican Revolution. It also showed the resistance to a system of the idea of togetherness imposed by the state. Society demanded its recognition as a separate entity. Tlatelolco “had a profound impact on the national-popular imaginary that had been constructed and exploited by the Mexican state, and to the liberation of desire of represented by the movement, which, in certain versions, links itself to the coming of the neoliberal era” (Steinberg 283).

This event in the history of Mexico marks a turning point of the possibility to fight and defeat the system. Although it certainly unveiled the truth of the extreme violence and its adjustment alone with the forms of production; it also presented a pessimistic view since the forms of pacification shown by the massacre of the protestors and the students made evident the lack of ability to reverse the path of the future. “The Mexican state reached a point of crisis in the catastrophic moment of violence at Tlatelolco by exhausting its capacity to narrate both

foundational violence as well as the everyday forms of violence through which it administered Mexican society” (Steinberg 275). The Tlatelolco victims made visible the corpse of the ideals of the Mexican Revolution. The dead and the way the dissidents were silenced exposed the continuation and evolution of the former system of oppression in the past, now under a single political party system. The country moved from a dictatorship to a system of *police*, and repression was certainly one of its tools. It was a proof that modern forms of slavery had emerged and that the system of segregation and oppression remained as a form to monopolize power and territory.

Such events contribute to an undoing of the community due to the forms of pacification through the state. This event portrays the status of oppression and lack of freedoms people were experiencing. It unveiled the failure of the revolution and the political crisis. Greeley states that “[m]ore than any other event in the twentieth century, the Tlatelolco massacre ruptured the state’s claim as the self-declared heir to the Mexican Revolution’s promise of social justice and political inclusion, to represent the nation’s citizenry” (18). The forms of oppression and violence had surpassed the old ways and only adjusted to the new forms of production of the modernity brought since the Díaz government. These violent events demonstrated an exercise of power that was a betrayal of the ideals the revolution.

The relevance and importance of the catastrophic violence of Tlatelolco falls in the public exposure of the erroneous belief of a victorious revolution. It was a disruption of the system, and the incongruence of the discourse that had been elaborated by the state and spread by the ideological state apparatus. The Mexican Revolution was a war that began with authentic ideals and genuine desires to fight for a transformation of a broken society that had the majority of the population segregated, oppressed and in starvation. The end of the revolution changed the leaders of the state. However, the system of oppression remained and was solidified by an authoritarian power, a government that had no room for the society to speak up. One of the

outcomes of the Revolution was the fusion of the state and masses. Therefore, the actions of the state were justified as they were the actions of all and for the sake of everyone's well-being. The state now had constructed a prideful historical revolutionary war and everyone needed to be satisfied with the outcomes and its success.

Despite these efforts to standardize the discourse, upheavals were disrupting the state narrative. However, the forms of pacifications these movements had, through cruel violence, were a synonym of the killing of the possibility or opportunity to produce a real change and eradicate the system. The pertinence of Tlatelolco or the 1968 movement in Mexico is that it "... initiates...[the] transition, turning on the decline of the Mexican state's national- popular form and its reconfiguration in the neoliberal era" (Steinberg 267). Therefore, it could be stated that Tlatelolco had a double impact for one side it exposed the popular imaginary that had been believed since the Revolution. On the other hand, the forms utilized to pacify the protest and the killing of the protestors was a clear message and that no organized or unorganized movement would interrupt the state's narrative without fatal consequences. It is key to understand the use of sovereignty, and the transition the country had made to an authoritarian normality. The students in the Tlatelolco movement were striving to find a language of the "egalitarian logic" (Rancière, *Disagreement* 99). However, the force of the strongest or the reason of the sovereign reconstituted itself in order to preserve the order against the riots and public disturbances.

This event helps to understand that Mexico had been evolving around a mythical Mexican Revolution. In addition to producing a false sense of inclusion and justice, it had also given birth to a Constitution, the Constitution of 1917. This new legal system would incorporate new forms to act against its own people within the framework of the law. Although one of the

positive fruits in theory was the creation of the *ejido*<sup>7</sup> system, the legal system also contained an article that allowed for a *state of exception*. In other words, the state could suspend its own law or the individual guarantees in order to preserve the sovereignty of the state. Foucault explains it as "...a permanent coup d'état, that is exercised and functions in the name of and in terms of the principals of its own rationality, without having to mold or model itself in the otherwise given rules of justice" (*Discipline* 339). In article 29 of the Mexican Constitution of 1917, there is permission to the state to use armed force for the security of the state. Later, there was a reform in 1938 that extended this exceptionality of the state in case of any type of perturbation of the public space or anything else that might put society in danger (Williams, *The Mexican Exception* 27). There is interdependence between the system of police that Rancière suggested, and a permanent state of exception. This was the real transition for Mexico. There was no longer a Porfiriato, but an authoritarian government emerged protected by the country's constitution. The state, through the supremacy of the constitution was legally able to suspend the law itself; in such case a system of repression and police was possible within a legal framework. Tlatelolco was not able to develop a voice in a system of *police* where everyone is told "...ways of doing, ways of being, ways of saying..." (Rancière, *Disagreement* 29). The result of this upheaval was the legal abandonment from the law under a *state of exception*, translated into the killing of thousands who strived for a true democracy. The assassinations of these victims are not to be persecuted as the country is under a state of exception, protected by the country's very own sovereign constitution.

### **Mexico, a Neoliberal Country**

The general concept of neoliberalism in the words of Harvey "...is a theory of political

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<sup>7</sup> "The *ejido* is then property of a group of peasants, who collectively possess legal rights over the given land" (Stabehagen 17).

economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trades..." (*The Brief 2*). The historical context of years of oppression and concentration of wealth since the époque of colonization led to constant situations of corruption and inequality that made it overly complicated to govern. The legacy of corruption was carried to recent times where the country as one of the results found itself in tremendous debt. This debt put the country at risk in a global scale to the creditors, forcing it to repay under abusive and unfair circumstances. The initiatives of president Carlos Salinas de Gortari put Mexico in a position of disadvantage in relation to other countries and international organs. First was the signing of NAFTA then his anti-constitutional reforms of the *ejidos* and finally the arrival of the ultra-right with the victory of president Vicente Fox. These situations endangered and fragmented the sovereignty of the nation state. As far as the common people, they were unable to compete in a global economy and they had to leave their lands to find a job in urban world. The power of private industry enabled the *laissez faire* policies of Milton Friedman that fostered a neoliberal state<sup>8</sup>. Although these policies brought different results for most of the population, modernity and advancement were not a reality for all. Violence, for instance, and its different manifestations, is one of the main aspects to be assessed not as an outcome of these rearticulations of power to a neoliberal form of production but as the way itself to constitute this system. Mexico had evolved after the Mexican Revolution to a system of police where any type of actual politics was repressed. The sovereign, the state, or in most cases, the president had the right to utilize the constitution, article 29, to use force to preserve peace. In this context of power, Mexico now was incorporating the transnationals and reinforcing the oligarchy to maintain power in specific sectors of the society. The Mexican

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<sup>8</sup> "State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because,... the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitable distorts and bias state intervention (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit" (Harvey, *The Brief 2*).

political crisis exploded with the waves of violence the country was facing at the beginning of president Felipe Calderón's term. However, the sovereign aligned himself to the constitution to legally utilize force as the perfect juridical justification to implement a pacification and militarization of the country.

### **External Debt of Mexico**

According to Harvey the external debt converted Mexico into one of the first countries to implement the neoliberal system in exchange for receiving support from international sources to overcome the crisis. Mexico's case demonstrates the differences between the liberal and the neoliberal state. It also evidences the vulnerability of the countries that are in debt. Stronger international organs will force these countries to repay regardless of the negative consequences this might cause on their people; "...the state makes lenders largely immune to losses. Borrowers have to pay no matter what the social cost is" (Harvey, *The Brief* 29, 74, 100). This implementation of a new economic system, in conjunction to the political situations of Mexico (police in a context of permanent state of exception) made a direct impact in the culture and lifestyle of the whole country. This was mainly or more evident in border cities where a mandatory adaptation to rapid urbanization accompanied the new and continuous transformations. Many of the public enterprises became private; for instance, in 1982 there was a reduction of state owned firms from 1,100 to 200. Meanwhile, the accumulation of wealth was reduced to an even smaller elite circle that became or remained in control of important decisions (Harvey, *The Brief* 101). In 1991 Mexico signed the NAFTA agreement, which was received enthusiastically by a large portion of the population, which expected the agreement to bring progress and development to the country and more job opportunities. It offered "freedom and equality" in theory, and in reality, translated into "unfreedom and inequality" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 261).

Mexico, as a state, had always used technological as a mode to argue its goodness and legitimize its sovereignty as power. Since the times of Díaz, this had been a tradition with the intention to cover other maladies the country suffered. However, these technological achievements such as the railroad, electricity in rural areas were no longer a synonym of development. In the early nineties, the vision and connotation for national evolution had more to do with the international relationships the sovereign attained globally. Therefore, NAFTA and the arrival of transnational enterprises were presented, received and perceived as a national improvement for everyone (Lomnitz 114).

The foreign investment became palpable, the northern border of the country, was basically turned into a site for transnational factories and assembly lines or *maquilas*. There are key events in the economic and political arena that have certainly impacted the pathway Mexicans have come to face. The level of debts some of these countries were facing opened doors to negative economic restructuring into a neoliberal state; such was the case of Mexico. This situation left the state with a fissure of autonomy and began to allow the transnational power to influence the decision making of the life of the people. The signing of NAFTA and the repaying of the external were in part the final step that prompted to consolidate a neoliberal state. There was a crisis of the sovereignty of the nation-state. It was fissured, and subjected to international organs.

The crisis historically inherited in Latin American countries, and the debt regimes can certainly facilitate and more importantly “legitimate” (Sassen 87) the entrance of more dominant governments or powers, which fracture the sovereignty of a nation-state. This implicates the inability of the state to protect their people against the oppression of the policies of the transnational factories, and makes it difficult to contribute with the enhancement of opportunities, as it is proper of a welfare state. A mixture of now legitimate organs controls the nation-state: local and international dominant corporations, local and global elite classes, and

local and international forms of governments. They create a system of decentered power unable to be located, and therefore, making it close to impossible for any type of accountability. A government under a state of exception builds a foundation to maintain legitimacy within the acts of the neoliberal state, regardless of the true results. It focuses mainly on the needs of large and powerful corporations, putting aside the needs of the population. It allows for new forms of oppressions of the employees at the bottom of the ladder in the factories. The state of crisis is due to profound debt and the constant corruption of the leaders. These circumstances oblige the government to take austerity measures or cuts on welfare putting basic needs a state should provide aside. Priorities are re-accommodated to benefit the powerful corporations and the people responsible to run them as well as their owners.

The permitted deregulation allows for the reemergence of primitive forms of accumulation. Therefore, new forms of oppressions or contemporary ways of slavery develop. They adjust to the new forms of production. The *laissez faire* and deregulatory policies are originated and facilitated by combination of decision at the legislative level and complicity with the oligarchy and other powerful circles of the society. They will follow their own economic and political. The logic of the transnational corporations that arrived in Mexico in the early 1990s (and have continued to develop throughout the country) functions by redefining the sense of different concepts such as poverty, opportunity, employment, and employee among others. The arrival of NAFTA that evicted the people out of their land seeking for ways to survive changed the concept of poverty to owning a small piece of land or having a few animals to having nothing but their body to produce for someone else. Its dynamic is to disconnect their labor from the product (Sassen 221-2). People, especially from the rural areas, lost any chance to participate or compete within the market of international products. The most vulnerable were the most affected. This was the main cause of forced migration since the only choice was to become a part of the unending labor force of the international *maquilas* or any other transnational in the

northern part of the country. Regardless of the unfair and indecent conditions the assembly lines offered, these jobs were perceived as an opportunity to fight their hunger and poverty, and a possibility to move to the city where the advanced world was developing.

The logic of this industry and corporations is to offer part-time work at low wages and with few benefits. The legislators accommodate for laws in order to make the purchase of national land by foreigner a legal possibility, which besides contributing to the rupture of sovereignty of the nation-state, uproots peasants, who become evicted from their own land. If they can make it to a city, they will most likely "...find themselves living in crammed slums at the edges of large cities" (Sassen 82). These political decisions seem no different than Díaz economic policies during his time of tyranny and dictatorship. The allowance and preference to international intervention placed the country in a vulnerable position regarding the state's sovereignty. Mexicans continued serving foreign parties in their own land under more sophisticated forms of slavery.

## **NAFTA**

"NAFTA confirmed a transition that had been long underway, a transition toward a neoliberal present, the understanding of the decline of the national-popular state in favor of the understanding that 'the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of the market transactions' (Steinberg 269). In 1991 Mexico signed the NAFTA agreement with its northern neighbor countries, the United States and Canada. The majority of the population, mainly due to the euphoric discourse that had been previously and continuously spread and reinforced, received the agreement positively. It promised to bring advancement and development to the country, and of course more job opportunities.

The institution of the free trade agreement had different results for the Mexican cities situated in the northern border and their populations than for the US factories benefiting from

the global economy. As Karl Polanyi states, the word free degenerates also into the freedom for the factories only and people who need no more power or security. This, according to Polanyi, will then "...the fullness of freedom for those whose income, leisure and security need no enhancing, and a mere pittance of liberty for the people, who may in vain attempt to make use of their democratic rights to gain shelter from the power of the owners of the property..." (257). In this case, this could be translated also into the unprecedented waves of violence these cities are facing. The factories can act without any state regulation and therefore with the possibility to produce new forms of control and slavery such as subcontracts, or the avoidance of the employee benefits (Harvey, *Condition* 86). The arrival of the multinational factories brought with them the deskilling, and this division of labor, where no one produces a product contributed to the growth of the plebeianization in a global economy (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 146). This free market ideology, as Jameson states "has less to do with consumption than it has to do with the government intervention, and indeed with the evils of freedom and human nature itself" (*Postmodernism* 271). In these cities, a degeneration of this "freedom" and lack of state intervention, have made room for anarchy within the society as well as the creation new forms of crime and an intensification of violence. The outcomes of the Mexican Revolution ended a dictatorship only to move to an authoritarian single party government with a system of police whose foundation is on a permanent state of exception and was now turning into a neoliberal country. In all these forms of government, there was one constant: death and exclusion; as Jameson puts it, "...capitalism is at once and the same time the best thing that has ever happened to humanity and the worst" (*Postmodernism* 47). There seemed to be no strong opposition to it, but rather a positive welcome and acceptance due to the historical and political context. On top of these changes, the few positive aspects that were obtained with the revolution were being revoked to provide even more space for international power. Carlos Salinas de Gortari, former president of Mexico during the 1990s, passed a bill to eradicate the right of *ejido*, ending a legacy of justice the revolution had brought.

## Ejidos

In a neoliberal system “if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary” (Harvey, *The Brief 2*). This is precisely the ideology that former president Salinas de Gortari implemented when he made the agrarian reform. He decided to make lands available for the international market and justified his actions with a discourse of advancement.

The importance of the *ejido* and the reforms to the Mexican Constitution relies in its contexts. Jensen defines it as ‘the fruit of the revolution,’ perhaps the only one that provided well-being for its people and that became part of our legislation. Zapata, who is famous for his revolutionary motto “Land and Liberty”, initiated the fight for the *ejido*. This motto was translated as a protection to peasants, due to the conditions they were facing. The goal was to maintain the land for the people and to obtain protection from foreign investors or owners that had them oppressed in the past, or with extreme forms of taxation. Therefore, the *ejido* system terminated the feudal system and obtained this fundamental human right. Jensen thus notes, “agrarian reform, of which the *ejido* is the main theme, was born with violence and political animosity which in a measure continues today” (7). This reform was valuable for the people and written as a permanent right as it became part of the article 27 in the Mexican Constitution in 1917.

Regardless of the sovereign protection of the Mexican Constitution of 1917 Salinas de Gortari took a different road against the rights of the peasants. In 1991, the government passed a reform law that both permitted and encouraged privatization of the *ejido* lands, opening them up for foreign ownership, similar to the actions that had caused the Mexican Revolution in the first place. “[T]he *ejido* provided the basis of collective security among indigenous groups, the government was, in effect, divesting itself of its responsibilities to maintain that security”

(Harvey, *The Brief* 101). Neoliberalism was being built over and around the corpse of the ideals of the Mexican Revolution.

### **The logic of the *Maquilas***

The *maquilas*, or assembly lines, arrived under the perfect disguise. These transnational factories signified promises of modernity, and an entrance to the advanced world. These also meant the possibility of equality, justice and freedom that people had awaited since the Mexican Revolution. The vulnerability the people had been facing since the violent processes experienced from the time of their foundation; recalling the violence of colonization, the violence of independence, and the violence of revolution allowed for an urge to change, regardless of the effects and results. People were hungry for a dream that would enable them to change their circumstances. Citizens were tired of constant fighting and struggle, longing for stability in their lives and lands. The inherent factors that Mexicans had confronted, which had promoted fear, hunger and poverty allowed for the people to accept, unquestionably and in a euphoric manner the celebratory discourses of globalization and compulsive modernity. These ideas were mainly disseminated by the collusion of the media, and right wing politicians in power. The success of the president was not, as in prior times, equivalent to modern and technological advancements. After the early nineties, the popularity of the president was perceived according to the level of international relationships and entrance in the global world. This, people hoped, would finally bring them a variety of opportunities. Therefore, the arrival of transnational factories and the privatizations of companies in Mexico during the late eighties and early nineties represented a pass to the international world. Most of the assembly lines were indeed internationals, many from the advance world. Nonetheless, they created precisely a space, a postmodern space in the sense of coexistence of different worlds within one. There is a coexistence of the first and the third. The perpetuation of a third is to support the first with a mirage of inclusion and opportunity. Agamben and Esposito agree in their theory by stating that the system works by

the concept of inclusion/exclusion. The only inclusion of these historically marginal groups of peasants was in the way they were excluded.

The *maquila* system offered post-Fordism style jobs that consisted of repetitive movements, disconnection with the worker and product, subcontracting, and dehumanization. As Jameson puts it "...automation goes hand in hand with deskilling...with new and more rudimentary, plebeian forms of labor anyone can do..." (*Postmodernism* 146). In the other hand, it provided in part the sense of steadiness people were seeking in a long chaotic time. Therefore, the crisis Mexicans had been facing made it simpler for the interested groups of powers to implement policies that propitiated a rapid and easier acceptance of the new system of neoliberalism. Choices were never a reality; everything had already been premeditated and determined by the father sovereign, a state that legally unprotected their people.

The decision making of the destiny of the country was in the hands of the politicians, oligarchies and transnationals. They were interested in their own growth and their personal agendas. The government facilitated their establishment by intervening less in favor of the workers and dismissing possible obstacles such as taxation. They implemented deregulatory policies rather than labor laws to protect the workers. Laws benefitted the owners and powerful leaders of these enterprises. All government spheres provide them full support usually in exchange of economic means to maintain political power. Albeit they were indeed bringing jobs in a land of hunger, the complexity of their offers served the production of wealth only for select circles only, while leaving others with the belief of an opportunity but vulnerable and reducing their life value to pure labor.

The vicious cycle of production of poverty was not reduced but strengthened with these forms of production. Workers remain in the exacerbated army of laborers for the rest of their lives, with wages that will make it impossible to resign or resist an unbreakable system; feeding

the system to perpetuate their own generational poverty. The uncontrolled waves of migration produced a rapid and unplanned urbanization. This compulsive modernity contributed to the increase in crime, femicides, poverty, and the precarization of life in a modern context. The system reduces life to “bare life, that is, the life of *homo sacer* (sacred man), who may be killed and yet not sacrificed” (Agamben, *Homo* 8). This dynamic has created precisely a break up or an undoing of the community itself. The system segregates a specific group of individuals that are never able to function or to fully interact within the community due to their lack of economic power. Zigmun Bauman calls them the waste of globalization. They are the part that constitutes the other side of modernity. If it is true they do contribute to the growth of the wealth of others, they are far from leaving their socioeconomic status and obtaining the equality the Mexican Revolution once promised. The equality and justice for the subalterns in Mexico appears to have shifted regions, as most of the migrants who lived in rural areas, most of these indigenous people with dreams of equality, as well as women, have been forced to migrate to the outskirts of the cities with the dream of becoming city people and the opportunity to work in one of these assembly lines, never considering the reality the system has to offer them; no possibility whatsoever.

The *laissez-faire* system of factories governed by post-Fordism also often leaves the workers in position of disadvantage before the law. The reduction of hours, subcontracting and enormous number of workers waiting for a job fosters a wider gap of abuse on behalf of the assembly lines, leaving the already uprooted migrants in an even worse circumstance. The desperation and hunger lets them settle for these conditions. Rights and benefits for employees seem to be absent and the reality they face is a total dehumanization and fragmentation of their lives in every sense.

