

12-2017

Literary and Cinematic Representations of Neoliberal Forms of Contemporary Violence in Latin America with Special Interest in Mexico and Colombia

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Literary and Cinematic Representations of Neoliberal Forms of Contemporary Violence in Latin
America with Special Interest in Mexico and Colombia

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

In the last decades, with an increased rhythm and greater intensity, the so-called *neoliberal violence* has come to play a relevant role within the history of world societies. The Latin American institutional, political, social, and economic changes of the 1970's and 1980's, especially those produced under dictatorships, contributed to create the conditions for the implementation of the processes of economic liberalization and global market as part of the concept of institutional modernization and cultural globalization that gave rise to the neoliberal mentality. In this context, neoliberalism becomes hegemonic as a mode of discourse and is incorporated into the way individuals interpret, live in, and understand the world. Its incorporation into world societies has motivated changes in the division of labor, changes in social relations, the dismantling of welfare necessities, increase in technology, and differentiation in the ways of life and thought, but more importantly, it has motivated the rise of new forms of contemporary violence which develop and nurture themselves from the political and economic opportunities that neoliberalism creates.

This work will present a theoretical approach of the theme of neoliberalism and will concentrate its study on literary and cinematic representations of the theme of *narcotrafic* and the relation *migration-femicides* as new forms of contemporary neoliberal violence in the context of Latin America with special interest in Mexico and Colombia. In this sense, the work of authors such as David Harvey, Hermann Herlinghaus, Ileana Rodriguez, Jean Franco, and others; will contribute to the analysis of the theme of violence in this study in ways that will support how violence has been used historically as a tool to perpetuate relationships of domination. Also, the literary and cinematic representations of the theme of neoliberal violence will be analyzed in the works of Fernando Vallejo (*La virgen de los sicarios*), Jorge Franco

(Rosario Tijeras), Roberto Bolaño (2666), Orfa Alarcón (Perra Brava), Juan Pablo Villalobos (Fiesta en la madriguera), and Yuri Herrera (Los trabajos del reino) are analyzed in this work.

Key words: violence, neoliberalism, globalization, colonialism, feminicides, narcotraffic, migration, capital accumulation, marginalization, disposable workers, postmodernism, and competitiveness.

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Acknowledgements

This is the work of a crew, an incredible sailing crew that navigated by my side during the most exciting and frightening moments of this literary adventure. God is my *Captain* and main source of strength and direction not only for my professional endeavors, but also for my personal ones. Luis Fernando Restrepo, my *Quarter Master*, helped me chart a clearer route and kept me on course. His valuable work in overseeing my journey was crucial to a safe arrival. His expertise and spirit of service are greatly appreciated. Sergio Villalobos, my *Sailing Master*, inspired me to steer my boat to unknown oceans of imagination and harsh realities. His theoretical intellectual influence in the early stages of my literary adventure also contributed to shaping my route. Keith Booker, my *Boatswain*, supervised maintenance activities to assure the impeccability of all sailing requirements. Carlitos, Alejandra, Carolina, Jaqueline, Nelson, Lina Maritza, Orlandito, Luz Helena, Santiago, and Enrique, served as my *Riggers*. These are the sailors who always stood by my side in moments when I thought I would not reach the end of my journey. They were also dear partakers of this quest. To them I owe the encouragement, the laughter, and the joy that inspired me to reach my port of arrival. Finally, I am very grateful to Wendy Dodge, *lead rigger*, whose academic support in the supervision of my work became a key instrument during the intellectual challenges provided by the whirling masses of knowledge of the University of Arkansas.

I would like to make a special mention to John Brown University for its financial support and for providing a Christian environment that enriched me with feelings of hope and strength.

Dedication

Star, Christian, and Noah: the time and effort invested in the fulfillment of this work were meant to build a future of love, excitement, respect, and gratitude, but more importantly a future of HOPE for all of you. Thank you so much for your unconditional love and support!!!

Husband and father: *Iván*

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i. Introduction

In the last decades, with an increased rhythm and greater intensity, the so-called *neoliberal violence* has come to play a relevant role within the history of world societies. The historical period inaugurated in 1964 with the coup d'état in Brazil put an end to the anti-imperialist projects and anticipated the fall of Latin America's socialism. The Latin American institutional, political, social, and economic changes of this time, especially those produced under dictatorships, contributed to create the conditions for the implementation of the processes of economic liberalization and global market as part of the concept of institutional modernization and cultural globalization. The transition from dictatorships to democratic governments and the frequent economic crises that hit the region were strong factors that contributed to generate an institutional and political instability that still persists nowadays.¹

This particular category of violence established by military regimes in Latin America during the 1960's and 1970's was characterized by the destruction or invalidation of the previous social welfare state. These military regimes suspended established laws and constitutions, threatened human rights, and certain freedoms, such as that of speech, were censored to varying degrees. Thus, the military consolidated itself as the hegemonic power and paved the way to the emerging *neoliberal* thought that would come to dominate today's cultural, political, and economic spheres of world societies, but more importantly to dictate the financial rules of engagement of the world market.²

In *Global Modernity*, Arif Dirlick suggests "that while the interests of advanced capitalist

¹ See Ignacio Romano (3).

² One key example of the positioning of the military ruling elite within the world market, which involves Latin America directly, is the coup in Chile. *The Chilean experiment*, as it is known, was a strong indicator of the drastic economic measures that the neoliberal elite, both local and foreign, wanted to impose as a means to revive their capital accumulation. Forced privatization, the dismantling of the welfare state, the reduction of taxes to big businesses, and the favorable business climate to encourage foreign investment, were some of the measures carried out to achieve the economic consolidation of neoliberalism, first in Chile, and then in large parts of the world.

economies of North America, Europe, and Japan have provided the motive force behind globalization, what facilitated the global hegemony of neoliberalism was the acceptance of or compliance with the neoliberal economic model of a third world Chile and a socialist China” (19). This neoliberal economic model sought to reorganize international capitalism, but it also sought to reinforce the power of the economic elite.

i.i The Road to Latin American Neoliberalism:

The road to this economic success by the neoliberal elite was a *violent* one. Under the appearance of a communist threat in the world, the United States put into practice an alliance with repressive military dictatorships and authoritarian regimes throughout most of Latin America. Karl Polanyi argues that the emergence of national markets has not been the result of the gradual and spontaneous emancipation of the economic sphere from government control but “the conscious and often violent intervention on the part of government which imposed the market organization on society for noneconomic ends” (*The Great Transformation* 250). The coup in Chile was, without a doubt, the most significant one.

Chile’s coup demonstrated that the liberal utopian vision of economic growth (at least for those at the centers of power) could only be attained and sustained by force, violence, and authoritarianism. The goal was both economic and political. In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey argues that different from the neoliberal agenda accomplished by Reagan and Thatcher through democratic means, the neoliberal “revolution” carried out in Chile by the traditional upper classes was supported by the military forces (39). *The goal*: to fight the common enemy (communism) that was hindering the road to individual freedoms. That is how powerful foreign corporations in alliance with Chile’s elite found in the word *freedom* a political, social, and economic “weapon” to develop a well suited neoliberal agenda that captured the

ideals of individual freedoms with respect to particular products but also with respect to lifestyles, and other modes of cultural practices.

In this context, neoliberalism becomes hegemonic as a mode of discourse and is incorporated into the way individuals interpret, live in, and understand the world. Its incorporation into world societies has motivated the division of labor,³ changes in social relations, the dismantling of welfare necessities, increase in technology, and differentiation in the ways of life and thought, but more importantly, it has motivated the rise of new forms of contemporary violence which develop and nurture themselves from the political and economic opportunities that neoliberalism creates.

In this new configuration of power, the so-called *neoliberal violence* takes different forms that, in many cases, challenge our understanding. We are not talking about a violence between two countries or two enemies (as protagonists) that are clearly identifiable, and who behave in agreement with certain explicit rules which make the conflict very obvious. In this new scenario, violence interconnects with other aspects of social life: the proliferation of gangs and other criminal groups such as *sicarios*,⁴ the high rate of criminality of these groups in the form of *narcotraffic*, the origin and development of social conflicts such as *migration* and *feminicides*⁵ which manifest themselves in various aggressive forms, the switch from *government* to

³ In *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), Manuel Castells argues that the newest international division of labor is constructed around four different positions in the informational/ global economy: the producers of high value, based on informational labor; the producers of high volume, based on lower cost labor; the producers of raw materials, based on natural endowments; and the redundant producers, reduced to devaluated labor (146-47).

⁴ Sicarios are Colombian “hitmen” working for drug lords. Pablo Escobar is believed to be the creator of this organized crime group. In the 1980’s, Escobar offered to pay up to a million pesos for the murder of each Colombian police officer as a way to retaliate against the Colombian government for its severe policies against the illegal drug trade. Sicarios as a social prototype is a figure that travels on motorcycles, in many cases with a partner, from where they shoot their victims. They are generally adolescents no older than 17 years old who have no moral values or respect for life, including their own.

⁵ This work will support the use of *feminicide* (feminicidio) instead of *femicide* (femicidio) based on the work of the feminist anthropologist Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos who describes *femicide* as the mere homicide of women, but *feminicide* as the ensemble of violations of women’s rights, which contain the crimes against and the disappearances of women. See Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos (xv).

governance which emphasizes the liberalization of economies and brings drastic social, political, and economic repercussions including the systematic marginalization and impoverishment of vast populations.⁶ In the case of Latin America, Michael Shifter, in his introduction to *Latin America in a Changing Global Environment*, argues that “Yet, privatization and liberalization of the economies have failed to yield sustained growth; in 2001, Latin America’s economies were distressingly stagnant. There was no per capita growth for the region as a whole during the five–year period from 1998 to 2002” (2). This pluralization in the forms of neoliberal violence implies a great deal of economic factors, but it also reveals how individuals are attracted by these conflicts in search of significant economic opportunities.

We propose, then, to take some literary works and ethnographic sources of the last three centuries, and films of the last two, to study the ways in which these literary and cinematic representations still reveal the continuing effect of colonialism in Latin America within the age of globalization, now under the guise of *neoliberalism* as the main socio-economic structure of the world market. *Narcotraffic*, and the relationship *migration- feminicides*, as new forms of neoliberal violence, will be the focus of this study. In addition, the ethnographic, literary, and cinematic representations of the problem of violence here presented supplement each other in the sense that they all reveal a genealogy of violence. This genealogy connects the origins of the economic expansion of the so-called Imperial Europe of the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the prevailing and current economic system of neoliberalism that originated in the last two decades of the 20th century.

These representations of violence support the idea that violence has never ceased. The

⁶ James Ferguson talks about structural adjustments occurring in Africa where a new form of domination carried out by private, multinational organizations, instead of the legitimate state figure, is imposing new economic laws in African states. The state transfers democratic powers into the hands of a minority group (Governance) that controls the market according to its financial motivations. See *Global Shadows*.

wars of independence of the 19th century never put an end to the expansion of the imperial powers. On the contrary, the agenda of economic expansion of these powerful economic countries continued to exert a violence that has adjusted itself to the new demands of the patterns of capital accumulation. This violence has undergone a series of metamorphoses to accommodate itself to the necessities of those who possess the means to control it and use it over the less fortunate in a world of globalized economies and doubtful borders. In other words, violence has served throughout history to strengthen the power of imperial/capitalist nations which profit through the surplus value taken from the colonial/underdeveloped nations.

On the one hand, and in a broader sense, we will consider the following questions as part of our study: What are the distinct characteristics of neoliberal violence in relation to colonial violence? Who have been the main promoters or supporters of the neoliberal agenda? How did neoliberalism come to play such a defining role in today's world economy and politics? What role does neoliberalism play in the marginalization of a great number of people in world societies? Even though we will attempt to provide satisfactory answers to these questions, we have to acknowledge that this study's insufficient research in disciplines such as sociology, economy, and politics will limit our responses. On the other hand, and in a more specific sense pertaining to our study, we will make use of discursive practices such as literature and film to address questions such as: Which are some of the social repercussions that derive from the phenomenon of neoliberalism? What are the violent consequences that originate from such a phenomenon? What are the cultural transformations that originate from it? How can we describe the postmodern neoliberal subject? Why is neoliberal violence so appealing as part of cultural production? What do criminals look like within neoliberalism?

Therefore, this study will seek to answer these questions by exploring both literary and

cinematic representations of the theme of neoliberal violence in Latin America during the last three decades with special emphasis in Colombia and Mexico. For the purpose of our literary and cinematic analysis, we have selected a primary corpus in order to study the implications of this neoliberal violence in relation to *narcotraffic*, *migration*, and *feminicides*. This corpus will reflect how neoliberalism has had violent political, economic, social, and cultural repercussions in Latin America's way of life.

In addition, this study will examine themes such as transnational markets, economic and social inequalities, corporate power, governance, capital accumulation, marginalization, cultural homogenization, cultural diversity, postmodernism, and competitiveness through literary and cultural narratives that reveal how neoliberalism motivates in individuals, and societies as a whole, a constant search for economic gain. In this search, individuals create their own cultural practices, interpretations of law, and forms of violence.

We will open our study of neoliberal violence by analyzing cinematic representations of the theme of narcotraffic in Colombia and the impact of neoliberalism and its market mentality on individuals and culture. The following films will serve our purpose: Barbert Schroeder's *Our Lady of the Assassins*, Emilio Maillé's *Rosario Tijeras*, and Pablo Larraín's *Tony Manero*. The first two films will provide a different look at the so-called *sicarios* as key agents of narcotraffic's transnational, crime-oriented organization. These characters try to succeed, through their violent methods, in the neoliberal market system that promotes great economic opportunities and which also encourages a new culture (*postmodern*) from which they feed their desires and actions. The last film, although it does not pertain to the theme of narcotraffic, will allow us to have a better understanding and a different look (from that of the *sicarios*) at the

impact that the neoliberal model and its market mentality have in the production of postmodern individuals restrained by the laws of competitiveness within the market system.

Later on, we will consider the aesthetic representations of Mexican drug traffickers in contemporary societies by revealing how these individuals, as a new social group, find in the accumulation of wealth their own and different *taste* in language, clothing, music, architecture, cars, and women, but more importantly in violence. These aesthetic representations of drug traffickers have become more visible and popular within contemporary societies by the persistent work of the media through television, music, and films. Three significant Mexican books of the so-called *narcoliterature* genre will be the focus of our study: Orfa Alarcón's *Perra Brava*, Juan Pablo Villalobo's *Fiesta en la madriguera*, and Yuri Herrera's *Trabajos del reino*.⁷

Finally, we will analyze the relationship *migration-feminicides* in the context of Mexico and its connection with the USA border as a critique of neoliberal capitalism. Here, the execution of the law is exerted by the means of violence and labor exploitation to the benefit of powerful transnational corporations. In this equation, women, as displaced migrant workers, will represent the victims of sexual abuse (rape) and murder but also symbolize the violence of low wage labor in the neoliberal global exchange of power and capital. For this purpose, we will initially analyze the violent implications of what has been understood as *Accelerated Modernity*⁸ and its close connection with Ciudad Juárez's rapid growth as the result of the so-called *maquiladoras*⁹ and the

⁷ *Narcoliterature* (literature concerning all about drug culture) is believed to have its origin in the ballads or songs known as *narcocorridos* which told and idealized the lives and violent actions of drug traffickers. Later on, the social, economic, and political realities of the illicit drug business became relevant issues which motivated media attention and inspired the emergence of this genre. The books labeled under this genre are known as *narcovelas*.

⁸ For Paul Virilio, "Modernity is a world in motion, expressed in translations of strategic space into logistical time, and back again. It is a history of cities, partitions, trading circuits, satellites, and software; of a political landscape governed by competing technologies of surveillance, mobilization, fortifications and their independent administrations." See *Speed and Politics* (7).

⁹ Assembly factories owned by foreign companies and located in the borders of the countries involved in this commercial operation. In the case of Mexico, these companies are owned by USA and use Mexican workers under the assumption of cheap labor.

advent of migrant workers attracted by them. Roberto Bolaño's *2666* will continue this conversation through the depiction and analysis of *feminicides*, consisting of hundreds of unsolved sexual abuses and murders of Mexican women as a consequence of the economic transaction controlled by these transnational maquiladoras.¹⁰

i.ii Previous Discussions of our Corpus / Literature Review:

Even though many authors have previously considered many aspects of the theme of violence during colonial and neoliberal times, none of them has ever developed a broad study that connects the colonial violence of the 16th century to the most contemporaneous forms of neoliberal violence of the 21st century. This continuity of violence, pertaining to this work, provides an analysis on how violence has never ceased to exist since the colonization or conquest of America and it reveals a historical connection to what we have come to understand as today's neoliberal violence. However, this continuity of violence has been possible due to the changes or transformations suffered by the market and its mentality of wealth accumulation which, directly or indirectly, perpetuate the relationships of domination, exploitation, and oppression of those who have the means to compete within the globalized economic world network over the ones that are left out of that economic network.

In this context, the work of authors such as David Harvey, Hermann Herlinghaus, Ileana Rodriguez, Jean Franco, and others; will contribute to the analysis of the theme of violence in this study in ways that will support how violence has been used historically as a tool to perpetuate relationships of domination. Harvey's idea of the commodification of everything, Herlinghaus' ethical response of sicarios' violence capacity as a form of survival, Rodriguez' analysis of the so-called maquiladoras as a new form of labor exploitation, and Franco's

¹⁰ Sexual abuses consisting mainly of rapes and mutilations of nipples and clitoris.

characterization of sicarios as postmodern subjects are all useful in supporting the implications of the theme of violence as a form of neoliberal weapon that keeps creating new forms of domination at the service of capital and its mentality of wealth accumulation.

Before getting into the study of this corpus of cinematic and literary works, it is relevant to consider some ideas concerning previous discussions of these works in relation to the theme of neoliberalism and the violence that derives from it.

Our Lady of the Assassins, originally *La virgen de los sicarios* (1994), is a book written by Colombian author Fernando Vallejo. The film is a cinematic adaptation by Franco-Swiss director Barbert Schroeder. Fernando Vallejo, a novelist and filmmaker born in Medellín in 1942, is among Colombia's most controversial public figures. His work, censored by some and praised by others, deals with crime, poverty, sexuality, religion, and violence. His most well-known work is precisely *Our Lady of the Assassins* and was published in English in 2001 to coincide with the film by Schroeder. Both the novel and its cinematic production reflect Vallejo's pessimistic attitude towards Colombia's fate at the hands of what he considers corrupt institutions such as government, church, and the justice system, but mainly at the hands of Colombia's new social and violent problem: *narcotraffic*.

The film is important because its story reveals the result of the increased violence rate in Colombia at the hands of *sicarios*, individuals who represent the cultural imaginaries of narcotraffic, the neoliberal mentality, the phenomenon of globalization, the contradictions of capitalism, as well as the instability of Colombia's government.¹¹ In this same line of argument,

¹¹ Maximiliano Ignacio De la Puente has described the rate of violence in Colombia addressed in *Our Lady of the Assassins* as "anomia social" [social anomia] which defines the extreme climate of oppression and insecurity experienced by Colombian citizens and lack of ethical values. According to De la Puente, everyone is prepared and ready to kill for no particular reason and no particular place. In *Our Lady of the Assassins*, Vallejo states how in Medellín people can get killed in baptisms, weddings, funerals, and even during mass services. See "Formas de representar la violencia en algunas escenas de la literatura latinoamericana," n.pag.

Alvaro Baquero-Pecino describes sicarios as “el hermano pobre de los movimientos globalizados” [the poor brother of globalized movements]¹² and develops an analysis of these individuals, at the service of criminality, as the product of the reformulation of the new states and the implantation of neoliberal policies in Latin America (*Universo sicario* 15). In *Our Lady of the Assassins*, sicarios are regarded as a *threat* to a city (Medellín) known for its stable economic and industrial development. These sicarios operate within marginal and lowest income neighborhoods known as *comunas* which can easily be translated into spaces of violence controlled by narcotraffic.¹³

Moreover, young people in the *comunas* have transformed themselves in the prototype of Latin America’s marginal, popular and violent youth. In *Violence without Guilt: Ethical Narratives from the Global South*, Hermann Herlinghaus argues how from the mid-1980’s to the mid-1990’s film directors in Mexico, Brazil, but more importantly in Colombia, started to reconceptualize the cultural identities of young people due to their intervention in civic life through their excessive consumerism¹⁴, and a great deal of killings, especially of political nature. In the case of Colombia, for instance, Herlinghaus states:

Marginalized young men – recruited and trained, in the above-mentioned case, by Pablo Escobar and the Medellín drug cartel – moved to the center of public anxieties.¹⁵ These young people started to be the protagonists of news headlines and TV programs and became a new object of study...Actions generated by the drug trade now seemed to feed into the old prejudice that associated youth, and especially the poorest young people, with a threat to social order and rule, allegedly owing to their lack of integration or strict

¹² All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

¹³ The *comunas* are generally understood as areas of irregular occupation and lack of public services or urbanization.

¹⁴ Irene Depetris Chauvin develops an interesting study in relation to youth consumerism in Argentina and Chile. Irene analyses films and narratives by Alberto Fuguet, César Aira, and Martín Rejtman where she reconsiders critically the connections between youth culture and neoliberalism. In her study, youth culture is associated with the triumph of neoliberalism not only because youth are the main consumers, real or imaginary, but also because youth culture becomes in itself the aesthetic of the market. See *Latin American Youth and Market Culture in the Age of Neoliberalism*.

¹⁵ The case refers to the killing of 1984 Colombian minister of justice, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, who was assassinated in the streets of Bogotá by two adolescents riding a bike. Lara Bonilla was killed because of his work in prosecuting cocaine traffickers mainly belonging to the Medellín Cartel.

control. (106)

However, this social stigmatization of young *sicarios* could find a certain form of social *redemption* in their relationship with violence and the way they respond to it. Herlinghaus sees this response as “the perception of ethical survival in times of advanced global capitalism and imperial rule” (177). For the young *sicarios*, violence represents a *commodity* in neoliberal terms. It is a *way out* of the sphere of poverty and marginalization, a way to avoid the destruction of their mere adolescent existence. They represent Harvey’s neoliberal concept of the *disposable worker* (169) whose existence is only valuable in terms of what he/she is able to produce and spend. For Herlinghaus, narratives dealing with the violence of narcotraffic in marginalized areas rearticulate the issue of consumption at the point of lives being obstructed by social and economic exclusion (200).¹⁶ The most attractive and lucrative way for these individuals to avoid social exclusion is through the opportunities offered by narcotraffic both as a criminal organization and as a way of life.

The same concept of *sicarios* seeking a *way out* of poverty and marginalization through the criminal means offered by narcotraffic as well as the concept of life as a *disposable commodity* has been addressed by other critics of neoliberalism and the close relationship of this phenomenon to violence. In her article “Colombia's Drug Trafficking Subculture: Its Literary Representation in La Virgen de los *sicarios* and Rosario Tijeras,” Maite Villoria states:

Youngsters inhabiting the marginal areas of the city, the *comunas* or urban ghettos, are the most vulnerable group within this world of crime and murder linked to drug trafficking. They have been trapped in a global system and a society that is existing within one of the strictest paradigms of neo-liberalism and capitalism operating during

¹⁶ Irene Depetris Chauvin states: “Upon considering the cultural productions of the last two decades that refer to youth, we find representations of deprived, confused, and apathetic youths, who under the forces of neoliberal globalization, fall prey to the rise of consumerism and individualism on the one hand, an unemployment and exclusion on the other. If these portraits of marginalized youth show, explicitly and implacably, the relations between neoliberalism and emerging poverty, the narratives about middle-class youths characterized by apathy and the lack of a future tell yet another story of the transformations that took place in the region during the decade of neoliberal hegemony.” See *Latin American Youth and Market Culture in the Age of Neoliberalism* (xiv, xv).

the last decades of the twentieth century. Therefore, the new lifestyle brought about by the drug trafficking has been quickly adopted by the so-called sicarios, youngsters excluded by the system that cannot offer any bright vision of the future. In fact, the sicario lives in a perpetual present, constantly aware of his high chances of premature death. The sicario kills on request, and in this way, he is the extreme example of selfimposed consumerism, as life has become a disposable object, a commodity to merchandise and the source of his particular sort of economic interchange. (76-77)

In this context, sicarios' quest for economic power is also linked to the search for social recognition. They claim the place which has been denied to them within the traditional social order due to the structural social exclusion product of different circumstances.¹⁷ However, this search for identity within the established social order does not necessarily convey the acceptance of the hegemonic system. In this sense, the dominant system strengthens relations of domination and subjugation by both giving visibility of the subculture and also by denying it.

Unfortunately, this social recognition of sicarios has been commonly misinterpreted by Colombian contemporary written and visual narratives related to the theme of drug trafficking. These narratives usually emphasize the *differences* that separate sicarios from the established order and its followers in an attempt to exclude them from the world being described and turn them into an item of consumption within the market. Villoria states that "Colombian literary texts that recreate the drug trafficking subculture displace the subject, transforming him or her into a market product. This is regardless of the fact that he or she has been recreated as a fascinating character, a victim or an assassin, who is confirming his or her existence through difference" (79). One of these forms of differentiation of sicarios from the "norm" is *exoticism* which turns them into a *rare* commodity following French writer François Rabelais' first use of

¹⁷ Sicarios are a product shaped by different types of violence that include social, economic, political, and structural, but also by both local and global ideas that promote consumerism, international contacts, media, and film. See Maite Villoria (77).

this term in 1552.¹⁸ In *Our Lady of the Assassins*, sicarios become Fernando's objects of desire for their beauty, a beauty that reaches its highest point of fascination with sicarios' most violent attitudes. In other words, violence is exoticized but also eroticized for matters of consumption.

In "La insoportable levedad de la historia," Francine Masiello argues that "bajo el neoliberalismo las identidades se mercantilizan" [Identities are commercialized under neoliberalism] (805), which brings about the fetichization of cultural difference and the commercialization of a historically marginalized minority and low socioeconomic groups. In other words, capitalism should be understood as the violence production mode with an aesthetic value in itself. In this respect, sicarios, homosexuals, and women are seen within international markets (promoted by the postmodern capitalistic mentality) as "exotic instruments" that promote a "difference" easily translated in terms of a *bestseller*.¹⁹ This same exotization of violence can be found in the film *Rosario Tijeras* (2007) of Mexican director Emilio Maillé.

Rosario, main protagonist of the film *Rosario Tijeras*, symbolizes that *exotic* and violent instrument able to cross over to other sectors of mass culture, and able to position herself as a heroine that defies the male monopoly on power and violence.²⁰ The film is based on a book by Colombian writer Jorge Franco, and deals with the life of a beautiful woman involved with the subculture of sicarios. This young, sexy and violent Colombian "action chick," who works as a

¹⁸ The Rabelaisian *exotique* denotes the word's classical etymology, which originates from the Greek *exôtikos*, signifying *stranger*. In his 1552 *Quart Livre et Faictes et dicts Heroïques du bon Pantagruel*, Rabelais uses the adjective *exotique* to describe *imported merchandise*. Three hundred years before the *exotique* turned into the adjective and noun *exotism*. Rabelais evokes the Asian and African merchants who bring their *marchandises exotiques* to a port in Europe. In the 19th century, the term will eventually come to signify *exotic*. See Robin Anita White.

¹⁹ Due to the incursion of sicarios within different cultural manifestations, they have been incorporated within a commercial structure that turns them into objects of consumption at the highest levels. Writers, film makers, and publishing houses have contributed to the making of sicarios as characters that are seen in a film, and read in a book, magazine or newspaper. They are regarded as "the other" and turned into an "exotic item" of consumption. See Alvaro Baquero-Pecino (24).