The crisis historically repeated in Latin American countries, and the debt regimes can certainly facilitate and more importantly “legitimate” (Sassen 87) the entrance of more dominant

governments or forms of powers. This is the fracture of the sovereignty of a nation-state promoting an even smoother transition to a neoliberal state. A mixture of now legitimate organs controls the nation-state: local and international dominant corporations, local and global elite classes, and local and international forms of governments. They create a system of decentered power unable to be located, and therefore, making it close to impossible for any type of accountability. The local government has an essential role in the process of maintaining legitimacy within the acts of the neoliberal state, regardless of the true results. It focuses mainly in the needs of large and powerful corporations, putting aside the needs of the population.

These processes of uneven development and compulsive modernization are transforming the dynamics of the community and the social tissue. Mexico City, for example, went from being one of the most tranquil cities to one of the most violent of the world, after the government was forced to cut on internal welfare to repay the external debt (Harvey, *A brief* 100). Although free market, and treaties such as NAFTA offer to open job opportunities, these policies exclude people from the society. “[T]his waste” as Bauman calls them are “...unable to find a gainful employment” (37). The job options are reduced to becoming a part time employee of a factory, participate in any informal business as street vendors and the like or join organized crime. The people, who are excluded from the society, are a result of what Sassen calls, “new logics of exclusion” inherent to the neoliberal state. She explains this phenomenon as beyond simply more inequality and poverty but “... more accurately described as a type of exclusion” (15). Bauman also calls them “flawed consumers” (39) since they can’t be a part of the consumer market, so they are forced to live in exclusion from the community. The change in the modes of production reduces citizens to having nothing but their bodies. It converts them into pure labor. It reduces them to bare life. Nevertheless, it is bare life that constitutes the body of the society. The body is now what becomes at stake and must be the very form of profit to sustain the system. Thus, sovereignty of the nation-state is in crisis, the ‘Empire’ that assumes

it is able then to decide on the value of the body. The incorporation of the body into the politic makes "...the corpus... the new subject of the politics" (Agamben, *Homo* 124), a biopolitical government.

The new forms of the extraction of value, and the changes in the patterns of accumulation have prompted for new dynamics in the politics of the state. The inability to hold someone accountable for the violence shows the ability of the state to suspend its law through a state of exception, defined by Agamben as "...a zone of indistinguishability between law and life..." (*State*, 59); he also explains it as "...not the chaos that precedes order but rather the situation that results from its suspension" (*State*, 18). This is the political current life of Mexico. It is what produces a strong liaison of law and anomie where the inhabitants of many Latin American countries are forced to live. That is how the juridical political order functions, by "a structure of inclusion of what is simultaneously pushed outside" (Agamben, *Homo* 18).

The methods of disconnection among the product, the producer, and buyer as well as the fallacy of freedom serve the ideology of a neoliberal market well. They help conceal the dark side of globalization. People are forced to live in marginal ways in different aspects of their lives. The legitimization of a neoliberal state enables the system to continue to foster a division of labor and the production of more *homine sacri* (Agamben) whose only space available for them to inhabit is the anomic state. Life itself in capitalism becomes a source of profit (Marazzi 39). It is through and from the social body that the system gains the profit to perpetuate an uneven modern and developed life.

In addition to the inequity of classes and races, the patriarchal traditions of Latin American countries have widened the gap for women's oppression. The regular practices that have maintained women in lower hierarchical positions in the structure of the society have been supplemented by the neoliberal practices, which have made women victims of yet more

subjugation and violence. Violence inflicted on women remains under the shade of impunity. The victims of these systematic killings, such as the femicides follow a pattern of women with the same physical characteristics; *Las morenitas*<sup>9</sup>, (Bowden) young women, and *maquiladora* workers, with indigenous features. These women represent the bare life of the society; they suffer oppression, and the double discrimination of women, by men and capitalism (Moufle 142). The strong patriarchal cultural heritage and gender inequality, and the complicity of the state, allow for these crimes to remain unpunished. Workers are forced to work under conditions that will endanger their health, whether physical, emotional or psychological. However, women are put in a position of double discrimination within a system that will make them disposable workers. In addition, in a patriarchal structure, women are oppressed by males in the society and their male supervisors, and trapped in a culture against them. As González describes, women are often victims of sexual harassment, but they are also exposed to severe and diverse forms of exploitation (31). This patriarchal culture facilitated the entrance of neoliberal practices that were inherent to the *maquiladoras*, for example, which mainly hire women workers because of their tradition of natural submission and obedience to males (Harvey, *Condition* 152).

The double side of modernity and the “illusion” (Althusser) of freedom of women to work and access equity also brought with it a rearticulation of the cultural codes of the society, principally in the borders of Mexico. González illustrates the negative freedoms addressed previously. Males in a traditional society “unleash” anger for the ability of women to finally being able to join the work force (34). The femicides occurring in Juárez correspond precisely to the same intensification of violence that is being inscribed in most bodies. Although it is certain that the femicides are the expression of misogyny (Valenzuela, *Sed* 52), the crimes against the women in Juárez are not just a result of a patriarchal society, but to its complicity with a system that first reduces these women to bare life, and expels them to an anomic space where their

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<sup>9</sup> The dark ones

assassination does not constitute a crime. The violence inscribed in the bodies of the victims, whether women or *homo sacer*, becomes relevant to emphasize the Foucauldian precept of a birth of biopolitics and the inscription of violence in the body, the body as canvas on which to inscribe violence. In a class and patriarchal society, women are easy targets of the violence of the neoliberal contemporary processes.

### **Violence as an Inherent Part of the Logics of the System**

Violence in Latin America has always been present, Agamben states that "... violence that posits law, [and] violence [also] preserves it" (*Homo* 63). The colonizers, for instance, began their process of "civilizing" the colonized world with strategic plans that were far from hegemonic practices. The forms used by the colonizers to achieve full submission of the people of the new world were full of fear and violence. The violent practices carried out by the conquerors were ways that were constantly renewed to oppress and dehumanize the population of the colonized world. Nevertheless, the conquest through violence of the Latin American countries was justified by the spread of Christianity. Then again, the history of the bloody conquest was forced to fit a narrative with the result of a new civilization formed under a traditional western philosophy. The process of violence in Latin America has been continuous. Violence was the means to acquire independence, and violence was the means to perpetuate a system that would benefit the few elite in power and oppress the majority. Diverse types of dictatorships emerged to preserve control over the population, mainly in the south cone, consequently different forms of violence, riots, protests, civil wars and revolutions were present to overthrow dictators while hoping to move towards more democratic governments as in the case of Tlatelolco. The processes of pacification through militarism and violence Latin America went through during the 1960s marked a new period. A new beginning and a whole era of politics and economics followed. However, the violence that continued in this period, as

Agamben argues, "...neither preserves nor simply posits the law, but rather conserves it in suspending it and posits it in excepting itself from it" (*Homo* 64).

The arrival of neoliberalism with the word "liberal" in it sounded promising. However, "[g]reater freedom and liberty of action in the labor could be touted as a virtue for capital and labor alike, and here, too, it was not hard to integrate neoliberal values into the 'common sense' of much of the workforce" (Harvey, *The Brief* 53). Nonetheless, these practices of freedom were only applied to restrain any state intervention or regulatory practices, a *laissez faire* idea for the enterprises that would empower only capitalist investors. As Karl Polanyi states, this freedom "...degenerates into a mere advocacy of free enterprise"; Polanyi explains the neoliberal forms of freedom as the ability "... to exploit one's fellows... to make inordinate gains without commensurable service to the community... to keep technological inventions from being used for public benefit, or ... to profit from public calamities secretly engineered for private advantage" (256-8).

The society becomes unified, when legally regulated, by the principle of separation (Esposito, *Immunitas* 41). It is a system of inclusion/exclusion. Lives are included but simultaneously excluded. By extracting the mere value of determined bodies, they feed and become excess of a system. The bare lives produced by the system find themselves living in an anomic space, where the law has been suspended in a state of exception. They are extracted from their rights and juridical protection. The violence done to these humans, which goes unnoticed but unsanctioned becomes an inherent part of the experiences of the excluded of the system. However, the inhabitants internalize this negative freedom of the system. It transforms it into a system that in order to preserve the lives of its people it becomes necessary to deny life itself to the fullest (Esposito, *Immunitas* 51), reducing the citizens to bare life.

## State of Exception, Militarization, Pacification and a Parallel State

The circumstances or damage caused by the neoliberal state make it appear imperative to institutionalize an urgent form of protection. In a neoliberal state, “[t]he state...must also set up those military, defence, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets (Hervey, *The brief* 2). The problems are addressed by perpetuating precisely what is destroying the community (Esposito). The need for police is accepted out of constant fear and for the need of peace, in agreement to what Foucault had suggested in a society of a “...carceral network... with its systems of insertion, distribution, surveillance, observation, has been the greatest support, in modern society, of the normalizing power” (Foucault, *Discipline* 236). Perhaps it is precisely the form of what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call “Empire”, due to its capacity to present itself as needed. In this context, it seems pertinent to include Gareth Williams’ definition of biopolitical, as “...the regime of truth that potentializes the capitalists’ modes of production via the principle of self-limitation of government” (*The Mexican Exception* 10). The disciplinary government has appropriated the right to control the body.

The logic of this form of politics or biopolitic, has enabled and legitimized a direct jurisdiction over life, over the body, over the body of the community. As result, the system constitutes itself in its ability to legitimately exclude, and abandon some who are pushed to live where the law becomes suspended. Those reduced to bare life are expelled to inhabit at the margins of the law, where their only relation to “the political order [is] in being exposed to an unconditional capacity to be killed” (Agamben, *Homo* 85). The state has chosen to prioritize the rights of large corporations while abandoning others, literally banned from the law, allowing for a direct power of the state over their bodies, fostering biopolitical practices to control the society. However, as Agamben extends on this method of control, and in addition to the power of the state, the system determines who has value and who are the *homine sacri* of the society.

The constant suspension of the law becomes the common rule, and the state of exception created by the state itself gives the possibility of a dangerous anomic sphere where “the law is in force but does not signify” (Agamben, *Homo* 51). Violence adjusts itself to the processes of compulsive modernization. The violence no longer responds to any type or desire to reappropriate the nation-state, or a simple criminal isolated activity. Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott explains it in the following words:

The standardized colonial, state, and counter state forms of violence have not disappeared completely, but they have reaccommodated to a general change of the society related to a process of globalization and with the transformations of the pattern of accumulation of capitalism... (*Modernidad* 3).

The transition to a neoliberal state prompts for a sudden change in the social tissue of Latin America, the state of free market releases with it the necessity of the population to readjust to the new system. The kind of violence Latin America experiences after the formation of a neoliberal state certainly does not obey the same partisan causes as it had in the past, but it is inherent to the compulsive processes of modernization. Violence has evolved and readjusted to the system. According to Harvey this “...anarchy of the market...generates a situation that becomes increasingly ungovernable. It may even lead to a breakdown of all bonds of solidarity and a condition verging of social anarchy and nihilism” (*The Brief* 82), and there might appear to be a need for militarization according to some neoconservatives.

The new forms of the extraction of value, and the changes in the patterns of accumulation have prompted for new dynamics in the politics of the state, as the neoliberal system implemented requires a complex and decentered system unable to be located. Both, the inability to hold someone accountable for the violence and the ability of the state to suspend its law through a state of exception, produce a strong liaison of law and anomie the mechanism of inclusion-exclusion Esposito exposes. In the fragmentation of the state inequality does not completely nor accurately describes the repercussion of this matter in the undoing of the

community. The consequences reside in the capacity of the state to suspend the law completely leaving legally unprotected some of the citizens. As the sovereignty is fractured, there is room for an emergence of what Segato calls a “parallel” state which for this negative state to subsist, there must be first the possibility of the state to suspend itself, and when the state “...becomes null, then the juridical-political system transforms itself into a killing machine” (Agamben, *State* 86).

The emergence of these two asymmetric states allows for the minimum regulatory practices for the big enterprises and illusory freedom of choice. The practices of the precarization of life through post-Fordism done by the ideology of neoliberalism, the production of bare life it has created, and with it the intensification and metamorphosis of violence have facilitated the entrance of fear. This fear of knowing the possibility of being expelled completely of the society, or of becoming a victim of an unpunished crime, already makes the population *homine sacri*, as anyone could be killed with impunity. This fear of being the one reiterates Esposito’s understanding of living under the precepts of *immunitas*, in a stage where power has become self-referent. Violence is naturalized and internalized as a normal form of life. It is in such way that the system can include the very undesired elements that conform it.

The necessity of protection, to be “immune” of what is outside is what makes the ‘Empire’ seem necessary “...to present force as being in the service of right and peace” (Hardt and Negri 15). It is in this manner that, where the political has entered life itself, how the biopolitical takes control over the individuals of a society. And although the intervention of a repressive biopower appears to be the solution for the chaos lived in many of these places.

## **Conclusion**

The conversion of Mexico to a neoliberal country has been a constant and gradual process. However, the reality is that the discourse of advancement translates into catastrophe

for a majority and advancement for few. Currently, the country reached a stage which principal foundation for its community is the opposite concept of immunity, the separation of itself, its undoing. The evolving and transformation to a neoliberal country has worked by the inclusion of violence while expulsing, and excluding others from the land and the law. However, the legal, economic and political systems as well as other ideological state apparatus have all colluded and readjusted to continue to develop these modern forms of oppression. Mexico has certainly undergone a transition from feudalism to industrialization, and later on internationalization. Nevertheless, this transition to modernity and posteriorly to the postmodern (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 157) has always been unfair and uneven in Mexico.

The forms of power, even though they have changed, have not eradicated inequality but developed legitimate forms to perpetuate it. The processes of modernization have continued to produce “uneven development of late capitalism whose first world produces a third world within itself by its own inner dynamics” (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 159). Mexico’s case demonstrates the ability of the system to adjust and incorporate different forms of power to benefit an elite circle and finally become a biopolitical government, making life and letting live (Foucault, *Society* 241). The war of the Mexican Revolution served as a solid foundation to legitimize a legal and political system that has maintained a permanent state of exception, which is necessary to implement a government of police. This system of police has been successful in repressing true politics and democracy among the citizens.

Modernization and the incorporation of Mexico into the global system of the transnational companies are a form of progress for the country, but they have also brought death and violence. Mexico has become a society that has a rupture in its social tissue. The crisis of its social contract is visible in its body, the social body, where violence and death are being inscribed every day. The bare life, and its proliferation is not a consequence of neoliberalism; it is its core. At the same time, the current case of the waves of violence in Mexico disrupts the

narrative of the state of peace and stability. They question the discourse of progress and international advancement. The violence makes evident and visible a system that produces death, but finally it exposes completely the corpse of the Mexican Revolution.

### III. The Corpse of the State

As discussed in the previous chapter, the shift to a neoliberal economic system in Mexico has been accompanied by considerable violence, especially in the northern states bordering on the U.S. A number of literary and cultural texts have addressed this situation, though it is not immediately clear whether these texts can function as an effective subversive challenge to the *status quo* or whether they simply perpetuate the prevailing system, either by subtly conveying its ideology or by acting as an escape from its reality. In particular, one needs to ask whether literature and other cultural texts are still able to offer the community an ability to rewrite their own history by providing a magical and comprehensive narrative in a fragmented society, or if such texts merely contribute to the hegemony of the state.

Mexico's political situation has reached a point where crime is not outside the state apparatus, but it is embedded within it. The heads of the cartels are no longer a separate group of criminals operating solely apart from the legal order, but are now in the government and vice versa. Contemporary literary and cultural texts are produced in this socio-historical context, a context in which the political and the criminal are inextricably intermingled. The state has been transformed into a killing machine, and the death has become part of everyday life. It has become a culture, the *narco*<sup>10</sup> culture. This culture has been portrayed in such texts as the novels: *Perra brava* (2010) by Orfa Alarcón and *Trabajos del reino* (2003), by Yuri Herrera. These texts invite us to rethink the place of the aesthetics in a country in which two states operate, the legal and the illegal. These literary creations take place in a determined political context of crisis of the social contract, where death comes directly and indirectly from the state. Other cultural texts also portray the *narco* as a cultural commodity, including *narco* soap operas and *narco corridos*.

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<sup>10</sup> Narcos are the Heads of the drug cartels, or anyone involved in the drug business.

The current high level of violence and crime in Mexico has become a globally known topic. Violence has mainly intensified in the northern and border area of the country. Some of these cities had experienced it since the beginning of the nineties, others at the beginning of 2007. However, the highest rate occurred between 2008 and 2011. During these times the statistics were elevated to 24 homicides for every 100.000 citizens (Bataillon). According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) there were 20,525 homicides in 2015 (INEGI.org).

After seventy-seven years of the single party government, and its authoritarian system, the people of Mexico were ready for a change. Nevertheless, the changes of government since the arrival of Vicente Fox in 2000 did not reach up to the expectations people were envisioning. President Fox represented hope and a possible change in direction for Mexico. At the beginning, he seemed unlike the other stereotypical candidates and presidents, especially given that he was the first opposition party candidate to be elected president since 1910. It only took simple changes and good marketing of his image to make him look very different to the eyes of masses. The common people easily perceived these changes. These differences he portrayed, although not very significant, were of high impact in his political campaign. For instance, when he addressed the people he used a more colloquial language, often utilizing slang or popular words. He tried to identify with farmers or people from rural places. He also dressed more informally than traditional candidates, often appearing with rolled sleeves, boots, hat and a belt buckle to affect a rural look. He tried to stay away from the typical idea of the distant politicians Mexicans recognized; he became “the right-wing cowboy” (Berman). He filled the meetings everywhere he went and seemed to have a natural connection with the rural and most of his audience when he campaigned. Therefore, the discourse of the PAN as a minority party did not function any longer for the PRI (Borjas 108). His ability to communicate with the people who had always been marginalized was key in his campaign and a factor of major “allusion-illusion”

for the voting community. In other words, there is an allusion to reality and an illusion that the situation is different to what it is what it would be, such “ideology from the perspective to the relation to the real” (Althusser 304). On the other hand, Fox had been in the private sector as an executive of Coca Cola in Mexico (Fox.presidencia.gob.mx). His experience in the private industry provided him with a solid relationship and access to businessmen. Fox expressed during an interview his experience in the field. He stated, “[W]orking at Coca-Cola was my second university education. I learned that the heart of a business is out in the field, not in the office. I learned strategy, marketing, financial management, optimization of resources (Dillon).

Fox’s provincial image suggested possible political change. His successful campaign consisted of a mixture of factors that took place in the right political moment. His success was strengthened by his ability to reach and connect to several types of audiences. The youth was also a major factor, as his triumph was perceived as promising change and a better future. Therefore, as it was highly expected, on July second of the new millennial Fox won the elections, changing the ruling party for the first time since the end of the Mexican Revolution. Again, many people had hope for more opportunities of equality and inclusion. People from rural areas were expecting attention to the peasant sector, as a huge part of the campaign was targeted towards this sector. The summer of 2000 brought enthusiasm for a new situation and reinforced the idea of victory over a system of oppression and corruption. For the first time in many years there was a common genuine goal from the presidential candidate and the people. Everyone wanted to defeat the PRI. The change had been possible and people expected a true democracy. However, the reality was far different from those dreams. Fox continued the policies of former presidents of the PRI, and the country was highly disappointed. His cabinet was formed not only by members and icons of the former system, but from people who had proven to go against human rights and others who had been involved in different illicit activities

(Hernández 3226-3231)<sup>11</sup>. At the end of the term, Mexico found itself not just affected by a bigger crisis, but also as a hopeless country. The patience of the people in Mexico was not as tolerant as it had been with the more than seventy years for the PRI. Therefore, the successor for presidential candidacy of the PAN, Felipe Calderón, did not have an easy election, even though he had the support of the party in power. The elections of 2006 had a turn as the people seemed to be leaning towards a third choice, the left-leaning Party of the Democratic Revolution, led by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who was a former active member of the PRI (1970-1989). His popularity grew as people were tired and disenchanted by the right-wing parties. Nevertheless, Calderón ended up being the winner of the presidential election. The results were not easily accepted, as Calderón was ahead with only .05 percent of the majority of the votes (Trife.gob.mx). This close election was nationally evident with the violence during the presidential swearing-in inside the legislative palace in 2006. After this beginning, President Calderón had the need to legitimize himself as the head of state (Bowden).