²⁰ Rosario took her nickname "Tijeras" (scissors) after castrating her father-in-law who had sexually abused her.

hitwoman for the drug mafia in Medellín, is a strong representative of the growing number of tough women in the global media.

For Ruth Nelly Solarte Gonzalez, “El sicario como personaje femenino abre todo un campo de reflexión donde se incluye el tema de la belleza, el cuerpo, la sexualidad, la objetivación de la mujer, el amor de pareja, la hija, la amante” [The sicario as a female character opens a field of reflection that includes the themes of beauty, the body, sexuality, the objectification of women, love couple, the daughter, the lover] (*Representaciones De La Mujer En La Literatura De Violencia* 4). These different roles of the female sicario make women’s incursion within sicariato a complex matter since they can be regarded both *as hired killers* and *hired lovers*. In both cases, these female characters are subjugated to the hegemonic patriarchal order which prevails within the narcotraffic structure. This idea takes us directly to another important book of our primary literary corpus: *Perra Brava*.

Alarcón’s *Perra Brava* will serve us as material for the analysis of the relationship *body-narcotraffic*. This book is relevant to our study in the sense that it will help us develop a representation of Mexican drug traffickers as *sexual chauvinists*, and the idea that narcotraffic embodies a patriarchal structure linked to the capitalist system. This representation, which has been broadly popularized through the media, will be analyzed in connection to the violent actions carried out by drug traffickers to meet their sexual needs. The violence exerted over women’s bodies, regarded as sexual objects by these individuals, is directly associated with the patriarchal network of social relations within narcotraffic’s inherent apparatus.

Even though *Perra Brava* has been read and regarded by many critics as pertaining to the narcoliterature genre, other readings of it situate this book within the field of psychological

works.²¹ Fernanda, main protagonist, embodies the thousands of women that expose and allow their bodies to be objectified and commodified at the hands of drugs traffickers seeking sexual pleasure. These women, in most cases, depend both economically and emotionally on these men whose main motivation appears to be the execution of power in many forms (economic, sexual, and criminal). However, this execution of power inherent to narcotraffic can be directly linked to the social pathology of some specific cultures and regions. In the case of Mexico, Carmen Lugo states that “México es conocido como la patria de los machos, por excelencia, como el país donde esa patología social es parte del modo de ser, del carácter popular, del inconsciente colectivo, de la superestructura” [Mexico is known as the country of the machos, by excellence, as the country where that social pathology is part of the way of being, of the collective unconscious, of the superstructure] (“Machismo y violencia” 42). In this context, the connection *machismo*²²-*narcotraffic* is intrinsic to the economic, social, and personal relationships that derive from it. In her article “La violenta transformación de la violencia en *Perra Brava*, de Orfa Alarcón,” Luzelena Gutiérrez de Velasco states in relation to narcotraffic:

Se trata sin duda de la construcción de un mundo habitado y dominado por figuras masculinas, con códigos varoniles y estrategias de fuerza, de destrucción. Un universo de hombres donde las mujeres pueden incluso ser jefas, pero siempre son focalizadas desde una mirada masculina. (106)

[It is without a doubt the construction of a world inhabited and dominated by male characters, with male codes and strategies of power, of destruction. A universe of men where women can be bosses, but always observed under the male gaze]

²¹ Although Athena Alchazidu recognizes the importance of the theme of narcotraffic and its patriarchal structure within *Perra Brava* as a reminder of the *machismo* that prevails within the structure of this criminal organization, it is the psychological transformation of Fernanda from “victim of violence” to “executor of violence” which makes her consider this work within the genre of “psychological novels.” See “El imaginario de la violencia: entre el miedo y la fascinación. Consideraciones en torno a *Perra brava* de Orfa Alarcón” (81-100).

²² Despite the well-known idea of narcotraffic being dominated by male power, Matousek develops an interesting idea of the new wave of cultural production that situates women at the center and top of their own drug-trafficking operations. In her article, she engages in an analysis of *Perra Brava* as an example of Mexican narcoliterature depicting the inversion of the macho male trafficker in a narrative driven by a female protagonist immersed in Mexico’s drug world. See Amanda L. Matousek (118-180).

Later on, the use of that patriarchal gaze over Fernanda will allow us to elaborate a representation of the male drug trafficker as a *sexual chauvinist* by making use of the different forms of violence endured by our female protagonist which include language, sex, and gender among others.

On the other hand, Juan Pablo Villalobo's *Fiesta en la madriguera* will serve us to produce a different representation of drug traffickers as *materialistic monsters*²³ by analyzing the relationship *commodity-narcotraffic*. We will consider this representation from the perspective of what they own and enjoy having as part of their materialistic world immersed in the commodification of everything.²⁴ For this purpose, we will analyze Tochtli's perceptions of his environment as main protagonist and son of a powerful leader of a drug trafficking group. Tochtli's world surrounded by sicarios, mute servants, and corrupt politicians, but also by material things as product of his consumerist whims, will help us build a representation of a drug trafficker's world as ostentatious, pretentious, and exaggeratedly eccentric based on the same mentality of wealth accumulation that neoliberalism encourages.²⁵ This neoliberal mentality, and following Mónica E. Lugo Vélez's development of her interpretation of *monsters*, will serve us to elaborate our own interpretation of drug traffickers as monsters at the service of capital and

²³ In relation to this term, Mónica E. Lugo Vélez develops an interesting work on the representation of human beings as social monsters. In her study, she describes *monsters* as those individuals that break with the normal and natural order of things. In this context, individuals suffering from any biological or genetic disorder that causes them a deformity and hinders their normal development in society as well as those who do not follow the system established by the law can be considered *monsters*. See *La narcoliteratura produce monstruos* (22).

²⁴ David Harvey argues that commodification presumes the existence of property rights over processes, things, and social relations that a price can be put on them, and they can be traded subject to legal contract. See *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (165).

²⁵ Donald Bret Gadbury analyzes Tochtli's consumerism as part of one of the stages in an individual's identity development. In this development, especially between the ages of six and thirteen, feelings of insecurity, escape, satisfaction, and social comparison as well as the relevant role of the media seem to have a great impact on people's motivations that lead to consumption. According to Gadbury, Tochtli embodies the idea of "child consumer" whose consumption habits are justified by his lack of power and influence on his own life. See *Narco-Socialization and Child Consumerism in México*.

violence.²⁶

Yuri Herrera's *Trabajos del reino* will open our discussion on the relationship *music-narcotraffic*. This book, which introduces a musician (El Artista) as protagonist, will help us build a representation of drug traffickers as *pop icons*; that is to say, some sort of characters whose exposure in popular culture has constituted a defining characteristic within their era. In this analysis, the relationship *power* and *art* will reveal that the latter is used as a means to build and reproduce the image of sovereign of the former.²⁷ Art is exemplified through the means of *music* in the form of the so-called *narcocorridos*.

In his own thesis to obtain his Masters of Fine Arts at the University of Texas at El Paso, Yuri Herrera argues that drug traffickers are the individuals who more clearly reproduce the essential characteristics of kings. He acknowledges that both presidents and modern monarchs encounter institutional barriers that hinder their road to absolute power. In relation to drug traffickers, Herrera states:

Un capo no somete su autoridad a límites institucionales, cuenta con un ejército que obedece no a una constitución sino a una voluntad; y, sobre todo, un capo construye alrededor de sí mismo un aura de grandiosidad, inclusive de manera chabacana, que a un líder político no se le permite. (*Trabajos del reino: A novel 4*)
 [A drug lord does not surrender his authority to institutional limits, he counts on the support of an army that obeys not a constitution but a will, and, overall, a drug lord builds around himself an aura of grandiosity, even in a tasteless manner, which is never allowed to a political leader]

In this context, the musician's aesthetic elaboration in the form of *narcocorrido* will contribute to build that aura of grandiosity that has positioned drug traffickers as modern *pop icons*.

²⁶ Other readings of *Fiesta en la madriguera* explore the importance of humor (especially *black humor*) as a subtle "weapon" at the service of narcotraffic's inherent violent nature. Humor appears as something that becomes uncomfortable to you (as reader), something that makes you interrupt the pleasure of laughter to question yourself, something that makes you blame yourself for the enjoyment of the evil that is being presented to you. See Andrés Francisco Sanín.

²⁷ Drug traffickers, similar to monarchs, are given a status of power that comes from the consent of men. In this sense, drug traffickers can decide over the lives of those under their rule as well as offering them protection. See Carlos Ávila (148-158).

In a similar perspective, the themes of *migration* and *feminicides* maintain a close connection with the theme of narcotraffic in the context of Ciudad Juárez in Mexico. Charles Bowden, in his book *La ciudad del crimen*, conveys one of the most common explanations for Ciudad Juárez's protagonism within the world's circle of violence:

Hay explicaciones para todo esto. La favorita es que todo se debe al mundo de la droga, especialmente a la batalla entre cárteles por el control de la frontera, que las autoridades reivindican. Algunos culpan a la migración masiva de gente pobre que llega a la ciudad para trabajar en las fábricas. Otros, especialmente aquellos que se centran en las mujeres desaparecidas, se inclinan por un asesinato serial que frecuenta las calles oscuras y solitarias. Por último, algunos consideran que la debilidad del Estado y la violencia han dado paso a un nuevo orden donde las organizaciones criminales han suplantado al gobierno. (41)

[There are explanations for all of this. The preferred one is that everything is due to the world of drugs, especially the fight among cartels for the border control, which authorities claim. Some blame the massive migration of poor people that come to the city to work in the factories. Others, especially those who center their attention on the disappeared women,²⁸ believe in the idea of a serial killer who wanders around dark and deserted streets. Finally, some consider that due to the state's weakness and generalized violence, the state has been displaced by a new order controlled by criminal organizations].²⁹

Even though there has been exhaustive research on this topic, the real nature of the hundreds of crimes committed in this city and the real reasons for Mexican migration to the USA is still uncertain. In this study, Roberto Bolaño's *2666*³⁰ will help us present the argument that Ciudad Juárez's murder phenomenon is linked to a systematic abuse and violence, both sexual and labor related, against women at the service of disadvantageous neoliberal working conditions.

For a better analysis of the implications of this neoliberal violence in Colombia and

²⁸ [110 bodies constitute the gallery of female dead bodies. (...), the evidence of this violence, the constant failure of the investigations, and the details presented through a detective style provide an imagery of *horror* of these assassinations]. For the argument on the disappearance and discovery of female bodies as a literary representation of *horror* see Carlos Walker (105).

²⁹ Bolaño's *2666* has served as a tool for sociological studies concerning the theme of modern violence. In this sociological view, crimes and social violence are related to both impunity and the State's incompetence to address the issue of the Modern Project. See Nilia Viscardi.

³⁰ A reading of *2666* suggests that Bolaño's *bodies* could be read under the influential definition of *biopolitics* proposed by Michel Foucault. In this context, these bodies become signs filled with dangerous political potential that reveal the intrinsic violent nature of Latin America's history. See Paul Merchant.

Mexico, we will present in Chapter One of this study a brief description of the characteristics that make this phenomenon so particular and meaningful within Latin America's context.

i.iii Distribution of Chapters:

In this context, the chapters to follow discuss the social, political, and economic repercussions of this *neoliberal violence*. *Chapter One* develops a brief theoretical approach of the concepts of globalization and neoliberalism suggesting the idea of a *symbiosis* between these two phenomena. This theoretical study will concentrate on themes concerning the plea for an unregulated capitalist system (free market economy), the ideals of individualism, optimal economic performance, technical progress, competitiveness, and consumerism among others. This chapter also reveals how both globalization and neoliberalism, under the guise of the capitalistic mentality that sells the idea of economic growth, create new forms of economic, social, and political marginalization in the context of Latin America with special focus in Colombia and Mexico. *Chapter Two* explores different stages in the evolution of violence from colonial and neo-colonial to more contemporary neoliberal expressions of this *transformed* violence. For this, we begin by discussing the role of imperial powers in universal history and their understanding of territoriality not as a space to be discovered or colonized, following the historical purpose of 19th century colonialism, but instead as the articulated global intervention of the United States in a world which transforms the classic form of extensive capitalism into the new order of intensive capitalism. In the articulation of this capitalistic mentality, the possession of the *land*, as well as the opposition between *Civilization* and *Barbarism* play a crucial role in the acquisition of power and in the construction of the New Modern Nations. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845) and José Eustasio Rivera's *La vorágine* (1924) serve to illustrate this social imaginary. Also in *Chapter Two*, we continue with the analysis of colonial violence in

the context of the so-called *neocolonialism* by briefly exploring three important elements in the representation of violence in Latin American films and their direct connection with the still neocolonial condition of Latin America in the 21st century. *La hora de los hornos* (2000) by Fernando Ezequiel Solanas and *Cidade de Deus* (2002) by Fernando Meirelles help illustrate this assumption. Here, the old and traditional *establishment* of power starts to transform into a more corporate political space that demands the configuration of a new globalized financial market. Chapters *Three* and *Four* argue through literary and cinematic expressions of Latin America how, in the new configuration of power motivated by the globalized financial market, the so-called *neoliberal violence* takes different forms that, in many cases, challenge our understanding. In this new scenario, violence interconnects with other aspects of social life and motivates the proliferation of criminal groups such as *sicarios* (Hitmen), as well as motivating the origin and development of *narcotraffic* (*Chapter Three*) and other social conflicts such as *migration* and *femicides* (*Chapter Four*). As mentioned before, this pluralization in the forms of neoliberal violence has vast economic implications, and it reveals how individuals take advantage of these conflicts to seek significant economic opportunities.

1. Chapter One

Globalization and Neoliberalism: A Theoretical Approach

In a broader sense, both *globalization* and *neoliberalism* have been regarded as a broad set of processes consisting of multiple networks of economic, political and cultural interchange where contemporary economic development is propelled by the rapid growth of information in all types of productive activities, but especially by the developments in science and technology. In addition, both phenomena have been regarded as a continuous form of colonialism that emphasizes the global victory of capitalism propagated from the older centers of power, but more importantly by the United States.

In this chapter, we will examine the theoretical implications of the concepts of globalization and neoliberalism suggesting the idea of a *symbiosis* between these two phenomena. This theoretical study sustains the idea that both globalization and neoliberalism plead for an unregulated capitalist system (free market economy) that embodies the ideals of individualism and optimum economic performance with respect to efficiency, economic growth, and technical progress. Below this model of globalization lies the belief in progress and development which inevitably suggests that individuals should be equipped with *market values* such as individualism, personal initiative, success, consumption, and more importantly, competitiveness. All these ideals become even more crucial under the strong relationship *media-culture*.

In addition, both globalization and neoliberalism plead for a limited economic role from the state. In this economic notion, neoliberalism is regarded as an updated version of the classical liberal economic thought of the 18th century (stated by Adam Smith), which encouraged the emergence of the globalization phenomenon. This chapter also reveals how both globalization

and neoliberalism create new forms of economic, social, and political marginalization by “selling” the idea of economic growth and economic power, but instead these phenomena, under the guise of the capitalistic mentality, continue to reproduce *inequalities* under new circumstances and new forms, especially in the context of Latin America with special interest in Colombia and Mexico.

In *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith stated some of the guidelines for his economic liberalism.³¹ For Smith, a capitalist’s work to obtain personal benefits would also create benefits for the others (society as a whole). For this reason, no state intervention should be required within economic activities. In Smith’s terms, economic activities are controlled by the *invisible hand* of the market which has the inner ability to solve all economic problems by itself and in itself. Smith states that:

...by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he³² intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many more cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. (349)

Under this scope, the restrictions and regulations imposed by the state should disappear to motivate the creative skills of individuals (*laissez-faire*), but also to allow them to exercise their individual rights.

The developments of the French Revolution (1789-1799) and the Industrial Revolution (1760, 1820-1840) helped strengthen the ideas of freedom and citizens’ rights which in turn emphasized and promoted the concept of equality. To reach these standards of equality; mainly

³¹ “As a broader discourse, liberalism is a seventeenth- and eighteenth- century philosophy born in England out of English struggles for the freedom of trade and correspondent forms of governance. As a political philosophy, liberalism claims to be an open system where individualism is the solid and unswerving bedrock upon which liberalism firmly rests and to which all the other concepts of liberalism refer.” See Ileana Rodriguez (11).

³² The capitalist.

economic equality, the possession of money played an important factor. However, it is ironic to understand that the liberal concept of equality, motivated by the equitable possession of money, suffers a reverse in its pragmatic application by granting the possession of money the status of an instrument of oppression. Both the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution allowed citizens to move up the social ladder through their skills and through opportunities that arose. Both revolutions left behind new institutions, ideas, and inventions that helped develop the middle class; however, due to the hard, demanding working conditions created, many workers' living conditions never improved.

When the first industrial cities emerged, individuals from the rural areas started to populate these urban sites in search of better living conditions. While the new capitalists sought their personal economic growth through maximizing their earnings, the disadvantaged working class suffered the appalling conditions of low wages and long working hours. Polanyi states:

It was deemed an established fact that the masses were being sweated and starved by the callous exploiters of their helplessness; that enclosures had deprived the country folk of their homes and plots, and thrown them on the labor market created by the Poor Law Reform; and that the authenticated tragedies of the small children who were sometimes worked to death in mines and factories offered ghastly proof of the destitution of the masses. Indeed, the familiar explanation of the Industrial Revolution rested on the degree of exploitation made possible by eighteenth century enclosures; on the low wages offered to homeless workers which accounted for the high profits of the cotton industry as well as the rapid accumulation of capital in the hands of the early manufacturers. (156)

The political liberal ideas of “freedom and equality for all” ironically manipulated a working class subjugated by the economic interests of an emerging bourgeois class. From the very beginning, many of these emerging capitalists showed their desire to control their national markets, but they also strove to create a “culture” of economic liberalization through the implementation of free trade policies among nations.

By the beginning of the 20th century, more specifically in 1929, these ideas of economic liberalization had strengthened the economic power of the new capitalists and had caused the weakening of products' value due to the phenomenon of overproduction. As a consequence, many factories decreased their production levels causing a significant increase in unemployment. These drastic economic measurements led to what we have understood as The Great Depression of the 1930's. This catastrophic event made the world market reconsider the natural capacity of the market to solve economic problems by itself (as stated by Smith). Following this crisis, the state came to play an important role in the economic realm through the relief and reform measurements put into place by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It was not until after 1939 that the world market would make significant improvements during what has been known as the Golden Age of Capitalism which extends from the end of World War II in 1945 until the early 1970's. It is precisely in 1945, following the devastation of the Second World War, when *The United Nations* organization was created. Its main mission was to maintain international peace and security, and to promote prosperity and economic opportunity.

Ironically, between the months of February and March of 1945, the United States tried to impose an economic and military plan at the Inter-American Conference on Problems of War and Peace³³ in Mexico City in order to subordinate Latin America to its political and economic interests.³⁴ That same year in July, The United Nations created the *International Monetary Fund*

³³ This conference is known in the Latin American sphere as *La Conferencia de Chapultepec* which ironically sought to reduce the influential role over Latin America of the two main political powers of the time: The United States and The Soviet Union.

³⁴ This is not the only defining moment in the political and economic relationship US and Latin America. Néstor García Canclini states that Latin America was "invented" by Europe in a process of colonization initiated by Spain and Portugal. This relationship of dependence reached a strong tie with the United States during the 20th century. However, these changes cannot be seen as a mere transference of power since agricultural, industrial, and financial markets, as well as important changes in technology and culture (tourists, migrants, etc.) altered the structure of that dependency. In the last decades, the intensification of economic and cultural relations with the United States has encouraged a social model where many of the state's functions disappear and they become a part of private

(IMF) whose primary purpose was to ensure the stability of the international monetary system, reduce vulnerability to economic and financial crisis, and raise living standards. However, to ensure the effectiveness of these three important goals (mainly in favor of the powerful nations) and to avoid the occurrence of the disastrous consequences of the 1930's Great Depression, the IMF appears to be one of the main sources of the economic crisis of the underdeveloped countries since its economic policies, instead of contributing to the economic development of these powerless nations, ended up harming them.³⁵ Organizations such as the IMF contribute to the internationalization of the capitalist system through their deceitful promises and loans, and through their support of economic measures such as the Free Trade Agreement, which emphasizes the internationalization of the global market and opens the debate about the lucrative benefits and harmful consequences of the phenomenon of globalization and the neoliberal agenda.

Dirlik states that "The euphoria over globalization, however, has served to disguise the very real social and economic inequalities that are not merely leftovers from the past but products of the new developments" (21). In other words, the 19th century free market (later understood as globalization) which developed from the productive strength of the Industrial Revolution resulted in a kind of symbiosis with the economic liberalization policies (privatization, deregulation, reductions in government spending, free trade, etc.) and the powerful technological revolution of the late 20th century into what has been understood as neoliberalism.

corporations. Likewise, social participation is organized under the model of consumption and not citizenship. See *Consumidores y ciudadanos* (14-15).

³⁵ The IMF's method of operation is that of offering loans to those underdeveloped countries to facilitate their economic development; however, its high interest rates cause these poor nations to be subjugated to the economic interests of the powerful members of this organization.

1.1. A Theoretical Approach to Globalization:

Both globalization and the essential driving force of its market economy have proven to be a fuzzy, complex, and almost incomprehensible phenomenon for various schools of thought such as political economy, anthropology, sociology, and philosophy among others.³⁶ The discussion around this phenomenon includes the idea of *interrelationship* which concerns: a) making the world one, b) creating and maintaining a global economy, and c) homogenizing cultural differences. This idea suggests that the understanding of globalization is that of a multidisciplinary one. According to David Murillo,³⁷ globalization requires a global knowledge of the world: “We shall therefore leap from the language of Political Theory to that of Economics, from Anthropology to History, Moral Philosophy to Business Management, International Relations to Finance and Sociology” (*From WalMart to Al Qaeda* 3). In this understanding, all the economic, cultural, political, institutional, and technological structural elements necessary in the shaping of globalization focus on the collective concept of *development*. However, this idea of development is linked to the idea of intensive growth that can only be achieved through highly-technological advancements.

In today’s world, investments are carried out in relation to new technological developments. Nowadays, we have observed the transformation of an industrial economy into a technological one, which in some cases can be regarded as more traumatic than the one experienced by our ancestors who went from an agricultural economy into an industrial one. The

³⁶ “Economists conventionally define the market as the activity in which buyers and sellers exchange goods, services, and money and where prices and quantities are determined through the forces of supply and demand. On the other hand, anthropologists focus on the social relationships created by the exchange of goods and services. Like anthropologists, sociologists also prefer the more general concept of exchange to the specific form of the market. Sociologists conventionally view the market exchange as part of the evolution and organization of society.” See Robin Cantor et al. (2-5)

³⁷ David Murillo is a Doctor in Sociology from the University of Barcelona whose work focuses on the areas of business ethics, geopolitics and globalization studies. He has also served as advisor in CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) for the United Nations.

traumatic aspect resides in the idea of *speed*. The Industrial Revolution extended through several generations allowing time for both individual and institutional adjustments; however, the technological revolution, motivated by the phenomenon of globalization, has proven to have faster, more drastic consequences.

This new techno-economic dimension in the world economy reevaluates the traditional way to understand geography, man's relationship with his environment, demographics, and culture itself. This new dimension opens the debate to the understanding of globalized societies, as those affected across borders, where dominant centers will dictate the changes in the world economy over more dependent, passive subjects. This idea reinforces the concept of interdependence or connectivity between societies and countries, but also stresses the notion that not all societies or countries are transformed equally by the changes that operate within globalization. David Murillo offers a well-summed up explanation of the different types of transformations that can derive from the complexity of the phenomenon of globalization:

The different types of transformation are linked and fed back, producing new transformations. Thus, migrations affect societies, make them multicultural and affect their identity. This transforms social structures, the demographics of our cities, our family make-up and the spectrum of social classes. Mobility will also affect companies and organizations, as it will alter their composition. Their action will transform the economic sectors (agriculture, industry and services) and will put new pressure on natural resources, energy and water. In turn, these changes will bring about the appearance of new social actors, new demands and new pressures on states, political frameworks, and state and supra-state institutional structures. New technologies, added to the above changes, will introduce successive alterations into the traditional media and the way citizens understand the events around them. (33)

Even though there are facts that support the benefits of globalization, these facts do not disavow the disadvantageous consequences of globalization for those societies or countries not located at the dominant centers of world economy, and in some cases even for those at the center.

For many thinkers, the term *globalization* suggests a process that involves the globe as a

whole; however, this is not the case since many areas of the globe are left out of this process. In this context, globalization creates new forms of economic and social marginalization which also imply political marginalization. Dirlik states that the capitalistic ideas of globalization may promise plenty for all, but as many studies have revealed, the actual outcome of globalization aims more at “the marginalization of the majority of the world’s population, including many in the core societies” (23). In other words, the world undergoes a reconfiguration that takes place under the regime of capitalism, which continues to reproduce inequalities under new circumstances and new forms.³⁸

The phenomenon of globalization does not affect the economic sector only. It also spreads its tentacles to the political, social, and cultural spheres. Globalization has the ability to touch, influence, and even contaminate thoughts and values that have been considered essential to societies and cultures for many centuries. In many cases, those societies and cultures outside the network of globalization may not be active participants in this process, but they will still find their lives transformed by forces originating from the flows of capital, technology, and labor within the network.

In considering the key elements that make up today’s culture of globalization and its globalized market economy,³⁹ we would certainly have to include: economic freedom, private

³⁸ We are talking here about high numbers of job losses, job instability, and wage gaps that provoke precarious living conditions. To cite just one example, we could highlight the Pontiac Assembly Center in Michigan (located in Metro Detroit and opened in 1972) which went from producing around 1,300 GMC trucks a day in 2003 to around 200 in 2009, where two-thirds of the company’s workers were laid off forcing the company to close down. The closing down of what was once the world’s largest automaker and main source of economic stability for this region, brought up what the media characterized as the *Fall of the Black Middle Class*.

³⁹ “By the late 1980’s the total commodification model had taken hold in the Eastern as well as Western European countries, spreading to areas and sectors of the economy which until then had been unaffected. The aggressive nature of this capitalism, which up to the 1970’s had been limited to the commodities market, a few areas of the service sector and the private labour market, is today regaining ground as component of a new hegemonic order postulated on the ideology of individualism, on the core position of the firm as both economic and social leader of community life, and on the ideology of the market as independent and self-reliant regulating element.” See Bruno Amoroso (81-82).

property, mass production, capital accumulation, individualism, the desire to possess, competitiveness, and consumerism as a way to achieve personal satisfaction and fulfilment. All these aspects strengthen the belief that globalization encompasses the idea of *progress*, a goal that is only attainable through the capacity for people to maintain a successful job (mainly measurable in terms of the size of their salary) which will prove their strong purchasing power. In this context, we could think of at least three important *markets* that integrate themselves within the culture of the globalized market economy, which play a crucial role in the analysis to be carried out within this study: *the transnational, financial, and media markets*. Let us provide a brief description of each one of them and the possible way(s) in which they interact within a globalized economy.

The transnational market is made up of multinational corporations that exert great influence over the way the world market behaves. Nowadays we hear the term “foreign direct investment” where the word “direct” implies control and ownership by the multinational corporation providing the investment. In many cases, some of these transnational corporations are more economically powerful than many countries, which allows for these corporations to “invade” these economically weak countries’ borders and markets with big masses of products and capital investment. Small countries rely heavily on multinational corporations to supply capital and create jobs. Hufbauer and Suominen argue that “small countries such as Luxembourg, Belgium, Hong Kong, and Singapore are more than 60 percent ‘transnationalized.’ The figure for Trinidad and Tobago and Estonia is more than 40 percent, and for Chile, Jamaica, the Netherlands, and various Eastern European countries, it is above 30 percent” (*Globalization at Risk* 88). With this transnational economic globalization, the economic system itself suffers transformations. We go from stable domestic markets to changing transnational ones that not only compete in local markets, but also globally, with a high degree of interrelation and dependence on subcontracting

companies.⁴⁰ In addition, contrary to the old model of job stability based on a person's educational level certified by diplomas and degrees, the new model seeks employees that can obtain a specific set of skills which will enable them to adapt to flexible work environments. This means that education does not necessarily have to reach a final point of destination or end, but instead it becomes continuing education.

The profound change in the economic system in the last three decades can be understood as the result of an insistent pressure from different economic agents and organizations to liberate or free global capital. Dani Rodrik explains how in the times of the Bretton Woods⁴¹ conference “there were controls over loans and cross-border indebtedness, limits on firms' and banks' capacity for foreign indebtedness; and hot money was globally perceived as a danger” (*The Globalization Paradox* 103). With this agreement, powerful financial corporations sought to remove and/or weaken the state control through deregulation and the influence of the private sector in modern society. According to Dirlik, the message is clear:

Globalization means the supremacy of the market in shaping all relations, social and political, and the nation-state in its social and political concerns is an impediment to the efficient functioning of the market. The nation-state must allow the regional autonomy that permits successful regions to participate in the global economy, unhampered by obligations to other parts or constituencies of the nation guaranteed earlier by the state.
(28)

The financial market plays a crucial role in the weakening of the state and encourages the increase in the power of large financial corporations which seek their own interests and benefits around issues concerning political decisions (including the funding of political parties), policy

⁴⁰ In other words, instead of being focused on mass production and mechanization as a competitive factor, the new transnational economic system moves toward “the direction of flexible production models, with short and long cycles; in which knowledge – obtained through access to information – is the essential production factor; in which digitization is the key competitive factor.” See David Murillo (82).

⁴¹ This conference was officially known as the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference and consisted of a gathering of delegates from 44 countries that met from July 1-22, 1944 in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, to agree upon a series of new rules for the post-WWII international monetary system.

making, media control, and the support of intellectuals who can exert influence over government agencies to manipulate laws and regulations. With the weakening of the state, we also find that a lot of the economic power of the world market rests in the hands of international economic organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the International Labor Organization, the European Union, and in various international organizations of free trade like Mercosur, NAFTA, etc., which dictate the rules of engagement for world financial matters.

These financial measures transform the functioning of the economic system at different levels (both micro and macro) and produce devastating changes in the world economy by transferring income from the real economy to the financial sector, increasing income inequality, contributing to wage stagnation, and changing the structure and the functioning of the financial market by changing economic policies, among others. In *Latin America in a Changing Global Environment*, Riordan Roett and Guadalupe Paz state how the globalization of market relationships introduces threats to human rights, which are mainly generated by multinational corporations and financial institutions through the imposition of structural adjustment programs that increase inequality and deepen the abuses against the marginalized:

Some multinational corporations endanger the human rights of their employees and host communities through direct or subcontracted coercive labor suppression; life-threatening health and safety workplace conditions; workplace violations of free speech, assembly, and privacy; and suborning of local authorities. Guatemalan Strikers against Del Monte have been assassinated, Colombian peasants kidnapped by oil companies' private security forces, Mexican border communities poisoned (...). (148)

These intentional policy choices are made to favor those with the most income, wealth, and political power; decisions which end up shifting political power away from low and middle wage workers toward the owners of powerful corporations.

Investment abroad plays an important role within the structure of the financial market. Hufbauer and Suominen argue that “inflows to developing countries, which were tiny and confined

to natural resources in the 1950s, reached a record figure of \$500 billion in 2007 that was spread among services, manufacturing, and some natural resources, with Asia leading the pack as top destination” (87). We can see that the financial market has moved up from the mere matter of rich countries just seeking out cheap labor in poor countries. However, these poor countries rely heavily on the support and investment of the big foreign multinationals that control the financial market. This economic structure leads to the rise of what has been understood as “Grand Globalizers” (*Globalization at Risk* 88) where leading multinational corporations such as Walmart, ExxonMobil, Toyota Motor, etc. contribute to a third of the planet’s productivity. Mainly, these multinational companies employ their investment “tentacles” in two ways to acquire profits. On the one hand, they use cross-border mergers and acquisitions⁴² to facilitate the taking over of existing firms abroad. On the other hand, they seek brand-new investments, usually of high profitability.

These two forms of financial exchange can be read as new forms of economic exploitation and marginalization since those with the weakest financial power will be excluded from the network of economic control. Those societies and cultures outside the network of globalization will still find their lives transformed by forces originating from the flows of capital, technology, and labor. All of this is encouraged by the process of globalization which, eventually, will end up influencing the traditional, cultural values considered essential for established societies.

The media market comes into play (within the scope of globalization) by producing values associated with individualism, consumerism, the desire to own, personal initiative and creativity, competitiveness, and more importantly the concept of “being successful” measured only in terms of what you are able to accumulate economically and based on what you are able to buy. As a

⁴² These terms describe the transactions in which the ownership of companies, other business organizations or their operating units are transferred to or combined with other companies, usually of greater financial power.

starting point, it is essential to consider the relationship between media and culture since the latter becomes the source for the former to develop its mechanisms of action. For this purpose, a definition of culture could provide us with an idea of the importance of the transformations we are dealing with.

Culture has been broadly described as a set of ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are commonly shared by a particular society. These ways provide the individuals of that particular society with a sense of identity and belonging, and at the same time allows them to construct and share a group of values that bring meaning to the members of this specific society. Murillo states that the function of values within a society is “to orient our behavior, to motivate and guide our way of doing things, to identify us as belonging to a group in relation to the rest, and to provide a framework explaining the world and our role in it” (48). Without a doubt, the last of the items of Murillo’s description plays an important role within the scope of globalization since individuals of a particular society have the moral obligation to interpret and interact with the environment in which they live and develop, as well as constructing a vision that allows them “to integrate” within that specific environment. For example, individuals should be able to understand and learn the ways to cope with the challenges provided by a globalized world that encourages the idea and the value of *competitiveness* as one (or *the only*) way to achieve their desirable economic goals. In addition, individuals should be able to understand that, mostly, these values (e.g., competitiveness) are going to work in favor of some (e.g., employers who seek competent workers) and in detriment of others (workers who lack this value). From this point of view, the *right* way to succeed in a globalized world is to create individuals equipped to compete for and to attain the values of economic freedom, capital accumulation, and mass consumption that the globalized market encourages.

In agreement with this thought, mass media plays a significant role in creating and molding both culture and individuals to the demands of the market. Then, to cope with the key elements of the globalized market system, societies create their own cultural and individual models to satisfy the demands of a system that emphasizes the idea of economic utility (measurable in terms of economic success). Below this model of globalization lies the belief in progress and development which inevitably suggests that individuals should be equipped with *market values* such as individualism, personal initiative, success, consumption, and more importantly, competitiveness.

Mass media, under the influence of the globalized system of consumption, redefines the ways of understanding concepts and doing things. According to García Canclini “las identidades se organizan cada vez menos en torno de símbolos nacionales y pasan a formarse a partir de lo que proponen, por ejemplo, Hollywood, Televisa y MTV” [identities organize themselves each time less around national symbols but around what is proposed by, for example, Hollywood, Televisa, and MTV] (*Consumidores y ciudadanos* 15). In this sense, mass media monopolizes and creates the culture of “new individuals” destined for production and consumption.

It is common knowledge that *to sell, you need to advertise*; that is why companies invest a great deal of money in publicity to see their products being sold in the market. However, publicity is not only aimed at selling products but also at influencing the way in which individuals perceive and interpret those products. In his book *The Power of Identity*, Manuel Castells reflects upon who the media are. For him, in today’s democratic societies, “media are, essentially, business groups, increasingly concentrated and globally interconnected, although they are, at the same time, highly diversified and geared toward segmented markets” (314), which aim at creating in individuals’ minds images that express *credibility*, but more importantly *cultural values* able to connect them as part of a given community.

A good example of the strong influence of the media in shaping individuals' ways of perceiving and understanding products in the market is what George Ritzer has called "McDonaldization" which describes how this chain of fast-food restaurants has not only become a part of American culture but also how its management principles have become a sort of American cultural imperialism around the world. Ritzer states how McDonaldization constitutes "the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world" (*The McDonaldization of Society* 1). McDonald's fosters four main dimensions (or values) that strengthen the mentality of the globalized market system in our modern society: efficiency (at all costs), calculability (with an emphasis on quantity), predictability (leading to the idea of homogenization around the world), and control of the individuals (by providing customers with an "unpleasant" eating experience due to lines, limited menus, and uncomfortable seats). The last dimension suggests that individuals are no longer in charge of their habits and choices, rather the market (supported by the media) is the one exerting this control. García Canclini states:

En la perspectiva de esta definición, el consumo es comprendido, ante todo, por su *racionalidad económica*. Estudios de diversas corrientes consideran el consumo como un momento del ciclo de producción y reproducción social: es el lugar en el que se completa el proceso iniciado al generar productos, donde se realiza la expansión del capital y se reproduce la fuerza del trabajo. Desde tal enfoque, no son las necesidades o los gustos individuales los que determinan qué, cómo y quiénes consumen. Depende de las grandes estructuras de administración del capital el modo en que se planifica la distribución de los bienes. (*Consumidores* 59).

[Under the perspective of this definition, consumption is understood, mainly, for its *economic rationality*. Different fields of study consider consumption as a moment in the cycle of social production and reproduction: it is the place in which the process of generating products is completed, the expansion of capital takes place, and labor force is reproduced. From this point of view, individual needs and likes do not determine what and how is consumed, and who consumes. It all depends on how the big structures of capital management organize the distribution of goods]

In this context, questions about how individuals can get informed and who represents their interests are responded, mainly, by their personal consumption of goods and the mass media rather than the rules or laws of democratic representation. That is why some critics of globalization suggest that this phenomenon, vastly influenced by the market media, implies not only the homogenization of world production but also that of culture.

Behaviors, habits, likes, and values tend to be standardized and universalized through the influence exerted by media. There is no room for the traditional values, for those that characterize particular communities or societies. This universalization of values and behaviors does not depend on the natural agreement of individuals belonging to different human societies. Instead, it is the globalized market system that seeks to create a unified system of world communications, a homogeneous system of life styles, but more importantly a universal system of world economy propagated and supported by the unlimited influence of the mass media. This media emphasizes, among other things, the values of consumption, individualism, and competitiveness.

However, in the context of Latin America, García Canclini offers a different interpretation in relation to the “homogenization” of cultures and world economy. According to him, the national differences that persist under the process of transnationalization⁴³ and the way in which the market reorganizes production and consumption to obtain greater earnings turns those differences into *inequalities*. In his attempt to recognize the transformations of some Latin American cities as global cities, he states:

... las transformaciones que ocurren en ellas tienen como principales focos generadores procesos intrínsecos derivados del desarrollo desigual y las contradicciones de estas

⁴³ “The view here is focused on how countries and areas of the world are integrated into the production process by estimating labor costs, access to raw materials, or even to promote policy measures in support of political systems or governments. This international integration has been possible due to the decentralization of production and the strong incursion of the new information and telecommunications technologies.” See Bruno Amoroso (65).

sociedades: migraciones masivas, contracción del mercado de trabajo; políticas urbanas, de vivienda y de servicios insuficientes para la expansión poblacional y del espacio urbano, conflictos interétnicos, deterioro de la calidad de vida y aumento alarmante de la inseguridad. Las grandes ciudades del continente, que los gobiernos y migrantes campesinos imaginaban hasta hace pocos años como avanzadas de nuestra modernización, son hoy los escenarios caóticos de mercados informales donde multitudes tratan de sobrevivir bajo formas arcaicas de explotación, o en las redes de la solidaridad o de la violencia. (*Consumidores* 18)

[...the transformations that occur in them have as main generating focus intrinsic processes derived from the unequal development and the contradictions of these societies: massive migrations, work market reduction, urban policies, housing and insufficient services for population expansion and urban space, multiethnic conflicts, deterioration of quality of life, and an alarming increase in insecurity. The large cities of the continent, which governments and migrant peasants imagined only years ago as advanced in modernization, are today chaotic spaces of an informal market where multitudes try to survive under archaic forms of exploitation, or in the networks of solidarity or violence]

In other words, globalization, despite its homogenizing agenda to maximize earnings, must recognize local and national differences, especially in the case of Latin America which presents a heterogeneous sociocultural composition which has historically placed it in a position of subordination, but which has not hindered Latin America's aspiration to negotiate its incursion in modernity through the adoption of market values encouraged by the globalization phenomenon.

1.2. **A Theoretical Approach to Neoliberalism:**

In his article "The End of History?" (1989), Francis Fukuyama states that after the fall of socialists' societies and any other ideological alternative, *capitalism* emerges as the only viable economic and political system to be carried out throughout the world:

And yet, all of these people sense dimly that there is some larger process at work, a process that gives coherence and order to the daily headlines. The twentieth century saw the developed world descend into a paroxysm of ideological violence, as liberalism contended first with the remnants of absolutism, then bolshevism and fascism, and finally an updated Marxism that threatened to lead to the ultimate apocalypse of nuclear war. But the century that began full of self-confidence in the ultimate triumph of Western liberal democracy seems at its close to be returning full circle to where it started: not to an 'end of ideology' or a convergence between capitalism and socialism, as earlier predicted, but to an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism. (3)

The victory of this worldwide Western liberal mentality is evident within intellectual circles, politics, and economic developments such as consumerism. Western culture started to make its appearance in the markets of communist countries such as China and Russia, where the Western industries of food, clothing, and music seemed to spread their idea of a “material” world.

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping took the first steps towards the liberalization of a communist-ruled economy. In 1979, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and, in 1980, President Ronald Reagan also sought to revitalize the economies of Great Britain and the United States by fighting inflation. Harvey states how these world leaders supported Paul Volcker, director of the US Federal Reserve in 1979, in the application of drastic economic measures that included the deregulation of industry, agriculture, and resource extraction, the liberation of the powers of finance both internally and in the world (1). These, and other economic measures, were named by both Volcker and Thatcher as *neoliberalism*; the economic system that would emerge as the central guiding principle of world economic thought and management.

Etymologically speaking, *neoliberalism* stands for “new liberalism” which revisits the old liberal doctrines, but also incorporates new thoughts into it. In this respect, we find the first strong connection with the economic ideals proposed by Adam Smith, which encouraged the emergence of globalization. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith suggests that economic activities should be controlled by the *invisible hand* of the market which has the inner ability of solving all economic problems by itself and in itself. For this reason, no state intervention should be required within economic activities. In other words, state interventions in markets (once these have been created) must be kept at minimum since powerful economic groups (such as powerful multinationals) will do anything in their capacity to distort state interventions for their own economic, and political benefit.

As a first instance, Harvey has described *neoliberalism* as:

...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 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 integrity of the money. (2)

In Fukuyama's vision, the state that emerges at the end of history is liberal in the sense that it emphasizes and protects individuals' rights to freedom. Especially, freedom to individuals' own choices, economic growth, and unlimited consumerism. All of these freedoms can only be attained through a strong work ethic encouraged and guided by *competitiveness*. Within this scope, capitalism appears as the only system able to provide economic power, work, and overall well-being.

Indeed, neoliberalism borrowed from globalization the element of *competitiveness*. Globalization transformed big businesses from supporters of the state into opponents of it. Globalization increased the competitive pressure faced by large corporations and banks, as competition started to become the main element to establish relationships worldwide. In his article "Globalization and Neoliberalism," David Kotz argues that globalization produced a world capitalism similar to the one of the Robber Baron Era⁴⁴ in the United States, in which giant corporations battled one another in a market system that sought freedom from political burdens and restraints (13). It is this element of a competitive globalization that is one of the main sources that propels the rise of neoliberalism. According to Kotz:

⁴⁴ In the 19th century, as the United States transformed into an industrial society with little regulations on business, it became possible for a group of men with powerful political influence to dominate important industries. These men, who engaged in unethical and monopolistic practices, were known as Robber Barons. Among the conditions that favored their wealth accumulation, we can find the extensive natural resources being discovered as the country expanded, the enormous workforce of immigrants arriving in the country, and the general acceleration of business being done during this industrial development.

One reason for stressing the line of causation running from globalization to neoliberalism is the time sequence of the developments. The process of globalization, which had been reversed to some extent by political and economic events in the interwar period, resumed right after World War II, producing a significantly more globalized world economy and eroding the monopoly power of large corporations well before neoliberalism began its coming in the mid 1970's. (14)

This suggests, to some extent, that the later consolidated neoliberal ideas reflect the influential tendency of globalization in the process of capital accumulation, but also they reveal how major financial institutions of the leading capital nations enter into competition with one another within the open and integrated world financial system, where both globalization and neoliberalism have promoted their quest for economic freedom.

The political liberal ideas of “freedom and equality for all” continue to be relevant within neoliberalism. According to Harvey, “The assumption that individual freedoms are guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade is a cardinal feature of the neoliberal thinking” (7). However, these freedoms remain within the realm of the economics; that is to say, that they embody the economic interests of financial institutions, multinational corporations, and private business owners who seek the conditions for profitable capital accumulation. In other words, these freedoms represent the values and the economic security of the dominant class that strives to position itself within the economic elite, especially after the political and financial crisis of the 1970's.

Another important aspect of neoliberalism is that it favors individual private property rights. In fact, neoliberal advocates seek the privatization of assets. In this transaction, each individual is held responsible for his or her own financial well-being. In other words, individuals are expected to have the capacity to make rational and well-informed economic decisions in their own interests. For this reason, *competition* in all forms (between territories, firms, and individuals) is regarded as one of the main qualities in the neoliberal way, since the power of

competition drives individuals into the search for new products, new production methods, and new forms of management.

In *The Rise of the Network Society*, Manuel Castells states how competition, both for countries and firms, requires strengthening market position in an expanding market. For him, the process of worldwide market expansion feeds from productivity growth, since firms must improve their performance, when faced with stronger competitors around the world (98-9). In other words, countries and firms, under free and fair market conditions, must do their best to produce goods and services able to compete (and meet the needs) within international markets. Thus, we will have winners and losers. The former, those with the best and more effective business practices; the latter, those unable to meet the demanding business requirements of the marketplace.

On the other hand, individuals within the neoliberal labor market are regarded as a mere factor of production. They represent their employers' economic interests and for that, they are not regarded as individuals with dreams, desires, or ambitions; but as individuals with a specific set of skills or qualities able to produce goods or services favorable to their employers' economic expectations. Harvey denounces how workers in sweatshops around the world suffer the appalling working conditions of long hours, bad food, cramped dorms, and even physical and sexual abuse (169). In addition, workers under neoliberalism strive to maintain a job in the chronic, insecure world of *flexible labor*, which dismantles all collective institutions (unions), takes away social protections, and can only offer them a short-term contract.⁴⁵ Castells states

⁴⁵ In great part, this figure of the disposable worker has been the result of the transformations promoted by the advent of the technological revolution driven by neoliberalism. Technology has not destroyed employment, but it has transformed it. Employers look for workers with a set of required skills and education level, specifically "designed" to succeed within the contemporary global market economy.

how the growing flexibility of labor has inspired a new generation of workers who displaces, and replaces, an old generation of workers once entitled to job security:

Business consultants and service entrepreneurs have replaced automobile workers and insurance underwriters. On the other hand, there has been a parallel growth of highly educated occupations and low-skill jobs, with very different bargaining power in the labor market. Exaggerating the terminology to capture the imagination of the reader, I labeled these two types of workers ‘self-programmable labor’ and ‘generic labor’. Indeed, there has been a tendency to increase the decision-making autonomy of educated knowledge workers who have become the most valuable assets for their companies. They are often referred to as ‘talents’. On the other hand, generic workers, as executants of instructions, have continued to proliferate, as many menial tasks can hardly be automated and many workers, particularly youth, women, and immigrants, are ready to accept whatever conditions are necessary to get a job. (*The Rise of the Network Society* xxiii)

In this context, the new structure of flexible labor demands for a new concept of workers whose skills, competences, and personal characteristics embody their employers’ desirable economic quests. Christina Garsten and Anna Hasselström offer a new vision: *Homo Mercans* (or *Market Man*).

In “Homo Mercans and the Fashioning of Markets,” Garsten and Hasselström contrast their 21st century *Homo Mercans* to the old 19th century figure of *Homo Economicus*, mainly in terms of their economic rationality. For them, the *Homo Economicus* continually makes rational decisions that intend to achieve the most beneficial profits with the lowest labor investment possible. On the contrary, the *Homo Mercans* is defined by the settings, usually of socio-material nature, to which he is exposed. He is never sure of what he needs to maximize, and his decision-making is not as straightforward and automatic as that of the *Homo Economicus*. In other words, the economic world of the *Homo Mercans* is one of uncertainty and insecurity (211). In sum, the structure of a flexible market promoted by neoliberalism transforms the organization of labor and creates a new “brand” of individuals (disposable worker, homo mercans, etc.) who will either struggle or benefit, economically, from the manipulative principles of today’s world market. In

all cases, these individuals are embedded in a discourse that places major importance not only in the marketability of goods and services, but also in skills, competencies, and attitudes.

Unfortunately, this concept of “marketability” can either provide them with economic power or can hamper all possible expectations of reaching high social mobility.

Social mobility in the neoliberal economic structure implies that individuals should move along the market network. Those outside of the network are more likely to fall through into spaces of marginalization. The majority of the world’s population is now in a process of marginalization or, as some anthropologists have put it even more strongly, “abjection – being thrown down and thrown out of the global.” (Dirlick 96). Aihwa has identified this as *exception* within the neoliberal agenda in which differences in individuals’ capacities and performance of market skills are going to intensify pre-existing social and moral inequalities. In this context, “Low-skill citizens and migrants become exceptions to neoliberal mechanisms and are constructed as excludable populations in transit, shuttled in and out of zones of growth” (16). This is why economic neoliberalization has been associated with increasing numbers of the globally excluded.

Part of this economic exclusion has to do with non-state intervention policies in free market transactions. As the state diminishes its role in areas such as public education, health care, and other social services; it leaves large sectors of the population exposed to marginalization and impoverishment. This way, the structure of *government* (characterized by state power alone) also suffers a transformation within the neoliberal way and gives origin to the so-called *governance* (characterized by the power of big transnational corporations). In this new configuration of power, the state will guarantee the formulation and regulation of laws that will protect and work to the advantage of these big transnational corporations’ interests: “The

coercive arm of the state is augmented to protect corporate interests and, if necessary, to repress dissent” (Harvey 77). Very clearly, the *suppression* of any form of opposition conveys the meaning of acts carried out through the means of violence, domination, authoritarianism, and in the most severe of the cases, *colonialism*.

Postcolonial studies reveal the importance of colonialism to understand the present. Instead of regarding the prefix “post” as “after,” we should read it as “produced by.” In this context, neoliberalism can be regarded as the last stage of capitalism which seeks to restore its power through “corporate” colonization of the world. In *Global Corporations and Sovereign Nations*, David Saari states that “we are discovering, in the last 15 to 20 years, that much of corporate globalization is merely modern colonialism refashioned as a form of capitalism that opts for centralization of command in giant corporations just as communism did in government (...)” (2). In this new configuration of control, these transnational corporations do not respect borders or boundaries, and their immediate goal is to spread their modern colonial mentality by adhering more world countries and citizens to their neoliberal agenda with the implications of a desirable economic growth and active participation and/or performance within the market network.

Obviously, what is left out of this progressive neoliberal mentality are the disastrous disadvantages that such economic measurements represent for the vast majority being left out of the network, and for the world itself. Saari highlights, among others, some of these disastrous implications: environmental destruction, business corruption, social global instability, exploitation of labor and its close connection to migration, debasing of all professions created by commercial market norms, disease outbreaks related to global transport of food and people, loss of indigenous tribes, useless global homogeneity, and dangerous global warming (3). These and

other disastrous consequences of the neoliberal agenda have been attributed to what some critics have described as *Corporate Party* (within the governance structure), which has come to replace the traditional political parties (within the government structure).

In sum, we could argue that the old colonial system has given way to a less concrete form of colonialism (understood as neoliberalism) which requires a new, and different, reordering of the world at the hands of a global, transnational, corporate elite that dictates new forms of engagement within the world market. Dirlick offers the following description:

[u]sing the concept, the network of institutions that define the structure of the new global economic system is viewed not in structural terms, but as intentional and contingent, subject to the control of individuals who represent and seek to advance the interest of a new international capitalist class. This class, it is argued, is formed on the basis of institutions that include a complex of some 37,000 transnational corporations (TNCs), the operating units of global capitalism, the bearers of capital technology and the major agents of the new imperial order. These TNCs are not the only organizational bases of this order, which include the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund...In addition, the New World Order is made up of a host of global strategic planning and policy forums...All of these institutions form an integral part of the new imperialism- the new system of global governance. (100)

However, for this new elite capitalist class to protect and restore their business power through a neoliberal agenda, they needed to create a new culture along with it that would be able to back up their business practices.

For Harvey, “Neoliberalization required both politically and economically the construction of a neoliberal market-based populist culture (...). As such it proved more than a little compatible with that cultural impulse called ‘postmodernism’ which had long been lurking in the wings but could now emerge full-blown as both a cultural and intellectual dominant” (42). In a broader scope, *Postmodernism* emerged as an epistemological critique of the Eurocentric rational modernity prior to the 1980’s, initially in the artistic circles. However, with the great impulse of the global modernity of the 1980’s, the term came to represent a way to understand

the “new culture” driven by the new phase in the development of capitalism. In this new phase (*Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* as pointed out by Fredric Jameson), capitalism penetrates all corners of everyday life by emphasizing the rise of a consumer society. Thus, liberty of consumer choice, not only of particular products but also of lifestyles, becomes the key to individual’s expression within postmodernism.

Therefore, the advent of postmodernism implied a sort of *revolution* that would repudiate the rationality of the Eurocentric modernity. For this, it was necessary to lead an “assault” upon major cultural institutions such as universities, schools, publishing houses, and the media, in order to change the way individuals perceived and understood their present cultural (but also political, economic, and social) practices. Dirlick states:

These are by-now familiar themes of postmodernity but also of what goes by the name of globalization. Repudiation of the coherence of totalities and metanarratives has had liberating effects in giving voice to or rendering visible those who had been suppressed under the regime of modernity. While postmodernity is most importantly a ‘cultural logic’ of advanced capitalist societies, the logic has spread around the world as practices of contemporary capitalism have gone global. Thus, Akbar Ahmed has found in the superseding of third world regimes of modernity the liberation of those who had been suppressed by these regimes, committed as they had been to modern faiths of reason and secularism, which he views as tantamount to ‘demotic revolution.’ Traditions and religious beliefs once viewed as backward have made a comeback as modernity itself has come under question, powered by incorporation in new economic practices. (65-6)

As we see, postmodernism is directly associated with issues concerning the reorganization of global relations and the incorporation of global capital. In this context, multiculturalism (initially sponsored by transnational corporations in search of techniques to manage international labor), artistic freedom, exploration of sexuality (sexual preference and gender), and a general lifestyle diversification mentality became the agenda of a corporate elite determined to protect their economic interests.

At this point, let us analyze the implications of the neoliberal agenda in Colombia and Mexico to understand the characteristics that make this phenomenon so particular and meaningful within Latin America's context.