### **Parallel state/Crisis of the Sovereign**

The corruption in Mexico and the reduction of state intervention in favor of the country have gradually contributed to a crisis of the state and its sovereignty. This crisis that the state itself created has made a rupture or fissure in the state apparatus. "Since the end of the Institutional Party's (PRI) domination in the 2000 presidential election, Mexico has become a particularly significant arena for reconsideration of the mere fact of sovereignty" (Williams, *The Mexican Exception 2*). In a way, the legal frames have been bending their limits to allow for the constant corruption and illicit remuneration of government members in complicity with powerful circles, whether from the big companies or the heads of the cartels. This complicity also made allowed for an implicit compromise or contract to rule since they have power of decision making over the

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<sup>11</sup> Such as Eduardo Medina Mora, Jorge Enrique Tello Peón, Enrique Pérez Rodríguez, Leonardo Beltrán Santana, Luis Francisco Ruíz (Hernández 3226-3231).

acts of the state. The Mexican state has not been able to protect its people, to grant them security, or provide them basic needs such as decent labor, healthcare, or education. The community has suffered consequences that have negatively affected the social tissue, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, the fact is that the modes of production have been transformed by the multinational era. This has also led to a change in the violence and forms of crime. Mexico has transitioned from the era where “war is not against drugs but for drugs” as a type of business and power (Bowden). The business of what is illicit, drug trafficking, different ways of kidnapping and piracy, for instance, has become part of the platform for the functioning of the state. The limits of the licit and illicit are vague in practice regardless of the law, as the theory does not align to the practice, or worse, the law has the ability to suspend itself against its own citizens (Agamben, *State of*). The drug trafficking and illegal business have evolved into the mode of production that reflects the era of a multinational business, “the neoliberalization of the *narco*”. Bowden calls them “the good old days” when referring to Juarez, for example, when only two or three hundred people died each year (Bowden 10). According to the journalist Anabel Hernández, the levels of corruption in Mexico are very high, and the collusion of important politicians with heads of the cartels has a historical past. Their groups of decision-making in the state are conformed now by an elite group of politicians, businessmen and head of the cartels. However, these tasks are not limited to one group; they can perform one or all the jobs mentioned. The truth is that what is constantly growing is not the welfare of the state, but the level of impunity. The journalist also adds that the violence has become more acute because the government has taken sides and decided to protect one of the cartels against their other rivals. They have concluded it would be easier to negotiate with one than all of them and have allowed a single cartel with the ability to put the rest in order (Hernández 135-140). Therefore, the war of Mexico wasn’t against the cartels but against the ones opposed to the one that the government protected. The relationship between *narcos* and the government changed forever after the term of Vicente Fox. According to Hernández one of the most important capos

of history, Joaquín Guzmán Loera, has had the unconditional protection of Vicente Fox and his family. It is because of him and the millions of dollars that the presidential family received as a bribe that allowed the head of the cartel to escape jail. The agreement also included systemic protection from the federal government for him and his organization, the almighty organization of the Pacific (Hernández 90-96). As the corruption grew inside the government, more politicians and public servants became employees of the drug dealers and their armed forces. Powerful *narcos* do not have to hide anymore; they can be anywhere and anyone because the government and the organized crime are interrelated and interdependent, but worst of all indistinguishable. Bowden describes this situation with the following example: "You might be a DEA agent, but you'll have a brother who has a nightclub bankrolled by people from this other world or you'll have a sister who marries a guy who works for a cartel" (80). This is what Valenzuela calls an adulterated state. It is adulterated since "there is complicity of the governmental organs and the organized crime, allowing for impunity and the perpetuation of crimes" (Valenzuela, *Sed* 181)<sup>12</sup>. The *narcos* have moved into power and decision making in elite circles. These sophisticated adjustments in crime within the government reflect the changes of the modes of production. The *narco* has also undergone a kind of professionalization more *a doc* to current economic policies. Anabel Hernández states that she could obtain documents from the CIA and DEA about the Irán-Contra case. She indicates that this was the detonator for the Mexican *narcos* to go from being simple marijuana farmers to becoming sophisticated cocaine and synthetic drug traffickers. She states that she has rescued archives from the PGR about important businessmen that kept their airplanes in the place of known *narcos* such as El Chapo Guzmán, Amado Carrillo Fuentes, and Héctor El Güero Palma at the beginning of 1990. Nowadays those men are owners of hotel chains, hospitals, newspapers, and similar influential business (Hernández 111-118). The state does not act to

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<sup>12</sup> Translation mine

prevent crime, but instead serves as a criminal apparatus. It serves as a platform for the organized crime to work as an alternate system, as an alternate state. The state in Mexico is corrupted with organized criminals who are part of the government and vice versa. As Bowden states: "no one really knows who the bad people are" (Bowden 8). They both conform the actual state.

*Trabajos del reino* by Yuri Herrera and *Perra brava* by Orfa Alarcón are written under a context of a state whose sovereignty has been broken. They both unfold in a broken society where people are craving to understand the violence in their everyday life. The novels present a scenario in the northern part of the country, in the land in between two juridical systems. Everything has become uncertain, and the law is not on any written code made by legislators, but it is proclaimed and executed by whoever is able to have the monopoly over violence. The novels present a state that is governed now by heads of the cartels, the organized crime and the government. They certainly reflect the impact of the *narco* in the society. The question is whether these texts are naturalizing the violence, providing a narrative alone with a liberating romantic end, or making noise and still challenging in a subversive way the *status quo* of the system, making evident the emergence of the parallel state in Mexico. These novels present us with a scenario of the dichotomy of two worlds that are interconnected. The two states have grown into a codependency, each unable to stand without the other. The reader can understand, by the metaphors or symbolism, a state that is not just infested with corruption and endless ambition, but a state that is formed and influenced by different powers and two different sides. These novels portrayed a fragmented government, which is leading to a constant confusion of its people and tremendous inability of its residents to make sense of a broken state. In a country in which paternalism has been a form of government it becomes nearly impossible to develop effective ways to oppose the illegality of some of the actions of the government. Submission, or acceptance of the decision of the paternal government, is the

more common reaction, although it is precisely the different and subtle forms of subversion that emerge in the novels. The authors present us with characters that portray the impossibility of taking a definite side, in a romantic way, either the good or the evil. They must remain in an ambiguous area. The goals of the characters are to survive, to preserve life rather than intensify it (Esposito, *Immunitas* 43). They understand the dynamics of the law outside the law, and that the rules in the two worlds are linked by violence itself. As per Benjamin Walter's understanding all violence is, as a mean, power to establish and maintain authority, then it becomes the law (15)<sup>13</sup>. They situate the mutation of the violence into a professionalized and organized crime.

Both novels, *Trabajos del Reino* and *Perra Brava*, include in their narratives the role of the aesthetics. They both present the ambiguous place of literature and popular art. *Perra Brava's* main character Fernanda is a drop out student of Literature and Philosophy. This could be interpreted as the inability of the humanities to provide an escape to the continuous state of crisis. In the other hand, the artist, Lobo, is a *narco* corridor writer. He can use his lyrics to make *narcos* powerful or destroy them through the force of his words. There is an obvious tension between literature and the state, tension with the ability of literature to make sense in a violent environment facing compulsive forms of modernization. They allow the perception of a pessimistic approach of possibility for literature to continue to be a subversive form against the state, as the characters cannot use it, neither to make sense of the context nor to fight it. This is where the discussion continues, whether literature has turned into a commodity as well, managing to preserve its life in the in and out of a system. This is precisely the main allegory of the main characters of these novels. They have in common the use of letters, literature, philosophy, and popular art as a possible way of life. However, it is impossible for them to subsist without moving back and forth into the licit and illicit, into the parallel state. A certain

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<sup>13</sup> "...toda violencia es, como medio, poder que establece y mantiene el derecho" Translation mine (Walter 15).

type of complicity is implied, a complicity of the characters, and everything that represents the work of the aesthetics and the dissidence within the system. They too have to develop an interdependent relationship with the system in order to subsist. The question remains, whether the power of aesthetics is still subversive in anything at all, and able to create forms of resistance.

The novel *Perra Brava*, by Orfa Alarcón, takes place in the city of Monterrey, located in the northern part of the country about two hours away from the border. This is a large city with about six million people, the icon of the prosperous industrial world of Mexico. It has recently gained the attention of the media and the news because of the unexpected waves of violence the city has encountered. "The entire Mexican north has become a killing field" (Bowden 18). The novel revolves around the life of Fernanda, a young girl who is a victim of the class and patriarchal system. Fernanda embodies the life of a disposable human, a wasted life. The author begins the novel in rural area of the northern state. As the plot develops the novel presents to us the transition of the economic system in the country. The change from Keynesianism, liberalism to neoliberalism and how the lives of the citizens, mainly of the northern states is affected. The situation existent in the northern border of Mexico after the early nineties depicts "...the move from Keynesianism to the global, era of privatizations, deregulation, and open borders from some, entailed a switch from dynamics that brought people into dynamics that push people out" (Sassen 211). Fernanda's family, as most families in the rural areas of the country, does not have the ability to subsist in such small towns anymore. Therefore, they migrate to the bigger cities. They represent those who are evicted and uprooted from their lands and hometowns because they are unable to compete with the bigger producers. They must migrate, not in order to seek better opportunities, but because it is the only opportunity left to try to save their lives before they starve. The waves of migration from the rural to the outskirts of the cities affect the lives of Fernanda and her family. She moves from a

small rural town to live in one of the poorest and most dangerous areas of the city. The author references the name of a known conflictive zone in the city: "*La moderna*". This area, like many others, reflects the aftermath of the unplanned growing of the city as well as the other side of modernization. Such areas do not have access to main services such as public lighting, water, trash collection, and the like. In other words, these areas offer what the postmodern world offers men according to Rosenberg: "everything or nothing" (3). Crime is a common denominator in the everyday life of people living in these areas. Often police will not go in there, as it is known that different gangs or criminal groups govern these places. Most of the time, crime here remains unpunished and the law is not guaranteed to protect the residents in these areas. These aspects are causing poverty, marginalization, and a scarce quality of life (González 8).

The author uses these specific different scenarios to depict the way in which the legal system and the state truly work in Mexico. The constitutional individual guarantees that are intended to protect the basic rights of the citizens do not apply to everyone in practice, and are dependent on the area where the constitutional law is or is not executed. The sovereignty of the Constitution and the state is threatened (as Roberto Esposito explains), due to the violence but not for the violence itself but because of its location. The violence that the country is facing is located outside of the legal parameter. Therefore, it is sufficient to change the location of violence from the inside to the outside. This does not only put the state and the parallel state into tension as two forces, but much worse, they both end up coinciding as one (*Immunitas* 47). The author utilizes the border as their main scenario to provide an imagery of the geographic limits to make a point of the selectiveness of the protection of the law, to highlight its ambiguity and its ability to suspend itself in specific places and for different people. Through the novel, it becomes obvious that the law and mainly the individual guarantees that were created to protect the people are not exactly the same for everyone. Thus, the reader can assume and visualize not just an ambiguous legal system, but also a different order that operates within itself, and

under the protection of the theoretical law. Therefore, it could be then referring to a legal and paralegal system, the state and the parallel state that work together to maintain the power in specific groups. The different location from where the law operates indicates its legality or illegality but brings the same consequences of protection, abandonment or empowerment. Other powerful groups, outside the state, such as corrupt officials or cartel members, or any other criminals, are entitled by a general understanding to execute their own order to certain people in certain places. They aim to maintain the power in specific circles and perpetuate a system that will continue to profit on bare lives. Fernanda throughout the course of the story moves physically back and forth into these areas. There is evidently no place for her, or for people such as herself. She is invisible to the state, invisible to the law. She represents one of the many migrants to bigger cities where they are nothing but *homo sacer*, “[e]very society... decides who its sacred men will be” (Agamben, *Homo* 139). She leaves her rural life, as this is no longer a way of life. Her life changes with the modes of production; and she moves to the industrial city. The life in the farm is abandoned as the production is disconnected from the product and the forms of labor become more and more post fordist style and dehumanized. Two women, Fernanda and her sister, are now expected to face the unknown world of the bigger city with the only resource they have: their labor force. Once they are part of the source of profit of the system they both chose different ways. Both sisters live in a violent world, and violence becomes a way of life, the only way of life. However, as Fernanda gets involved with her new boyfriend, the head of a cartel, she starts to immerse herself into a parallel law order, a different system that she rapidly learns to survive and stay alive outside the law. Her family represents the personification of the wasted and disposable lives that constitute the processes of compulsive modernization. Like many other women in the country, she is a victim of the patriarchal system. First, she grows up with a father who constantly inflicts violence on her. As many other women in Mexico, she grows up believing a patriarchal ideology that will keep women submissive and at a complete disadvantage in the culture. Women such as Fernanda

and her sister face a world of expectations, different than those of a man. She discusses the story of submission she first had while living with her father and then moves on to a boyfriend that will own her life as well. Julio, in *Perra Brava* is the allegory of the sovereign power, the state. This role seems to be exclusively for the males, as the sovereign in Fernanda's world was incarnated previously by his father. They are both allegories for a paternal government in that they act as providers, but the needs are created by the ideology in the culture. This is how people are subjected to these forms of oppression, based on class and gender. The moving of Fernanda physically represents on one side the exclusiveness of the legal, constitutional system to certain areas. There are places where the law is only a vague concept and people develop and follow a different order. Fernanda's family is first expelled from their origin and land to join a city that is not prepared to welcome them. They live in one of the poorest and most unsafe areas of the state. However eventually, as she becomes more involved with the cartels, and understands the parallel system that rules outside the juridical constitutional frame, she can live in one of the wealthiest areas in Monterrey. Fernanda's physical moving to Julio's place ironically represents protection and safety, even though they act outside the legal frame. Having both orders of the law on her side here, she is no longer invisible in these areas. It is at this point when violence takes its own character, as it is only through its understanding, and internalization that Fernanda is able to feel like a person with choices, independence, protection and freedom. She becomes powerful through violence. The law is not the same for all; it is not applicable to everyone. It is a relative and deficient legal system that has developed a pathological codependency with crime, the parallel state. The law, as it is depicted in the novel, is selective to geographical areas and consequently to certain people. Fernanda, for instance, rapidly realizes she is always protected where she is with Julio. He represents the almighty that

is the law outside the law. “Julio was above me, and above him there was no law” (Alarcón p.88).<sup>14</sup>

As women, both sisters are not just victims of the unplanned and compulsive processes of modernization, but they are also affected by the patriarchal system in the country. Since they were kids, they had been raised with the mentality to accept a submissive life as they are inflicted with violence by the very own hands of their father. As they arrive to the city, the sisters take different paths. However, they are not able to immediately forego their pasts, and they both remain victims for a while. Julio, the head of a powerful cartel, is violent and abusive with Fernanda, just as her father was. Therefore, there is nothing abnormal with this situation for her. It is simply a pattern, often viewed as repetitive to many of the victims in these types of societies. The ideology is based on precisely that: women are expected to meet the standards of a subjective gender role to perpetuate a patriarchal system that keeps women doing their expected task to benefit males. Nevertheless, although she starts as a submissive young girl who is in love and expecting to have a male by her side, violence is a factor of impact and she changes her mindset. She learns the ways of the *narco* world, the law outside the law. The pessimistic approach relies on the premise that the only way to overthrow her boyfriend is by acquiring more masculine stereotypical traits and detaching from any stereotypical feminine characteristics such as emotional sensitivity. The process of her transformation into a different gender role is cataclysm to become the head of the cartel.

The novel *Trabajos del reino* by Yuri Herrera is centered on two main characters, *El Rey* or the King, who is the head of the cartel, and *Lobo* (Wolf) a talented *corrido*<sup>15</sup> writer. According to Alviso, *Corrido* is “...an important song genre found in Mexico...”. Although they can be traced

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<sup>14</sup> Sobre mí estaba Julio y sobre Julio no había ley” (Alarcón, p.88). Translation mine.

<sup>15</sup> Drug ballads

back to the 1800, their popularity raised mainly during the times of the Mexican Revolution. *Corridos* were not just to tell news, but a form of celebration and dignification of the events. They were primarily used to write about the lives of folk heroes such as Pancho Villa (Alviso 60-64). They kept their popularity mainly in the northern border of Mexico. The genre *Narco corrido* continues this tradition to write about popular events around the lives of the main *Narcos*. They are narratives that communicate to the popular masses the heroic acts of the *narcos*, their power or their liaisons with the government. They include themes on their love affairs, corruption, deception, betrayals or messages to other cartels. It is common for *narcos* to pay for the creation of a *narco corrido* to spread their fame or power. Artist can sponsor *corrido* singers to write for them in exchange of either money or popularity. This is the case of *Trabajos del reino*. The novel also takes place in a border city, where *corridos* are a popular genre of music for the masses. The author chooses to create the metaphor of a kingdom as the scenario of the plot. Herrera constructs a true kingdom, including a court, a witch, mistresses, a minstrel, need for an heir, and everything that constitutes it. "He knew about blood and knew his was different" (Herrera 9)<sup>16</sup>, states *Lobo* at his first encounter with *El rey*. He knew he was invested with authority to make a law; and this type of power set him apart from the rest of the crowd.

Since the beginning of the story, the connection between The King and *Lobo* are the *corridos* he writes. The King seems to enjoy his songs and recognizes his talent; "I recognized his talent as soon as I saw him stated the king" (Herrera 25)<sup>17</sup>. Thus, he decides to take him to the palace under his protection as his private minstrel. His art is what gives him the key to this new world. Ironically, it is because of this artistic talent, that he can physically move to the safest part of the city and leave the uncertainty of the streets, which had previously left him

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<sup>16</sup> "Él sabía de sangre, y vio que la suya era distinta" (Herrera 9). Translation mine.

<sup>17</sup> "Yo le supe el talento en cuanto lo vi" (Herrera 25).

constantly vulnerable. Anywhere around “The King”, the artist will be protected. The King, again, represents the sovereign, the almighty, who will take care of his people. The palace represents the parallel state, with its own organized way of life, its rules and its order, and more so than anything, its corrupted codependency with the state and government to remain in power. *Lobo* has lived in the streets, singing for pennies in the *cantinas*, where being invisible came as second nature to him. He is used to the everyday violence in the country and understands being next to a King is not a crime but a privilege. As he moves to the palace, he begins to learn and understand the world of the *narcos*, the system, and their rivalries and conspiracies to ascend to power. Violence is the means and the end to remain sovereign.

Both characters, Fernanda and *Lobo*, find themselves fragmented in the two worlds. This is what the state is offering them. They represent the paradox of their relationship to the law by its own abandonment, not simple by enacting “outside of it and made indifferent to it but rather abandoned by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable” (Agamben, *Homo* 28). They both realize that to survive they will have to move to the side of the parallel state, and violence is the only way of life, and a way to survive and acquire power. Fernanda moves into Julio’s house, and *Lobo* moves to reside in the palace; this provides them with their ticket to protection. As they enter these worlds, the scenarios are not much different than a regular system of order. There is a head, a leader, a king, and an oppressor who has sovereign power over the rest of the people. There are rules to follow, pacts to be respected, and protocols that everyone seems to know even though there is not an official constitution or written juridical system. As people migrate to the city, they have the choice to be street vendors, offer their labor for a pitiful salary, or join the organized crime, the parallel state. They are pushed to inhabit in the law outside the law, as it is the option that will offer them more safety and protection. And if they can make it through, the power is never-ending. Julio and The King represent the sovereign who is all-powerful and

unquestionable. They have all the authority since "...authority proves itself not to need law to create law..." (Agamben, *Homo* 17).

Fernanda and *Lobo* have fragmented lives in a fragmented world, and in a fragmented system. They seem to seek for ways to manage a mode of living, in this context of "uneven development". At the beginning of the novel they start as vulnerable people, victims of a state that has left them unprotected, with little possibilities to make a living. As the novels progress they approach the world of the *narcos*, the parallel state. They learn to coexist in a fragmented system finally realizing that the only way to survive is by moving to the side where the law that reigns is the law outside the law. The important matter to underline is not that there are two worlds, the good and the bad, but that they coexist, they are parallel to each other. They overlap with each other and they have developed interdependence in order function. They both constitute the current state.

These novels or texts appeal to the argument of veracity and cohesion in their narrative. This discourse of disclosure of the reality conquers the needs of the readers to comprehend the mysterious world of the *narcos* and confirms the presumption of the corruption of the government. It contributes to the sense of liberation by unveiling publicly the responsibility of the state. The kidnapping of Fernanda, for instance, illustrates the collusion of these two powers. Her boyfriend manages to rescue her and she finds herself in the house of the mayor where she is released. The King, the head of the cartel in *Trabajos del reino*, enjoys and shares important family events with important members of the government. Both powers mingle and there is evident mutual help. The state and the parallel state work together but at the same time they depend on each other to maintain their power. Their codependency develops a complicity that becomes a vicious cycle. Crime and violence act as the seal to their agreements and renewal of their lifetime partnerships. It is not by chance that these novels develop in border cities. In this sense, the geopolitical context is a direct impact on the life of these communities, these border

cities located in between the two countries. The novels take place in an anomic scenario, a scenario outside the law, but then again twice protected by him who is invested with legality and he who is invested with power. These novels portray an adulterated state, a whole system within a system, and simultaneously outside itself. The novels do not render a mythic world, but the authors use it to make visible the crisis that the state is facing, the crisis of the sovereign. The authors develop a cosmos in which the inhabitants must follow what seems to be an organized system. The narrative of the novels presents their internal organization as the most normal way of living. They present violence as a way of life, as being the main character in these novels and “[t]he culture of death becomes a life” (Bowden 167).