1.3. Neoliberalism in Latin America:

Latin America has been one of the spaces where the neoliberal agenda has been implemented firmly. It started with Chile's coup in 1973 and it continued with drastic programs of privatization, deregulation, and *precarization* of labor implemented during the 1980's and 1990's.⁴⁶ Even though neoliberalism is a complex phenomenon which implies a variety of meanings,⁴⁷ in the context of Latin America, José Francisco Puello-Socarrás has described it as an economic, and political transnational project under the guise of a capitalist strategy of wealth accumulation commonly known as "Desarrollo" [Development], and implies that all of production and reproduction⁴⁸ of social relations are subjected to the power of the market (*Neoliberalismo en América Latina* 23). In this sense, the strategic dimension of neoliberalism is materialized through the implementation of economic measures not only at local levels, but also regionally and globally. Unfortunately, these economic measures also imply a model of political domination that is characterized in Pablo Dávalos' terms as:

(...) despojo territorial, el control social, la criminalización a la resistencia política, la conversión de la política en espectáculo y la concesión de la soberanía política tanto a los inversionistas como al crimen organizado, en un contexto de globalización financiera y especulativa que ha generado un cambio importante en los patrones de dominación política. ("Hacia un nuevo modelo de dominación política" 135-36)

⁴⁶ The so-called *Chicago's Boys* played an important role in the implementation of the neoliberal ideas in Chile in the early years of Pinochet's dictatorship by providing economic, social, and political "advice." Later on, these guidelines were transferred to neighboring countries, then Europe, and finally were spread worldwide. See José Francisco Puello-Socarrás (21-22).

⁴⁷ In its most strict sense, the term neoliberalism has been described as the absence of State regulations in the market. Other interpretations criticized the way this term has worsened the great economic separation between the rich and the poor. See Eun-Kyung Choi (5).

⁴⁸ This concept of *reproduction* has been described by critics of neoliberalism as the way in which this system creates and recreates its own historic conditions that allows it to exist in terms of time and space.

[(...) territorial dispossession, social control, criminalization of political resistance, transformation of politics into spectacle, and the concession of political sovereignty into the hands of both investors and organized crime in a context of financial and speculative globalization which has generated an important change in the patterns of political domination.]

In part, this model of economic and political domination was motivated by financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund [IMF],⁴⁹ the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization.⁵⁰ Harvey states how in Mexico, the IMF and the World Bank became centers for the propagation and enforcement of free market ideas and neoliberal thought: “In return for debt rescheduling, indebted countries were required to implement institutional reforms, such as cuts in welfare expenditures, more flexible labour market laws, and privatization” (29). These financial measures reveal that under neoliberalism, the indebted countries are forced by international powers to pay their financial debt no matter what the consequences are for their citizens. Colombia and Mexico have not escaped this fate.

The new conditions of economic development for Latin America imposed by the IMF and the World Bank were supposed to motivate the modernization of these countries’ economies to help with their internationalization. However, in his article “El neoliberalismo: la nueva derecha. Apertura, privatización, intervención del Estado, capitalismo salvaje,” Otto Morales Benitez states:

El afán de lucro - lícito e ilícito – se ha apoderado de nuestros países. Por ello andamos de sorpresa en sorpresa: descubriendo cómo se toman nuestros servicios públicos – regalados, con mínima inversión – o cómo se apoderan de las industrias nacionales del lento y difícil ahorro nacional, acumulado en varios años - las transnacionales, sin límites en su apremio de codicia. Todos tan contentos. Y nuestros gobiernos tan complacientes. Lo que nos conduce a un tema aún más profundo como es la desaparición de la equidad

⁴⁹ Asian politicians view American neoliberalism as a strategy of market domination that uses intermediaries such as the International Monetary Fund “to pry open small economies and expose them to trade policies that play havoc with these nations’ present and future economic welfare.” For more information see Aihwa Ong (1).

⁵⁰ Thus, neoliberalism finds promoters and supporters in positions of influence in diverse areas such as education, *finance*, mass media, but more importantly, within these financial institutions which regulate and control global monetary transactions and dictate contractual relations in the marketplace.

social y la ‘democracia limpia’, frente a una limitada y manipulada. Es que lo de la privatización y apertura tiene múltiples y dañinas irradiaciones. (34).
 [The profit motive – licit and illicit – has taken control of our countries. That is why we go from surprise to surprise: discovering how they take control of our public services – almost free, with minimum investment – or how the transnationals take control of the national industries and their slow and difficult national savings, accumulated for several years -, without limits in their pursuit of greed. Everyone so happy. And our governments so obliging. This takes us to a more profound topic which is the dismantling of all social equity and ‘clean democracy,’ as opposed to a limited and manipulated one. The reality is that privatization and economic openness have multiple and harmful wide-ranging results]

Unfortunately, there was little debate against the neoliberal ideas that were being implemented in Latin America during the last two decades of the 20th century. This fact contributed to the rendering of Latin America’s economy into the powerful financial investment of transnational corporations.

1.4. Neoliberalism with Colombian Characteristics:

In the case of Colombia, the neoliberal ideas of social and economic revolution strengthened during the presidency of César Gaviria (1990-1994).⁵¹ In his article “Las reformas estructurales y la construcción del orden neoliberal en Colombia,” Jairo Estrada Álvarez⁵² argues that the need to incorporate the neoliberal thought into Colombia’s constitutional project can be attributed to the emerging idea of global market homogenization of the last two decades:

Tal proyecto presupone una tendencia a la homogeneización de los ordenamientos jurídicos nacionales, en tanto les incorpora contenidos normativos expresivos de ese derecho global o supranacional, que en nuestro caso es el derecho de las reformas de Consenso de Washington, esto es, de la desregulación económica y la disciplina fiscal. El derecho nacional deviene, por tanto, en derecho supranacional, transnacional. (248)
 [Such a project presupposes a tendency to the homogenization of national laws by incorporating into these laws certain expressive normative contents of the global or

⁵¹ This social and economic revolution had started during the presidency of Virgilio Barco (1990-1994) who, in 1990, under a program of economic modernization called *Programa de Modernización de la Economía* sought to promote the development of productive sectors through the model of economic openness encouraged by American financial institutions (IMF and World Bank). For more information on Colombia’s social, political and economic changes at the end of the 20th century see Jorge Andrés Díaz Londoño (216).

⁵² Jairo Hernando Estrada Álvarez es un economista, historiador, abogado y activista social colombiano, integrante de la agrupación política Voces de Paz. Entre sus funciones más recientes, participó en las negociaciones de paz de La Habana entre el gobierno de Juan Manuel Santos y la guerrilla de las FARC.

supranational law. In our case, this refers to the reforms of the Washington Consensus⁵³ which establishes economic deregulation and fiscal discipline. Thus, national law reform becomes supranational or transnational law]

In this context, neoliberalism in Colombia is incorporated as a State policy which, in turn, becomes a market policy controlled by both Colombia's local power and the interests of a transnational capitalism.⁵⁴

President Gaviria's economic program called *Colombia: Revolución Pacífica* sought to promote the modernization and internationalization of Colombia's economy. According to Jorge Andrés Díaz Londoño, Gaviria's plan of economic openness was based on certain structural components that included financial openness and foreign investment policies which promoted the development of Free Trade in Colombia (Estado Social de Derecho 216). In this way, Colombia's economy adapted itself to the transformations of the global economy of the second half of the 20th century.

As mentioned before, many of the political and economic reforms carried out in Colombia during the first years of the 90's, under Gaviria's presidency, brought some changes to Colombia's political system and strengthened both the economic and political principles of neoliberalism which, despite the idea of a revitalization of Colombia's economy, never came to satisfy the basic needs of the larger population that has struggled to reach that economic dream.⁵⁵

⁵³ In 1989, the IMF, the World Bank, the US Treasury Department, members of the Federal Reserve Committee, and members of the USA congress got together to evaluate the development of the neoliberal agenda in operation since early 80's. In 1996, John Williamson quoted the conclusions to this meeting as *Washington Consensus*. This became the political and economic agenda of Latin American countries, with the exception of Cuba, in search of participation within the global market. See Daniel Alzate Mora (66).

⁵⁴ "It is believed that the implementation of the neoliberal system in Colombia was not due to the external *imposition* of global financial institutions but to Colombia's national government decision to reactivate the country's internal production in order to align Colombia's economy with the current global economic tendencies." For more information see Diego Parra Vargas.

⁵⁵ The Gaviria administration set up an *Asamblea Constituyente* which allowed the president to change the constitution in 1991 (La Constitución de 1991). According to Jeff Browitt, "What the new constitution did, in effect, was to weaken the social functions of both the congress and the myriad state enterprises, from social security agencies to public works to government credit and banking institutes, the latter being vital to low-cost credit for businesses and public housing. While this amounted to a frontal assault on the previously constitutionally

Díaz Londoño highlights, among others, the following reforms: national security under the control of Colombia's Military Forces, development of a competitive market, protection of private property, dismantling of welfare policies,⁵⁶ and privatization policies affecting the productive and financial sectors, communications, infrastructure, and social security (217-18). In this sense, many of the productive activities that had been under the control and management of the state are transferred to the private sector in charge of the market.

Another important reform that brought disadvantageous economic conditions to the Colombian society as a whole is the so-called *Reforma Tributaria* [Tax Reform] or *Ley 49 de 1990* [1990's Law 49] since it was applied to the entire population regardless of any socio-economic condition.⁵⁷ As a consequence, a great number of the neoliberal measures⁵⁸ of economic development established during Gaviria's presidential term ended up producing "una apropiación desigual de la riqueza" [an unequal appropriation of wealth] (Díaz Londoño 219) which reached its highest point in the last year of his presidency as revealed by the Gini Coefficient⁵⁹ study performed during the 1990's: "En 1994, mientras el 20% más pobre percibía

guaranteed social functions of the state, it also invested the presidency with extraordinary powers to abolish or merge public enterprises, to change their juridical status, to change the structure of ministries without congressional consultation, and to exercise almost total control over the national budget." See "Capital Punishment: The Fragmentation of Colombia and the Crisis of the Nation-State" (1071).

⁵⁶ A good example is the 1990's Labor Reform known as *Ley 50 de 1990* (Law 50) which brought consequences of economic instability for the working class since benefits that had been previously obtained by labor movements (Unions) were dismantled to give way to the neoliberal model of *flexibilization of labor*. Under this model, all government solidarities are stripped away from the workers. In addition, this reform allows for collective dismissals, eliminates the possibility of workers' reintegration into work, and eliminates the retroactivity of severance pay for workers hired after January 1, 1991. Other examples include the 1993's Health and Social Security Reforms. See Ricardo A. Castaño Z (64).

⁵⁷ "This reform sought to raise money for social investment by creating an exaggerated tax (IVA) of added value from 10% to 12%." See Jairo Estrada Álvarez (257).

⁵⁸ One of the most controversial issues of Gaviria's reforms is in the field of Health and Social Security. According to the 2001 International Monetary Fund report, "Law 100 of 1993 was an important step to broaden the coverage of the pension system, reduce inequalities, and provide adequate and sustainable retirement benefits; however, (...) Law 100 did not fully address the problems (...)." 2001 IMF Country Report No 01/68, April, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁹ The Gini Index is a measurement of the income distribution of a country's residents. This number, which ranges between 0 and 1 and is based on residents' net income, helps define the gap between the rich and the poor, with 0 representing perfect equality and 1 representing perfect inequality. It is typically expressed as a percentage, referred to as the Gini Coefficient. www.investopedia.com

2,9% del ingreso nacional, el 20% más rico concentraba 62,3% del total de ingresos” [In 1994, while the 20% poorer obtained 2.9% of the national income, the 20% richer obtained 62.3% of the total income] (Díaz Londoño 220). These drastic economic consequences were the result of the neoliberal economic model promoted during Gaviria’s presidency which advocated for the limited intervention of the state in economic matters and encouraged the principles of individual freedoms, competition, private property, and free trade. In this sense, the implementation of the neoliberal model in Colombia produced a separation between the traditional political system and an emerging neoliberal economic system characterized (the latter) by a large participation of the private sector.

According to Díaz Londoño, the separation of Colombia’s political and economic systems produced certain tensions which translated into power relations. On the one hand, the traditional Liberal and Conservative parties developed a *bipartisan* agreement (*Acuerdo Bipartidista*) which allowed them to have control of both the public administration and the state’s bureaucratic apparatus through the monopoly of public offices, clientelism, and the state’s economic resources. This bipartisan party (with the support of the executive power) joined forces with the Military Forces, and powerful economic groups (representing the private sector) to coordinate economic policies and to approve laws related to wealth distribution and productive activities.

On the other hand, social movements and non-traditional political parties (representing the subaltern sectors) were in charge of seeking better living conditions for Colombia’s population through adequate access to public services, education, health, land, and work conditions. In this sense, they advocated for a better distribution of wealth with the hope of reducing social inequality (223). Unfortunately, both social movements and non-traditional

political parties were opposed and defeated through extralegal mechanisms such as *political violence*⁶⁰ and legal ones such as the *state of exception*,⁶¹ which in Giorgio Agamben's terms represents "state power's immediate response to the most extreme internal conflict" and consents for the establishment "of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system" (*State of Exception* 2). Over the course of the twentieth century this political mechanism has become a common practice of governments in contemporary politics.

Some critics have also described the *state of exception* as *state of emergency*; however, even though in both cases governments can suspend rights and freedoms guaranteed by that country's constitution during times of civil unrest, only in the former, can governments transcend the rule of law in the name of the public good.

In this context, the power relations' tensions between Colombia's dominant and subaltern sectors were not solved through democratic means such as that of political participation but through the means of a political violence motivated by the implementation of the neoliberal model in Colombia. This model has remained the dominant and, for some critics, authoritarian⁶²

⁶⁰ "In 1993, the *Unión Patriótica* political party (constituted in 1985 as the result of the peace agreement between Belisario Betancur's presidency and the FARC) suffered the assassinations of two candidates to the presidency of Colombia, 7 congressmen, 13 representatives, 11 mayors, 69 council members, and around 1,300 other party members." See Jorge Andrés Díaz Londoño (225).

⁶¹ Stephen Humphreys analyses how the Italian philosopher Agamben describes the *State of Exception* as a modern institution that appears as an ongoing imperative to colonize 'life itself' and signals the slow disappearance of meaningful political action. According to Humphreys, Agamben identifies two main schools of thought on the legality of the state of exception. The first school views it as an integral part of positive law which supports the idea that when faced with a public emergency that threatens the life of the nation, international human rights treaties – and many constitutions – permit states to suspend the protection of certain basic rights. The other school understands the state of exception to be essentially extrajudicial, that is to say that it is neither possible nor desirable to control executive action in times of emergency using standard judicial accountability mechanisms. In other words, a legal space must instead be opened for unrestricted state action. See "Legalizing Lawlessness on Giorgio Agamben's *State of Exception*" (678-79).

⁶² Colombia's neoliberal political project "siendo esencialmente autoritario" [being essentially authoritarian] appears covered under democratic procedures since all the reforms proposed by the executive power have been analyzed rigorously within Colombia's congress and have undergone all necessary controls under the judicial power. In other words, the neoliberal project has been invested with "el don de la legalidad" [the gift of legality]. See Jairo Estrada Álvarez (249).

system in the decades to follow Gaviria's presidential term.

Therefore, the administrations of Ernesto Samper⁶³ (1994-1998), Andrés Pastrana⁶⁴ (1998-2002), Álvaro Uribe⁶⁵ (2002-2010), and Juan Manuel Santos⁶⁶ (2010- present) have revealed their connection with neoliberal policies. In all these administrations, the neoliberal measures were implemented through legal means by the creation of national development plans, and budget laws (Estrada Álvarez 251), as well as the institutional transformation of the economic system directly associated with power relations and characterized by “la exclusión del otro y la eliminación física del contrario” [the exclusion of the Other and the physical extermination of the opponent] (Díaz Londoño 226). In other words, the construction of the neoliberal model in Colombia produced a new configuration of power defined by violent characteristics and represented, mainly, by the powerful local economic and political groups eager to join the transnational world of capital. However, this capitalistic model also triggers anti-neoliberal⁶⁷ measures which in Colombia's current political and economic times of peace

⁶³ 29th President of Colombia Ernesto Samper Pizano is the current Secretary General of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). Samper's neoliberalism has been described as “alternative” since he continued carrying out Gaviria's policy of economic openness but under the scope of *reciprocity* by opposing the *unilateralism* of Gaviria's scope. In addition, Samper insisted on complementing economic measures with an agenda of social policy which he called *Salto Social*. Ibid., 263.

⁶⁴ In relation to Pastrana's administration, “we can observe that, under the curtain of a Peace Process, there was an explosion of the neoliberal model (...). The income *per capita* of Colombians was lower compared to the one observed at the beginning of this government and the population's poverty level went from 50% to 62%.” See Daniel J. Pazos y Carolina Vega (n.pag.).

⁶⁵ An interesting analysis on Álvaro Uribe's neoliberal administration focuses mainly on privileging foreign capital investment, control of the media, an open attack on the FARC, and a deceitful participation of the population in the decision-making process. For more information see Marta I. Fierro (127-147).

⁶⁶ According to Carolina Jiménez Martín, Santos' peace negotiations in *La Habana* (which awarded him the Nobel Peace Prize in December 2016) can open spaces for the materialization of certain neoliberal matters in Colombia's democracy. The present results of the conversations in the topics concerning land possession, political participation, and illicit crops are a clear example of these matters. In this sense, the negotiations with the FARC are part of a political project that seeks to put Colombia on course to a sustainable “Desarrollo” [Development] through both local and foreign investment. See “Crisis del neoliberalismo y dinámica constituyente en Colombia” (153).

⁶⁷ “In the past two to three years in Colombia there have been several major national strikes against the government's economic policies. Public sector and private sector labor unions have been agitating for a moratorium on the payment of foreign debt, a change from the dominant neoliberal economic model of the past 10 years and a rejection of IMF preconditions for loans. Suffering under the weight of its worst recession in 70 years, the Colombian economy is witnessing an unprecedented wave of bankruptcies and company failures: in the first half of 1999, over

negotiations⁶⁸ in *La Habana* between Juan Manuel Santos' government and the FARC are translated in Jiménez Martín's terms as:

(...) una defensa de los bienes comunes, en la lucha por la soberanía alimentaria, en prácticas de sustentabilidad ambiental, en el reconocimiento de los sectores populares como sujetos políticos de derecho, en el fortalecimiento de los derechos humanos, en la lucha por el acceso a la tierra, en enfoques pedagógicos transformativos, en la apuesta por la materialización del derecho al trabajo, entre otros elementos, que hoy son puestos en cuestión por el modelo neoliberal dominante. (“Crisis del neoliberalismo” 158)
 [(...) a defense of common goods, in the struggle for food sovereignty, in practices of environmental sustainability, in the recognition of popular sectors as political subjects of the law, in the strengthening of human rights, in the struggle for the possession of land, in transformative pedagogical approaches, in the commitment to the materialization of the right to work, among other things, that are questioned by today's dominant neoliberal model]

In this sense, we are witnessing an institutional crisis in Colombia that involves more than the regular internal opposition *revolutionary armed groups*. According to Jeff Browitt, this institutional crisis comes from both external and internal factors *government*:

In the Colombian case state sovereignty and national identity are now challenged from without by multiple transnational links - global telecommunications and entertainment media, global capital flows, multinational financial institutions which shape economic investment and strategy – and from within by alternative or parallel power structures – local mafias, revolutionary groups and paramilitaries. The long-term crisis of the nation-state has created a vacuum of legitimacy into which have flowed military and paramilitary forces and the drug industry, especially over the past 15-20 years, all of which have virtually destroyed the successful functioning of electoral politics and the rule of law. (“Capital Punishment” 1064)

Consequently, these internal and external factors which challenge economic, political, and cultural spheres within Colombia's social fabric reveal not only the country's integration

70 major companies and 3600 small businesses went to the wall. With very little growth in gross domestic product over the past three years and an official unemployment level over 20%, the signs are definitely not good.” See Jeff Browitt (1063).

⁶⁸ In relation to Colombian citizen's refusal of the 2016 Peace Process in Havana, Clara Rocío Rodríguez Pico had previously produced an article that examined the issue of public endorsement as a part of the arrangements regarding citizen participation at the negotiating table at Havana. She described three main obstacles that could hinder the outcome of the peace agreement: 1) the distance between the existing positions of the national government and the FARC regarding the conception and mechanism for citizen validation to be used, 2) the technical and procedural complexity and the few successful precedents in this regard, 3) the low level of civic support. See “Participación política en los acuerdos de paz de la Habana” (57-75).

into the transnational global market of neoliberal characteristics, but also the violent social, political, and economic repercussions that affect those unable⁶⁹ to meet the demands of this neoliberal model.

1.5. Neoliberalism with Mexican Characteristics:

In the case of Mexico, Humberto García-Bedoy argues that there are four important aspects that promoted the incursion and establishment of neoliberalism in Mexico. The first one sees neoliberalism as an *anti-inflationary instrument* able to solve the socioeconomic crisis and allow for a better economic growth. To reach this economic growth, measures such as “el control de la oferta monetaria y del crédito bancario al sector privado, la reducción del déficit gubernamental, la liberación de los precios, la eliminación de los subsidios e, incluso, la devaluación del tipo de cambio, y, sobre todo, ‘los topes salariales’” [the control of money supply and bank credit to the private sector, the reduction of government deficit, price liberalization, the elimination of subsidies, and, even, the exchange rate devaluation, but overall ‘salary caps’] are recommended. (“Neoliberalismo en México” 11). In this sense, to stop inflation the government needs to start by controlling salary increase. By doing this, it is possible to establish a balance between supply and demand since price increase can be contained. However, despite these neoliberal measures against inflation neither rich countries nor poor countries have reached the expected goals:

En el caso de México fue patente en el sexenio de De la Madrid⁷⁰ que los índices de la inflación y de los precios alcanzaban cifras tan altas como, quizá, nunca se vieron en la

⁶⁹ Consuelo Ahumada offers insightful analysis into the impact of neoliberalism in Colombia by stating that “an authentic development plan must respond to the national interest of those countries and not that of those who control the prevailing economic and political order in the world,” that is to say, that “any effort to come to grips with an increasingly global market economy must adopt a more nuanced approach to the possibilities of engagement on a more localised or decentralised scale, since national approaches to economic (and social) development in Latin America have generally failed the underclasses.” See *El modelo neoliberal: y su impacto en la sociedad colombiana* (290).

⁷⁰ De la Madrid’s presidency created a structural crisis in Mexico’s economy that consisted of: “agricultural crisis, fiscal deficit, unequal distribution of income, and a reaction to the economic crisis of 1982 which produced a

historia del país, y, sin embargo, los ‘topes salariales’ permanecían rígidamente establecidos. Además, causas de elevación de precios como la inflación internacional transmitida a través del sistema financiero nunca se tomaron en cuenta en el discurso neoliberal. (García-Bedoy 13)

[In the case of Mexico, it was apparent during De la Madrid’s six-year presidency that the inflation and price rates reached high numbers never seen in the history of the country. Nevertheless, ‘salary caps’ remained firmly established. Besides that, causes of price increase, such as the international inflation transferred through the financial system, were never considered by the neoliberal discourse]

The second aspect refers to the *limited intervention of the state in economic matters* which, conversely, strengthens the role of private enterprise. From the neoliberal standpoint, the state appears as an obstacle in market competition both nationally and internationally, hinders production in some sectors due to price control over products, is blamed by promoting inflation due to not establishing salary caps, and is accused of technological backwardness. In addition, the state also appears as an obstacle to more and better employment because of its failure in favoring foreign investment (García-Bedoy 13). In this context, state intervention in economic matters is limited to creating and supporting economic policies and providing an adequate infrastructure for production and services at the hands of the private sector.

The third aspect supports the idea of *complete openness to foreign investment*⁷¹ which reinforces the idea of a universal market without barriers and limitations. In other words, a *transnational* market. According to García-Bedoy, neoliberalism has not been the cause of the processes of capital, goods, and market internationalization and transnationalization, but it is in agreement with these processes since it provides economies with a clear orientation towards

decrease in the gross domestic product (GDP) of 0.2%, an excessive inflationary index of 100%, a price increase in the public sector, and an increasing public debt.” See Francisco Salazar (n. pag).

⁷¹ In 1985, Mexico signed a bilateral agreement with the United States on subsidies and customs obligations. This agreement implied the need to eliminate certain policies that protected Mexican producers from the competition of TNCs (Transnational Corporations). This measure brought disadvantageous economic repercussions that translated into a more profound commercial deficit for Mexico’s society. In addition, this crisis worsened even more with the process of privatization of state companies under the assumption of overcoming Mexico’s commercial deficit. See Paul Cooney (20-22).

exportations and towards the incorporation of national economies into the international market (21). From this perspective, we have come to understand that the role of all these initiatives is to promote free trade among nations under the guise of economic agreements and treaties.⁷²

Finally, the fourth aspect sees neoliberalism in Mexico as *metropolitan* and *authoritarian*. Here, neoliberalism is seen as an economic, political, and social project which favors international and metropolitan capital coming from the investment of powerful transnational companies. For García-Bedoy:

La realidad es que la transnacionalización, la internacionalización desplaza las decisiones económicas estatales nacionales a los centros de gestión internacional (...), reemplaza las metas de integración nacional por las de integración internacional y somete más estrechamente las economías nacionales a los ciclos y vaivenes de las de los países ‘metropolitanos’. Así, pues, los intereses, las decisiones, las estrategias, etc., y, por supuesto, los beneficios principales, se sitúan en las cúpulas y metrópolis del capitalismo transnacional. (27)

[The reality is that transnationalization, internationalization displaces state and national economic decisions to the centers of international management (...), replaces the goals of national integration for those of international integration and submits, more strictly, national economies to the cycles and the ups and downs of those of the ‘metropolitan’ countries. Thus, the interests, decisions, strategies, etc., and, of course, the main benefits are situated in the cupula of power and metropolis of transnational capitalism]

In regard to the authoritarian nature of neoliberalism in Mexico, we can argue that Mexico has had a long tradition of authoritarianism that has permeated its political system and its presidential regime⁷³ at the hands of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). The neoliberal system

⁷² In the case of Mexico, we find PRONAFICE (Programas Nacionales de Fomento Industrial and Comercio Exterior), PROFIEIX (Programa de Fomento Integral de las Exportaciones Mexicanas), and CONCANACO (Confederación de Cámaras Nacionales de Comercio, Servicios y Turismo) among others. See Humberto García-Bedoy (22-26).

⁷³ From 1982 to 2000, three PRI presidential terms at the hands of Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988), Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), and Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León (1994-2000) instituted and consolidated the neoliberal project in Mexico. This project consisted of the state’s “abandonment” of any social and economic responsibility. In the economic realm, the model of import industrialization was replaced by the industrial, commercial, and financial liberalization and deregulation. The IMF and the World Bank dictated the financial measures to be followed. In the social realm, “exclusion”, “marginalization,” and “extreme poverty” were the key words. In the political realm, the elite class of the PRI started to experience separation and the new neoliberal technocracy began to gain control. See Francisco Salazar (n. pag).

advocates for a strong state which, still limited by its intervention in economic matters, is able to hinder the restrictions of market competition and limit all egalitarian tendencies (including the ones of presidential pluralism). For García-Bedoy, “Paralelamente a la concentración de la riqueza en pocas manos y en pocos sitios, el neoliberalismo ha propiciado una concentración aún mayor de poder en la Presidencia” [Parallel to the concentration of wealth in a few hands and in a few places, neoliberalism has promoted a greater concentration of power in the Presidency] (30). The most striking aspect of the many years of this presidential authoritarianism, which can also be understood in terms of a powerful political *elite*, is reflected, on the one hand, in the high levels of poverty of a great majority of Mexican people and, on the other hand, in the high levels of wealth favoring the powerful national companies and the transnational investment that control Mexico’s national market. This Mexican neoliberal authoritarianism could be summarized in García-Bedoy’s terms as:

Una forma de constatar el ‘elitismo’ del proyecto neoliberal mexicano es la comprobación de la marginación del pueblo y de los sectores mayoritarios del país, con que opera. Basta observar, por ejemplo, las fuerzas sociales que promueven e impulsan este modelo y, obviamente, a las clases y fracciones de clase a quienes favorece. En una palabra, los interesados y favorecidos. Y no cuesta mucho trabajo hacerlo: las compañías extranjeras – sobre todo las grandes compañías – que poseen inversiones directas en el país, por las facilidades y ventajas con que cuentan (...); las compañías con capacidades para aprovechar el mercado nacional a través de las importaciones; en general, el capital financiero internacional, tomando en cuenta el fuerte endeudamiento del país y la situación de dependencia de nuestra economía; los grupos nacionales exportadores (...). (32)

[A way to verify the Mexican neoliberal ‘elite’ project is through the confirmation of people’s marginalization and the major sectors of the country on which it operates. We only have to observe, for instance, the social forces that promote and drive this model and, obviously, the classes and class fractions to whom they favor. In a word, the interested and favored. And it does not cost much to do it: foreign companies – especially big companies – that have direct investment in the country because of the facilities and advantages they count on (...); companies with the capacity to take advantage of the national market through imports; in general, the international financial capital, taking into account the country’s heavy indebtedness and the situation of dependency of our economy; the national export groups (...)]

In this sense, we need to understand Mexico's *metropolitan* and *authoritarian* neoliberalism as a small group of elite entrepreneurs and financiers who decide on and control Mexico's economic, social, and political fate. Unfortunately, this fate has translated into violent social phenomena (such as narcotraffic, migration, and feminicides) which may have originated due to a *culture of fear* as product of the global, exclusive, and authoritarian system of neoliberalism. With regard to this, it should not surprise us that the dictatorships of the 70's and 80's were the pioneers in Latin America to adopt, promote, and implement this neoliberal agenda where the process of *privatization of state assets*⁷⁴ plays a relevant role.

According to Dávalos, the transition of Latin America to democracy in the 80's and 90's was characterized by a context of economic crisis in which the IMF imposed rigid programs of economic adjustment that created recession, poverty, and concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. These programs were also supported by the establishment of dictatorships that implemented, besides the military fear, some kind of *economic terrorism*:

La violencia del terrorismo de estado y la violencia del terrorismo económico fracturaron a las sociedades de forma radical. Generaron un miedo permanente que obligaba a las sociedades a recluirse en sí mismas. Asumieron como prioridad la ruptura de todos los lazos de solidaridad social como recurso de sobrevivencia individual. Fue sobre ese miedo que pudo operar la lógica monetaria del FMI. El miedo provocado desde la economía fracturaba cualquier referente de futuro (...). El discurso de la crisis económica del FMI era apocalíptico. (Dávalos 138)

[The violence of state terrorism and the violence of economic terrorism fractured societies in a radical way. They generated a permanent state of fear which made societies shut themselves away. Their priority was the break with all the ties of social solidarity as a resource for individual survival. That fear was used by the IMF to implement its monetary logic. The fear provoked by the economy fractured any future hope (...). The IMF's discourse of economic crisis was apocalyptic]

⁷⁴ Between 1982 and 1995, Mexico went from having 1,155 state companies to only 185. Some of these companies included railroads, phone, natural gas, electric energy, ports, airports, sugar refineries, and banks. One of the main disadvantages of this privatization process is the excessive increase in unemployment due to the dismissal of 765,730 workers between 1982 and 1993. In 1995, Mexico privatized the system of social security and in 1996 the system of pensions and retirement affecting more than 50% of Mexico's population. See Paul Cooney (22-23).

In this sense, the economic fear (accompanied by the military one) was used as part of the neoliberal agenda to capture social conscience and promote a mentality of *individualism* which sought the individual good, even, at the expense of others. For neoliberalism, the others become “amenaza” [threat] (Dávalos 138), so solidarities are scarce. In other words, fear destroyed all social capacity to confront the logic of neoliberalism. Nevertheless, it is this fear that originated new forms of response towards the authoritarian policies of neoliberalism and its economic, social, and political agenda. Some of these responses have been identified in this work as narcotraffic, migration, and feminicides.

In his article “Neoliberalismo y crimen organizado en México: El surgimiento del *Estado narco*,” José Luis Solís González argues that the implementation of neoliberal policies has driven Mexico to a profound organic crisis producing three decades of insignificant economic growth and in addition, it has produced a rampant increase in poverty and in social inequality that has brought as a consequence high levels of violence, public insecurity, and militarization of the state. According to Solís González:

Tanto el modelo neoliberal vigente, basado en la apertura externa, como el sistema corporativo autoritario heredado de la época del ‘nacionalismo revolucionario’ (...), han constituido el caldo de cultivo para el surgimiento de una economía, sociedad y gobiernos con una creciente penetración y control por parte del narcotráfico y de las distintas agrupaciones del crimen organizado. (8)

[Both the neoliberal model, based on external openness, and the authoritarian corporate system inherited from the times of the ‘revolutionary nationalism’ (...), have constituted the breeding ground for the emergence of an economy, society, and governments characterized by a growing penetration and control at the hands of narcotraffic and other groups of organized crime]

However, this response in the form of organized crime groups has worsened the relationship *society-state* since those who confront and resist the political and economic violence of capital accumulation characteristics are placed in direct opposition to the state. In other words, these criminal organizations are regarded as “outside the law” and, therefore, the state must make use

of a new form of violence to confront them and restore the state hegemony: “(…), hacia aquella violencia que reduce la sociedad al estado.” [(…), towards that violence that reduces society to the state] (Dávalos 143). In this way, the state still operates as guarantor of the market and its powerful representatives, but overall as guarantor of the ruling neoliberal mentality of capital accumulation.

1.6. Conclusion:

At this point, it would be safe to argue that the values of consumption, individualism, and competitiveness have played an important role in the modernization of western societies. More conservative societies were held back by their own history and traditional roots. In this respect, we can assume that in the greater scheme of things, each society has been responsible for its own development or underdevelopment (or in a more drastic sense for its “backwardness”). However, we cannot overlook that the discourse of modernization is linked to the concept of a capitalist modernity attainable only in direct relationship with the discourse of globalization and the great dream it offers to worldwide societies and to their powerful emerging elite class: *incorporation into global capitalism*. However, for this new elite capitalist class to protect and restore their business power through the neoliberal agenda, they need to create a new culture along with it that is able to back up their business practices. The media plays a crucial role in the making and strengthening of this new culture of postmodern characteristics which becomes *the* globalized life model able to equip individuals with the right values – *market values*- to compete within the world market.

It is precisely this teleological (purpose) sense of globalization which defines its evolutionary (relationship) sense into what has been understood as *neoliberalism*. The idea of *symbiosis* between globalization and neoliberalism suggested in this work addresses the fact that

both phenomena plead for an unregulated capitalist system (free market economy) that embodies the ideal of free individual choice, but also achieves optimum economic performance with respect to efficiency, economic growth, technical progress, competitiveness, and individualism. It also calls for a limited economic role from the state. In other words, neoliberalism could be regarded as an updated version of the classical liberal economic thought of the 18th century (stated by Smith), which encouraged the emergence of the globalization phenomenon.

Harvey makes a strong case for the relationship of globalization as paradigm to the emergent global hegemony of the neoliberal economic agenda. Harvey suggests that transformations such as the ones produced by globalization do not occur by accident, “So it is pertinent to enquire by what means and paths the new economic configuration⁷⁵ – often subsumed under the term ‘globalization’ - was plucked from the entrails of the old” (1-2). The important aspect here is that the interpretation of this new configuration needs to be understood as the reorganization of international capitalism as a political project that will seek to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites.

⁷⁵ Neoliberalism

2. Chapter Two

From Colonial to Neoliberal Violence

War is the motor of history: history begins with war and war set history on its course. But since, in the straitjacket of the law, war follows the repetitive dynamics of violence, the resulting movement, which always follows the same laws, mimics an eternal return. Basically, we always engage in the same conflicts, and the presidential decision to release a nuclear payload imitates the act of the Roman consul or the Egyptian pharaoh. Only the means have changed.

Michel Serres⁷⁶

In this chapter, we will consider a panoramic study of the main implications of the so-called colonial violence and its metamorphosis into neoliberal violence, the current systematic apparatus that imposes social, political, and economic authority or power over global space. This structure reveals a historical form of dependence of Latin American countries under the guise of *development* which conditions not only the internal but also the external relations of these countries in regards to their economic, political, and social structures. This panoramic view will also consider the passage from the colonial concept of “empire” based on territorial annexation beyond their boundaries to a more deterritorialized center of power with no fixed frontiers where the passing from feudalism to capitalism plays a key role. Here, capitalism appears to be firmly supported by a great technological evolution which transforms the traditional establishment of power into a more corporate political space that demands the configuration of a new globalized financial market. In this economic and political space, Michel Foucault’s concept of *biopower*⁷⁷

⁷⁶ “Law and History,” *The Natural Contract*, USA, The University of Michigan Press, 1995 (14).

⁷⁷ In a very strict sense of the word, Michel Foucault highlights in *Right of Death and Power over Life* (Chapter 5) that life has moved to the heart of political struggle, a process that is directly linked to relations of knowledge and

as well as the incursion of labor power play a crucial role in the understanding of social life production into history and the creation of political mechanisms to control it and modify it to the service of world market and culture.

In the articulation of this capitalistic mentality, we will explore ideas concerning the opposition between *Civilization* and *Barbarism* as well as the relevant role of *land possession* in the construction of the New Modern Nations. For this, we will briefly analyze two important literary works of late 19th and early 20th centuries: Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845) and José Eustasio Rivera's *La vorágine* (1924) correspondingly. In addition, we will continue with the analysis of colonial violence in the context of the so-called *neocolonialism* by exploring three important elements in the representation of violence in Latin American films and their direct connection with the still neocolonial condition of Latin America in the 21st century. *La hora de los hornos* (2000) by Fernando Ezequiel Solanas and *Cidade de Deus* (2002) by Fernando Meirelles will help us illustrate this assumption. Here, the old and traditional *establishment* of power starts to transform into a more corporate political space that demands the configuration of a new globalized financial market.

According to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, we are witnessing a new structure of rule or sovereignty as a result of the overthrow of colonial regimes and to the incursion of a new order of global market and global circuits of production motivated by the globalization of economic and cultural exchanges. Hardt and Negri have identified this new global logic of power as *Empire* (xii). Nevertheless, they establish a clear differentiation between the classic 15th to 19th centuries colonial and modern understandings of “empire” – following their logic of territory annexation beyond their own boundaries-, and their own interpretation of 20th century “empire”

power and to the application of political techniques in the constitution of the subject. See *The History of Sexuality* (142).

characterized by the absence of a territorial center of power, no fixed boundaries or barriers, and a new understanding of wealth production based on the production of social life in which the political, the economic, and the cultural increasingly overlap and invest one another (xiii).

Michel Foucault, through the analysis of his *biopolitics*, addresses the topic of social life production by stating that modern “life” and “living things” are now at the center of political battles and economic strategies. For Foucault, “Western man was gradually learning what it meant to be a living species in a living world, to have a body, conditions of existence, probabilities of life, an individual and collective welfare, forces that could be modified, and a space in which they could be distributed in an optimal manner” (*The History of Sexuality* 142). In this sense, political power structures can take into account the possibility of controlling and modifying life and its social production for the political, cultural, and economic interests of these power structures. Foucault states how “bio-power⁷⁸ was without a question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism, the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes” (*The History of Sexuality* 140-41). In this scenario, The United States appears at the top of this new world order in charge of the distribution and control of the current global market networks and as creator of a worldwide culture organized by the values encouraged by this world market.

One key characteristic of this new economic, political, and social world order is the declining of sovereign nation-states which were fundamental to the mentality of colonial expansion during European colonialism. In this sense, the colonial mentality established a

⁷⁸ “Biopower is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior. Power can achieve an effective command over the entire life of the population only when it becomes an integral, vital function that every individual embraces and reactivates of his or her own accord... The highest function of this power is to invest life through and through, and its primary task is to administer life.” See Hardt and Negri (23-24).

structure where “the territorial boundaries of the nation delimited the center of power from which rule was exerted over external foreign territories through a system of channels and barriers that alternately facilitated and obstructed the flows of production and circulation” (*Empire* xii). In Hardt and Negri’s interpretation of *Empire*, the center of power becomes a “*decentered* and *detritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers” (xii). In this sense, the concept of *Empire* maintains a close connection with *neoliberalism* since they both advocate for 1) a lack of boundaries, 2) no limits for its rule over the world, 3) absence of nation-states, 4) regulations over human social life, 5) and enormous powers of oppression and destruction (xiv, xv). Therefore, the passage of the structure of colonial rule to neoliberal rule reveals not only the continuing presence of *violence* as a perpetual tool to carry out and sustain domination, but also the increasing control over world economies and social life production.

Let us consider a brief study of the historic trajectory from colonial to neoliberal violence by stating some of the main characteristics and repercussions of these periods in the development and transformation of the phenomenon of violence and its close interdependence with wealth accumulation in which the concept of *inequality* has been a crucial factor.

2.1. A Thought about Inequality:

In *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau states that, in his natural state, “Man’s first sentiment was that of his own existence; his first concern was that of his preservation. The products of the earth provided him with all the help he needed...” (44). In this sense, man’s natural instincts led him to perpetuate his own species mainly by profiting from the gifts offered by the nature surrounding him. However, when nature started to confront him with new challenges, he quickly had to learn skills in order to overcome these obstacles. Weather,

animals, and even other men became difficulties in the long run of his subsistence. Overcoming these obstacles, and more, made man aware of his development and his superiority over animals and other men, as well as experiencing the first feelings of pride. This experience made him understand that love of well-being became the reason for human actions and put him “in a position to distinguish the rare occasions when common interest should make him count on the assistance of his fellowmen, and those even rarer occasions when competition ought to make him distrust them” (46). These scenarios prepared men to either associate or compete to obtain their purpose. With time these associations became stronger, forming nations⁷⁹ but also establishing and strengthening feelings of comparison and preference among men. These preferences were the first steps toward *inequality*, which encouraged negative feelings of vanity and revenge in men and made them greedy and cruel. According to Rousseau, this cruelty intensified with the emergence of property and labor which transformed vast forests into fields “which had to be watered with men’s sweat, and in which slavery and misery were soon seen to germinate and grow with the crops” (51). The cultivation of land gave origin to the division of land, and the idea of property created the first rules of justice. In this context, new relations among men needed to move from the primitive, natural state to a more civilized one on which the new “right of property” could be supported and defended by the laws and regulations of an emerging society that promoted the idea of a new man based on their capacity to accumulate wealth no matter the means and the well-being of others:

Finally, consuming ambition, the zeal for raising the relative level of his fortune, less out of real need than in order to put himself above others, inspires in all men a wicked tendency to harm one another, a secret jealousy all the more dangerous because, in order to strike its blow in greater safety, it often wears the mask of benevolence; in short, competition and rivalry on the one hand, opposition of interest[s] on the other, and

⁷⁹ This notion of *nation* is prior to the existence of laws and regulations. This nation is characterized by the same kind of life, foods, and climate influencing the natural state of men. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau (49).

always the hidden desire to profit at the expense of someone else. All these ills are the first effect of property and the inseparable offshoot of incipient inequality. (54)

These feelings of ambition, competition, rivalry, desire for individual profit, and the right to another's goods encouraged the destruction of equality and promoted a history of long lasting conflicts that have produced endless wars and the most horrifying acts of violence. These acts of violence have had motivations of diverse nature depending on both the historical spaces in which these acts have been carried out and on the social, political, and economic purposes behind them. Among these motivations we find: religious supremacy, racial superiority, land appropriation, and labor control.

2.2. Colonial Violence: Iberian Colonialism of 16th & 17th Centuries

Colonial violence in its 16th and 17th century classical interpretation has been described as *Iberian colonialism* and its dominant discourse encompasses the concept of religious supremacy.⁸⁰ In his article "Iberian Globalization and the Rise of Catholic Theology of Religions in the 16th Century," Enrico Beltramini⁸¹ argues that the Church of Rome, during the Iberian colonialism of the 16th century, elaborated a theology that emphasized the new relationship between *nature* and *grace* in which the "Indians" of the New World were placed at the center of this religious discourse. In this relationship, Beltramini argues:

The superiority of the Catholic faith on non-Christian religions was thus set up theologically and justified by the very fact that the 'conquest,' which in the eyes of Ginés de Sepúlveda⁸² (1489-1573), a Spanish theologian, constituted necessary 'violence' that needed to be exercised in order to convert the pagans, because if they were converted, there would no longer be any cause for just war. (74)

⁸⁰ "The presumptuous 'model' of ideal humanity on which it (colonization) was based was not established by God as natural order, but according to the perception of Christian, White, and European males." See *The Idea of Latin America* (15).

⁸¹ Dr. Beltramini is a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Notre Dame de Namur University.

⁸² "Employing Aristotle's theory of natural slavery, Sepúlveda argued that the native's natural inferiority, idolatries, and other sins justified war to civilize them. That is, the barbarity that constituted the native's very nature vindicated their conquest and even enslavement. Moreover, war would facilitate their conversion to Christianity." See Burkholder and Johnson (62).

In other words, conquest was justified by a divine command in which the “pagan barbarians” could only achieve union with the Catholic God through the gift of *grace*. Furthermore, 16th century’s Cardinal Cajetan made his contribution to Catholic Theology by stating that non-Christian religions were nothing more than natural religions; therefore, the New World Indians’ barbaric nature was inadequate for achieving salvation. Thus, it is not the superiority of the European “reason” that plays a major role in the 16th century’s concept of colonial violence, “but the superiority of the Catholic faith” (Beltramini 75). In this context, the idea of *Christian conversion*⁸³ appears as the main figure of this type of colonization which sought the abandonment of other gods and the destruction of forms of community life that appeared as an obstacle to the process of economic expansion of a Christian imperialism.

In “Colonialismo: comercio, cristianismo y civilización,” Eduardo Subirats⁸⁴ states that the imperial acts of violence of the 16th century carried out by the Catholic Church as a form of sacred war (The Crusades) against the barbaric pagans not only of America, but also Asia and Africa (Islam) were articulated under three expressions involving economic, theological, and juridical ideals: “Commerce, Christianity, Civilization” (173). These three aspects of the Christian imperial colonization sought not only to eliminate economies, cultures, and traditions, but to adopt and implement a new universal order in the name of civilization. In Walter Mignolo’s terms “to leave certain people out of history in order to justify violence in the name of Christianization, civilization, and, more recently, development and market economy” a new geopolitical configuration was implemented to create “a divide between a minority of people who

⁸³ Even though Bartolomé de Las Casas agrees that the Amerindians’ path to freedom from persecution should pass first through Christian conversion, he criticized that the majority of the Spanish military, administrators, and colonists, hungry for gold, saw the occupants of the new world as irrevocably Other and less than human. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (116).

⁸⁴ Dr. Subirats is a Spanish and Portuguese professor at New York University (NYU). His areas of research involve Spanish intellectual history, the colonization of Spanish America, and modern Latin America.

dwell in, and embrace the Christian, civilizing, or developing missions and a majority who are the outcast and become the targets of those missions” (*The Idea of Latin America* 4). In this sense, the Christian Church joined the colonial bureaucracy and was supported by the Crown both financially and legislatively with the main purpose of exercising conversion to the Indians in Spanish America.

According to Mark Burkholder and Lyman Johnson, the Church assumed this task by imposing “Christian beliefs, social practices such as monogamy, and political organization through a mission system that undermined the Indians’ potential for resistance and rebellion” (*Colonial Latin America* 83). These changes were meant to prepare the indigenous communities for integration into a new, emerging colonial order which sought economic profit. For this purpose, the destruction of the indigenous gods was a *must* in order to prove the superiority, credibility, and profitability of the colonial Church. Thus, “The Crown received control of tithes income, the tax levied on agricultural production and livestock, to sustain the ecclesiastical hierarchy, its physical facilities, and its activities” (84). This system helped to create more religious orders which spread throughout the colonial Spanish empire and which contributed to strengthen the Church’s power.

Burkholder and Johnson state that the Church became the major source of investment capital and the major colonial property owner by creating and controlling a system of mortgages, loans, tithes, fees, and gifts which would “enable the Church and individual clerics to become extremely wealthy” (89). In this economic system, Indian (as well as Black) labor became one of the main pillars for the constitution and preservation of this new colonial economic order which would strengthen and bring both *racial inferiority* and *land labor* to the scene of 19th century postcolonial relationships. The implantation of this emerging economic order has come to prevail

through the passing of time; and even though it has undergone transformations and changes according to the demands of the market and its political motivations, it still reveals a strong dependency on its economic ideals and on its violent means to perpetuate its domination.

2.3. Colonial Violence: 19th Century Colonialism

Colonial violence in its 19th century interpretation could be described as the convergence of two fundamental processes. The first one refers to the classification of the differences between conquerors and conquered in the idea of “race,” which presupposes that scientific and biological structures place some individuals in a natural situation of inferiority to the others. The conquerors seized this idea as the fundamental, founding element of the relations of domination that the conquest imposed. The second process was the constitution and implementation of a structure of control of labor, including its resources and products for which the possession of the land was essential. According to Anibal Quijano, “This new structure was an articulation of all historically known previous structures of control of labor, slavery, serfdom, small independent commodity production and reciprocity, together around and upon the basis of capital and the world market” (“Coloniality of Power” 534). It has been argued that in the historical process of the development of America, all forms of exploitation of labor, as well as the control of appropriation and distribution of labor, revolved around the world market and its capital-salary relation.

After the conquest of America and the expansion of European colonialism to the rest of the world, Europe needed to elaborate a theory of knowledge that legitimized the idea of race in conformity with colonial relations. This meant “a new way of legitimizing the already old ideas and practices of relations of superiority/inferiority between the dominant and dominated” (Quijano 535). So the conquered peoples were situated in a “natural” position of inferiority that

would consider their phenotypic traits, as well as their cultural features, as inferior. Under this perspective, the implementation of violence counted with the approval of the instruments of science which justified such domination, beginning primarily with the legitimization to seize the land and continue with the further exploitation of its resources.

In her article “Espacio y nación,” Graciela Montaldo suggests that due to territorial expansion of the empires⁸⁵ during the 19th century the theme of nature appeared as subject of debates for possible legitimization of spaces: “...la naturaleza se construye como entidad externa al sujeto y, por lo tanto, es objeto de conquista. Lugar hacia donde ir y controlar.” (6) [...nature is constructed as an external entity to the subject and, therefore, becomes an object of conquest. A place to go and to control]. Thus, the relationship man-nature is legitimized by adopting social and cultural practices that presuppose the use of mechanisms of domination.

From this viewpoint, Western rationality in the 19th century makes use of all possible instruments and mechanisms to pursue the forms of oppression necessary to consolidate its dominant position under the concept of *civilization*.⁸⁶ Hard and Negri state that “The dark Other of European Enlightenment stands as its very foundation just as the productive relationship with the ‘dark continents’ serves as the economic foundation of the European nation-states” (*Empire* 115). In this equation, nature appears as the main object of conflict that will legitimize the use of

⁸⁵ For example, mainly French (in Haiti) and British (in India) due to the waning of the Spanish empire.

⁸⁶ Walter D. Mignolo traces the development of different forms of colonialism produced under the rhetoric of development and progress. He starts with the hegemonic discourses of *race* and *salvation* which questioned the humanity of those outside the “locus of enunciation” or “knowledge” mainly of Western Christianity’s foundations. Both discourses emphasized the massive appropriation of land in the New World and the extreme exploitation of Indian and African slave labor. Then, Christianity and *capital* came together with the common goal of producing the commodities of a global market (from gold to tobacco and sugar) in the pursuit of commodity production and capital accumulation. This came to be conceived in the rhetoric of modernity as *development* and *progress* which not only strengthened the conversion of capital into *capitalism* but also brought up the devaluation of human lives and the naturalization of human expendability. In this equation, the implementation of technology came to play a relevant role as an instrument of colonization within the modern mentality of progress. See *The Idea of Latin America* (11-30)

power by those in a higher social position.

In this sense, modern sovereignty has understood the relationship between man and nature as a bond regulated within the scientific parameters of exploitation almost always of violent characteristics.⁸⁷ The scientific and technological instruments that modernity⁸⁸ is able to create become the same instruments of exploitation and domination that carry out a sort of “domestication” of nature in order to maximize the quality of its exploitation and to be able to incorporate its production within a market that strives to become more globalized day after day.

In his article “Violencia ecológica,” Diego Parente states:

El proyecto de control científico-técnico de la naturaleza consiste esencialmente en un proceso de domesticación en un doble sentido. En primer lugar, como labor de *amansamiento*, como extracción de sus propiedades impredecibles y dañinas. Se intenta, de tal modo, disciplinar las fuerzas salvajes de la naturaleza, convirtiéndolas en fuerzas dirigidas hacia lo humano-un molino de viento, una represa hidrológica-. Pero también- como lo indica el latín *domus*-, la domesticación se dirige hacia la conformación de un lugar para *habitar*, es decir, a la colocación de lo natural dentro de la casa, dentro de la cultura. (2)
 [The project of scientific-technical control of nature consists essentially of a domestication process in a double sense. In the first place, as a *taming* labor, as the extraction of all unpredictable and harmful properties. The intent is to discipline all wild forces of nature to make them useful for all human purposes –a windmill, a hydrologic dam-. But also –as indicated by the Latin term *domus*-, the domestication is directed towards the construction of a place to be inhabited, that is to say, the incursion of the natural within the home, within the culture.]

According to this perspective, nature becomes the *space* to be domesticated by both the use of scientific mechanisms and by the *hand* that controls such mechanisms in order to seek its total

⁸⁷ Michel Serres argues how science becomes an ongoing relation between the contract uniting scientists and the world of things. Thus, the legal contract that brings together scientists involves things; it discovers them, analyzes them, and constitutes them as scientific objects. Thus, “a scientific collectivity united by an agreement finds itself facing the world in a relation, neither dominated nor managed, of unconscious violence: mastery and possession.” See *The Natural Contract* (22-23).

⁸⁸ “The ascending of modernity is a ‘fait accompli’, that is to say, something that has already happened and there is nothing to be done but to accept it. In addition, modernity implies a unique, universal, and continuous process of modernization, which means, self-improvement by making progress on the line of the production techniques, social organization and political management that began to take shape in Europe during the 16th century.” See Bolívar Echeverría (2)

control and exploitation.⁸⁹ For Graciela Montaldo, this idea of nature refers to all regions and ecosystems that had not been under the domination of the European “hand”, in other words “la mano blanca” [the White Hand]⁹⁰ (“Espacio y nación” 8). Africa and South America would be the most common places under this domination. It is this “white hand” that assumes the role of the colonist, and uses the power of science in his favor to demand not only the control of the land and its resources but also to legitimize the superiority and supremacy of the colonist’s European, white race, and to promulgate the thought that progress is only attainable by following the footsteps of Europe in its development of more interconnected Western societies:

The primary result has been massacres on a scale never before imagined and the establishment of racial, political, and economic structures of European rule over non-European world. The rise of European supremacy was driven in large part by the development and spread of capitalism, which fed Europe’s seemingly insatiable thirst for wealth. In various regions and among different populations capitalism developed unevenly: it lurched forward, hesitated, and retreated according to a variety of diverse paths. One such circuitous path is traced by the history of large-scale colonial slave production in the Americas between the late seventeenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, a history that is not precapitalist but rather within the complex and contradictory developments of capital. (Hardt and Negri 120-21)

In other words, the development of capitalism is historically linked to the development of labor, more concretely slave-labor, within European colonies.