Yuri Herrera in *Trabajos del reino*, carefully creates a *narco* cosmos. The structure of governance is very clear as he uses the metaphor of a kingdom and the life in a palace. Everyone in the palace has a specific place and responsibility. There is hierarchy, with a sovereign king in power and a court, and servants with different tasks to perform. No one would be able to object to the sovereign, and everyone was to remain doing what he or she was supposed to do, without any questioning. The court was formed by “[d]octors, journalists, policemen, priests, jewelers, artist cooks” (Herrera 43). Everyone had his or her job and its correspondent salary. Nevertheless, The King, as any other good father, is presented as magnanimous. The palace organizes weekly audiences for his people in which he provides help in different areas. During these meetings, everyone who worked in the kingdom should be available and present in case his or her help is needed. The King, and these *narcos* in general seek the popularity and acceptance among the people. This contributes to the natural development of a popular leadership for these *narcos*. They show an interest for the well-being of the people. “The king financed churches” ...” People got in through the gate...with their faces slightly sparkling because of their faith” (in the king). “He gave to every single one” (Herrera 43-

58)<sup>18</sup>. The king represents the sovereign authority invested by the legitimacy of the popular people who accepted his power as a certain investment from a divine source.

They seemed to take seriously their role as the sovereign. This ambiguous idea, of the criminal sovereign providing for the people, is an allusion to real life. Criminals are portrayed as magnanimous heroes that substitute the lack of efficiency of the government work. They provoke an admiration of those around them. In the novel *Perra Brava*, Julio is also the embodiment of the sovereign. He is at the top of the power ladder, and his power is unquestionable. These figures cause everyone fear, admiration, and/or jealousy. However, there is no room for dissidence, and that is a known fact.

Regardless of all the power, the characters, Julio and The King, represent the current political situation Mexico faces of the crisis of its sovereignty state. At the same time the authors depict the corrupted side of the state. Due to the corruption of the government and the constant codependency of the two ends, there is a constant fear of falling on both parts. The codependency of these “two states” makes them simultaneously powerful and vulnerable. They create a fissure in each other’s sovereignty. Nevertheless, as a result, this situation brings the suffering of its citizens, as they are the ones who are left unprotected in the end. The power of the criminal organization, even though it works outside the law, functions under the protection of those who are invested with legality as well. The characters just as the citizens have to move back and forth the legal and the illegal to succeed. It is not a bipolar situation, between the binary of good and evil, but there is always ambivalence in the character of Julio and The King, as they show humane characteristics as well as mighty ones, as it is with a sovereign ruler.

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<sup>18</sup> “El rey financiaba Iglesias...”(Herrera 43). “El pueblo en fila entrando por un portón, de rebozos y pantalones de hilachas, con niños a cuestras, con caras de ausencia pero levemente brillantadas por la fe” (Herrera 58). “Cada mes hay audiencia...A todos les da” (Herrera 59).  
\*Translation mine

However, it is these humane characteristics, which will eventually make them vulnerable, and will later terminate their life and power. Their power does not only rely on violence, although it is certainly all over and around them, it also relies on trying to win the approval of their people in different hegemonic manners. It is a mixture of hegemonic practices and violence. The different uses of forms of oppression are similar to the existence of the overlapping of the forms of productions. Everything seems to be uneven, complex and no one is to be accountable. The worlds of the two states are in constant interdependence. The most powerful ones ought to be able to have access to both. If the official government and politicians want power, then the organized crime also needs a direct line and constant support to access control over the drug business. The sovereign is not in full control, but in crisis, and this situation feeds itself by its complicity with the parallel state. The criminals, the *narcos* and rulers, Julio and The King, remind us of archetypes of Pedro Páramo, and his sovereignty. He possessed complete control. He executed his power from the illegal, but he was the law. He was the law outside the law in a world of dead. They lived in an anomic sphere unprotected by the state. Here the legal and illegal becomes indistinguishable. Thus, the culture becomes a culture of death. However, the current criminals differ in the sense of the old *cacique* style, or the rural cowboy with a pistol, but they have adjusted the drug and criminal business according to the current modes of production. There are no longer two scenarios for the criminals and the keepers of the legality, but the two worlds have intertwined. The truth is that illiterate peasants such as Caro Quintero, Don Neto, El Azul, El Mayo y El Chapo would have never gone far without the complicity of businessmen, politicians, and policemen. These people execute their power daily from a false jurisdictional space. The faces of the heads of the cartels and corrupts leaders are no longer seen in wanted posters, but in the social and business media. "They are the truth lords of the narco" (Hernández 123-130).

## The role of literature

The question to keep posing is regarding the posture and the place of literature and the aesthetics in a world of late capitalism, in a neoliberal country. Both authors, Herrera and Alarcón, include the problematic of the aesthetic in these times, the romance aesthetics. Using Jameson's perspective, the political work in both novels, the "political unconscious," is found in these *narco* texts. The texts must not be interpreted as just a symptom of contemporary life, but they are "unmasking of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic act" (Jameson, *The political* 20). The issue to ponder is whether these cultural artifacts are powerful or powerless towards a corrupted state, whether the forms of aesthetics are representing a subversive form of resistance to the current *status quo*. At the beginning of the story, for instance, Fernanda happens to be a student of letters and philosophy in a public university. This election of the author of Fernanda's initial academic goals is not a chance, as this is an allusion to the role of literature and its impact within the new modes of production. The point is made that she is not able to make sense of the violent events in the city and her own life, not through her career. She can't logically find an explanation for the fragmented system in which she lives in many areas of her life. Letters are no longer able to make a story in her fragmented life, where different worlds coexist within one. In addition, in Mexico a university career does not guarantee a successful life, but the numbers are discouraging. Mexico is the only country in which going to a university almost puts students at a disadvantage. "It is the only country in which to reach a higher education degree generates disadvantages to acquire jobs, since they have higher rates of unemployment than the rest of the population with less academic education" (Valenzuela, *Sed* 131). Finally, Fernanda determines to drop out of school since she is aware of the amount of money and power that evolves around the organized crime. In the other hand, a degree in Philosophy or Arts and Letters is not a guarantee to overcome her obstacles. Most important, this is an argument to reiterate the inability and powerless state of the aesthetics to provide an

exit to what the community is facing. She decides to actively learn how her boyfriend manages his power and how he leads the cartel. As a natural development, she begins to learn from her boyfriend Julio his techniques of violence and oppression; violence becomes for her a normal way to live life.

In the same lines, Herrera represents the role of the aesthetics in the creation of the character, *Lobo*. *Lobo* is a *narco corrido* writer, a popular artist whose objective is to eternalize the power of *narcos* with his songs among the popular masses. He intends to make them famous and spread their glory or send messages to other cartels. There is a romantic view of *Lobo*, which is used to emphasize that the popular still has power to create, to change, and to influence in various ways. The hopes do not solely rely in the possibility of *Lobo* to defeat the King, but also in the subversive power that continues to be in the popular art of his *corridos*. The *corridos* are a way to register the regional stories, popular mainly in the border cities in north of Mexico. The *narco corrido* stresses the lives of the drug dealers, their deeds. It is important to highlight the postmodern side of the *narco corrido* as a reproduction of existing styles, the *corrido*, as a trait of the era of late capitalism the society is facing (Harvey, *The Condition* 55), the old and the new in the lyrics of their music. The process of reproducing rather than producing conducts, "...[t]he producer of culture have nowhere to look but to the past, the imitation of dead styles..." (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 19).

The *narco corridos* have as scenarios the northern border. It is in in this intersection of the two worlds that these battles between death and life take place. The culture of dead is all over this popular art. The stories retell the achievement of power from a place of illegitimacy. This is one of the reasons some *narco corridos* have been banned from the government because they portray the complicity of the state and the drug dealers and some of atrocities that have occurred. It is again because of the allusion to the reality that they gain popularity and legitimacy among the masses (Valenzuela, *Jefe* 7-9). It is the power of the words, and the

power of its popular art to establish a disruption to the state's narrative. At the same time, it serves to empower the illegitimate, the corrupted, the law outside the law. It provides authority to them. "...[T]he *corrido* is not just an adorned framed on the wall. It is a name and it is a weapon" ... "It is not just truth, it is pretty but it makes justice" ... "[I]t is art...[I]t has life of its own" (Herrera 64, 87- 8)<sup>19</sup>. Different important factors are at stake in the use of the author of the *narco corrido*. It reflects the postmodern life, as they reproduce the old, and provide a narrative to make sense of the incomprehensible. In the other hand this also reaffirms the aspect of hope to resist a system through the aesthetics; there is still power in the words, in the popular art. And at the same there is the ability of the system to commoditize any sort of resistance as well. The art of *Lobo*, his weapon, also becomes his labor, and the King has the power to buy it. The ability to buy labor with money opens the door to other types of impositions or forms of power, and "it confers the privilege to exercise power over others" (Harvey, *The Condition* 102).

At the beginning of the novel the narrator refers to the main character as *Lobo*, a wild animal. *Lobo* lives in the violent streets. Then, as he is introduced to the king, he is acknowledged and can acquire an identity, a personality, and a profession as real "artist". His music then becomes art and consequently his art has value. *Lobo* expresses the day he meets the king as the most important day in his existence, as his life would finally make sense. He was no longer an orphan. The king baptized him as an artist with his words: "Pay the artist" (Herrera 11)<sup>20</sup> as he defended him from a drunk man in the cantina. He was no longer invisible to the law; the king was to protect him from then on, and *Lobo* was no longer a wild animal fighting for his life and food on the streets, but a recognized artist who played for a king. The

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<sup>19</sup> "...el corrido no es un cuadro adornando la pared. Es un nombre y es un arma" (Herrera 64). "El corrido no es nomás verdadero, es bonito y hace justicia" (Herrera 87). El periodista: "...lo suyo es arte, ...lo suyo tiene vida propia" (88). Translation mine.

<sup>20</sup> "Páguele al artista" (Herrera 11). Translation mine

king had the power to decide on his identity, on his task, and on the value of his art. His art was his form of labor. “Everyone in the kingdom had a very precise task according to his or her talents, everyone had their own grace and this determined their precise place” (Herrera 10)<sup>21</sup>. Towards the end of the novel, as he escapes to leave with “*La cualquiera*”, the woman of the king, the narrator refers to him again as *Lobo*, in other words, he loses his identity and place in the court and in the system, and goes back to being no more than an animal left outside both systems. An orphan again, he is in a state that does not take care of him and no longer protects him from the parallel state. He is once again a wasted life.

Both *Lobo* and *Fernanda*, although they represent the aesthetics and play an antagonistic role against the system, are clearly unable to make a living with their intellectual and artistic work, one with the philosophy career and the other one with his popular art making. Their only choice is to be adopted and protected by the parallel state to be able to survive and earn a living. They have to relocate themselves outside the law. It is from that place of illegitimacy, in all sense where they can overthrow their oppressors. It is suggested that there has to be complicity with the system in order to succeed, and to overcome it. In other words, it needs to be resisted, if it will, with the same resources it provides. In the lines of ideology from the Althusserian perspective “the working class cannot, by its own resources, radically, liberate itself from the bourgeois ideology”; they can only do it by using elements from the dominant ideology, remaining prisoners of it and its structure (309). *Fernanda*, the embodiment of a future philosophy student, and *Lobo*, a popular artist, both move in and out of the anomic sphere, ironically being protected only when acting outside the formal juridical order. The crisis is not only of the state, but also the crisis of the aesthetics.

The importance of literature and its evolution through times is presented by the allusion to other texts or characters in both novels. In *Trabajos del reino*, *Lobo* is an archetype of the

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<sup>21</sup> “cada cual en el reino tenía por su gracia un lugar preciso” (Herrera 10). Translation mine.

minstrel of *El rey burgués* by Rubén Darío. It is important to recall the figure of Rubén Darío as the initiator of the "...current that took the name of *modernism*..." the context of this current was in the search of Latin American artist for the emancipation "...from the past of Spanish letter themselves" (Anderson 3). The evocation to a minstrel in *Trabajos del reino* reminds the reader of the return to a similar context of the crisis of the art. During this period, 1890 and toward the new century Latin America was facing a constant crisis in many aspects of life such as religion, art, science and politics. Society was changing the modes of production and everything was beginning to turn into a commodity. Therefore, the artist, the poet, felt marginalized, and thus fantasy and imagination were a form to escape. This is the theme of *El rey burgués* (Chang-Rodríguez and Filer 207).

Herrera evokes this pessimistic approach to the end of the freedom of art for the sake of art, the end of the possibility to produce a change in the society, to challenge the system. Again, there is a representation of the transformation of the aesthetics into a commodity *a doc* with the modes of production and its lack of value or influence in the society immersed in materialism. Alarcón does similar allusion with his character Julio, as he is depicted as an archetype of *Pedro Páramo* by Juan Rulfo. Juan Rulfo (1918-1986), was a Mexican writer whose main themes are based around the failure of the promises of the Mexican Revolution. His short stories and novel *Pedro Páramo* are postrevolutionary narratives that demonstrate the marginalization of the farmers, and the abusive misuse of the law to take advantage of the rural areas (Chang-Rodríguez and Filer 406-7). Pedro Páramo is "...the embodiment of the law outside the law... in a socioeconomic order suspended between feudal and bourgeois forms" (Williams, *The Mexican Exception* 17). The sovereign, Pedro Páramo, can attain complete power and ultimately bringing death over the community and himself as well. The context of the novel proceeds the Mexican Revolution, which is relevant since the social order the Revolution was trying to abolish was reinforced and "became institutionalized in postrevolutionary Mexico

thanks largely to the laws inscribed in the 1917 Constitution” (Williams, *The Mexican Exception* 18). Both novels do portray the commodification of the art, and the position of literature and the aesthetics, which have not been excluded of the transition of the modes of production. Even though they can present a form of critique or counterhegemonic posture, some theorists have also noted that “[c]apitalism [has the] ability to reproduce itself and to incorporate into itself the forces of resistance and opposition (Fiske, *Brittish* 116). Nevertheless, the use of the *corrido* lyrics still demonstrates a window of resistance for the aesthetics. The artist of the *corrido* has the power to build a legend of the *narco*’s power with his lyrics, to make him or destroy him. At the same time, *The King* is finally defeated because of the written words from the artist in one of his songs. *Lobo*’s art did have the power to destroy and fight the sovereign. However, the power again switches to a new *narco* with the same structure. There is certainly an understanding of the incapacity of literature and philosophy to give an account to the self-referent power and violence in the state. However, the king gave “the artist” its job as an artist. The king decided to make him famous, and give him power. “It is not just a struggle over the meaning of a word but over who has the power to control those meanings” (Hall 127). The neoliberal policies have not left aside the aesthetics; they have also been subjects of the processes of neoliberalism. Overall, even though the aesthetics are not independent of the modes of production, in a way, they might continue to create noise, a breakthrough from the inside against the *status quo*.

### **The narrative**

These novels serve the purpose of providing a narrative. The stories provided by their narratives offer a symbolic act. The aesthetic romance of the work of these novels provides the opportunity for a resolution at the end of the story. It offers a sense of magical liberation of the most desired freedom. The fall of the sovereign and the defeat of the system are the two final achievements of the main characters in the novels. The sovereign is overthrown, and the

victims could defeat their oppressor. The novels in a way provide a sense of understanding of what can't be understood. The stories show the world of the *narcos*, of their power, of their lives. There is a fascination in the understanding of how the community is functioning. This is what the narratives are providing, in a way even though there is not a complete reality; they reinforce what Hall stated about narratives and their functioning as myths. "They are myths that represent in narrative form the resolution of things that cannot be resolved in real life" (Hall 341). The development of the stories presents everyone's fantasy as far as the defeat of classes and gender. There is an offer of the sense of liberation as the problem that is symbolically solved in the plot. However, on one side there is consciousness, which is merely a fantasy and not the reality for most Mexicans, and at the same time if this was to happen, as it does in both cases, nothing would actually change. Fernanda will repeat the scheme of his predecessor, reproduce violence; and *Lobo* will have to move and sell his songs to another important *narco*. This is precisely one of the political and subversive parts in the work. The novels do not just rewrite what is happening in northern cities, but there is a clear critique of the situation of the country that could never be solved in real life. The aim is not solely based on producing a magical narrative to provide a liberating effect in the war among classes or gender subjection. It is not only a romance based on overriding a system. Nor are they a denunciatory piece of work of the violence in Mexico. These novels reiterate the subversive position of the aesthetics, its place outside the state regardless of its complicity with the system, and the political work that is still available in the text. They expose the incongruence of the state's discourse of peace and stability, and the awareness of the people of the political situation. The novels provide both a solution of what could possibly not be solved in the current situation, while simultaneously representing the possibility of an eventual fall of the sovereign. Again, as in *Pedro Páramo*, the sovereign has the power to let live or kill, but it can also produce its own death, collapsing the whole state with his own death (Williams, *The Mexican Exception* 17). The narratives contain a sense of utopia, as the oppressed can overcome their oppressor. They offer a prediction or re-

affirmation of the future auto destruction of the sovereign itself. Fernanda, for instance, can overcome the class and patriarchal system. She is a poor rural migrant who later becomes wealthy and powerful. She defeats her boyfriend Julio, who had objectified her and constantly inflicted violence on her body. In a way, these narratives attempt to rewrite the history of Mexico with a sense of utopia. However, the reader can still sense the level of impossibility to eradicate such a system. The approach is pessimistic and deterministic considering the fact that the means Fernanda uses to defeat Julio are supported by the acquisition of masculine stereotypical attributes. Fernanda begins by understanding survival as a synonym of violence and power. She puts aside her feelings of romance and love towards Julio to execute her power, first as the woman of the leader of the cartel, and then as the one in charge of Julio himself. She stops being the typical girl in love who will subdue and consents to anything her boyfriend demands just to maintain him by her side. She challenges him, the *status quo*, his law, the law and the patriarchal institutions he represents. At the same time, Julio's decrease in power correlates to his decrease in his masculine attributes. As he develops feelings and sentiments towards his girlfriend, his power as the leader of the cartel diminishes. There is not exactly a defeat in the system, as there is an evident "[r]eproduction of misogyny within femaleness" (Halberstam 360). The masculine attributes are still preserved to achieve power. In a patriarchal society, masculinity is a requisite to obtain and represent power in a country where patriarchalism is in complicity with capitalism to maintain power. "Masculinity in this society inevitably conjures up notions of power and legitimacy and privilege... the power of inheritance, and the promise of social privilege" (Halberstam 357), Fernanda "symbolically" overcomes the whole apparatus, the patriarchal and class system. However, it is important to note that she can only accomplish this by the correlative act of acquiring masculine attributes, while her oppressor becomes fragile, allowing himself to fall in love. She overcomes her oppressor but perpetuates the system. A similar case is at stake in *Trabajos del reino, El rey*, the king, is in constant struggle due to his questionable masculinity since he suffers from

impotence. His masculinity is never assured and regardless of his other skills he will be perceived as incompetent to lead such a powerful cartel. It is not just the inability to produce a heir to continue his throne, but the lack of the main masculine attribute in the eyes of the culture. There is no one to follow him in power, and as long as his masculinity is in question, his power will be too.

The novels act as a narrative apparatus of the history of the society. *Trabajos del reino* strengthens the sense of nostalgia, evocating a romantic remembrance of feudalism within the capitalist world. The novel recreates the past and provides a collective memory of the aristocracy. Nonetheless, the author provides evidence of the overlapping of the neoliberal policies and the neoliberalization of the *narco* business itself. The romantic perspective of this novel relies on the sense of freedom for a society to create its own cosmos within a world that is confined to a cruel reality. The text takes advantage of that craving present in the fragmented community, a craving for an unknown past, and the narrative can feed it with its historicism. The allegories used in this novel, such as the creation of the aristocracy to narrate the current status in a neoliberal country also acknowledge the continuation of an authoritarian system of oppression with the never-ending class struggle and marginalization. It is a satire of the current functioning of the state. The state that uses the very opposite of the sense of community, immunity, and, in this case the *narco* culture, to perpetuate an oppressive system that is disguised with popularity.