It has been argued that one of the main goals of colonies’ existence was to increase both the economic well-being and the political strength of their “mother” countries. According to

⁸⁹ Nowadays, we can still see the same logic of appropriation of areas of natural resources (e.g., in the Amazon or oil-rich Iraq) where the land becomes one of the main targets of capital accumulation. Mignolo states that “the idea of Latin America is that of a large mass of land with a wealth of natural resources and plenty of cheap labor” followed by a rhetoric of modernity by the IMF, the World Bank, and the Washington consensus stating that “Latin America is just waiting for its turn to develop.” See *The Idea of Latin America* (12).

⁹⁰ Franz Fanon argues how the implementation of colonial exploitation seeks to fabricate two sectors. On one side, we find the colonist’s sector (or the White Hand) that is meant to control with the main purpose of “wealth accumulation.” On the other side, we find the colonized sector (the poor and deprived) represented by the thought of *hunger*. The colonized is hungry “for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light,” the material things that will be able to satisfy his existence. See *The Wretched of the Earth* (4).

Burkholder and Johnson, the colonies' "production and markets were intended to benefit solely their metropolises which regulated trade and imposed taxes to transfer colonial wealth to themselves" (*Colonial Latin America* 125). In this equation, economic activities such as agriculture (sugar plantations) and mining (gold and silver) played a crucial role in the development of capitalism.

Sugar was the first tropical export crop of the expanding capitalist economy of Western Europe.⁹¹ Though some sugarcane had been grown in Spain since the days of the Moorish conquest, it was thanks to the eastern Mediterranean specialized milling technology (also supported by commercial foreign investment and enslaved labor force) that sugar production developed in Spain and later on the New World due to colonization (Lockhart and Schwartz 26). In the 16th century, sugar production grew rapidly and became, together with silver and gold, one of the main important exports of colonial Latin America. Mining and the sugar industry tended to determine the cyclical behavior of the colonial economies' market-oriented sector. However, in the 17th century the initial dependence on imported agricultural products decreased as textile and other manufactured goods replaced comestibles as favored imports (Burkholder and Johnson 139). Thus, we observe a transition of productive resources from agriculture to industry or, in other words, from a declining class of landowners and farmers to an emerging class of industrial and business capitalists who sought to claim for themselves the rights of private property within the market. This change involves what has been described as the transition from feudalism to

⁹¹ "The sugar plantation was also the site of the first large-scale experiment in industrial agriculture and a laboratory for the exploitation of nature and human labor. The transatlantic slave trade brought about the first mass migrations driven by capitalist development and the need for a workforce, long before there was a proletariat or even a working class in Europe." See Sibylle Fischer (12).

capitalism.⁹² In “Karl Marx on the transition from feudalism to capitalism,” Claudio J. Katz states:

The process of consolidating the new economic order required the ascending class to complete the destruction of the traditional regime, anchored in the institution of the Crown. Clearly, if private property was to do the whole task of allocating labor power and its product, then all productive resources, including labor power, had to be compelled to assume the new property form. Accordingly, the transformation of the ruling class manifested itself in a struggle to secure the dominance of a wholly new form of property in the means of production. (379)

The 18th century marked a continuous growth in industry which motivated a more intense production and a more clear dependence on the market. Once the mass market is large enough and people become increasingly dependent on the market for their subsistence, then this market will become a primary factor in any dynamic of economic change. In other words, once a market-dependent mode of consumption dominates, the structure of the socio-economic system is likely to change (Shami Ghosh 279). One key element of the nature of the capitalist market is unquestionably that the force of competition creates a need for innovation and higher levels of productivity, but also a need for labor power. Therefore, the quantity of labor power plays a crucial role in the exchange value of the commodity being produced. According to Karl Marx:

In general we may say that the greater the productiveness of labor, the shorter will be the working-time necessary for the production of an article, the smaller will be the mass of labour contained in it, and the smaller will be its value. Conversely, the less the productiveness of labour, the longer will be the working-time necessary for the production of an article, and the greater will be the value of that article” (*Capital* 33).

⁹² “The feudal system of industry, under which industrial production was monopolized by closed guilds, now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new market. The manufacturing system took its place. The guild-masters were pushed on one side by the manufacturing middle-class. Meantime, the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacture no longer sufficed. Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionized industrial production. The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, Modern Industry, the place of the industrial middle-class by industrial millionaires, the leaders of the whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois.” See Karl Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (15).

What becomes relevant in this economic exchange is that the laborer needs to work under the control of the capitalist to satisfy all his basic conditions of life,⁹³ but at the same time, the product produced by the laborer's work belongs to the capitalist, not the laborer, since the capitalist not only owns the means of production⁹⁴ but also the labor power that he is able to afford. In this sense, we can observe that capitalism not only emphasizes a relation between commodities but also a relation between people. Unfortunately, the latter has reflected throughout history a system of exploitation and oppression⁹⁵ of violent repercussions⁹⁶ since labor has constituted one of the main instruments needed to continue increasing capital. The more capital increases, there will be a surplus-value⁹⁷ that will produce accumulation, and therefore the relation capitalist-laborer will strengthen.

In Marx's terms, "Accumulation of capital is, therefore, increase of the proletariat" (162) which suggests a relation of domination of a "superior" class (capitalist, bourgeois, oppressor, foreigner, white, etc.) that owns the wealth and the means to subordinate an "inferior" class (proletariat, working-class, laborer, oppressed, non-white, or just "The Other") with no other means than their labor power at the service of the dominant class. Marx has understood this

⁹³ Food, clothing, heating, lodging, etc.

⁹⁴ Such as raw materials, machinery, tools, and buildings. See Karl Marx, *Capital* (21).

⁹⁵ "The extraordinary productiveness of modern industry, accompanied as it is by both a more extensive and a more intense exploitation of labour power in all other spheres of production, allows of the unproductive employment of a larger and larger part of the working class, and the consequent reproduction, on a constantly extending scale, of the ancient domestic slaves under the name of a servant class, including men-servants and women-servants." Ibid., 140.

⁹⁶ In the case of sugar plantations in Cuba, studies of slave demographics have shown a positive high correlation between sugar cultivation and slave mortality, with slave mortality rising with the size of the slave holding: "Domingo Del Monte asserted that deaths exceeded births on sugar but not coffee plantations. He estimated the overall slave mortality rate at 5 percent per year, the rate on sugar plantation at 8 percent, and the rate 'in the towns, on coffee properties, and other farms...much less.' Most observers reckoned the slave mortality rate on the sugar plantation at between 5 to 10 percent annually, and it may well have risen after the steam's engine introduction (...). Cuba's planters themselves had a saying, which says enough: '*Con sangre se hace azúcar*'- 'Sugar is made with blood'." See Robert L. Paquette (56).

⁹⁷ "To produce anything, be it small or large, simple or complex, material or spiritual, capitalist economy only requires that its production function as a vehicle for the production of surplus value. Likewise, for something to be consumed, be it useable or utilizable, familiar or exotic, essential or a luxury, the only requirement is that the satisfaction it offers be integrated as a part of the accumulation of capital." See Bolivar Echeverria (20).

relation within societies as “the history of class struggles” (*Manifesto of the Communist Party* 14). On the other hand, Franz Fanon has understood this relation of class struggles within the sphere of colonial violence as the violence of the foreigner who imposes himself by using his military artillery (*his cannons and machines*), and who hides himself behind the curtain of the modernization of the economy to reach success and situate himself on the pedestal reserved only for the ruling class.⁹⁸ For Fanon, “the ruling species is first and foremost the outsider from elsewhere, different from the indigenous population, “the others” (*The Wretched of the Earth* 5).

A good example to illustrate the arguments being developed so far in this chapter concerning the ideas of religious and race superiority, land exploitation, progress and development, capital production, and mechanism of ruling power reside in one of the more controversial 19th century Latin American books: *Facundo: civilización o barbarie*.⁹⁹

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento¹⁰⁰ wrote *Facundo* (1845) during his long exile in Chile due to Juan Manuel de Rosas’ tyrannical government in Argentina from 1835 to 1852. It has been considered that Sarmiento’s intention in writing *Facundo* sought to reveal not only his dissatisfaction with Rosas’ form of government, but also to propose his political agenda for the future of a new Argentina, an agenda that was intended for the establishment of a homogeneous

⁹⁸ “It is the quagmires of the modernization of the economy --the counterproductive effects of progress, whether quantitative (extensive and intensive) or qualitative (technical), in the production, distribution and consumption of goods-- that most often, and with the greatest violence, make Man a purely destructive being: a being who destroys the Other, when it does not fit into Nature (defined as the ‘fond of resources for the human order’), and himself, when he is a ‘natural’ being (too material, too spiritual) and does not fit into the scheme of what has been humanized through ‘productive’ work.” Ibid., 5.

⁹⁹ Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1998.

¹⁰⁰ Two of Sarmiento’s most important works are *Recuerdos de provincia* and *Conflicto y armonías de las razas en América*. In these works, Sarmiento explores the concepts related to barbarity and civilization, race, inheritance and nation. However, here his position becomes far more radical under the influence of the scientism and positivism in vogue during the latter years of his life. In *Recuerdos de provincia*, Sarmiento contextualizes barbarity in the form of Rosas and his followers and believes that the model to follow is Europe; but in *Conflicto y armonías de las razas en América*, he presents barbarity as a racial question, and the model that he proposes is now the United States. See Mercedes Serna Arnaiz. A similar work on ethnicity, mestizaje, and nationality as part of Latin America’s structures of coloniality strengthens Sarmiento’s thought on European immigration into Argentina as a breeding ground for capitalism opposing the traditional, feudal Spanish system. See Thomas Ward (86).

national conscience. Sergio Villalobos has understood this form of nationalism as “comunidad ideal” [ideal community] emphasizing the notions of “belonging” and “patriotism” (*El poema de la ley* 62). However, for Villalobos the notion of an ideal community has always faced the risk of an enemy or *hostis* which threatens to disrupt the mechanisms of control articulated by the State apparatus. Sarmiento saw in the *gauchos* and the indigenous communities of Argentina and Chile the *hostis* that would hamper his vision of a modernized and civilized Argentina. Therefore, in *Facundo* Sarmiento makes use of a discourse that aims to emphasize the dichotomy *Civilization vs Barbarism* with the expectation of reaching drastic political and social changes. The former exemplified by the intellectual, progressive figure of the civilized man of the city (supported by the process of European immigration), and the latter embodied by the uneducated, barbarian¹⁰¹ *gauchos* represented by Facundo Quiroga and Juan Manuel de Rosas, two of the most celebrated of the *caudillos* lineage.

From the very first pages of his book, Sarmiento provides a description of both Facundo and Rosas as evil, barbaric individuals absorbed by anti-progressive ideas:

Facundo, provinciano, bárbaro, valiente, audaz, fue reemplazado por Rosas, hijo de la culta Buenos Aires, sin serlo él; por Rosas, falso, corazón helado, espíritu calculador, que hace mal sin pasión, y organiza lentamente el despotismo con toda la inteligencia de un Maquiavelo. (37)

[Facundo, provincial, barbaric, courageous, astute, was replaced by Rosas, son of the cultured Buenos Aires, yet lacking its culture, because Rosas was fake, cold-hearted, calculating spirit, who does evil without passion, and slowly organizes all despotism with a sort of Machiavellian intelligence.]

However, Sarmiento’s description of these two *caudillos* with these characteristics aimed at communicating that their barbaric actions to seek power and exercise their tyranny relied on

¹⁰¹ “Barbarians became an image of modernity to classify certain people who, subsequently, had no choice but to deal with the fact that they had been classified as ‘barbarians’. Coloniality of knowledge works here as an epistemic strategy to create the *colonial difference*. By the 18th century, barbarians were translated into ‘primitives’ and located at the lower scale of an order driving toward ‘civilization’.” See Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (153).

some deterministic aspects concerning geographical as well as anthropological conditions.

Geographically, Sarmiento defines how the physiognomy of Argentina's territory opposes the nation's project of civilization: "El mal que aqueja a la República Argentina es la extensión" (56) [Argentina's greatest problem is its extension.]. For Sarmiento, Argentina's forests, jungles, and *pampas* are parts of a nature that has remained away from the reach of civilization. Sarmiento sees nature as the space where natural resources can be exploited in the name of progress. The pastoral concept of nature as *richness* emphasized by Andrés Bello turns into *capital* at the hands of Sarmiento. In other words, nature as territory is assigned an economic value that will strengthen Sarmientos' aspirations to see Argentina become the progressive, civilized nation he dreams of.

Anthropologically speaking, Sarmiento considers the inferiority of the gaucho. From an early age, gauchos are trained physically to cope with the needs and challenges that the vast territory of the pampas will offer; however, Sarmiento emphasizes the lack of intellectual ability of the gauchos which makes them inadequate beings for any industrial endeavor in search of modernization. His political agenda favored commerce and a growing industry, promoted river navigation as a means to obtain all possible available resources, reinstated the postal service, strengthened the national army, promoted free press, invested in agricultural programs, but more importantly established diplomatic relationships with European countries to facilitate foreign immigration as an immediate source of civilization and progress: "...cien mil por año harían en diez años un millón de europeos industriosos diseminados por toda la República, enseñándonos a trabajar, explotando nuevas riquezas y enriqueciendo al país con sus propiedades;..." (358) [...one hundred thousand a year would make in ten years a million hardworking Europeans scattered all over the Republic, teaching us how to work, exploiting new forms of wealth, and

enriching the country with its resources;...] Nevertheless, Sarmiento's political agenda refused to include the *gauchos* and the indigenous communities of the region as part of the national project of State he was aiming to build.¹⁰²

Let us remember, as mentioned before, that Sarmiento considered the *gauchos*' "backwardness" as evidence of their lack of intellectual ability which made them inadequate beings for any industrial endeavor in search of modernization. Therefore, the nineteenth-century mentality of *positivism*,¹⁰³ as the successor of the *Enlightenment*, emerges to systematically support the idea of "inferior races" and to promote the violent military expeditions which sought to legitimize the extermination of both *gauchos* and indigenous communities of Argentina in the name of progress.¹⁰⁴ The legitimation defended by this positivist epistemology supported the genocide of "inferior races" or "savages" (as Sarmiento would describe the indigenous communities of Argentina) to whom a place in the establishment of the new Argentine Republic

¹⁰² Independent of any geographical or anthropological considerations, Sarmiento's political agenda to exterminate what he considered as inferior races such as that of the *gauchos* and the indigenous communities of Argentina and Chile (*mapuches*) is a clear example of the violence perpetrated by the hegemonic power to exercise control over those that directly or indirectly interfere in the path to more progressive, civilized nations.

¹⁰³ The doctrine of positivism was developed by French sociologist and philosopher Auguste Comte. This doctrine has the main view that the only authentic knowledge is the scientific knowledge. In Comte's view, this scientific knowledge is the crucial tool to declare social reorganization. Comte emphasizes that this process of social reorganization must be carried out by an intellectual scientific culture: "He (Comte) begins by observing that whenever society needs any kind of theoretical work done, it recognizes that it must go to the appropriate class of experts (*savants*) since the experts engaged with the sciences of observation are the only ones with the capabilities and intellectual culture to satisfy the necessary conditions... Only education... that results from the study of the sciences of observation can develop their natural theoretical capacity in the proper way"; but more importantly, "Comte's scheme will exclude the great mass of the people from the theoretical phase of socio-political reorganization". See Michael Singer (36-37).

¹⁰⁴ The dichotomy "Barbarity vs Civilization" will become the necessary excuse for the urgent incorporation of Latin American countries into the positivistic mentality. Both Mexican and Argentinians agreed that the pass from backwardness to progress or from barbarity to civilization required a big change in their inherited colonial mentality. This colonial mentality hindered all possibilities of progress, for that reason "los progresistas, los positivos, los civilizados y civilizadores podrían pugnar para facilitar la presencia física de hombres provenientes de esos mismos pueblos con su presencia física y cultural, para que hiciesen por esta América lo que ya habían hecho por sus naciones." [the progressive, the positivists, the civilized and civilizing could fight to enable the physical presence of men coming from those same countries with its physical and cultural presence, for those men to do in America what they had already done for their nations]. On the other hand, the Peruvian Manuel González Prada also addressed the issue of the inherited race from Spanish colonization. He stated that there were no inferior races but races that had been subdued to slavery, therefore "Al indio no había que eliminarlo, sino incorporarlo" [Indians did not need to be eliminated, but incorporated]. See Leopoldo Zea (xxiii, xliii).

would be denied. Sarmiento, in his universalist project based on the political and ideological agenda of *Order*,¹⁰⁵ fought to keep both the gauchos and the indigenous “savages” away from the social sphere, and in their place he insisted on positioning, according to Álvaro Kaempfer, “la raza caucásica, la más perfecta, la más inteligente, la más progresiva de las que pueblan la tierra” [the Caucasian race, the most perfect, the most intelligent, the most progressive of those who inhabit the earth.] (Lastarria, Bello y Sarmiento 16). By exterminating these uncivilized races, Sarmiento’s approach to find in nature the deterministic racial inferiority of these groups would prove to be beneficial to his political agenda.

One of the most relevant episodes of violent military expeditions to exterminate both gauchos and indigenous communities is the *Campaña del desierto* in Argentina (1879) under the command of General Julio Argentino Roca¹⁰⁶. In *Indios, ejército y frontera*,¹⁰⁷ David Viñas explains how the scientific ideology of *positivism* acted as “possible conscience” of the military and political movements that guaranteed the seizing of a vast, rich territory, its expropriation, and its final exploitation including that of its inhabitants.¹⁰⁸ According to Viñas, Roca’s positivism manifested through:

...monopolio de las tierras expropiadas a los indios, capitalización de un prestigio pulcro obtenido sobre los desmanes de sus subalternos, centralización, conservadurismo modernista, feroz ‘homogenización racial’, fuerte estatización, sintonización con los ritos del capitalismo mundial, nacionalización de las oligarquías provinciales y del ejército frente a las milicias locales, reafirmación de fronteras, articulación de los ferrocarriles,

¹⁰⁵ “The idea was to create an *Order* which could go beyond the struggle that Latin American men had to endure against the heirs of colonialism. Based on the liberal and emancipatory mentality to civilize Latin America, men will find in positivism the key instrument to create new educational systems that could guarantee men’s freedom and, therefore, a free path to civilization and progress.” Ibid., xxxiii.

¹⁰⁶ President of Argentina during two terms (1880 to 1886 and 1898 to 1904). Roca had total control of the economy and facilitated a rapid economic growth motivated by the large scale of European immigration.

¹⁰⁷ México: Siglo XXI Editores, 1982.

¹⁰⁸ Roca’s *Campaña del desierto* or *The Conquest of the Desert* extended from 1879 to 1930 and then 1980 trying to occupy Argentine “espacios vacíos” [empty spaces]. On May 25, 1879, Roca swept the island of Choele-Choel at the Negro river. Then, he continued to the Patagonia (1883) where he not only defeated Argentine Indians but also put a stop to Chilean expansion. David Viñas states that the conquest of the Patagonia also meant an end to the war against Paraguay. See *Indios, ejército y frontera* (22-25).

los telégrafos y el puerto único. (*Indios, ejército y frontera* 25)

[...monopoly of the expropriated lands from the Indians, capitalization of a clean prestige obtained through his subalterns' outrages, centralization, modernist conservatism, fierce 'racial homogenization,' strong nationalization, harmonization with the laws of world capitalism, nationalization of rural oligarchy and the army against local police, strengthening of borders, and management of railroads, telegraph, and the only port]

This description establishes a clear relationship between *positivism* and *capitalism* where spaces are taken in the name of progress and civilization for the exploitation and transformation of natural resources into items of commodification within the economic world market.

José Eustasio Rivera's *La vorágine*¹⁰⁹ provides a good example of a space that is taken for exploitation and further commercialization of its natural resources.¹¹⁰ According to Jennifer Lynne French, this novel combines two different stories, one largely fictional and the other closely based on documented sources. The first is the personal odyssey of narrator Arturo Cova, a well-known poet who flees Bogotá, and an incipient scandal with his lover Alicia. The second, largely historical story is based on the scandal of the Peruvian Amazon Company, a consortium of British and Peruvian interests that in the early twentieth century was accused of exploiting the indigenous tribes of the Putumayo region, a land located on the disputed border between southern Colombia and northwestern Peru. The Peruvian Amazon Company took brutal advantage of the lawlessness of the area to terrorize both its would-be competitors and the indigenous tribes, gradually establishing a monopoly on violent labor and natural resources in the jungles of the Putumayo, Colombia. Today it is estimated that between thirty and 40,000 Amazonian Indians died after being forced to work as rubber tappers in a pseudo-legalistic system of debt-peonage that was enforced by terror and violence (*The Invisible Empire* 178).

¹⁰⁹ Santiago de Chile: Editorial Andrés Bello, 1981.

¹¹⁰ The novel deplores the destructive rubber-tapping practices of the plantations "where every year the rubber workers in Colombia destroy millions of trees, while in Venezuela the *balata* rubber tree has disappeared" (243). Likewise, the novel nearly completely ignores the history and culture of the indigenous inhabitants of the forest except to the extent that they are involved with the production of rubber. See Rex P. Nielson (28).

In addition, this system progressively reveals within the novel the different stages of a long exploiting genealogy which starts with the Christian missionaries, “A El Dorado y las Amazonas, le sigue la labor evangelizadora y destructora de los misioneros,” [El Dorado and the Amazons are under the evangelizing and destructive mission of the missionaries] (374), followed by “...científicos y exploradores en múltiples viajes de reconocimiento,” [...scientists and explorers in multiple surveillance trips] (374), and “...continúa con la participación de los mecanismos reguladores y administrativos del estado, tanto en la figura de visitantes e inspectores que dejan pasar por alto los abusos, como en la sucesión de oficinas y consulados que aparecen en el texto” [...continues with the participation of the State’s regulatory and administrative mechanisms represented by examiners and inspectors who ignore the abuses perpetrated, and with the succession of offices and consulates that appear in the text] (374). In this sense, *La vorágine* denounces these exploitation enterprises carried out in the Colombian jungles of the Amazon by European imperialists who, supported by their corrupt relationship with Colombian church representatives and government officials, make profit through the devastation of not only its natural resources, but also its native inhabitants who have endured a structure of control of labor at the service of a globalized market net. These enterprises can be regarded as neo-colonial in the context of the 20th century.¹¹¹

2.4. Neo-colonial Violence: 20th Century Colonialism

It has been argued that Latin America’s origins began during the 19th century through the wars of independence. These wars were directed against colonial Spain. However, the wars of

¹¹¹ *La vorágine* is also “a text which appropriates European discursive forms in order to articulate a critique of neo-colonialism. European and specifically British dominance over the economies of South America locates the Putumayo scandal within the context of nineteenth-century colonialism, while what may be called the situation’s local or ‘internal’ dynamic -- in this case the struggle to extend government control over the rubber-rich Amazon jungle — calls for the repetition of earlier and specifically Iberoamerican narratives of conquest and colonization.” See Jennifer Lynne French (196-197).

independence of the newly Latin American “Nations” did not put an end to the system of colonization and oppression. The oppressed groups before the wars of independence took place continued to be the same oppressed groups after these wars, which only produced structural adjustments in the power sphere. Mignolo argues how the new ex-colonies were linked by a clear structure of power which did not vanish after the new nation-states came into sight. For him, the wars of independence (in all the Americas including the US) ended with the external form of colonialism but replaced it with an internal one¹¹² (*The Idea of Latin America* 68). The former colonial Spanish power was handed down to the elite *criollos*,¹¹³ who took control of the institutions of power and kept their people in the same detrimental social and economic conditions. These poverty conditions were a direct consequence of the systematic structure of colonial violence, and its close connection with the so-called state violence.

The initial state model in Latin America was the Spanish monarchy, which ruled until the early nineteenth century under the control of *virreinos* (viceroalties), *audiencias* (appellate courts), and other local authorities. Independence from Spain, however, meant neither the continuation of the monarchy under new leaders nor an entirely revolutionary break with the past since “creoles could not or did not want to cut their subjective dependency on Europe; they needed Europe as Indians needed their past and Blacks needed Africa and the memories of suffering under slavery” (*The Idea of Latin America* 68). That is to say that even though such emancipation brought up the end of colonial rule, it is clear that this process did not inaugurate the immediate consolidation of the new national states that were formed out of these events.

¹¹² Mignolo states that “Francisco Bilbao addressed the issue of ‘internal colonialism’ when he denounced Sarmiento as a defender of the civilizing mission and called the civilizing mission a new instrument of imperial expansion. Bilbao could already see the complicity of the native elites (Creoles of Spanish descent) in promoting imperial expansion and, in some ways, self-colonization.” See *The Idea of Latin America* (71-72).

¹¹³ “The Creole elite, in America and also in Haiti, sat in the driving seat from which Spaniards, Portuguese, French, and British were removed. ‘Dependency’ did not vanish, it was simply restructured.” *Ibid.*, 68-69.

These new nations were incapable of consolidating, thus putting off indefinitely the making of the republican project that gave them birth. In part, this was due to their impossibility to establish the Latin American difference with Europe that in Mignolo's terms refers to the question of *subjectivity* in the context of a new *emerging identity* that instead of finding answers through the analysis of its own colonial past, it devoted itself to “*emulating* European intellectuals and imagining that their local histories could be redressed by following the example of France and England and hiding colonialism” (*The Idea of Latin America* 66-67). This way, both the idea of nation and the state were constructed from, or around, the remnants of Spanish imperialism and the imitation of France's liberal political ideas.¹¹⁴ However, once Spain is out of the picture, the United States reveals its imperial ambitions to colonize the South. In 1856, in his *Iniciativa de la América: Idea de un Congreso Federal de las Repúblicas*, Francisco Bilbao states:

Vemos imperios que pretenden renovar la vieja idea de la dominación del globo. El Imperio Ruso y los Estados-Unidos, potencias ambas colocadas en las extremidades geográficas, así como lo están en las extremidades de la política, aspiran, el uno por extender la servidumbre Rusa con la máscara del Paneslavismo, y el otro la dominación del individualismo Yankee. La Rusia está muy lejos, pero los Estados-Unidos están cerca. La Rusia retira sus garras para esperar en la acechanza; pero los Estados-Unidos las extienden cada día en esa partida de caza que han emprendido contra el Sur. (n. pag.) [We are witnessing empires that are trying to renew the old idea of global domination. The Russian Empire and the US are both entities located at geographic extremes, just as they are located at the political fringe. One aims at expanding Russian serfdom under the mask of Pan-Slavism, and the other (the US) at expanding the domination of Yankee individualism. Russia is far away, but the US is nearby. Russia draws in its claws, waiting in ambush, but the US extends them more every day in that hunt that it has initiated against the South]

¹¹⁴ “When military action for independence was followed by the need to put their house in order, the Creole elite put their past in the closet and joyfully looked for political ideals toward France, where they found the republican emphasis on the ‘res publica’ (the state) and the important role of the state in the coordination of a just and peaceful society. And they also found liberalism, a newer doctrine or ideology propagated by Locke and the Glorious Revolution in England and theorized by Adam Smith that pushed the freedom of the individual and free trade rather than state management.” Ibid., 65-66.

Nevertheless in the 20th century, a new form of global domination or neo-colonialism takes a different logic of interpretation. Mignolo distinguishes the old imperial way of *colonialism*, which consisted of maintaining physical presence of institutions, administrators, and armies in the colonized country or region, from the concept of *coloniality* which exemplifies the new logic of domination over the world emphasizing political and economic restructuring as well as the powerful use of modern technology (*The Idea of Latin America* 11). In this context, the United States appears as the main dominant, foreign culture to exert not only political and economic control over Latin American countries, but also cultural.¹¹⁵

In “The Structure of Dependence,”¹¹⁶ Theotonio Dos Santos addresses this issue in relation to Latin America by stating that “the relations of dependence to which these countries are subjected conform to a type of international and internal structure which leads them to underdevelopment or more precisely to a dependent structure that deepens and aggravates the fundamental problems of their people” (231). In this context, foreign multinational corporations control the most important sectors of economy of these countries by owning their main resources as well as their most developed industrial sectors. This fact allows these corporations to intervene politically, whether directly or indirectly, to protect their economic interests and maintain the *status quo* which, in many cases, still perpetuates the violent repercussions of

¹¹⁵ This domination of the North over the South has been the object of study of many writers and film makers who have used their work to show and communicate not only the almost unending and continuous condition of *neocolonial* dependence of Latin American societies on the dominant US foreign culture, but also the ways in which violence has penetrated and perpetuated itself within Latin American societies. This idea of dependence communicates that Latin America’s situation could be characterized as a neocolonial case in which we observe certain formal political independence but economic dependency at large levels.

¹¹⁶ “By dependence we mean the situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected. The relation of interdependence between two or more economies, and between these and world trade assumes the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and can be self-sustaining, while other countries (the dependent ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion, which can have either a positive or a negative effect on their immediate development.” See Theotonio Dos Santos (231).

exploitation and oppression.¹¹⁷

One of the most relevant Latin American film directors of the 20th century who tried to understand, communicate, and transform this neocolonial condition through his political filmmaking was the Argentinian Fernando Birri.

In “The Roots of Documentary Realism,” Birri stated that there were basically two kinds of filmmakers: “one invents an imaginary reality; the other confronts an existing reality and attempts to understand it, analyze it, criticize it, judge it, and, finally, translate it into film” (11). Birri’s statement is in agreement with the ideology of those who supported the movement of The New Latin American Cinema who decided to seek out Latin America’s national realities in order to interpret them, communicate them, and, hopefully, transform them.¹¹⁸ However, all artistic expression that seeks to penetrate the social realm and identifies with social issues is regarded as “political” since it reveals a certain concern for the destiny of people. Consequently, if all artistic expression that identifies with social problems entails a political position, then, this position can be understood as a profound revelation of the author’s beliefs.

Despite the economic problems, lack of government support, high prices of the equipment, and other difficulties that Latin American filmmakers face to carry out their film projects, many of these film directors have strived to show commitment to produce a kind of

¹¹⁷ “..., industrial development is strongly conditioned by the technological monopoly exercise by imperialist centers. We have seen that the underdeveloped countries depend on the importation of machinery and raw materials for the development of their industries. However, these goods are not freely available in the international market; they are patented and usually belong to the big companies. The big companies do not sell machinery and processed raw materials as simple merchandise: they demand either the payment of royalties, etc., for their utilization or, in most cases, they convert these goods into capital and introduce them in the form of their own investment. This is how machinery which is replaced in the hegemonic centers by more advanced technology is sent to dependent countries as capital for the installation of affiliates (...). In terms of numbers “data shows that in the period from 1946 to 1967 the new entries of capital into Latin America for direct investment amounted to \$5,415 million. On the other hand, the transfer of profits from Latin America to the United States amounted to \$14,755 million.” Ibid., 234.

¹¹⁸ John King views Latin American cinema not as a static category, but as a dynamic, constantly changing one that does not deny the influence of US Hollywood filmmaking: “This focus is not a repudiation of internationalism or a hankering after some essentialist ideal of national identity.” See *Magical Reels* (4)

Latin American cinema that reveals *how*, *why*, and *by whom* violence is produced so the public can be instructed in possible ways to oppose it; mainly, through the formation of a revolutionary consciousness. Jorge Sanjinés understood it in this way: “We offered our films as weapons against the two-headed enemy that had been identified in Bolivia: the ruling class and Yankee imperialism” (“Revolutionary Cinema” 38). This historical relationship has revealed not only the political and economic dependence of Latin America on the United States, but also its close connection to violence.

Sanjinés’ statement opens the road to one of Latin American cinema’s main elements in the representation of violence: *militancy*. Their real undertaking goes beyond the technological basics of filmmaking, since their real quest resides in the recovery of a national identity that has been lost or alienated by a system of economic, political, and cultural hegemony that has always been established by the dominant classes in turn, starting with the Spanish colonizers, then the British investors, and now at the hands of the United States, mainly. For these film directors, it is crucial to create a “voice” through their films in order to help mobilize the participation of a collective mind in search of a collective fulfillment. In “Beyond the Reflection of Reality,” Tomás Gutiérrez Alea identifies the militant cinema as:

...a militant cinema that aims at the poorest sectors of the country and seeks to spark a *toma de consciencia* [awareness] about the social and political problems that those people face. It is a valuable and necessary kind of cinema, but one that must not forget that the kind of ‘marginal’ or alternative cinema, you can obviously not compete with the kind of Hollywood spectacles shown in commercial theaters, the kinds of films that attract, among others, that very section of the population that the militant filmmakers are trying to reach. (qtd. in *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America* 125)

In other words, it is a form of militancy that acted as silent propaganda to achieve political results.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, open militancy can be a real problem with regard to the dominant classes and their constant attempts to repress and censor any public propaganda that may harm their political and economic interests. Many of these militant filmmakers, in most cases, are dependent on the limited “permissiveness” of bourgeois democratic governments which end up making use of their repressive methods to force militant filmmakers to leave the country and go into exile.¹²⁰

One of these militant Latin American film directors who suffered threats by right-wing forces in the 1970’s and had to abandon his native Argentina to go find refuge in Paris, France, is Fernando Ezequiel Solanas. Solanas studied theater, music, and law and became the forefront of the *Grupo Cine Liberación* that shook Argentine cinema in the 1970’s, developing its social conscience and political voice. Together with Octavio Getino, Solanas wrote the manifesto “Toward a Third Cinema”¹²¹ which opposed neocolonialism, the capitalist system, and the Hollywood model of cinema as mere entertainment to make money:

The anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Third World and of their equivalents inside the imperialist countries constitutes today the axis of the world revolution. **Third cinema** is, in our opinion, the cinema that **recognizes in that struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific, and artistic manifestation of our time**, the great possibility of

¹¹⁹ “This is why we feel that film should have a dialectical relationship to its audience, meaning that the issues should be openly posed to the public in a way that allows for debate between the audience and the film. If the film poses a question that the audience supports or opposes, it is stimulated intellectually and indicates its opinion. It is not a matter of trying to provoke a gratuitous clash, like avant-garde European or North American art, which seeks only the psychological shock – a very bourgeois way of exerting an impact on the audience. For us, the violent elements typical of Brazilian films are a means of provoking the public out of its alienation.” See Glauber Rocha (108-109).

¹²⁰ In the case of Cuba, we observe a kind of militant cinema at the service of the repressive structure: “To the extent that we are part of our revolutionary process, to the extent that we believe in it and realize that for the first time we are in control of what we are doing, of our own actions, we are exercising a much greater freedom than that which can be exercised in any country where conflict between different classes continues to exist. For a social system based on unequal exercise of power and influence *always* works in favor of the most powerful, who sometimes grants some scraps of apparent freedom to those whose lives they dominate.” See Tomás Gutiérrez Alea (129).

¹²¹ Third Cinema contains a political conscience and encourages militant actions. It has also been understood as “Revolutionary Cinema” or “Cinema of Liberation.” Solanas and Getino’s manifesto was first published in 1969 in Cuba and appeared in the 14th edition of *Tricontinental* magazine.

constructing a liberated personality with each people as the starting point - in a word, **the decolonization of culture**. (116)

In this sense, Solanas' first long feature documentary-film *La hora de los hornos* [The Hour of the Furnaces] (co-authored with Octavio Getino) reveals his discontent with neocolonialism and violence in Latin America.¹²²

*La hora de los hornos*¹²³ shows how Argentina's history has been established on a farce staged by a neocolonial power that attempts to communicate a political, social, and economic image full of liberties. From the very beginning, Solanas wants to show through clips of police brutality the violent consequences of exploitative and oppressive systems of power. His film "language" seeks to communicate and educate viewers on a Latin American reality ignored by many. As Rocha himself once said: "We cannot make films to express Brazilian or Latin American content using North American language. This is very great contradiction, because the cultural forms themselves, which are tied to the problem, must also be freed from alienation" (*Cinema Novo* 107). Thus, Solanas seeks to communicate with the public through a violent, aggressive language that touches and reveals experiences that are familiar to them, such as hunger or starvation, oppression, diseases, poverty, and death which become "a means of provoking the public out of its alienation" (Rocha 109) when confronted with images of neo-colonization such as that of wealth represented through stunning skyscrapers in Buenos Aires.

In this sense, opposed to Hollywood's language of *entertainment*, Solanas proposes a language that incites viewers to become "active" participants through observation, debate, and

¹²² "The enemies were North American imperialism, multinational capital, the seamless diegesis of Hollywood cinema, the fragmentation caused by neo-colonialism." See John King (69).

¹²³ "It is a colossal four-hour work, divided into three parts. Part I, 'Neo-colonialism and Violence', deals with Argentina's economic and cultural dependency on Europe. Part II, 'An Act for Liberation' talks of Peronism as a force for change in government, both when in power, from 1946 to 1955, and in exile. Part III, 'Violence and Liberation', is a series of interviews with militants discussing the best way of achieving revolutionary transformations." Ibid., 86.

action: “If the audience leaves the theater discussing the violence of the last scene, that is a good sign because it indicates that the film stimulated discussion and that other issues will also be raised” (Rocha 109). In other words, a language that proposes a dialectical relationship between the audience and the film where form (graphics, sounds, etc.) and content (ideas, opinions, etc.) stimulate intellectual reasoning leading to change.

In this context, the film also emphasizes how Latin American independences produced a transitory change, that is to say, they never ended. The independences broke with the Spanish control, but fell into the hands of the elite *criollos* who sold the destiny of their countries to the commercial power of the United States.

Solanas argues how Rivadavia,¹²⁴ in Buenos Aires, gave away Argentina’s national banks to the investment of English brokers under the motto: “Libertad de comercio” [Free Trade]. As a result, English goods flooded Argentina’s internal local markets through different Latin American port cities causing the rise and strengthening of a bourgeois class that found a secure place within the markets of the privileged European elite. This gives origin to a new system of exploitation implanted in Latin America known as *neocolonialism* which introduces a native bourgeois class that controls the nation’s resources for its own benefit and exerts a constant, systematic violence that does not resort to the use of weapons to rule and exploit men but to political, cultural, and economic means. The buying of local enemies is an example of this systematic violence exerted by the neocolonial agenda. Military and government officials, judges, even presidents, sell their lives and services to the exploitation enterprise of neocolonialism. This mentality contributes to strengthen the powerful capitalist nations and weakens the exploited underdeveloped ones. Pablo Neruda criticized these systematic maneuvers

¹²⁴ Bernardino Rivadavia y Rivadavia was the first president of Argentina (1826-1827).

in his poem *The Standard Oil Company* (1940) by addressing how the “obese emperors” from New York buy countries, people, seas, police, and even dictators to fulfill their thirst for *capital*. In his poem, Neruda reveals his concerns for the well-being of Latin America by showing how international investors serve themselves from the progressive “agenda” of globalization by continuing to carry out new practices of colonialism that produce considerable levels of poverty and marginalization. These are practices that have become stronger under the system of neoliberalism.

With this in mind, we find that the inequalities and violence brought up by the phenomenon of globalization contribute to another important element within Latin American cinema: the *marginal* as protagonist. The film *Cidade de Deus* by Fernando Meirelles (2002) depicts the arrival of marginal prominent agents of a crime-oriented organization who seek to find a space within the “opportunities” offered by a globalized world. These crime-oriented organizations are located in neighborhoods known as *favelas* which can easily be regarded as spaces of violence controlled by the illegal mafia of narcotraffic.¹²⁵

In Brazil, these so-called *favelas* have been described as slums (marginalized neighborhoods) where poor citizens are pushed away from the city and forced to live in the far suburbs. In the late 20th century, when Latin American cities were seeking to increase urbanization in the cities, a lot of the less fortunate people from the country-side moved to the

¹²⁵ “Residents of favelas and the academics who study them suggest that traffickers maintain a degree of order in favelas by enforcing certain basic rules. The truth, however, is somewhat more complex. Traffickers do not enforce such rules uniformly. Instead, as shown by evidence from the favelas in this study, by skillfully providing for dispute resolution and maintaining local order with an eye to their political, social, and emotional relationships with residents, traffickers create a ‘myth of personal security’ in which individual residents believe they can guarantee their own safety through their actions and political connections to traffickers. (...), traffickers are less likely to punish respected and politically connected residents than those who are marginal to the political life of the favela community. This very specific process of maintaining order reflects broader trends of continuing reliance on hierarchical and personalistic relationships in Brazil’s political system and suggests that increased policing is unlikely to bring drug trafficking under control.” See Enrique Desmond Arias and Corinne Davis Rodrigues (54).

big city of Rio de Janeiro in search of work.¹²⁶ However, with little opportunity to get a good job and afford urban housing, these migrants had to establish themselves in the favelas which then proliferated to the point of being perceived as a social problem.¹²⁷

The extreme condition of poverty in the favelas, which derives in part from the structural violence of the capitalist socio-economic mentality, functions as circle of misery and criminality from which individuals cannot escape. The only way out is through the use and control of violence, exerted also through illegal forms of lucrative business like narcotraffic.¹²⁸ The film shows how the changes in the pattern of capital acquisition vary from one decade to another. When Li'l Dice realizes that cocaine trafficking (in the 70's) is more profitable than the hold-ups (in the 60's), he resorts to more violent methods of leadership and control to ensure his goals. One of these methods is the recruitment of younger kids who represent the new generations of criminality. For these kids, violence is their "daily bread," and possibly their "last supper." It is a vicious cycle- similar to that of the *sicarios* in the Colombian *comunas*- where the opportunities of a better life have already been denied by the socio-economic structure of a capitalist system that demands individuals to be equipped to compete in a global sphere.

Unfortunately, one of the means to reach competitiveness is through another significant

¹²⁶ In *Porous City: A Cultural History of Rio de Janeiro*, the author makes a significant contribution to the understanding of Rio's multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multilayered past. The book focuses on the neighborhood of Cidade Nova (New City), which was created in the early 1800s, shortly after the establishment of the Portuguese Royal government in that city. Even though Cidade Nova was created to accommodate the newly arrived nobility, the region soon became a center for the less fortunate, even holding in its adjoining hills Rio's first favelas. See Rosana Barbosa (617-18).

¹²⁷ These favelas soon became associated with extreme poverty and were considered an obstacle to progress and development in Brazil, especially due to the increasing rates of violence therein. Even though institutional actions such as the creation of public housing projects were carried out to eradicate the favelas, they did not flourish due to insufficient investment by the government. This led to the disintegration of these projects into new favelas. "Cidade de Deus," originally one of these housing projects that did not succeed, was later popularized in a film of the same name.

¹²⁸ "People engage with the traffickers, be it through religious conversion or other changes in their behavior, in an emotional response to the violence they face and the lack of hope that the state will resolve the problem." See Enrique Desmond Arias and Corinne Davis Rodrigues (59).

element in Latin American film: *corruption*. In *Cidade de Deus*, corruption reveals itself as the result of the demands established by the constant changes in the global market. The film shows the corruption of the police force through the sale of weapons to gang members under Li'l Zé's control. However, corruption in the favelas touches more than the mere transaction of money, drugs, and weapons. It is a well-crafted structure that involves other participants.¹²⁹ In *Drugs and Democracy in Rio de Janeiro*, Enrique Desmond Arias states in relation to Vitória:¹³⁰

Vitória conforms to the expectations of criminal networking and politics laid out in this book. A network of actors from the criminal underworld, the business community, the political world, and the bureaucracy came together through the Scuderie to undertake the wholesale looting of the state treasury and the murder of their opponents. Connections to criminals provided the necessary expertise in illegal activities. Political links gave criminals access to the government budget and the port. Business leaders undertook illegal state contracts and provided kickbacks to bribe police and elected officials. Judges stopped possible investigations. Finally, police and criminals supplied the muscle to keep the complex operation in place. Through diffuse organizing and operations in different segments of society, this group engaged in large-scale criminal operations over the course of more than a decade. (171)

According to Robert Mandel, both “corruption and violence tactics involve violation of the established legitimate societal rules in different ways,” (*Dark Logic* 43) since they seek to create an atmosphere of terror and intimidation through their different modes which involve physical harm, kidnapping, extortion, bribery, money laundering, and fraud among other things. This is the kind of structural social violence that derives from the capitalist mentality of the market which finds in neoliberalism its most tactical expression.

¹²⁹ “Criminal groups ‘approach logistics, personnel, and accounting professionally,’ hiring experts and acquiring vital information and skills when needed and rationally undertaking cost-benefit analyses to maximize profit just like sound multinational corporations do. These careful calculations of criminal minds, when combined with vast financial resources, facilitate the successful use of both corruption and violence on a significant scale under differing circumstances.” See Robert Mandel (41).

¹³⁰ Capital of the state of Espírito Santo, just north of Rio de Janeiro.

2.5. Neoliberal Violence: 20th & 21st Centuries

Mid-20th century seems to be a good starting point to discuss the concept of *neoliberal violence*. The historical period inaugurated in 1964 with the coup d'état in Brazil, with the support of the U.S. economic and military influence, put an end to the anti-imperialist projects and anticipated the fall of Latin America's socialism.¹³¹ The Latin American dictatorships of this time had the task of producing the conditions for the implementation of the processes of economic liberalization and global market as part of the concept of institutional modernization and cultural globalization.

But, how can the military state exert its monopoly of violence? Two ways are the most common for the state to inflict violence on individuals or groups: physical or psychological. Physical violence can take the forms of abduction, assault, torture, rape, and the most extreme of all: death. On the other side, psychological violence can be present in the forms of fear and censorship. Both forms of state violence prevailed during the military regimes of the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's where thousands of people, considered a threat to this new system of military power, were seized, imprisoned, tortured, and finally killed.¹³² Independently from the intrinsic

¹³¹ "Happy with the political direction Latin America was moving in, Nixon was caught off guard when he learned in late 1970 that Chileans had elected the Marxist Salvador Allende president. 'That son of a bitch, that son of a bitch,' screamed Nixon... He then commenced a seven-minute monologue on how he was going to 'smash Allende.' He instructed the CIA to 'make the economy scream,' and over the next three years, Washington spent millions of dollars to destabilize Chile and prod its military to act. It finally did on September 11, 1973, in a coup that brought Augusto Pinochet's seventeen-year-long regime to power... In 1976, Argentina fell to a military junta, bringing the cycle of South American coups to completion." See Greg Grandin (59).

¹³² In *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, the author elaborates an interesting study (Chapter 5) on the topics of trauma, testimony, and truth that derive from extreme violent experiences such as the Nazi concentration camps in Auschwitz. Jelin stresses the idea that despite the negative psychological consequences due to the undergone violence, some victims "felt the imperative to tell the story, as if it were a means of survival" while others felt that "they needed to survive the horror in order to be able to tell the story." However, one of Jelin's important discussions deals with the relationship between *testimony* and *truth*. In the case of Latin America, this relationship is based on the collaboration between the person giving the testimony (usually a member of a socially dispossessed group) and a privileged mediator (usually of the higher strata of society) who lends his/her voice to the voiceless victim giving the testimony to "raise consciousness and denounce situations of exploitation." Jelin concludes that "testimonials are at the same time essential sources of information about what happened during the repressive regimes, an exercise in personal and social memory insofar as they are narratives that attempt to make

motivations of these military regimes, the systematic use of state violence appears to be contradictory to the preservation of social relations that the fundamental nature of the state seeks to mediate. Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott elaborates a comprehensive summary about the role of dictatorships in the process of economic liberalization and modernization of Latin American societies:

Tal consideración nos demanda, en otras palabras, repensar las recientes dictaduras latinoamericanas como operaciones cruentas y calculadas que utilizaron sistemáticamente la tortura y el asesinato como mecanismos dirigidos a la transformación de la sociedad, en un proceso de modernización institucional y de liberalización económica que terminó por precipitar el despliegue de la llamada globalización financiera y cultural contemporánea. (*Soberanías en suspenso* 65)

[Such consideration demands, in other words, a rethinking of the recent Latin American dictatorships as bloody, and premeditated operations that systematically made use of torture and assassinations as mechanisms directed at the transformation of society, in a process of institutional modernization and economic liberalization that ended up provoking the development of the so-called contemporary financial and cultural globalization.]

From this perspective, the series of military dictatorships in Latin America in the second half of the 20th century cannot be regarded as mere accidents in the history of this continent. What is at stake here is the radical reconfiguration in the concept of capital accumulation, and the establishment of neoliberalism as the new geopolitical reorganization of the world supported by the configuration of a techno-mediatic global power, highly militarized, and guided by the private logic of big corporations. Harvey backs up this argument by stating how a group of economists known as “The Chicago Boys” were brought by Pinochet into his government with the intention to restructure Chile’s economy.¹³³ Among their economic measures, they reversed

some sense of the past, and a medium of creative personal expression for both the narrator and for those who ask the questions or listen.” See Elizabeth Jelin (60-75).

¹³³ “Two years after the overthrow of Salvador Allende, with the dictatorship unable to gain inflation under control, the ‘Chicago Boys’ began to gain real influence in General Augusto Pinochet’s military government. They recommended the application of what [Milton] Friedman had already taken to calling ‘shock treatment’ or a ‘shock program’ - immediately halting the printing of money to finance the budget deficit, cutting state spending 20 to 25

the nationalizations and privatized public assets, opened up natural resources to private unregulated exploitation (including the exploitation of indigenous inhabitants), privatized social security, and facilitated foreign direct investment and free trade (*A Brief History* 8). This argument makes us reflect upon the close relationship between capitalism, as mode of production, and violence as an inherent aspect of its articulation where the concept of national state is challenged by other forms of global, transnational articulation. This transnational mode of operation is also due to the changes in the hierarchy of domination.

According to this, we observe a 21st century immersed in the era of globalization and supported by the neoliberal capitalistic mentality which has transformed violence and its criminal tactics to fit the new logic of an international market that promotes and emphasizes in Harvey's terms "the interests of private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations, and financial capital"¹³⁴ (7). Thus, the agents of violence that develop out of this neoliberal state are equipped with particular characteristics that enable them to compete within the social, political, but mainly economic sphere of a given society.

However, we should start by asking ourselves who the perpetrators of this neoliberal violence are. Carolyn Nordstrom, in *Global Outlaws*, develops an interesting study about the criminals of this century. Criminals have traditionally been identified as subjects who engage in certain practices that collide with the concept of legality; however, for Nordstrom the criminals of the 21st century are not the subjects of *resistance* who intend to oppose or compete with a

percent, laying off tens of thousands of government workers, ending wage and price controls, privatizing state industries, and deregulating capital markets. 'Complete free trade,' Friedman advised." See Greg Grandin (163-64).
¹³⁴ "It [capitalism] is a militarized and moralized version that under the banner of free trade, free markets, and free enterprise often makes its money through naked dispossession. It was in Latin America where this brutal new global economy was initially installed, beginning in the 1970's, resulting in what could be called the region's 'third conquest' - the first being led by Spanish conquistadores, the second by American corporations starting in the nineteenth century, and the last by multinational banks, the U.S. Treasury Department, and the International Monetary Fund." Ibid., 160.

hegemonic power to threaten its social and political *status quo*. On the contrary, Nordstrom's criminals are subjects who, in the articulation and conflicts of a globalized world, strive for spaces of negotiation, mainly economic.¹³⁵

Nordstrom shows how these criminals are part of an extra-legal network that involves kids who drop out of school to find a way to survive the harsh consequences of poverty, local shop owners who seek to “develop” their communities through their business, government representatives who use their military powers to exert control over people and resources, International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) representatives whose complicity resides in acknowledging these extra-legal practices, and more importantly the international network (powerful international businesses, multinational enterprises, other governments) that supports and benefits from these “il/legal” transactions. According to Nordstrom, “this entire system *is* the site, the management, and the exploitation of twenty-first century frontiers” (35) where powerful *empires* are created. These empires, which are mainly transnational organized systems of wealth and crime, produce the kind of money that is able to buy the military, politicians, and entire governments as well. Mandel argues that there are numerous elements that have fostered the recent growth of transnational organized crime:

On an individual level, criminals and their collaborators seem increasingly motivated by a burning desire for money, power, and fame; by fear; or by strong cultural or family connections. On a state level, the aggressive international expansion of criminal laws and prohibitions policies aimed at eradicating transnational organized crime's illicit market activities ironically has tended to push undesired activity underground into criminal

¹³⁵ “Transnational organized crime has been mushrooming specifically since the early 1990s, as local criminal groups expanded across national boundaries and formed tactical and strategic regional and international alliances. . . The value of illicit criminal financial flows across national boundaries in the late 1990s ranged from \$800 billion to \$1.5 trillion, and transnational criminal activities consume roughly between 5 to 20 percent of the world's gross domestic product per year. In many ways, criminal aspirations have become limitless in both time and space, with no means or ends out of bounds. The geographical extension of the reach of criminal groups has in itself led to a dramatic expansion of the range of criminal activities.” Among some of these transnational criminal activities we can highlight drug cartels, maritime piracy, illicit human transfer, and terrorism. For more information on a comprehensive analysis of major transnational criminal organizations see Robert Mandel (91-126).

hands. On an international level, the differences in values and norms pertaining to illicit cross-border activities allow transnational criminal organizations considerable latitude about where to base their operations. Aside from these stimulants, three interrelated systemic background conditions seem particularly important in facilitating the recent changes in transnational organized crime: (1) intensified economic globalization, (2) proliferating politically fragile or failing states, and (3) accelerating technological transformation. (*Dark Logic* 21).

In this new system of management, one aspect becomes crucial for the possible development and success of these transnational illegal activities: frontiers are no longer a space of territoriality but a space articulated by the global intervention of powerful transnational economic networks.

In this sense, James Ferguson argues that “The same processes that produce exclusion, marginalization, and abjection are also producing new forms of non-national economic spaces, new forms of government by NGO and transnational networks...” (*Global Shadows* 14). Thus, Ferguson talks of *shadow economy* to name the informal sector where extra-legal commodities are traded on the black market. Illegal narcotics (drugs) are one of these goods which, besides generating billions of dollars a year, also produce characters such as *drug lords & sicarios* who defy the interpretations of violence as we will see in the following chapter.

2.6. Conclusion:

As a result of the emergence of these transnational forms of criminal activities, we could argue that the use of violence has never ended, but it has been modified or has suffered metamorphoses by the changes in the structure of power influenced also by changes in the concept of capital accumulation and the economy that regulates it. Thus, drawing on earlier ideas, we see the transition of a 16th and 17th century (colonial) economy characterized by the possession and exploitation of nature by means of a trade monopoly of land and manpower through serfdom or slavery into an 18th and 19th century (colonial) economy based on industrial development and highly characterized by a more intense production and a more clear dependence on the market. Industrial development gives way to a 20th century (neocolonial)

economy characterized by the domination of big capital in the hegemonic centers, and its expansion abroad through investment in the production of raw materials and agricultural products for consumption in the hegemonic centers. Finally, we reach the current 21st century (neoliberal) economy based on multinational corporations which invest in modern industries geared mainly to control world economy, especially that of the underdeveloped countries. This form of economy is highly characterized by its dependence on technology and on social life relations.