### **The neoliberalization of the *Narco Culture***

The representation of *narcos* in the novels indicates the current culture of drugs, death and organized crime as a common denominator for every Mexican. The novels do not promote, per se, the naturalization of violence, but make evident the perception of it as a natural and inevitable way of life. As the state is in crisis, and working in complicity with its parallel state,

the community too is beginning with the crisis to make sense of the reality. Nevertheless, the society has had a contradictory perception of the presence of the *narco*. Fear is not the single reaction, but other ways to cope with the reality have been developed. The situation has developed into a culture, a popular *narco* culture. *Narco Corridos*, for instance, have become popular among all ages and across socioeconomic classes; the clothes and regalia that are allusive to old cowboys, with iconic items to represent the *narcos* are sold everywhere. All of this intends to increase the consumerism while producing a homogenization of perspectives, and a cultural pride with a foundation on a false sense of history or prefabricated “pastness” (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 18). People in Mexico, mainly in border states, have accepted the *narco* culture as a way of fashion, a style and a genre. A factor of influence to highlight and exemplify this phenomenon would be the *narco* soap operas.

The consumption of this culture takes place because there is meaning (Hall 908) for the audience with the context of *narcos* in the society. Three aspects influenced the success of the reception *Narco* Drama as realistic: the context of violence without precedent, the desire to make sense of their new reality, both locally and globally, and the inheritance of the telenovelas. The media, through *narco telenovelas*, as Bennett (referring to Gramsci) indicates, are used as “...structures of ideological hegemony” that can “transform and incorporate dissident values as effectively to prevent the working through of their full implication” (Fiske, *British* 129). Some examples of these *narco* soap operas would be *La reina del sur*, *El señor de los cielos*, or *Ingobernable*. These soap operas also “portray *narcos* (drug dealers) as ambivalent subjects who, although involved in the illegal drug trade, maintain strong social and personal commitments to their local communities, family members, and friends (Benavides 350). There is an overlap of two different modes of productions, feudalism and the nostalgia of the rural with the codes *narcos* use (clothes, language). The *narcos* themselves have been commoditized. In other words, crime itself, and the idea of representing a criminal, has been commoditized.

These cultural artifacts and icons people wear and the jargon that they use is embedded in a system of commodification.

These texts, like the northern cities, emit a new postmodern discourse, a mixture of the old forms and the new urban life, with the certainty of a continuous change of the new (Harvey, *The Condition* 65). These multiple temporalities of the past and present together demonstrate the necessity of the community to create their collective history. There is an evident sense of nostalgia for the rural, the feudal. Different orders and systems coexist within each other, as Foucault indicates there is coexistence in an impossible space of a large number of fragmentary possible worlds that are juxtaposed or superimposed upon each other (qtd. in Harvey, *The Postmodern* p. 48). As everything else, there is also a collision through the force of violence of the power of the state and the power of the law outside the state, the *narco* state.

The *narco novelas* are contextualized within globalization. We are presented now with a new type of *narco* or drug dealer, not the typical rural farmer that remains in his area respecting codes of geographical boundaries or moral codes. In opposition to the former knowledge of a *narco*, a different figure or drug lords and drug dealers emerges aligned within the context of late capitalism. The protagonists play roles of heads of well-established organizations with the capability to network to import and export globally. This is made possible with the support and connections of different spheres of power, with which they are ready to put the competitors out of business at any cost. These *narco-novelas* illustrate the involvement of the government that allows these delinquent groups to do more efficient business in exchange for protection. They also include in the characters the issue of the incorporation of lawyers, factories, priests, and many members of the community in the business as the only method for better incomes, and access to an upper class and status. Violence and drugs, as a way of life, not just in the immediate environment, but also in the world, are portrayed as a way to earn a wage.

Texts such as these *narco novelas* or *telenovelas* provide a narrative and continuity for the audience in two different ways, one being in the sense of the allusion to reality, and another in the presence of an accurate explanation of the “business” of the drugs in late capitalism. It seems that in a post-modern, fragmented world, audiences crave narratives, and the follow-ups in the *narco* texts, either with the same characters, or correlations of the stories, or same actors, is successfully appreciated by the spectators. According to the author, the description of the scenarios in these cultural texts, such as landscapes and other iconic elements that “...contain a high level of regional specificity and interaction” (Benavides 350), and offer nostalgia as a sentiment, which, according to Ian Gordon, is the longing for a return, for the past we can never go back (1010): for a world before NAFTA. The allusions to the haciendas and rural communities, and the connections not just between the city and the rural, but the global connection in the *narco* world, along with ability of the characters to move freely in these boundaries in a successful way, implies a nostalgia for a pre-industrial world. As Martín Barbero states: “In Latin America, the popular is often nostalgically equated with the indigenous and this in turn with the primitive and the backward –the disappearing authentic popular untouched by, and outside of the real of modernity” (460); this reinforces a nostalgic sentiment that is temporarily fulfilled through the discourse of the *narco novelas*. The characters gather a set of representative traits that are targeted to seduce the readers of these texts. They are not all perceived as criminals or even murderers, or antagonists, but they are equipped with characteristics of the typical heroes or heroines that are able to defeat the current system, and protect the most vulnerable groups in the society. There is a positive reception of these narratives, and the stories of these *narco* heroes because of the utopic offer to an audience that is longing for a sense of belonging in a community. The people, as the texts want “restore at least a symbolic experience of libidinal gratification to a world drained of it..” (Jameson, *The political* 63).

There seems to be an evident polysemic message in the encoded ideology represented through these types of characters. They are presented by known and accepted prototypes, which will most likely guarantee a positive reception. This is also an excellent opportunity for the media and other ideological state apparatus, as well as literature to vindicate a discourse of veracity in their work. They can sustain the argument of the critical posture against the government in current times when the President of Mexico is married to a famous soap opera actress. However, although there is a clear connection with the audience and the characters because of the characters' ability to temporarily defeat the system, whether it is class system or patriarchal system, it is clear that there is a sense of impossibility after all. The idea to defeat it is appealing to the audience and liberating.

As Martín-Barbero points out "...we begin to see the urban popular not as inauthentic degeneration but as the truly contemporary site where powerless groups seek to take control of their own conditions of existence within the limits imposed by the pressures of modernity" (460). There seem to be important factors in the answers, an apparent need to trust in the system, and the restructuration of community solidarity bonds that were lost with the waves of violence and free market, such as loyalty and kindness, the hope to escape a system, or free from a deterministic or pessimistic destiny. Or potentially even the possibility of a new system that is better than the current, able to provide clear communication and expectations. The important issue to notice is that the acceptance of the characters and part of success of the reception of the *narco novela* is relying on the nostalgia of the audience and the offering of a narrative to make sense of their present. Narratives are what make the past available for the community. They have the ability to tell the story of what was not seen. They answer the unanswered questions of those who were not there to witness. They are able to provide a sense of understanding. The community then, with a high need of reworking an identity, is willing to buy, at least through the characters, or for an hour, the narrative that the television company is

selling through the hyper-reality of these programs. The audience knowledge then, depends on how the story is told, on the narrative. The temporal anti-hegemonic effects that the audience might develop depend on the possibility to solve conditions they could not do in real life, but certainly long for. However, with the element that in the unreal story, any anti-hegemonic possibility of fruition has an expiration date at the end of the soap. Thus, the audience's false consciousness strengthens with the narrative provided by the media as one of the few, or even the only tool to make sense of their context. The *narco novelas*, appeal to reality and micro and macro narratives (Thornham and Purvis 1065-6, 70) for an audience that is striving to desperately make sense of their identity. Their place in the local and the global world, are reemphasized towards the end of the plot through the characters that lived through these disadvantages. In the hegemonic process, as John Fiske explains regarding to Antonio Gramsci's hegemony' theory, consent must be won and rewon, and this way the positions of subordinations and maintenance of the masses remain in their task (Fiske, *Intro* 167).

This is the hegemony of the state as it employs the ideological state apparatus to naturalize the violence in the community. It is not only the use of violence as a force or as a way to institute a system, but a complex mixture of using violence as a *pharmakon* (Esposito, *Immunitas*) to auto immunize the community and to re-write the legal corpus elsewhere. In a system of late capitalism, violence as well becomes a commodity, and it is consumed. Even though there is a professionalization of the *narco*, and the criminals could now be members of the governments, this *narco culture* became a commodity now as well as a possible counter hegemonic factor. This is where the hegemony and the complicity with the ideological state apparatus take place. It profits from its own violence and its own corrupted system.

## The class struggle

It is clear how these stories present the constant class struggle in Mexico. The novels highlight the constant reference to brands and fetishism that allude a social status. The fascination of the *narco* culture is due not just to the popularity of the *corridos*, but to the forms of economic power it offers. It opens the door to a “disproportionate consumerism, power and impunity (Valenzuela, *Jefe* 8). The characters equate power to their ability to acquire commodities and access to a different life style, a different status. For instance, in *Perra Brava*, powerful drug dealers would drive around luxury cars to show power, or were able to buy high end brands (Alarcón p. 159 & 161). Again “[s]ocial relations are understood in terms of power, in terms of a structure of domination and subordination that is never static but is always the site of contestation and struggle” (Fiske, *Brittish* 116), and in a class structure society this all go together.

However, the writers are aware of the importance of the continuation of class separation and segregation, and incorporate the factor of taste as a form to perpetuate a distinction among the true elite and the *narco* new rich. Taste again continues to be a constant that separates the community by the socio-economic status, the elite versus the new rich. The new rich are usually not part of prestigious families of the society. Therefore, are not familiar with certain codes of conduct or symbols that will identify them with the elite wealthiest group. Marshall indicates that the “nouveau rich” would still be excluded from the dominant culture because of its inability to coordinate the signs of wealth (1120). The bourgeoisie is still recognized by its control of emotions and its need to separate sentiments from the social setting, thus internalizing these emotions and re-creating them as ‘private schemes’ (Benavides 263). However, the characters in the texts, regardless of the economic capacity, will show elements of taste that demonstrate how they will remain in a specific place of the class system, regardless of economic power. “The search to communicate social distinctions through the acquisition of all

manner of symbols of status has long been a central facet of urban life (Harvey, *Postmodern* 79). The element used in the novel *Trabajos del reino* between *El Heredero* (the inheritor) and *El rey* (the king) is precisely the taste. *El Heredero* did not wear any of these iconic symbols of the *narco* culture, but as a second generation he seemed to understand the etiquette of the harmony of his choices for his dress code and appearance; "...he was a different story" (Herrera 72)<sup>22</sup>. He differentiated himself from the other members of the cartels who wore cowboy style clothing, and therefore could mix with elite circles publicly, unlike the rest of the crew who were restricted to the confinement of the palace. They still did not have the class elements to perform outside their social status regardless of their level of economic power. "The fetishism (direct concern with surface appearances that conceal underlying meanings) is obvious, but it is here deployed deliberately to conceal, through the realms of culture and taste, the real basis of economic distinctions" (Harvey, *The Postmodern* 78)

## Conclusion

Novels such as *Perra Brava* and *Trabajos del reino* provide the readers with a fantasy, a romantic perspective of the world, from Jameson's theory of the ascetics of the romance. There is a clear sense of the intention, conscious or unconscious, of the desire to rewrite the reality, and at the same time there is awareness on behalf of the reader and the author of its unfeasibility. From a romance perspective, the novels do try to provide a symbolic act; they aim to solve the issues that can't be resolved. Fernanda gets the power, the money, and *Lobo* gets resources and the girl. They both acquire an identity leaving the shadow behind. Nevertheless, the texts are self-conscious of the impossibility to resolve the complex situation. "It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity" (Jameson, *The political* 20). The subversive act

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<sup>22</sup> "...una historia distinta..." Translation mine.

of these novels relies in the pessimistic approach, their omniscient understanding of the impossibility to overcome such status. Thus, even if the situations was solved in reality there isn't fair community advancement available. This is what needs to be taken into consideration, the potential hope for the work of literature, art and the aesthetics. It is in this area where the subversive force can be found and rescued. *Lobo* defeats the hegemony of the monarchy while at the same time evidences a system that is still far from being democratic. Fernanda defeats the system of oppression, as far as class and gender while simultaneously becoming a factor of its perpetuation. Again, the subversive act in these texts translates to the recognition of a cruel reality and the awareness of the dead end the society faces. There is the exhibition of the different sides that are in tension in the society. It demonstrates the conflict that exists between the different groups, but they present the idea, the romantic idea that a song or *corrido* writer, a migrant girl can overcome what everyone wishes. This is the presence of the contradiction to the narrative of the state of democracy and fairness. The reality is that of inconformity as there is a constant segregation, and a sense of unhappiness that longs for a different life after all.

The sense of nostalgia appeals to the reader, restating the elements from the past into the present life. The resistance shows in the writing of the overlapping of old styles and forms of life and production with the current dominant. The *narco* culture uses elements from the feudal and the rural. It calls for a sense of nostalgia. The existence of this continuance of the rural, and the old forms also highlight the characteristics from the uneven development the community faces. Therefore, "features that in an earlier period or system were subordinate now become dominant, and features that had been dominant again become secondary" (Jameson, *Postmodernism and the Consumer* 123). On the other side, they do provide a space to restate the freedom to create one's own world. There is still hope for the power of the folk and the subaltern represented with the *corrido* writer and the migrant girl. The popular resistance in a

way reinstates its force against industrialization by the sense of liberation and disruption the texts offer.

The understanding of the current state of repression points to the surface the political unconscious of these texts. There is the part of it that is revolutionary. They continue to make conscious the historical and current oppression of class and gender. They uncover the political unconscious of the culture of the community and its forms to create it and the different ways of reception. This, their creation and the different readings of the cultural texts constitute themselves a political activity, conscious or unconscious. It is this practice that releases a level of rebellious act against the system. Therefore, their subversive part is not that they propose a possibility to defeat the system. It is clear this is only producing if anything a liberating effect, but the work consists precisely of seeing its impossibility of the resolution in real life. The texts put the tension between what is and the official narrative. They demonstrate their conflict and the awareness of the masses of the negativity of the context. Mexicans in general are aware of their submission and its forms of perpetuation. Nonetheless, the oppression of the people is not a simplistic result of hegemonic or manipulative tools such as the use of the media or other ideological state apparatus only, but it is an inherent part of complex modes of productions and contemporary forms of slavery and violence. The texts are certainly not meant to resolve people's lives or just offer a fantasy, but to make these situations visible, to continue to make a noisy rebellious act to challenge the system's discourse. They intend to make clear the counter hegemonic side of at least some of the population, the existence of political activity.

The neoliberal economic policies have transformed every aspect of life. Everything can and is being commoditized under neoliberal principles. The state itself and even violence has both been "neoliberalized". In the other hand these *narco* texts also demonstrate the possibility of capitalism to absorb any type of subversive acts as they can sustain the argument of freedom

of speech and criticism. It profits from its own subversive elements, as *narco* has become a culture, a *narco* culture, and part of the vocabulary as a style or genre.

These texts personify violence as a character itself, as a way of life. The novels allow the audience to question the posture of literature in the context of a state which sovereignty is broken. Evidently, there is a co-belonging of literature and the neoliberal state. The narrative can achieve a double bind, the symbolic act of resolving a wishful desire, and the political work of making visible what is hidden. They present the ability to still conduct a political activity through the aesthetic. Their political work exposes the reality of the corpse of the state.

#### IV. The Corpse of the Community

This section includes a reading of selected novels that portray aesthetics and its complex relationship with horror and violence. Villalobos-Ruminott describes this relationship as a "...co-belonging-a sort of coexistence between literature and horror" (*A kind of hell* 194). As discussed in the previous chapter, cultural texts have also been commoditized and incorporated into the market. Therefore, the relationship between them and the state is not the same as it was under different modes of production. The neoliberal economy also affects the efficacy of the political work through which aesthetics tries to resist the system. The purpose is to try to continue a political work to unveil the ideological artifacts of oppression and structures that create and perpetuate the precarization of life. The goal again as we read the following cultural texts is to keep questioning the current methods, forms and institutions that seek to promote resistance. Then, there is a possibility to rethink the terms and categories that have been believed to be forms of resistance, but that have been the product of the creation of repressive institutions disguised as dissidence. The novels and texts chosen are samples of the existence of an optimistic discourse of the aesthetic as a form of counter power, although they consciously recognize the lack of autonomy art is facing regarding the state. They also bring an invitation to continue the critique of the creation of categories that foster a discourse of modernity, multiculturalism and tolerance while they have strengthened new forms of contemporary forms of oppression. The problematic is placed in the danger of lack of awareness of any form or organized political activity that attempts to be a way of resistance towards segregation but contributes to the logic of expulsion of any subaltern group. The notion of subalternity becomes pertinent in this matter as we refer to a possibility of noise, or distortion. Subalternity, understood first as John Beverly defines it in terms of subordination of class, caste, age, gender and office or any other way (35), serves as a foundation, but Spivak extends it to explain it also as "the absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic" (285). However, for Spivak, a subaltern also has the potential to disrupt the hegemonic; it promises a displacement,

not of the colonized, but of the hegemonic group. It could be the interruption of the hegemonic system through the reading of the culture.

Counter hegemonic movements can be on the side of violence or cultural hegemony under the strong perception of providing emancipation. For instance, the concepts such as multiculturalism seem convenient "...to legitimize social relations of exploitations and domination" (Žižek, *Multiculturalism* 30). The production of knowledge and of the categories of the language continues to be a form of power that intends to maintain the *status quo* of the community. The texts analyzed in this chapter include works that attempt to reflect the abandoned lives of some members of subaltern groups, but that also present the impossibility to narrate the violence that Mexico faces. They seek to state an argument of the crisis of language itself and its use intentionally or unintentionally as a form of segregation. Those who can't speak and those who have no escape to speak do not belong to any nation. They have no rights or benefits, and their only link to the community is the possibility of becoming a nameless corpse. "As such, what the police order conditions is a symbolic distribution of speaking bodies where in some are ascribe the capacity of speak and others are not and later would be relegated as "being of no ac/count," "the part of no part". (Acosta 191)

The novels challenge the work of the aesthetics themselves and their autonomy or effectiveness in being a counter power to the violence of the state. In other words, the aesthetic has not been exempt from the process of neoliberalization. In fact, the cultural texts might have contributed to the naturalization of the state's production of death. However, the reflection proposed in the reading suggest a self-awareness of the cultural texts of their complicity and seeks to protest and discover alternative ways to escape the categories imposed by any repressive apparatus. The novels discussed in this chapter are *2666* (2004) by the Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño, and *Fila India* by Antonio Orduño (2013), as well as the film *Sicario*

(2015), directed by Denis Villeneuve. It will also reference some of the aspects of the novels, *El hombre sin cabeza* (2009) by González Rodríguez.

### **The Border: Anomic Land**

The violence inflicted on the migrants of both borders is shown in the literature that represents the bare lives of those expelled from the system. Both borders of the country present different aspects of subalternization and segregation affected by the geopolitical contexts of each area. “Modern power is a ‘relational’ power that is ‘exercised from innumerable points,’ is highly indeterminate in character, and is never something ‘acquired, seized, or shared’” (Best and Kellner 51). The border is a space of in-betweenness, and space of incoherence with a presence of different cultures with the waves of migration and constant flux. It is the geographical point for uncertainty for those who are there waiting to cross to the northern side, while at the same time it is a place where the hegemony of culture is present as its imperialism is seen in the hybridity of culture. The cultures are extracted and the dominant culture is inscribed in the different identities that are combined in the borders. It is after all a kind of cultural and economic colonization and a demonstration of power; therefore “[s]ubmission is the price of transculturation’s appropriation... Transculturation is a part of the ideology of cultural protectionism, indeed a systemic part of a Western metaphysics of production, which still retains a strong colonizing grip on the cultural field” (Moreiras 193-98). Borders, but mainly the northern border of Mexico are a clear example of the processes of cultural hegemony and different forms of resistance and hybridity developed.

The background of the northern border of Mexico needs to be understood under the concept of the principal border of migration in the continent (García Canclini 232). New Mexico’s State Land Office considered it one of the busiest borders for human transit in the world (González 9). The constant flux of people back and forth and the mixture of cultures that

are continuously arriving are part of the complex fabric of the northern cities along the northern border. There are migrants who are there temporarily waiting to cross to the United States, others who end up staying there permanently as they arrived seeking for jobs in the maquiladoras. There is a coexistence of people of different backgrounds, people mainly from the rural places of Mexico or even rural places of South America arrive to a place that is not ready to incorporate them in their community. The perspective and cultural interactions of the northern border towards the peasants and temporary migrants has changed the interactions of the society. The jobs that the transnational have brought and the inability to the domestic market to compete have also reinforced the different forms of oppression of race, gender and class within the interaction of the community. They promote a sense of a fragmented community, its undoing, based on segregation rather than its unity and inclusion. The unplanned urbanization of the border cities is a result of these rapid and unexpected waves of migrants that then becomes permanent residents when unable to cross the border. However, they are never able to incorporate themselves in the society, they never become members or full members of the community. The lack of infrastructure to incorporate them into the city due to the rapid urbanization also leaves them out of the possibility to involve in economic practices and therefore they cannot participate in the process of socialization within the community. Integrity breaks down, not just individually, but also collectively; they mature into fragmented beings. Society itself acquires an asocial status: its members feel disconnected from it. Conditions of continuous commotion and flux are accompanied by a feeling of rootlessness (González 37). On one hand, the migrants lack of sense of belonging, and they face an uncertain destiny. They might finally cross, and if they are successful, arrive to the United States. However, if they are not successful, they might end up working on an assembly line, join a cartel or end up as street vendors. The other scenario consists of becoming one of the abandoned corpses in the desert while trying to cross illegally, or becoming one more of the casual victims of the crime on the border. On the other hand, there are the northern border residents, who are known for their

regional pride and who are usually racist against the southern indigenous Mexicans. The border is not a very welcoming area. Žižek indicates, “[t]he colonizing power is no longer a Nation-State but directly the global company so multiculturalism is the ideal form of ideology of this global capitalism” (*Multiculturalism* 44). Capitalism continues creating different and contemporary forms of control and oppression, including the very own forms of resistance and opposition. The dynamics of inclusion to demand tolerance to the different to the dominant group, as the rights given are controlled and surveilled and should be appreciated and thanked.

### ***Sicario***

The film *Sicario* (2015) directed by Denis Villeneuve begins with the definition of the word ‘sicario’ as a ‘hit man’. The first scenario is in the desert of Arizona. The FBI enters an abandoned house looking for hostages, or illegal immigrants. No one knows who the victims are. Soon the agents discover decomposed corpses inside the walls of the house. The bodies show clear signs of tremendous torture. As stated before, it is not about killing only, but about the message sent in the way the victims are killed. It is a message and a form of language that is inscribed in the bodies of those who do not belong. The sovereign has the power to take life over those who can’t speak, because they have no names, they have no rights, and they are citizens on nowhere. Therefore, there is no legal system that would protect them.

The film dramatizes the powerless of the police on the Mexican side of the border and in Mexico in general. As Bowden explains, they do not have the means or wages to support a family. Most of the time, besides not having the right equipment they must endure extreme poverty. The images of the house of Silvio (Maximiliano Hernández), the corrupt policeman on the Mexican side of the border, indicate the lives of most of the policemen in Mexico. His house is on the outskirts of the city. They do not have enough money for a life with dignity and enough basic resources. He has no choice but to join the lowest levels of organized crime. His role is

to transport the packages of drugs in his police car. His son craves quality time with him, and the family ends up fragmented after he is killed by Alejandro (Benicio del Toro) the Colombian hit man. Alejandro is a member of the Cartel of Medellin who seeks vengeance from Fausto or "El Verdugo" (Julio Cedillo) who beheaded his wife and threw his little daughter in an acid-filled tank. He is evidently one of the best hit men as he is selected from the US government to help with the "reestablishment of order". However, regardless of his apparent natural skill to take life and precision to assassinate he suffers from posttraumatic stress disorder.

Kate Macer (Emily Hunt) is an FBI agent. She plays an idealistic character, always striving to act according to the law and legal procedures. She is convinced by his supervisor to join the crew to capture Fausto Alarcón and Manuel Díaz (Bernardo Saracino), both some of the most important leaders of a Mexican Cartel. Kate is told they will be going to El Paso and while they travel she inquires what the situation is. He refers to the watch as a metaphor to explain the complexity, and inability to understand systematic killings and the ambiguity of jurisdiction. He states, "nothing will make sense to your American ears". They end up not going to El Paso but all the way across the border to the city of Juarez. The transgression of the borders portrays the broken sovereignty of the Mexican State and its inability to deal with domestic crime, which has followed the patterns of the global market. The intervention of the American government reflects the lack of intervention of the Mexican state, which lacks resources, will and power. "Keep an eye on the police, they are not always the good guys". This is what they advise Kate who is observed as innocent. The images the film exposes show the rapid and unplanned urbanization of the city. There is a view of the geographic growth that has extended to the mountains where public services are not always available. Signs of graffiti are visible as they enter the city. The house of Silvio in comparison to the *narco* mansion of the Verdugo demonstrates the extremes of different socio economic statuses. These images portray an uneven city and the radical inequality that the citizens face.

“Welcome to Juarez” are the words from Alejandro to Kate as they enter the city and first see the display of bodies hanging off a bridge, dismembered bodies next to a *narco* message written on a big canvas. Kate evidently appears horrified by the images. It is not just taking the lives of people, but the messages they are sending to different groups or the whole city. As they continue driving the audience can perceive pictures of many announcements of girls that have gone missing. The walls of Juarez reflect the everyday violence and the crisis people face as a normal way of life. As they are in the line to cross the border they become involved in a shooting and Kate is left clueless inside the vehicle. Evidently, she is being left outside of the plan and is being used to legitimize the war against the opposite cartels. Kate Macer has a different perspective of the legal and the illegal.

The first confrontation is precisely in the crossing, the place between the two countries, an anomic zone. It is no one’s land, no law, no one’s jurisdiction. “Like a demilitarized zone, [the border] is a space that is neither inside nor outside the juridical order, neither inside nor outside the sovereign claims of Mexico or the United States, but instead is a doubly constituted state of exception existing between both” (Acosta 226-27). The international police is acting not just outside the law, but openly colluding with the organized crime. The Colombian hit man and the American agents killed without hesitation the Hispanic members of the opposing cartels. This is the way to reestablish a certain form of order.

Kate is obviously impressed and not aware of the reality and complexity of the systematic violence that involves the drug cartels and their relationship to the Mexican and American government. “Unbelievable”, she continues to argue with Matt in their return to the states claiming that things were handled in an illegal way. In their return, Alejandro visits in jail the second in the Cartel of Sonora, Guillermo. He kills him and Kate views the city from the other side of the border and hears the gunshots, arms and bullets, and explosions as the next in hierarchies are fighting for the reorganization of power after the killing of one of the leaders.

“Unbelievable” she exclaims while still unaware of the current situations of unprecedented waves of violence and organized crime that cities like Juarez are facing as a way of life.

She continues to be confused by the situation. Upon their return to the United States she demands an explanation, but still does not get it from Matt Graver (Josh Brolin) who continues to act arrogantly toward her. They arrive at the office of Homeland Security, looking for information from the migrants that were detained crossing illegally. They want to talk to the people in “The Nogales” area. He wants to investigate the routes of the opposite Cartels. Therefore, he asks the illegal aliens how ways to cross have changed for different people. Migrants explain they must avoid the pathways and roads the cartels use to cross the drug to the United States or they would be kidnapped or killed if thought to be useless. Alejandro explains to Reggie Wayne (Daniel Kaluuya), Kate’s partner, and Kate what happens as they seek answers. They are looking for Fausto Alarcón. He tells them that “...people are kidnapped or killed with his blessing, to find him will be like finding the vaccine”. These migrants are those who will never make it to America; those who will become corpses that no one will claim. They represent those with no name, who are in a part of no country. Acosta states that they are... “forsaken or disavowed... not due to the direct application of either Mexican or U.S. law ---or though their negligence---but rather to the law’s absolute abandonment of life...” (229). Kate returns to the hotel to search in her computer trying to figure out the situation. The images of slaughters and mutilated bodies are all over the city.

Matt has a plan to freeze Manuel Díaz’s accounts. However, Kate believes this could give them a way to develop a case against him with proofs and prosecute him according to the law. Regarding of Matt’s advice, she goes into the bank and is recorded by the banks cameras. Evidently, the bank executives have a connection with the Manuel Díaz and have granted him protection for illicit and suspicious transactions for the past five years. As they meet with Jennings the supervisor they explain to her the plan to attack the money, the trust among their

crew. However, she still reluctant wanted to appeal to the legal system. “If your is operating outside of bounds, I am telling you, you are not! the boundary’s been moved”. Dave Jennings (Victor Gerber) represents the capacity to accommodate the lines of the jurisdiction and procedures of the application of the law. He allows, or he legalizes the illegal acts they need to perform to immunize the community. There is only so much violence that can be tolerated to preserve power. Therefore, one cartel that can be controlled is enough. The communities are then in a permanent state of exception which “...separates the norm from its application in order to make its application possible. It introduces a zone of anomie into the law in order to make the effective regulation...of the real possible” (Agamben, *State of 36*). They use the figure of Kate to legitimize the process inside the legal system and the figure of Alejandro to move outside the law to achieve their goals and reestablish their order. The collusion of the police and the drug lords in the American side of the border. “If you see a Mexican in a uniform consider him a bandit,” is only a symptom of the fracture sovereignty and the absence of a clear division between the crime and the legal.

As they continue to plan the capture of Fausto, the film portrays the resources they have, such as satellites, cameras, and technology that would allow them to arrest the drug lords anytime. However, the situation is not so simple. The idea is for the American government and Mexican government to induce a certain form of the ‘infection’ to protect the community from a harsher form of the same kind. That way the body of the community can neutralize the antibodies and avoid other pathological consequences (Esposito, *Immunitas 17*). Therefore, one Cartel is better than many out of control. The purpose and justification of ‘controllable’ crime is legitimized as the means to maintain the order.

As Alejandro finally arrives to Fausto’s residency he finds him having dinner with his family: “Every night you have families killed, and yet you dine; tonight is no different”. Violence and forms of violence have also been commoditized. Violence is a way to make a living, a way

to provide for a family, to make a career, and a way of life. Alejandro kills Fausto's family in front of him as a form of vengeance and then kills Fausto. Alejandro returns to the United States to ask Kate to sign a legal document "I need you to sign this piece of paper. It basically says that everything we did was done by the book". He needs her signature to legalize the illicit acts committed to reestablish the order in both countries in regards of the Cartel's war. Even though Kate hesitates, she knows there is no way out and finally signs. Alejandro recommends her to move to a small town, "...where there rule of law still exists..." The film ends with the image of Silvio's kid waiting for a father who will never come. However, the kid returns to the normal routine playing soccer in an abandoned wilderness land and listening to gunshots as merely a part of his normal daily life.

### **2666: The Femicides**

The Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño addresses the case of the femicides in Juarez in his posthumous novel 2666. The novel is composed of five sections, autonomous in their plots and scenarios, while intertwined by two main factors: the character Beño von Archimboldi and the femicides near the Mexican northern border. The five sections Bolaño writes unfold around Europe and Latin America. The narrative is conscious on the impact of globalization and the manipulation of metanarratives to establish an official western historiography. As Villalobos-Ruminott states, "[w]hat makes Latin American political history part of the saga (and vice versa) is war and violence, which are not accidental to the plot but its main topic" (*A Kind of 202*). The novel begins with four professors or writers who meet in a literature conference in Europe, Jean-Claude Pelletier (French), Piero Morini (Italian), Manuel Espinoza (Spaniard) and Liz Norton (English). The four of them are Literature professors. They are all interested in finding more about the life of the mysterious author Archimboldi. They pursue and follow his work and try to trace him to meet him personally. Three of these four intellectuals following Archimboldi's literary work travel all the way to the border of Mexico where they have heard he was last seen.

Morini decides to stay in Europe due to health issues. Norton eventually returns to Europe and only the other two stay in Santa Teresa. The search of the German writer Archimboldi is the topic the author uses to transfer back and forth around the globe always basing the novel on femicides in the northern border of Mexico. The author creates the city of Santa Teresa as the allegory of the City of Juarez. In the Part of Amalfitano, which is the second part, the critics end up in Santa Teresa. They learn there is a professor there who might have a connection to Archimboldi. They then decide to travel to Mexico and visit the university to contact this professor. This is how they meet Oscar Amalfitano, a Chilean professor of philosophy, that presumably knows the whereabouts of Archimboldi. However, the academic has had a difficult life, and it has obviously affected his mental health. He had previously lived in Spain and was abandoned by his wife Lola when their daughter Rosa was only two. His wife left him once she heard her favorite poet was in an intern in a mental hospital. She returns once and tells Amalfitano that she has a son in France and has become infected with AIDS. Amalfitano decides to leave Spain with his daughter Rosa and they move to Santa Teresa. The professor lives in constant fear for the life of his daughter. Every woman is at risk in Santa Teresa, the city of the femicides. Amalfitano shows signs of insanity evidently caused by living in constant fear. For instance, he hangs geometry books in an improvised line on his balcony. He has repetitive strange dreams about his father, and he is continuously reading the letters his wife Lola sends him. Nevertheless, Lola, his ex-wife, also appears to have lost her mind and wanders around the cemetery alone. Juárez is rated by some counts to be the most violent city in the world (Bowden 242). Bolaño portrays the lifestyles of the city's citizens and the impact the neoliberal order has had mainly on the women of Juarez during the late eighties and early nineties. Santa Teresa, then, is the place that "...smells like death..."<sup>23</sup> (Bolaño 753). The city embodies the problematic of the northern border in Mexico. González argues that the city of

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<sup>23</sup>Translation mine: "...huele a muerto..."

Juárez gave birth to four cities in one, and in a way, they embody the fragmentation of the postmodern: “the city as a northern Mexican border town/United States’ backyard, the city inscribed in the global economy, the city as a theater of operations for the war of drugs, and the femicide machine” (13). The proposal is that the killings of the women are systematic femicides, constitutive of the neoliberal policies. Corpses of women around the city, but mainly in the dumpsters reflect the disposable lives of these women, subalterns. They interrupt the discourse of modernity and job opportunity by exposing the other side of modernity. The mutilated bodies of the women are part of the common fear that is a constant in the community. The death of these women is part of the life of the city. The conclusion of the research of Rita Laura Segato is that the way these women are assassinated follows a consistent pattern. There is an agonizing sexual abuse and torture inflicted on the bodies of the victims before they are killed. The mutilated bodies are then exposed in specific locations or abandoned in dumpsters. The motive of these crimes is not only to demonstrate power, or the sexual abuse, but the victim turns into the very symbol of a sacrifice where her will is taken through the abuse of her body. Her complete power and will are taken in a sovereign way while the victim is subdued through violence and torture. These killings then are developed in the form of a ritual. Segato proposes that the ritualistic killings are intended to consummate or seal a pact among distinct levels of power. This act and the participation in it of the males involved will then guarantee a silence and the unbreakable union among the members of these types of fraternities. The participants and accomplices of these crimes become lifetime members and collaborate to perpetuate their power in the zone untouchable by any formal legal system as this violence invests them with full authority and power. Therefore, it is suggested that these femicides are part of a language. The message of these language is that of power, and hierarchy outside and above the legal system. The bodies of the women are used to communicate and reestablish the actual authority and the expansion of a system parallel to the social contract (8-11). Santa Teresa, therefore, embodies the geopolitical territory that has implemented a bio-political government and the law

outside the law is written in the bodies of the women (González 29). The question develops around the right to speak. It is in the separation of noise and logos where the construction of power continues to be executed over other groups in the community. Those who are capable of sending a message are entitled with a form of power. The women who are the workers of the factories along the Mexican northern border, *las morenitas*<sup>24</sup>, are the main victims of the femicides. There is a key factor in the understanding of the development of the concept of multiculturalism. The case of Juarez, or Santa Teresa is the embodiment of the forms neoliberal violence, and the use of the term multiculturalism as the perfect ideological form to maintain a system of oppression. The arrival of the transnationals brought jobs that attracted mainly indigenous women from the southern parts of Mexico or Central America. It has been claimed and celebrated as a concept of unity and solidarity. However, the perpetuation of this idea has reinforced the different contemporary ways of slavery, segregation, oppression and uprooting. Žižek would explain this concept of multiculturalism as "...the hybrid coexistence of diverse cultural life-world- which imposes itself today is the form of appearance of its opposite..." (*Multiculturalism* 46). The transnational power is the new form of colonization and the reason to bring the *maquilas* to the border of Mexico is not a random decision to offer jobs and equality to the women in the country, but is intended to maintain a system that benefits only the colonizer, in this case the transnational power. Fanon's theory still applies as Mexico faces a kind of complex systematic colonization. He indicates this construction of the colonized subject was used to continue to extract more wealth from the colonies. "...[T]he colonist is right when he says he 'knows' them. It is the colonist who fabricated and continues to fabricate the colonized subject. The colonist derives his validity, i.e., his wealth, from the colonial system" (2). The construction of the subject by the foreigner allows for the myth of multiculturalism while hiding what Fanon calls a "compartmentalized world". The women that work in these transnationals have grown under a patriarchal ideology. They will work hard and are used to obeying males

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<sup>24</sup> Translation mine: Referring to women of dark skin color

without much complain. They will double their forces to maintain the family's economic and over all well-being. Most of these women, migrants from the southern rural parts of Mexico will work hard in the companies accepting almost any condition regardless of the pay or benefits. Besides, they will not neglect the housework and responsibility in raising the children. Regardless of the adversity, they are likely to be thankful for the opportunity to work outside the house with their husbands' permission.

Bolaño dedicates the fourth chapter to the femicides of Santa Teresa. In this part, the author narrates individually many of the femicides occurring in Santa Teresa since 1993. The author describes the violence inflicted with impunity on the bodies of these women. It is understood that being a woman in Juarez, or in Santa Teresa, is a synonym of being a target to being tortured, killed, raped and mutilated. The order of these actions can vary. Ironically the language of this chapter used to describe the deaths of the women recalls forensic files, although most crimes will never be prosecuted, and most victims will become part of the anonymous corpses in the morgues. Bolaño places violence as the only means of inclusion in society of these victims; violence is also the link among the chapters, which are mostly independent, provoking a de-narrativization. As previously noted by Villalobos-Ruminott, in this fourth chapter, the first victim is found in a dumpster named *El Chile*. The victims found in a dumpster are a metaphor for their lack of value, as waste being one of the principal characteristics of their already bare lives, and another metaphor could allude to what already has been indicated by Harvey as the country of Chile was the first experiment of a neoliberal state. It is not by chance that Bolaño selected Santa Teresa, or Juárez, as the setting of 2666, and as the place in which the literary professors end up. Professors of four different European countries end in an anomic sphere, in a land of no jurisdiction looking for literature. Therefore, the proposal is again the place of literature, as well, as everything else or everybody else inhabits in an anomic sphere with not much force of resistance. Santa Teresa, an anomic place

significantly located “in between,” on the border of Mexico and the United States, one of the busiest borders of the world. In Agamben’s words, every society chooses who their *homine sacri* will be, (*Homo*, 139), and women are the target in Juarez. “They are not prostitutes, they are proletarians”<sup>25</sup> (Bolaño 701) Santa Teresa, or Juarez is the place with the lowest rate of unemployment for women. The desert of the northern border is the sphere where the law can be suspended in the middle of both countries. Žižek states, “crisis is becoming a way of life...the result of a neoliberal economy that opens the doors for transnational power” (*Liberal*).

### **South Border: *Fila India***

*Fila India* by Antonio Ortuño focuses on themes around the waves of migration from Central America. The southern border Ortuño uses as the main scenario of these novel portrays the reality of those subalterns outside of Mexico. Ortuño describes the corruption of the Mexican state, but mainly the inheritance of a racist ideology against indigenous or darker people that Mexico has not been able to eradicate from their system and mentality. Thus, Mexican society is an excellent example of the phenomenon noted by, Žižek, who describes “...one’s direct identification with a particular culture which renders one intolerant towards other cultures” (*Tolerance* 1). The novel describes the corruption of Mexican institutions such as the National Commission of Migrants (CONAMI). CONAMI is responsible for receiving and following up on the individual cases of southern migration and facilitate the proper legal procedures while the decision on the immigration status is made. However, in *Fila India* we learn that the reality is often otherwise through the main character Irma. Irma is a social worker who moves to Santa Rita, a city in the south border of Mexico, probably in Chiapas. She is not with her husband, which is obviously a disadvantage in a patriarchal society. She moves down there with her seven-year-old daughter. As she immerses herself in her job, she realizes the contradictory discourse of the organization. CONAMI is participating in the kidnapping of Central

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<sup>25</sup> Translation mine: “*No son prostitutas, son obreras*” (Bolaño 701)

American migrants. Furthermore, the author develops the argument of the forms of racism and discrimination that are latent and have always been present among Hispanics. “And their acceptance of the indigenous features, which was never all that great to begin with, is decreasing” (Ortuño 146)<sup>26</sup>. Racism has been part of the culture in Mexico since its foundation, and it has never been eradicated. It continues to be a form of segregation and subalternization, not just of indigenous groups, but anyone with darker skin. There are pejorative comments, jokes and other practices of racism that are not always subtle, but that represent an obvious sign of power over a vulnerable group.

Besides skin color, there is discrimination against any migrant from Central America. “We are not gringos. But we are not like them either, like those Central Americans. Raise your hands those of you who would be proud to be confused with a Honduran?” (Ortuño 52)<sup>27</sup>. There are constant references throughout the novel that emphasize the racism toward and rejection of anyone with indigenous features. These migrants from Central America are part of the waves of migration around the globe. “...[I]t is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to” (Fanon 5). The issue of race was used to legitimize the imperial domination and the forced labor in the New World (Moraña 9). And this is the same in current times. Irma realizes that the CONAMI is complicit with the kidnapping and trafficking of migrants. As many others, she is unable to make sense of the brutal situation lived every day in this anomic sphere.

Ortuño in *Fila India*, elaborates on a narrative that develops around some abominations that take place near the southern border of Mexico. The novel reflects the cruelty from the

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<sup>26</sup> Translation mine: “Y su aceptación de los rasgos indígenas, que nunca fue demasiada, va en descenso” (Ortuño 146).

<sup>27</sup> Translation mine: “No somos gringos, pues. Pero tampoco somos como ellos, como los centroamericanos. Que levanten la mano quienes se consideran dignos de ser confundidos con hondureños” (Ortuño 52).

Mexican military and government, inflicted on the South American migrants. These migrants from the southern countries, mainly Central America, must face the horror of crossing a border all over again in the northern border. Nonetheless, the author develops an argument that stresses the strong racism and impunity from the Mexicans against the Central Americans. Regardless of the cultural similarities among Hispanics, the common trait seems to be a general racism against the natives, or any one with darker skin color or native features. Ortuño brings to light a picture of the southern border and the horrific circumstances these people must endure to enter the country illegally, just to do it all over again in the northern border. Ortuño carefully describes the atrocities inflicted on the bodies and corpses of these migrants. It is not just a matter of killing them and abandoning or dismembering their bodies, but a matter of taking their lives. There is humiliation and their will is completely taken away from them as they are tortured before being assassinated. There is no one and nothing available to provide any type of defense for them. They are not citizens of Mexico nor citizens of the United States and their citizenship from their own country fails to protect them. They have been abandoned by any formal legal system since they were in their homeland. Regardless of the geographic location, they are vulnerable, and any formal law is "...being enforced without significance" (Agamben, *Homo* 60). The illegal crossing of borders reduces them to the simplest law of bare survival. The lives of these South American migrants with no land nor identity is reduced to bare life. They become the excess of the society that is not in any way recognized as a possessor of any inalienable rights of human beings. It is known that migrants from Central America fear crossing the southern border of Mexico more than entering the United States illegally "...because it is Mexicans themselves who have sown horror on your way; they control all the routes to access. Once you are over there, congratulations! Breath deep: now the horror is on behalf of the gringos" (Ortuño 87)<sup>28</sup>. Their journey to the American dream is not only interrupted by the

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<sup>28</sup> Translation mine: "...porque los mismos mexicanos que han sembrado de espantos tu

Mexican border patrol, but their bodies become the object where violence of a complex system becomes tangible. The atrocities described in the novel, inflicted to these migrants, of mainly indigenous descent could be said to experience a true abandonment, as these victims of the system are truly abandoned since there is no hope for “law and destiny” in their lives whatsoever (Agamben, *Homo* 60).

### **The Dialectics of the Community**

These texts depict the characters as *homine sacri*. They reinforce the understanding of the situation of the lives of many victims of neoliberal violence. The cultural texts evolve around the theory of the undoing of the community. “The law of the community is inseparable from the law, debt or guilt” (Esposito, *Community* 15). The scenarios in these texts consist of the imagery of horror, mutilated bodies, detailed descriptions of unthinkable torture, and characters living under precarious situations. These texts suggest the relationship that exists between them and the imagery of horror involved in the meticulous narrative of the assassinations and torture that is currently a part of the rupture of the community in general. The characters “...inhabit the margin between what we owe and what we can do...so that when we do attempt to construct, realize, or effect community, we inevitably end up turning into its exact opposite- a community of death and the death of the community (Esposito, *Community* 15). These texts emphasize not just the process of taking life, but also the importance of the establishment of power by taking the victim’s dignity and will and the dismembering of the bodies or the perception of the corpses as trash. According to Villalobos-Ruminott, “...all hegemonic configuration is preceded, inhabits and determined by a non-hegemonic moment, in which bare life...is administered and

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camino controlan todas las rutas de acceso. Una vez allá, felicidades. Respira hondo: el horror ya corre por cuenta de los gringos” (Ortuño 87).

oppressed”<sup>29</sup> (*Literatura y ley* 5). These lives support the argument of the excess of a community, and its undoing. The community is formed by its own opposite concept of immunity. These lives are disposable and thus face an inevitable destiny of being killed; then, even after death, their bodies are used to foster fear and inscribe messages of power. In the other side, there is a presence of these atrocities as part of the aesthetic. Pain and suffering are presented not just as a way of life, but they are also aestheticized whether there is an audience or not. “Torment, a canonical subject in art, is often represented in painting as spectacle, something being watched or ignored by other people” (Sontag 42). This aspect is considering to revalue the posture of literature, and its contribution to the production and naturalization of the spectacle of violence. This refers to the association or liaison that the aesthetics has developed over time with the modes of production. Horror and violence are personified and in the cultural texts. Violence itself becomes a commodity, and culture acts partially as an accomplice to its perpetuation. There is a constant double bind and complex effort of the aesthetic. On one hand, they represent and reflect what the community is facing. They produce a resistance by showing a disruption to the discourse of stability and peace. They do portray what the state is attempting to cover. However, an aesthetic is still present within and regardless of the horrifying tortures and killings.

The creators of these texts seem to realize that there is an urgent need to develop different and alternate forms of resistance that will promote genuine possibilities to destroy the barriers of oppression in the society. The society, as it is, has been built on its very opposite concept of immunity. In other words, there is no community without immunity. Immunity is not a category that can be separated from the community. Community is constituted by immunity and it cannot be eliminated. The immunity system is described as a form of a military dispositive form, both defensive and offensive. It rejects everything that is not recognized as its own, and

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<sup>29</sup> Translation mine

therefore destroys it. However, it allows a certain amount of the Other that is manageable by the circles of power (Esposito, *Immunitas* 28-9) This kind of system reinforces the structures that marginalize and exclude the vulnerable and subaltern groups under the myths of possibilities, freedom and even advancement. This kind of politics in the community is "...first constitut[ed] through an exclusion (which is simultaneously an inclusion) of bare life" (Agamben, *Homo* 7) These myths are created and then perpetuated by the state apparatus, including the aesthetics. The current contexts, where everything becomes a commodity, leaves the impression that there is no area left from where resistance is completely autonomous and genuine, although the danger is based not just on the forms developed by the institutions that perpetuate a logic of exclusion, but on the belief that the structures of counter power and resistance have been and still are contributing to strengthen these barriers that have promoted segregation and the precarization of life. These cultural texts expose the levels of violence, its adjustments and its transformation, but they also portray the very own commodification of violence itself. The production of death and corpses has reached the aesthetics. There is then a co-belonging with horror and death; they become a spectacle. The imagery of dismembered bodies acts as an allegory for the necessity for a real rearticulation of the body of the community.

The texts coincide in specific details of different ways of inflicting death, in killing, in taking life in the most atrocious manners. The authors provide narratives that as a main objective reproduce the horrific sensation of visualizing the details of torture on the human body. The descriptions of violence and pain are a constant; torture, mutilated bodies, femicides, forced migrations, contemporary forms of slavery and extreme poverty are some of the examples the community faces. It is the inevitable destiny of the aesthetics as well as everything else to become a commodity. Everything else reproduces death, literature itself has not been exempt from the production of corpses as it is the logic of the economic system. The state, as González suggests, has become "a femicide machine, a killing machine," producing corpses and a broken

community. The texts themselves appear to be unable to reproduce what the society is facing, the dismembering of the body. The novels, just as the state, emulate consciously or unconsciously the production of corpses.

The representation of the bodies in the texts attempt to account for the victims of violence in the northern and southern borders of Mexico. Nevertheless, this also demonstrates a correlation of the aesthetics and the production of corpses. As Villalobos-Ruminott has suggested “[t]he juridical corpus and the literary corpus co-belong in the same bio-political operation... the new forms of law are “inscribed in the bodies and the corpses reappear in literature” (*Ontología* 7). These imageries can bring to light what “has no business being seen”. They expose of course in the first place that the society is living in postmodern times. They also present the audience with an obviously fragmented community and a fragmented system that has failed to support its country’s needs; they also depict characters who are fragmented and lack the theoretical sophistication to understand their environment. Literature on the one side is achieving its goal acting as a reflection of the society. It reflects the issues of horror, death and inescapable poverty in the constant class struggle, challenging the status quo of the state’s narrative. Nevertheless, the imagery of the detailed processes of torture, extreme and unthinkable ways of assassination that the victims undergo support the argument of the co belonging of literature and horror. As we discussed in the previous chapter, there is certainly a part for the possibility of the naturalization of violence on behalf of literature and its complicity. Nonetheless, the focus now is on the actual production of corpses and death on behalf of the aesthetic. Art is not producing life; it is not giving birth to a new way. Literature is not producing a new answer to escape the fragmentation of the community, but the stress must be put on the awareness on the texts themselves of these barriers that have been imposed and acquired by the aesthetics under the belief that they act as resistance. This is the very act of politics and rebellion produced from the power literature has left. The constant thinking and rethinking that

cultural texts cannot account anymore for the type and levels of violence lived in the community. The bodies, body parts and organs portrayed in these texts represent the necessity of the bodies to be free. The dismembered corpses are the very own allegory of the body of the community that has been dismembered. However, the texts do provide a side of hope. The texts portray a body of a dying community still seeking for the body without organs that will think and live outside the subjectivities that has kept them under the restrictions of their own well-being and working against their own interest regardless of their condition. Patriarchal, class and race systems have worked jointly through a platform, ideology and state apparatus to maintain a segregation of different subaltern groups. They have facilitated the acceptance of aspects such as gender, class and race subjectivity that will keep certain groups in a dead end. These circumstances have assured the repression of the desires of most people under the false belief of options and free alternatives. The subaltern groups in society have not been able to become emancipated but have kept moving towards a darker area of invisibility. Regardless of the apparent efforts in discourses of equality, justice, freedom and opportunity the corpses reflect a disruption of this created reality. The texts present us with characters that portray roles in a community that has developed contemporary forms to maintain them in a zone where they do not truly belong anywhere, and the law is not a resource for justice or even human rights, but a means to legally maintain them in a state of mere survival. The ways of migration, the uprooting of places where there is nothing but fear, death and starvation have made the concept of citizenship and cultural identity ambiguous terms. However, citizenship implies rights and benefits and this is what these "citizens" of nowhere are lacking. They are orphans of the law and of the father country, the father sovereign. The focus on these texts is on the borders of Mexico, the northern and southern. The border implies leaving and entering new forms of legality, rights, risks and identity. As they rapidly become the citizens of nowhere, invisible, without legal protection. They are the victims that are under the category of "*no nombre*"(NN) "no names," as the Mexican government labels them in the morgue. These bodies then form

part of the large stack of files that will not even have a trial to seek punishment for the guilty victimizers.

The readings of the texts selected provide narratives, imagery and language that demonstrate a complicity to the system and the impossibility to be fully a form of resistance. Narrative, language, terminology, categories have been embedded into a system of repression. The literature will be utilized to establish the argument of the embodiment of the neoliberal violence mainly through the effects of massive waves of migration, femicides and the missing bodies in Mexico. In the other hand, they also put into tension the state and cultural texts as they are aware of the need to reinvent genuine forms of resistance in late capitalism.

The texts open a perspective and question their own work as they recognize their double bind. Texts are reproducing what the state does by producing corpses. They present the necessity to reorganize the body of the community based on a different foundation than its own destruction as a form of constitution. The texts acknowledge the need to create new categories, language and terms to provoke a real political work that will produce a space for true resistance. This situation is what needs to remain in the debate floor to avoid the mirage of freedom or opposition while working against the real form of emancipation. The understanding of the process of globalization affected the intensification of poverty and its transition as it is described in Sassen's work. Globalization does not mean anything other than to possess the resources to eliminate distance (Sloterdijk 2041-42). Sergio González in his book *El hombre sin cabeza*, describes in detail some of the new techniques acquired by the criminal groups in México that demonstrate the levels of intensification of violence. The important matter is not that many of these techniques are learned from other parts of the world, but the anomic setting in which they are taking place and the predominant figure of the *Homo Sacer*; who can be killed while this killing will remain unpunished. Returning to Agamben, the violence here on behalf of the state

relies in its ability to suspend it (*Homo* 64), by not protecting the former and impunity for the latter.

### Language and Noise

The transition of the national state into the neoliberal order has made evident the exhaustion of the meaning of language as “[i]n the current order of global accumulation it is becoming increasingly obvious that words such as ‘nation’, ‘the people’, ‘development’ or ‘national culture’ can no longer mean what they used to mean in Latin America. The notion of subalternity in this context also is at its epistemological limit (Williams, *The Other Side* 11)<sup>30</sup>. Therefore, the repeated notion of silence, amnesia, unrecognizable corpses, victims with no names in the novels needs to be highlighted as it demonstrates not just the obvious psychological or emotional state people are facing because of the violence and a government of surveillance, but as Acosta states “...silence (like orality) is contained within the semiotic system of Western literacy as a marker of subordination, nothing more” (173).

As Villalobos-Ruminott states, “It is not that the literature is unable to describe accurately the sufferings of the subalterns but that language does not suffice to describe the brutal conditions of a history without redemption” (*Ontología* 2).<sup>31</sup> The novels recognize the subordination of the people by their need to remain silent but beyond that they are recognizing the impossibility of the traditional narrative and even literature to give account and make sense of the current acts of violence in the country. There is no narrative for that; there is no language to resist. That is the very act of resistance the works portray, the recognition of their own participation in the perpetuation of the order and their power is in the exhibition of their

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<sup>30</sup> Williams defines subalternity as “the name for the multifarious points of excess within the national and postnational histories of Latin America developmentalist. It is the limit at which hegemonic narratives and dominant modes of social and intellectual reproduction encounter their points of radical unworkability” (Williams, *The Other Side* 11).

<sup>31</sup> Translation mine

powerless. Acosta explains the importance of the understanding of the definitions politics and the police order that Rancière differentiated, and the relationship they have with speech as a form of power and oppression. He states that “[P]olitics constitutes a semiological confrontation over the very terms of the current social order (which he [Rancière] calls police), a critical emplotment where the capacity for speech- that is, the distinction between “noise” and “discourse”- is reveals as constitutive in or of political life” (Acosta 187).

Therefore, intellectuals also propose a decolonial turn in Latin America that began primarily with the work of Anibal Quijano and Walter D. Mignolo. Their thesis argues the necessity to expose the hidden or darker side of modernity. Modernity according to them could not occur without a form of coloniality. Quijano suggests that there is a colonial matrix of power that is contending in a global context for global colonies. This matrix of power controls the economy, authority, gender and sexuality, and knowledge and subjectivity. Mignolo believes that this is the foundation of the structure of Western civilization. Global modernity is constituted through the formation of global colonies only. The theory exposes the two sides of globalization, modernity and coloniality, the response to this narrative and logic for them must be decolonization. The matrix of power control as they indicate has been internalized first through theological philosophy and then through secular philosophy, being reinforced by a patriarchal culture. Therefore, what decolonialists propose is a “delinking from this colonial matrix to open decolonial options- a vision of life and society that requires decolonial subjects, decolonial knowledges, and decolonial institutions” (Mignolo 9). Decolonialism again tries to expose the consistence of the Western to acquire control over knowledge, and their methods of extraction of the natural resources of Latin America for the sustainability of their own market, incorporating also men as a commodity. Mignolo traces a transformation of this colonial matrix of power in the past five hundred years, and the euphoric rhetoric of modernity as a salvation and civilization to invite us to an analysis of coloniality (decolonial thinking) that will hopefully “[get] us out of the

mirage of modernity and the trap of coloniality” (17). One of the hidden logics of coloniality exposed by Mignolo is the notion of the double standard of the rhetoric of modernity through notions such as human rights, freedom, and democracy. In a capitalist world, freedom first could only be possible if one is alive, and that is currently one of the main struggles since security is a severe issue in borderlands of Mexico. Secondly the notion of democracy becomes very relative when there is a limit within the same options. For instance, he exemplifies freedom to choose to vote for someone who will use the vote against the people. Freedom to choose one’s own destiny is a similar matter, as the ability to choose a job is framed with only the choices of wage labor.

The theory argues that development does not automatically lead to freedom and it claims that it promotes the economic as the only way of happiness. Mignolo proposes a delinking through the “inventions of decolonial visions and horizons, concepts and discourses, which is what Evo Morales as well as the Zapatistas and other indigenous movements are doing” (312). Beverly would argue in opposition that this ‘decolonial’ thinking believes in the possibility to represent the voice of the subaltern from the academic institutionalized point of view. However, Villalobos-Ruminott goes further, questioning this theory even beyond these academic matters and what he sees is again the exhaustion and the limit of the ability to account for the fights for decolonization and emancipation and to find that “more and more we encounter reconstructive, regressive and contractual readings, that lack purposeful radicalness”<sup>32</sup> (*Crítica* 4). Villalobos-Ruminott enumerates five presuppositions that define the theory and seem pertinent to include. They visualize the areas of opportunities of the decolonial theory. First, the fundamental condition of rupture, the dewesterization, the false sameness between the concepts of modernity and capitalism, the radicalization of the indigenous, and a reformulation of the relationship of theory and practice. These presuppositions that contradict

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<sup>32</sup> Translation mine

the processes of precisely independent thinking are supposedly proposed by decolonial thinking. These are thoughts that have been all along the foundations of “coloniality and oppression” (Villalobos-Ruminott, *Crítica* 4-6) and therefore reproduce more of the same, and prove their inability to advance to a more radical thought. “[T]hese ties in which there is no longer a single master discourse capable of mapping out a new path for our understanding of self, society, or for that matter, the world” (Williams, *The Other Side* 3). Beginning with the concept of nation state and sovereignty, any narrative that is being made from the hegemonic precepts of power becomes a useless tool if it does not consider the biopolitical situation, the politization of bare life, the neoliberal order currently in place or the mechanism of power of this era.

The texts invite for the continuation of the discussion on concepts such as the subaltern, and the evolvement of their relationship with the aesthetics. They propose an analysis of the relations of power as well as the construction of colonial and postcolonial subjectivities that have been perpetuated against the best interest of the subalterns. These circumstances are masked by a discourse of inclusion, aided by the forms of narratives created by power structures. These texts that present the transformation of violence and the commodification of language and the aesthetic seek to regain and reclaim a history and a culture that was appropriated and narrativized “into logic” and for the interest of the West. They offer the possibilities to read the counter hegemonic cultural practices. They are looking for possibilities and expressions of resistance available in the community. These texts hope to make visible processes that history has tried to make seem natural, and therefore reclaim the position of the aesthetics.

The hopes must be geared to construct an alternative based on the realization that there is a necessity to change the strategy regarding the techniques of the aesthetics, and to revalue their position as an authentic and semi-autonomous counter power. The importance of the

political work of art that seeks a true democracy and inclusion, and a reconstruction of the society is partially based on the understanding of the historical functioning of language as a form of segregation and oppression. This is an essential step for literature or any cultural texts as language is the main tool to contest and defy a systematic oppression. The distinction between logos and noise, speech and noise has become into a form of segregation and power rather than a bridge with the means of translation. Rancière adds that “politics exists because the logos is never simple speech, because it is always indissolubly in the account that is made of speech: the account by which is sonorous emission is understood as speech, capable of enunciation what is just whereas some other emission is merely perceived as a noise signaling pleasure and pain, consent or revolt” (*Disagreement* 22-23).

Language itself has also served as a form of power, and therefore it has aided in the segregation of those who cannot speak. Therefore, there must be a detachment from the institutions of production of knowledge to foster true freedom of thought within the community. The revision and reevaluation of the effects that has been thought to be canonical obligatory literary or philosophical texts could be or reproduced a false sense of opposition. The history of philosophy, without exception, has been nothing by illusory systems used to develop forms of power (Storlidjik 90-92). These cultural texts attempt to provide a voice for those who are not part of the system. They try to testify for the inequality and exclusion they suffer. The texts disrupt the narrative of peace, but also the historiography Latin American aesthetics has in a way perpetuated. In other words, this is similar to what Edward Said had suggested in his theory about the Orient. Latin America has also been an idea, a representation that obeys a tradition that serves a circle of power. It presents a one-sided perspective of the exoticism of a history to the eyes of the world and the national identity. However, Latin America also has a “brute reality”, one that cannot be fully understood without also understanding their configurations of power (1801-2). This is also the process the Mexican History has undergone,

a system of knowledge that has permeated through the subjectivities in the Mexican culture. This process has not only served the Mexican government, but the global imperialism that masks the continuation of forms of oppression under a nationalistic myth of a historical revolution. Therefore, texts must always remain under a holistic “hybrid” perspective, attending to the genre and historical period and context to” ... study other cultures and people from a libertarian, non repressive and nonmanipulative perspective” (Said 1813-14). The texts no longer present an exotic colorful country. There is no magic in these texts. The horror and unthinkable actions committed in both borders are part of the processes of the continuation to execute unfair forms of power. The texts present a rebellious act from the exoticism created to please a Western perspective. They no longer cover with mysticism the dynamics of a system that expels their own people. The reduction of state intervention has developed a crisis of the State, this crisis has contributed to the emergence of the parallel state. The lines between legal and illegal are not clear and people who lack protection just try to survive on an everyday basis. People who cannot be part of the economic system become walking corpses, whose assassinations will most likely remain unpunished. There is no one to account for these people. In the process of transition from different economic systems, everything has turned into a commodity. There is no one who can defeat a system without contributing to its perpetuation in a way. However, although the commodification of the State, the *narco*, the violence and even the aesthetics are symptoms of the neoliberal system, the texts offer a detachment from the forms of knowledge production. The texts attempt to distant themselves from a folkloric Mexican narrative to detailed how the parallel law is being inscribed in the bodies of the victims.

### **Nomos of the body**

According to Rancière:

“symbolic distribution of bodies...those that one sees and those that one does not see, those who have logos – memorial speech, an account to be kept up- and those who

have no logos... They do not speak because they are beings without a name, deprived of logos – meaning, of symbolic enrolment in the city.... whoever is nameless cannot speak” (*Disagreement* 22-23).

The depiction of the corpses as part of the scenarios pertain to the authors’ argument on the effort of the literature to contribute to the deterritorialization of the bodies. In general, the bodies that constitute the body of the community seek their reorganization to emancipate themselves from the repressive institutions. The geographical areas of the borders are present in the literature chosen, as they represent the physical scenario to convey the clear idea of the lack of belonging and ambivalence on their citizenship status. Many migrants arrive to the borders without ever crossing it, and remain in as foreigners of their own country.

In the novel *2666*, in *The Part of the Critics*, Liz Norton, the English academic, describes a story to Morini while they are having lunch in a touristic neighborhood in London in an occasional rendezvous. The neighborhood was famous for the painters who lived there who were attracted to the site due a legend. Liz Norton narrates the story of John Edwin, a painter who was known for amputating his hand and gluing it on one of his self-portrait paintings. Apparently, the painter had already thought out his plan. He cut off his right hand, the one he used to paint. He then put a tourniquet on and took the hand to a taxidermist who he knew and was aware of his plan. Then, he arrives to the hospital and tells the doctors it was an accident. They asked where the hand was to figure out a way to re attach it to his body. However, he lies and tells them he had thrown his hand to the river out of rage. Later, his wife believes John Edwin has lost his mind and takes him to Auguste Demarre, a mental hospital in Switzerland. Norton seems interested in this legend, and Morini, seeking to impress her, finds the painter in Switzerland and pays him a visit without Norton. He inquired about the reason for his decision for self-mutilation. Edwin first states that he (himself) is not an artist and then secretly tells him the reason. Morini returns to Norton to tell her he finally found out the reason for his amputation. “He did it for money”, stated Morin. Johns’ paintings were sold to exorbitant prices and his last

self-portrait was bought by an Arabian who worked for the stock market. This pretends to reinforce the necessity of the body parts, the parts, the organs of the community to re-organize themselves in a manner that is free from imposed ideologies, from unintelligible messages that have maintained them on a task of suppression and dehumanization. The action also communicates the longing for aesthetics to become a part of the body, an extension of it and the hand that is still connected with the production of the art, with the production of the resistance regardless of the reality. The joining of the two, the art and the body, rejects the assemblage that exists with the human bodies and the machines, the repetitive works that have dehumanized labor, but it intends to territorialize the ensemble of the forces, of the body and the aesthetics, that have been disconnected. This goes along with the theory of the inscription of the literature in the bodies and the bodies themselves as part of the literature. The massive killings of women and migrants emphasize the inability of the state to provide the right to live with dignity to its citizens. The state, "has failed" to include all its inhabitants as citizens with equal rights and benefits (Williams). Citizenship confers benefits and duties. Per the Constitution, all Mexican citizens have certain theoretical rights, but these rights do not materialize for many citizens. The victims of the killings become the new spaces on which to inscribe and re-write the actual law that is based on the monopoly of authority through the most aberrant forms of violence. The message delivered through the dismembering of the bodies is that this violence goes beyond mere murder. There is a process of taking the life, taking the will and complete dehumanization of the victim. The sovereign outside the formal legal frames makes it clear that life and will to give and let live or let die belongs to him. It is not just the power of killing and not being punished, it is not just the claim of the impunity present in Mexico, but the presence and re-articulation of the forms of power that inscribe their hierarchies on the bodies of the people that are proved to still be worthless and an excess of the community. However, it is this same argument that the texts are using with the imagery of the body parts to reclaim a way of justice and democracy. The allegory to the necessity to a reorganization of the

organs of the community, a call for an actual movement that will provide are making of the social contract which is in crisis. The texts, and their imagery of pain, horror, and torture, also provide their protest against the system. The parallel law is inscribed as messages in the bodies of the victims as Segato suggests, however, the aesthetics are providing a space to re-inscribe these corpses in their narratives.

## **Conclusion**

The texts *Sicario*, *2666* and *Fila India* depict the lives and experiences of uprooted peasants, criminals or anyone unable to join the economic exchange. Their stories facilitate the understanding of the metamorphosis of violence "...that yesterday facilitated freedom at home is today facilitating a creeping unfreedom" (Asad15). These waves of migration are the result of a system that is failing to integrate holistically all the members of its society. The state kills only those who are legitimately killable and brings the concept of violence out of the contours of politics to put it into the "war" arena. This way it can justify and legitimize its acts and violence becomes war, a legitimate form of violence. Common fear is what is holding the community together. This, according to Esposito results in "...nothing but communal servitude, or the exact opposite of community. Community is precisely what is sacrificed on the altar of individual self-preservation" (*Community* 16).

It is not the denunciatory practices of the state, but the complex clues that rise to the surface of the texts to sense a self-awareness of the re-production of what the state is producing. The production of death, corpses and body parts is written all over the texts implicitly or explicitly. Cultural presents itself as an institution conscious of the end of its efficacy as a separate institution of counter power. And this is precisely where the resistance of the intellectuals and literature resides, in the awareness and comprehension of the complexity of its position. Ironically and pragmatically both, there is an understanding of the narrative in a

different sense, from the perspective of the complicity it has had with the states meta-narratives to fulfill a historical myth of a false freedom and ability to criticize, challenge and resist. The cultural texts provide a self-critique of the damage that has been done to Latin American by perpetuating a sense of mysticism and exoticism. As stated before, in his book *Orientalism*, Said makes this argument of the creation of the Orient (which is basically everywhere outside Western Europe, North America, and Australia) as "...an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West" (5). Said claims it is impossible to study a civilization without understanding the structure of power and therefore their production of knowledge, in the political, intellectual and cultural areas. According to Said, Orientalism in this case Hispanic culture has to do less with the Orient (Hispanics) and more with the West, and the way intellectuals and artists position themselves and their art within the hegemonic Western structure. The idea and the spread of the idea of the superiority of the West in entire fields of studies demonstrate the cultural imperialism currently lived in the global world. This to create room for an emergence of something new from within and outside the categories and language already unable to escape the repressive forms. As there is not efficacy anymore, but the opposite in the representation of the characters of the novels. Although they are certainly *homo sacer*, and there is a visualization of the current unacceptable situation, this must not be approached with a nihilist approach and the naïveté of a simple awareness of violence and corruption. There is a claim from the texts of the necessity and almost an ultimatum for the search to produce noises and mechanism to genuinely produce modes of resistance and the re-organization of the bodies, and their body parts, individually and collectively to reconstruct the perspectives under true freedom and democracy. "The political moment, in other words, suspends the distinction between noise and discourse and conditions the possibility for emergence of another semiotic ordering" (Acosta 193-4). The actual rebellious and political work of these texts relies on the assumption of a self (text) awareness of their own complicity with current oppressions, and even with the seal of the mirage of them

being emerging from a zone of freedom to resist. However, the very realization of this is already a step toward the development of new forms that will challenge the *status quo* free of manipulative discourses, whether they come from dissidence or the state. The corpses, the dismembered bodies, are displayed all over these anomic geographical spaces. And the political work of the cultural texts re-inscribes them throughout the imagery. Again, as Rancière had pointed out, the politics consists of making visible what was not, in listening to those who have speech and those who were only considered to be animals (*Sobre Políticas* 15). The corpses can't become invisible even though new forms are now being developed to vanish them. Death is present in literature as imprinted in their pages and imagery, as they're on canvas, as a method also to re write the force of law. Thus, according to Villalobos-Ruminott such novels "disclose the anomic condition of global war and point to the undecided situation of a general interregnum within contemporary imperial reason" (*A Kind of Hell* 202).

Literature has not been excluded from the culture of death, not as in the objective of reflecting society's life, or presenting a critique, but as possibly encountering death itself, victim of the state, without life, subjected to the system in part. The actual point is the evidence of the failure to describe accurately the lives of those oppressed, of the levels of violence. These cultural texts aimed to prove the lack of accomplishment to fully detach from the narrative and the language of the state; the show of the impossibility of the narrative is the actual political work. However, there is a pessimistic approach to the end of hope to defeat or escape late capitalism. Esposito argues "...the problem of our times is that there exists a barrier between language and politics; politics escapes language; language has no longer words for politics" (*Community* 8). Nonetheless, the value of the works also relies on the tension between the state's discourse, the narratives and the reality challenge the dialogue to continue a different level of debate of resistance. It recognized the necessity of a different approach to language itself, theory, and criticism besides the consciousness and awareness of the production of

knowledge. The contemporary society is facing a culture of death, a culture of corpses everywhere: the corpse of the aesthetics, the corpse of the state, the corpse of the community.

## V. Conclusion

In Mexico, the logic of the forms of production has been rearticulated in the neoliberal era to utilize not only ideology to maintain wealth and power for a selected group of people, but also to include pure violence as a crucial form of power. The community of Mexico has developed its foundation on a legal system based on immunity. The immunization of the legal systems functions in the same way an immunization works in the human body. It introduces a negative element, enough to be able to control it under an appearance of peace. Ironically, this element contains the very same substances that the body seeks to fight. The state, and the system allow for harmful and destructive features that maintain the community fragmented. Therefore, it could be stated that the community with an immunitary legal system preserves the community by its own destitution. The system reproduces amounts of antibodies that can neutralize a more severe form (Esposito, *Immunitas* 17-37). The logic of neoliberalism has segregated more and more different subaltern groups that have apparently, no opportunity to succeed. The increment of violence correlates with the implementation of economic policies Mexico pursued in the late 1980s and early 1990s; these policies are consistent with NAFTA and the right wing authoritarian parties that have remained in power with a paternalistic and populist approach to politics.

This modern Mexican state was constructed via a narrative of a Mexican Revolution that introduced a sense of identity and belonging, but that did not correspond with reality. This well-elaborated discourse strengthens the hegemonic power of the state by providing an imaginary historical past that would satisfy the need of inclusion, fairness, and opportunity that people were seeking. The struggle of classes, race and gender oppression were not by any means eradicated by the revolution or any subsequent struggle; instead, they were masked by the narrative of a successful revolution. As discussed previously, the wariness of the people and the necessity of stability paused the progress of the Mexican Revolution. The overthrowing of

President Díaz provided the argument of a false sense of victory of the dissidence although the bourgeoisie had won. The change of the head of power did not equal a genuine change of system in the years following the revolution.

The constant corruption, the lack of implementation of the existent Mexican Constitution, or even the revocation of legitimate and basic rights such as the *ejido*, continue to produce a space of legal ambiguity to those who are not able to function in the economic flow of the society. The law is not effective for those who are not actual citizens in practice, as they cannot enjoy the fruits of the rights and protection of the maximum juridical authority. The neoliberal system works in a way that helps it to profit from the bare lives it produces (Marazzi). The *hominis sacre* become the main source of profit of capitalism. It is in their bodies, as they turn into corpses or dismembered body parts where the actual law is inscribed, despite of the formal juridical system. Compulsive modernization has transformed the dynamics of the community into a place of fear, instability, and death. Poverty has continued to be a major factor for people to remain in contemporary forms of slavery, mainly working in transnational enterprises or as servants of upper classes. The border, which are the scenarios of the cultural texts discussed in this work, represent the anomic sphere where these citizens of nowhere inhabit. Their bare necessity is only to survive, and this is also the only reason for them to migrate. They seek to find a land to make a living if they are able to make it there. They are citizens of nowhere and invisible to the law in their own countries, "...which is to say they were bare life before they even left Mexico" (Acosta 231) or any Central America. Mexico faces a permanent State of Exception. "The state of necessity is not "a state of law," but a space without law (even though it is not a state of nature, but presents itself as the anomie that results from the suspension of law" (Agamben, *State* 51).

The state is no longer opposed to the drug dealers or criminals, but they are indistinguishable, the law order is ambiguous and partial to a certain group. The law is not a

code passed and developed in the congress or senate regardless of its existence; the true law is wherever the power lies. This affirms Agamben theory of the "...violence that posits law and the violence that preserves it" (*Homo* 63). The narco and the organized crime have embedded in the state and vice versa. The war is for power and to maintain this power rather than democracy. The state's historical corruption and the broken sovereignty have allowed for the emergence of this parallel state (Valenzuela and Segato). Most Mexicans live under the law of pure survival. Therefore, their control is not only through ideological practices but also through their bodies. The increment of violence and confusion of the population has prompted for the perfect constitutional excuse for a legitimization of a permanent State of Exception.

Compulsive modernization and the political economic policies have certainly worked through a process of exclusion/inclusion (Esposito). They work by expelling (Sassen), or excluding those who are not able to gain power through violence or economics. The unregulated and unplanned growth of large cities, the uprooting and the waves of migration, the femicides in Juarez, and the killing and disappearances of migrants on their way to the states are part of a whole process of economic decisions. Neoliberalism does not and has not brought freedom, but has continued the logics of segregation and oppression in complicity with organized crime, oligarchies and the state. It does not contribute to the liberation or emancipation of subaltern groups, but it utilizes the country's ideology, broken legal system and sovereignty or the use of pure violence to establish a relocation of wealth in determined circles of power of the society. The system has perpetuated the reduction of life to the minimum. The law has abandoned life and this abandonment is its only liaison to bare life (Agamben). Citizens or quasi citizens are faced with the laws of nature to protect their pure survival. The victims of the system or *homo sacer*, are invisible to a juridical system that only exists for some, or against or does not apply under the constitutional protection of the precept of State of Exception. The standardized colonial, state, and counter state forms of violence have not disappeared

completely, "...but they have adjusted to a general change of the society related to a process of globalization and with the transformations of the pattern of accumulation of capitalism..."

(Villalobos-Ruminott, *Modernidad* 3).

The question continues to be the reflection of the works of resistance and its actual political work to provoke a change, its effectiveness or complicity. The call is to continue to challenge the works of resistance to remain aware of the ability of capitalism to appropriate any type of dissidence into a mirage of freedom and reverse the effects. The cultural texts and discussion need on one hand to work to unmask any type of ideology, under the precept that every desire could be regulated, and the necessities that emerge are regulated, and the options that become available to simulate freedom are also prefabricated in advance (Deleuze and Guatarri). However, factors that have to remain in the loop would be for instance the damage narratives have caused, the naturalization of violence, the language as a structure of power, and mainly the illusion of counter power. On the same lines, there must be a continuous study and debate on the political awareness of this complicity, of this inefficacy to and self-criticism on behalf of the aesthetics to begin a walk towards an actual political resistance and deliverance. It must not be a complete pessimistic approach but an objective and holistic reading of the texts with the understanding of their political unconscious and ability to unveil its impossibilities imposed by the state. "We must be bilingual even in only one language, we have to have a minor language in the interior of our own language, we have to use less of our own" (Deleuze 8-9). Therefore, the political work of the aesthetics is based on the recognition of the necessity to create a different language that will generate a real noise to challenge permanently the *status quo*. This is the focused on the novels such as *Perra Brava*, *Trabajos del Reino*, *2666*, *Fila India* or other cultural texts such as the film *Sicario*. They are producing their own radical form of politics by presenting the incongruences in the discourse of the state while simultaneously presenting the necessity of rethinking forms of resistance that are in fact aiding the

naturalization of violence or segregation and thus acting as accomplices to the system. The very own recognition that can be read in these texts of their awareness of powerless is indeed a form of political activity and counterhegemonic force. This is the intellectual work that needs to remain in sight; that there is the danger of falling in a pervasive cycle of resistance-fantasy that will only continue to perpetuate and feed a neoliberal order based on bio political power and bare life.

The border chosen as a scenario for all the cultural texts included in these works allows for an understanding of the perspectives from each one of the sides. There are different aspects that must be addressed while discussing the different forms of resistance such as the hegemonic cultural, economic and political power one executes over the other side, since these aspects will certainly impact the view on identity and needs or ways for freedom or recognition. In these cases, the northern is perceived as more powerful over the southern part, with more tools to control forms of power. The scenarios of the novels and the cultural artifacts being developed in these geographical places portray not the difference of one country and the other, and the hegemonic power of one over the other, but the rules that apply while one is found in this in-between zone. In the desert, "...it is the point that marks their indistinguishability from each other, a terrain into which one is irreducibly abandoned between both, one in which the only laws that govern are those pertaining to biological life exposed to severe desert climate" (Acosta 226). The way in which the border is defined is always relative. Its definition depends on the side's perspective, or in the "in-betweenness".

The political work of the texts relies on one hand on the reflection of words and language, and their role within a capitalist system. As everything else, they have also been neoliberalized and to a certain extent could or do function to aid the logics of the current economic system. Nonetheless, as the *corridos*, "words", culture and the aesthetics are and will continue to be "...weapons...", as Ortuño states in *Fila India*. They have kept the power to not

just expose that the same forms of subalternity are still active but the lack of impact of language to reverse a system that has absorbed them in part. Therefore, it is the political activity that pertains to intellectuals to continue the debate of the need for a constant development of an independent language to genuinely resist the different forms of repression, and rethink the language, history, philosophy and the aesthetics in general with an understanding of the new patterns of accumulations under late capitalism. The political work of aesthetics is again the recognition and self-awareness of the commodification of the aesthetic as a symptom of late capitalism. The exposure of the corpses reclaims for those who cannot speak or who can speak but are not heard by the attempt to de narrativize the rhetoric of the State. It is a genuine response and an effective counter hegemonic movement against the system. The acceptance of an alternative manner to react as dissidence distinct to the pre-conceived concepts that have been used would provide ideas for different organized groups in the community to aid emancipation of segregated and oppressed groups. The proposal and joint goal must be to work towards a true democracy with alternatives for citizens other than becoming corpses. The political work on the novels is precisely the recognition of the need to seek for artifacts that as Williams suggests have “a language as a semiotic withdrawal of the matrix of the sovereignty, subtracting itself from the social order of democracy” (*The Other Campaign* 143). The fact of the matter is that the novels and the cultural artifacts reveal the impossibility to continue to represent the violence “...with the old national agenda” (Villalobos, *Soberanías* 69). They reflect the impossibility and even resistance to narrate, to narrativize the events that are embedded in the neoliberal practices, but beyond that they demonstrate the complicity with the state and ironically show their self-awareness.

Whether the aesthetic is acting in complicity with the oppressive system, or if it is a genre of the aesthetics of violence and horror, or then again if it offers resistance to the discourse of the state, is an ongoing question. The multiplicity of facets of the aesthetic is a

fact, and is certainly a strength. Readers of these dialogues need to remain vigilant in the task of developing new forms of emancipation; emancipation of thought, of contemporary forms of segregation. It is necessary to continue undoing and questioning the systems of representations and productions and producers of knowledge, and again agreeing with Foucault and his proposal of the relationship of knowledge and power to be able to attain freedom. The political discussions and different readings intend to dispose of the barriers covered of hidden ideology and power that will maintain, support, create or perpetuate any type of oppression system or subjective chains. The intellectual work must be aligned to an open discussion to consider the world, from different concepts, transitions, "*devenirs*" without the binaries imposed by the society, the state, or any structure of power. The hope, regardless of the current state of the community, is "that there is life beyond capitalism, as there is society outside the State. There always was, and –for this we struggle—there always will be" (Clastres 15).

Per its own rhetoric, the Mexican Revolution was one of the great emancipatory events in modern world history. Unfortunately, this rhetoric was not converted into reality for the Mexican people, who continued to live under an oppressive system that grew even more oppressive with the coming of neoliberalism. The economic consequences of this new economic policy have been dire, especially in northern Mexico, where the growth of population have been accompanied by rising levels of crime and violence--to the point that conventional law and order no longer prevails. Instead, the people near Mexico's northern border live in poverty, fear, and danger, threatened by a dual power structure in which the official government is rivaled in power by (and sometimes works hand-in-hand with) an official "government" dominated by drug cartels. Much recent culture has reflected this changing situation, but it remains open to debate whether cultural production can really have an impact in improving the condition of the Mexican production of death.

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