In this context, the historical, political, economic, racial, and state forms of colonial violence have not disappeared but they have transitioned and relocated themselves within society due to the changes produced by the process of globalization which has transformed the classic form of extensive capitalism into the new order of intensive capitalism. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc marked the near completion of the process of extensive capitalism.¹³⁶ Within societies, the rapid growth of direct foreign investment since the 1960s disrupted traditional modes of life by increasing the penetration of markets.¹³⁷ This became intensive capitalism. This change allows for the suppression of the nation state and its replacement with a global economy or neoliberal economy.

¹³⁶ “A different type of structural perspective argues that the Soviet system was unable to make the transition from a Fordist-Keynesian industrial system of mass production and mass consumption to what David Harvey calls a ‘flexible accumulation regime’, no longer dominated in the West by the old triad of big state, labour and capital or in the East by the monolithic planning system. In other words, the Soviet collapse was in part precipitated by the challenge of globalisation, although this could well be to confuse cause and effect: it was only after the fall of communism that globalization theory became the dominant paradigm of our age. Indeed, the removal of the European communist challenge allowed a triumphal capitalism to emerge, that was in the end beset by its own contradictions once bereft of the disciplining and constraining effect of the Soviet experiment.” See Richard Sakwa (66).

¹³⁷ “In the shadow of World War II and the Cold War, global politics trumped economic orthodoxy in determining policy preferences and financial support. This strategic perspective was transformed by the end of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 served as the capstone to a decade long apparent victory of market mechanisms and the disappearance of feasible alternatives. Concerns about military dominance, geopolitical alliance, industrialization, national self-sufficiency and the pacification of domestic discontent gave way to the pursuit of aggregate growth, inflation control and public debt management.” See Miguel A. Centeno and Joseph N. Cohen (16-17).

Within this context, the old established binaries of East and West, North and South, imperial metropolis and periphery, friend and enemy, have been called into question. In other words, we are experiencing the weakening and transformation of the old, traditional *establishment* into a corporative political space that demands the new configuration of “un nomos financiero global” [a globalized financial nomos] (Villalobos, *Soberanías* 24). One thing for sure, in common through all these centuries, is that the structure of power has always sought to maintain and use for its purposes the monopoly of violence to the service of *capital accumulation*.

3. Chapter Three

Narcotraffic: A Brief History of its Emergence in the World Market

However, narco-violence is not a simple reflex of economic activity. (...) Narco-violence, however, has increased sharply, to the point where about 700 deaths have been recorded per month and there is grim talk of the ‘Colombianisation’ of Mexico. Thus, narco-violence appears to follow its own trajectory (...).

Alan Knight¹³⁸

Narcotraffic has become the most influential and most dangerous criminal activity of today’s contemporary world. According to Nordstrom, the attention that illegal narcotics receive in law enforcement, the media, and literature has developed considerably not only due to their growing economic success but also due to its extreme criminal activity: “Walk into a law-enforcement institution and ask what most preoccupies their attention, and the topic almost always turns to illegal drugs” (*Global Outlaws* 131). Narcotraffic’s criminal activity has been able to destabilize countries, infiltrate and corrupt democratic institutions, and generate some sort of “shadow economies”¹³⁹ which have produced social, political, and cultural transformations in many different societies.

Nowadays, narcotraffic appears as one of the most pervasive of all criminal enterprises in the global market. This illicit business has proven to be very difficult to control both at national

¹³⁸ “War, Violence, and Homicide in Mexico,” *Murder and Violence in Modern Latin America*, Oxford, UK, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013 (45-46).

¹³⁹ James Ferguson talks of *shadow economy* to name the informal sector where extra-legal commodities are traded on the black market, illegal narcotics being one of these goods. See *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (15).

and international levels.¹⁴⁰ Even though there has been some success in the weakening of some drug cartels like the Colombian Medellin Cartel, others, like the ones formed by Mexican drug traffickers, have emerged with the same strength to find a space within the international global market. On a global scale, the supply of drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and marihuana¹⁴¹ continue to have great demand around the world. In *The Global Underworld*, Donald R. Liddick Jr. states:

The reasons for the growth in the transnational drug trade are many and include the opening of new markets as well as technological, socioeconomic, and political changes that operate in tandem with the process of ‘globalization’ to foster the industry (...) Socioeconomic and political changes are important factors as well. For example, increases in migration, shipping, aviation, communications, and a general liberalization of trade policies provide cover and new markets for traffickers. Finally, and perhaps more significantly, the proliferation of transnational drug trafficking is driven by an increase in the global demand for illicit drugs. (46-47)

Despite these challenging factors, still for some, narcotraffic is reduced to the mere traffic of illegal drugs which are produced, manufactured, and transported clandestinely for economic ends. In other words, its meaning is reduced to the operational sphere. For others, narcotraffic is regarded as a complex phenomenon that goes beyond the operational mode and establishes itself as a parallel structure of power along with that of the state. In other words, “the illegal narcotic industries are run like parallel-economy multinational enterprises” (Nordstrom 131). As a structure of power, narcotraffic can have drastic repercussions in all sectors of human life (political, social, cultural, and economic) that can destabilize both the power of the state and the society in which it develops.

¹⁴⁰ “The global illicit drug trade nets between \$420 billion and \$1 trillion a year, making illicit drugs the largest sector of the global black market and the single best selling product in the world. The United Nations estimates that the global drug trade is worth between \$320 billion and \$500 billion annually, a staggering 2 percent of the world economy, with the global trade in heroin – the most dangerous drug- valued at \$57 billion.” See Robert Mandel (103-104).

¹⁴¹ This work will support the use of the *marihuana* as preferred spelling. *Marijuana* will appear only as part of direct citations.

In this chapter, we will have a closer look at the phenomenon of narcotraffic to understand its origins and the way in which it became one of the strongest economic forces within the world market. Initially, we will develop a brief analysis of the emergence and development of this phenomenon in Colombia and Mexico. In this new scenario, violence interconnects with other aspects of social life encouraging the proliferation of criminal groups known as *sicarios*- at the service of *narcotraffic*-, and reveals how these individuals take advantage of this criminal organization to seek significant economic opportunities. We will continue our study by analyzing literary and cinematic representations of the theme of narcotraffic in Colombia and Mexico in order to reveal the impact that neoliberalism and its market mentality have on individuals and on their culture. The following films will serve our purpose: Barbert Schroeder's *Our Lady of the Assassins*, Emilio Maillé's *Rosario Tijeras*, and Pablo Larraín's *Tony Manero*. The first two films will provide a different look at the so-called *sicarios* as key agents of narcotraffic's transnational, crime-oriented organization who, through their violent methods, seek to promote great economic opportunities and also encourage a new culture (*postmodern*) from which they feed their desires and actions. The last film will provide us with a better understanding and a different look (from that of the *sicarios*) at the impact that the neoliberal model and its market mentality have in the production of postmodern individuals restrained by the laws of competitiveness within the market system.

Moreover, we will consider the aesthetic representations of Mexican drug traffickers in contemporary societies by revealing how, in the accumulation of wealth, these individuals find their own and different *taste* in language, clothing, music, architecture, cars, and women, but more importantly in violence. Nowadays, these aesthetic representations of drug traffickers have become more visible due to the persistent work of the media through television, music, and films. Our

study will concentrate on three significant Mexican books of the so-called *narcoliterature* genre: Orfa Alarcón's *Perra Brava*, Juan Pablo Villalobo's *Fiesta en la madriguera*, and Yuri Herrera's *Trabajos del reino*.

3.1. Narcotraffic: The Colombian Case

According to Carlos Medina Gallego, the beginnings of the industry of narcotraffic in Colombia extended from the second half of the twentieth century as the result of at least five important factors: crisis in agricultural production, crisis in textile production, development in the smuggling industry, political violence, and the logic of demand-prohibition-addiction-consumption ("Mafia y narcotráfico en Colombia" 146). The crisis in the textile industry, generated by the lack of cotton, stirred the emergence of hemp,¹⁴² which would ultimately give origin to many diverse forms of illicit crops such as marihuana.

What we have come to understand as today's illicit crops was no more than a traditional and native aspect of South America's indigenous way of life. The inhabitants of Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia chewed leaves of the South American coca¹⁴³ plant more than a thousand years ago. According to Simons, "The Incas regarded coca as sacred, a divine food planted by the sun god with the help of the moon. By the 20th century, cocaine, the principal alkaloid of the plant, was starting to emerge as the drug of choice for bohemians, thought it was soon being denounced by Western politicians and Western media." (60-61). Marihuana, on the other hand,

¹⁴² The cannabis plant, especially when grown for its fiber.

¹⁴³ The origins of the *coca* plant (also known as *hayo verde* during colonial times) dates from 1602. Its origins are based on studies carried on the main products used by the indigenous groups (Muiscas) located in the region of Chicamocha. Due to the privileged weather conditions of this region, coca production was intensified and became one of the main products of commercialization among *cacicazgos*. The *españoles* also claimed participation in this new form of commerce through the means of *tributes* or taxes paid by the indigenous. In addition to gold and blankets, coca appeared as the third item of taxation. For more information on the *coca* origins and its economic importance see Pablo Fernando Pérez (15-25).

was brought from Jamaica to the north coast of Colombia in the 1920's.¹⁴⁴ From there, it extended to the rest of the country and, as well as cocaine, its use was eventually prohibited. Nevertheless, through the passing of time, marihuana became an object of desire by powerful Colombian businessmen and politicians who made it popular within their elite class circle. In *Colombia: A Brutal History*, Geoff Simons states how “The sons and daughters of the wealthy Colombian elite, returning home from American schools and universities, imported substantial elements of the prevailing hippy culture in which marijuana was a principal element” (59). Thus, marihuana socially transformed its status of being regarded as a low-life vice at the hands of street beggars into a more fashionable element symbolizing social and political power.

By mid-20th century, marihuana's growth reached considerable development, in part by the great demand of the United States 1960's counterculture.¹⁴⁵ This fact encouraged the rise of the first organizational structure of drug dealers and their emergence within the world market. This event in Colombia's history is known as *La bonanza marimbera* (high-volume marihuana production) and the individuals participating in it were called *marimberos* (farmers who cared for the plants, pilots and drivers who distributed the product, etc.). Medina Gallego states that the historic marimbero cycle is an important aspect in the understanding of Colombia's social problems:

Los orígenes de la producción de marihuana, están unidos en la región atlántica, al fenómeno del contrabando. La inexistente presencia del Estado en estas regiones será un elemento primordial en el desarrollo del contrabando y el ciclo de la marihuana, lo que unido a las precarias condiciones de existencia y trabajo de la población hará que esta se incline al desarrollo de estas actividades ilícitas. (148)

¹⁴⁴ “In Mexico and Jamaica the marijuana plantations were being destroyed following the tough anti-drugs policies of President Richard Nixon in the United States – which served to boost the Colombian trade (...). Then, pot cultivation shifted to La Guajira where it thrived between 1974 and 1978, but by then there were signs that the marketing of marijuana would be replaced by the cocaine trade, a more lucrative and more hazardous expression of free enterprise.” See Geoff Simons (60).

¹⁴⁵ The 1960's counterculture claimed that the United States had been corrupted by capitalism and a corrupted culture led by a corrupt democratic government and by dishonest corporate businessmen. It was the time of a “revolutionary” spiritual search that gave rise to ideas of free love, trendy clothing, and wild drug use among others.

[The origins of marihuana production are linked, in the Atlantic Region, to the smuggling phenomenon. The non-existent presence of the state in these regions will be a relevant element in the development of smuggling and the marihuana cycle, which connected to the precarious conditions of the population's existence and work will make this (population) direct its attention to the development of these illicit activities].

However, the Colombian *marimberos* were not able to sustain their success due, in part, to their lack of industrial knowledge, but mainly to the intervention of the United States and its deceitful humanitarian projects. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy announced that in an effort to control communism in underdeveloped countries, the United States would be sending members of the Peace Corps to Colombia's rural territories to carry out community projects concerning construction, education, and health developments. Paradoxically, the intention of rural development led by the members of the United States' Peace Corps ended up opening the doors to cocaine's market at the hands of an emerging North American mafia aided by Colombian drug dealers. The Peace Corps' job was that of "publicitar"¹⁴⁶ (Medina Gallego 149) the use of Colombian marihuana by carrying quality samples of it to the United States. Mainly in the 1960's and 1970's, it is believed that the *bonanza marimbera* was under the control of a North American mafia which would relegate Colombian *marimberos* to the operational role. This situation would make Colombian drug dealers study the ways to regain the control of the drug market both nationally and internationally.

The new hegemony of drug dealers starts regaining control of the market by establishing relations in the United States. A great number of Colombian traffickers migrated to the United States and incorporated *cocaine* into their production and distribution chain. These changes were possible, in part, by a series of economic, social, and political circumstances that arose by the end of the 1970's: "El aumento de *la lucha contra la insurgencia* que duplicó los esfuerzos del

¹⁴⁶ To publicize

Estado al tener que enfrentar los dos fenómenos simultáneamente; el incremento vertiginoso del *consumo y la demanda* de droga en Estados Unidos y Europa y, una equivocada política antidrogas que privilegió *la lucha contra la producción* y fue *tolerante con el consumo*” [The increase in *the fight against insurgency* that doubled the State’s efforts by having to face the two phenomena simultaneously; the accelerated increment in drug *consumption and demand* in the United States and Europe, and an erroneous anti-drugs policy that privileged *the fight against production* and was *tolerant with consumption*] (Medina Gallego 152). Moreover, the precarious economic growth of the 1970’s (mainly of rural characteristics) produced the weakening of a middle class that found in narcotraffic a way-out of their economic needs. Among these, we find politicians and government officials. That is how, in the 1980’s, drug cartels began to establish powerful relationships with politicians and government institutions in order to seek political power within Colombia’s democracy. Simons states:

During the 1980’s the revenues derived from the drug trade had increasing importance for the national economy but was perhaps even more significant in its corruption of the political process. Army officers, lawyers, politicians, businessmen – all were corrupted by the prodigious fortunes to be made from drugs. Most judges, highly susceptible to bribery and intimidation, would automatically release any member of the drugs mafia who had been arrested (...). From the 1970’s prominent politicians in Colombia were increasingly linked with the drug trade. (62)

One of the most relevant cases of narcotraffic capital investment within Colombia’s national politics is the so-called “Procedure 8,000 or Proceso 8.000” where Ernesto Samper’s 1994 campaign for President of Colombia is said to be funded with drug money coming from *Cali Cartel* under the control of the Rodriguez Orejuela brothers. This event led to the imprisonment of several Colombian politicians, lawyers, and journalists, among others, but never to the imprisonment of then President Samper who was supported by members of his political party.

In addition to buying politicians, lawyers, journalists, etc., drug dealers were also creating

a complex network of companies with great influence in many sectors of the Colombian society: financial, sports, media, arts, but more importantly in the rural sector. The arrival of cocaine to the rural environment also brought some far-reaching consequences. Cocaine's high prices in the market represented some economic stability to Colombian rural workers who were tired of the little economic benefits that traditional crops brought in. Bushnell states how "small cultivators discovered that growing marijuana for export to the United States was far more lucrative than the production of other crops" (*The Making of Modern Colombia* 260). Nevertheless, this opportunity for profitability was never long-lasting since rural workers have had to endure for decades the disastrous repercussions of the violent conflicts carried out between drug cartels and Colombia's armed forces, as well as the suppressive laws of the state towards illicit crops.¹⁴⁷

Government intervention was necessary to counteract the wave of violence generated by the conflict of these armed groups. In 1992, President Gaviria declared a state of emergency in Colombia. The government outlawed talking to guerrillas, prohibited the publication of interviews or statements that gave publicity to guerrilla groups, any company paying the so-called "revolutionary-tax" would have its government contracts cancelled, and any official visiting the camps of armed groups would be fired (Simons 75). However, all these measurements did not destabilize the operational model of these armed groups or that of the members of the narcotraffic structure; on the contrary, it made them reevaluate and transform them into a more compatible model with the new necessities of the emerging market economy.

Medina Gallego argues that:

¹⁴⁷ Initially, the armed forces such as FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) and ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional) demanded a tax payment for cocaine growth and production in the zones of their control. However, due to the long-term duration of the conflict, both groups ended up involved in the production and protection of this illicit business. Likewise, the right-wing paramilitary armed groups acting in opposition to the revolutionary guerrilla forces (FARC & ELN) came not only to control the large majority of the illegal drug trade of cocaine but to be responsible for a great number of all political murders in Colombia, especially those belonging to the left wing.

Contrario a lo que se llegó a pensar, los grupos de crimen organizado cada vez se fueron persuadiendo de la necesidad de pasar de las prácticas de la corrupción y el ejercicio brutal de la violencia a un modelo de captura política del Estado y la sociedad en un régimen de convivencia entre el crimen empresarial y ejecutivo y el poder político y la ley. (141)

[Contrary to what has been thought, organized crime groups were persuaded of the need to leave behind their corrupt practices and their brutal violent tactics and capture a political and social State model which favored the coexistence between the financial and executive crime and the political power and the law]

In the case of Colombia, the war against narcotraffic and organized crime left behind some of the most brutal forms of confrontation to give way to institutional ones which promoted high levels of *corruption* infiltrated within the social, political, and economic spheres. In other words, “fire arms and weapons” yielded its way to the persuasive ability of “capital” in all its forms.

In this context, we observe how the so-called *marimberos* are “traded” by the emerging “empresarios de la droga” (drug lords) who make possible the processes of production (crops), transportation (routes), commercialization (market), and legalization of capital (laundry of assets), which elevates narcotraffic at the level of “industry” (Medina Gallego 142). This is precisely the complex configuration of the term *Cartel*. Drug cartels developed and made more complex the new industry of narcotraffic, and with their increasing power of capital accumulation were able to penetrate and permeate all spheres of Colombia’s way of life, to the extent of being regarded as a *mafia structure*. Medina Gallego highlights the following characteristics as pertaining to this mafia/cartel structure:

Estos elementos constituyen la base esencial de la caracterización del *fenómeno mafioso*, el que se reconoce por su condición ilegal, su orientación hacia la ganancia económica, su recurrente uso de la violencia física y las estrechas relaciones que entablan con el poder político y económico ‘oficial.’ (143)

[These elements constitute the essential basis for the characterization of the *mafia phenomenon*, which is recognized by its illegal condition, its aim towards economic gain, its recurrent use of physical violence, and the close relations established with the

‘official’ political and economic power.]

This close relationship to the political and economic power of the State allows these criminal organizations to infiltrate and invade all spheres of social life, and empowers them to maintain a power structure that acts almost parallel to that of the state. That is how these cartels are easily involved in legal activities such as commerce, construction, tourism, sports, health, and education, but mainly involved in their illegal activities (drugs, weapons), which constitute the main source of their economic power.

There is no doubt that the new transformed narcotics industry of the 1980’s brought more profitable earnings to the drug lords. Given the demand of USA consumers, the war on drugs, and the neoliberal policies, the drug industry showed phenomenal growth. The connection between neoliberal agricultural policies and the spread of illicit crops under the control of insurgent groups (FARC) helped spark this profitable business. According to Forrest Hylton, Colombia’s president, Cesar Gaviria:

...implemented the platform López Michelsen had announced in the 1970’s, shifting the economy further toward a model of export agribusiness, capital-intensive manufacturing (...), and multinational exploitation of petroleum, coal, and gold (...) With the help of Álvaro Uribe, then a Liberal Party senator, Gaviria slashed the public-sector workforce and set about privatizing health care and social security, establishing the autonomy of the Central Bank, liberalizing the economy and financial sector, reducing tariffs and import quotas, increasing turnover taxes, and flexibilizing labor. (*Evil Hour in Colombia* 82)

These neoliberal measures fueled a narco-economy which prospered at the expense of cocaine producers ruined by the low tariffs on export. Thus, cocaine, not marihuana, became the main product to be produced, manufactured, and distributed both nationally and internationally to the extent of being regarded as a “transnational commodity.” Simons also offers an additional look at the profitability of the cocaine economy:

The profitability of the cocaine trade, occasioned by its illegality, is remarkable: \$1 million worth of crop can be converted into \$5,000 million profit; a kilogram of cocaine

paste worth about \$800 can be transformed into a product worth \$50,000. Drug trafficking, 'the only successful transnational in Latin America,' represented 3 per cent of the national wealth of the Colombian economy, unable as it was to absorb more drug money. (61-62)

In this context, narcotraffic's more powerful "weapon" is not its firearm capacity but its capability to infiltrate and corrupt the political, cultural, and economic spheres of social life.

According to Mandel, "For drug traffickers, when a possibility exists of a cozy relationship with local authorities, corruption is generally preferable to violence, resulting in a gradual shift toward the primacy of bribery to maximize profits and to minimize law enforcement intrusion" (*Dark Logic* 106). For this purpose, cartel leaders establish alliances with the political elite to develop new models of economic, social, and political structure. In this case, we could argue that the more narcotraffic situates itself within the "legality" of the conventional government structure, the more its illegal activities seem to be less visible. Even the use of physical violence is reduced to a minimum by serving as protective tool for those activities related to drugs' production and management. However, within the legal and political business environment, coercion plays the most important tool.

Due to this dynamic, we could talk today of the relationship between cartel power and political power of the state, which somehow complement each other within the present structure of the global market. We could, then, consider the market as a structure driven by power control, and under the same scope, we could understand power as a structure resulting from the growing effect of the market. Therefore, the profitability of the narcotraffic industry comes to represent one of the forms of power control of greater appeal not only in Colombia, but also in Latin

America and the world as a whole, which continually involves acts of corruption that touch all sectors of the political, economic, and social:¹⁴⁸

One estimate suggested that the traffic of illegal drugs, especially cocaine, from Latin America to the United States throughout the 1980's and 1990's had amounted to as much as \$110 billion per year. There is ample scope here for the corruption of many of those people – judicial, police, political, military, paramilitary, and corporate – who move close to the drug trade. (Simons 66)

However, the true economic importance of the drug traffic was difficult to measure accurately because this new industry was, by nature, illegal. Regardless of its precise impact in the overall economy, the drug business had significant socioeconomic importance. Among the social consequences, Colombia experienced the rise of a new elite of multimillionaire drug traffickers. Undoubtedly, the most prominent were referred to as the *Medellín Cartel* with Pablo Escobar Gaviria as its most powerful leader.

Escobar enabled the Medellín Cartel to become the first criminal organization to mass market the drug (cocaine) business in the United States. However, of all drug dealers, it was Pablo Escobar who created the most powerful and criminal organization of armed enforcers with the highest rates of assassinations, extortions, bribes, kidnappings, and bombings. These criminal groups were known as *sicarios* whose single-minded determination was to achieve Escobar's goals at all cost. Escobar's way to persuade the social and political establishment was through *intimidation* only reachable through assassinations performed by the hands of his *sicarios*. Simons states:

The assassinations continued through the 1980's. By the end of the decade the mafia was demonstrating that it could strike at leading politicians, prominent judicial figures, worker's leaders, presidential candidates and others. Thus, on 4 July 1989 Antonio Roldan Betancur, Governor of Antioquia, was killed; on 29 July, Maria Diaz Perez, an active anti-mafia judge; on 7 July, Henry Cuenca Vega, President of the National

¹⁴⁸ "In Afghanistan, Colombia, and Myanmar, for example, crime syndicates use both corruption and violence, but increasingly rely on corruption to prey upon weak state institutions." See Robert Mandel (107).

Federation of Cement Workers; on 9 August, Daniel Espitia, national treasurer of the National Association of Peasant Users (*Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos*, ANUC); on 16 August, Colonel Franklin Quintero, Commander of the Antioquia police, and also Luis Carlos Galan, likely to be a presidential candidate committed to rolling back the influence of the drug cartels over the political establishment. (64)

Escobar's powerful criminal activity was essential in his attempt to threaten, and in some cases subjugate, Colombia's legal system and its democratic government, but also in incorporating Colombia's questionable illicit economy reputation within the global market.

The hunt for Escobar, once the most wanted man in the world, ended with his assassination in Medellín on December 2, 1993, but his criminal legacy has survived and undergone transformations according to the new necessities of the world market.

3.2. Narcotraffic: The Mexican Case

In *Historia del Narcotráfico en México*, Guillermo Valdés Castellanos argues how the production and commercialization of drugs in Mexico has not always been an illegal matter. In the first two decades of the 20th century, *Bayer*, the well-known German pharmaceutical company, produced a heroin (cough) syrup (El Jarabe Bayer de Heroína) used to prevent and treat respiratory illnesses. Its slogan was very appealing to customers:

En la bronquitis, la tos fuerte, faringitis, laringitis, neumonía y demás enfermedades de los órganos respiratorios, el JARABE BAYER DE HEROÍNA (mayúsculas en el original) produce un efecto sorprendente: regula y facilita la actividad de los pulmones, ejerce una acción calmante sobre los nervios excitados de la mucosa laríngea, mejora el estado general.” (29)

[For bronchitis, heavy cough, pharyngitis, laryngitis, pneumonia, and other illnesses of the respiratory organs, the BAYER HEROIN (COUGH) SYRUP (upper case in the original name) produces a surprising effect: regulates and enables lungs activity, produces a soothing effect over the excited nerves in the laryngeal mucosa, improves general condition.]

Likewise, cocaine products were used as part of alcoholic beverages with therapeutic properties to cure depression and low blood pressure. One of the most successful products was “el vino de coca,” (coca wine) which was initially of common use by famous people in the first two decades

of the 20th century. In the case of marihuana, it was also used for some medicinal purposes (against insomnia and rheumatic pain), but mainly for recreational use (Valdés Castellanos 31). In all cases, the production, sale, and consumption of these drugs were under legal conditions. However, this period of legality for these products would not last longer. Drugs (narcotics) consumption has always been associated with the debate concerning public health, which deals with the theme of users' dependency. Luis Astorga states that in search of the prohibition of drugs production and consumption, countries around the world got together to propose their local and international control:

En 1909 se realiza en Shanghai la primera reunión internacional para proponer el control de ciertas drogas, especialmente el opio y sus derivados. Luego, en 1912, en La Haya, se lleva a cabo la Convención Internacional del Opio, reunión a partir de la cual México empezará a participar aprobando y ratificando los tratados propuestos” (*El siglo de las drogas* 28)

[In 1909, Shanghai is host to the first international meeting to propose the control of certain drugs, especially opium and its derivatives. Later on, in 1912, in The Hague, the Opium International Convention, the meeting from which Mexico would start approving and endorsing all proposed agreements, took place].

However, it would be in 1920 when Mexico would finally adopt these prohibition laws in order to forbid the production and commercialization of drugs. First, marihuana (1920), and secondly opium (1926). It is precisely this discrepancy in time for the adoption of these prohibition laws which, according to Valdés Castellanos, allows for the emergence of the narcotraffic business in Mexico:

Debe señalarse, entonces, que hubo un periodo de seis a doce años – entre 1914 cuando se regulan las drogas en Estados Unidos, en 1920 cuando en México se prohíbe la marihuana y en 1926 cuando se legisla en contra de los opiáceos – en que la disparidad de legislaciones provocó una situación inmejorable para los incipientes narcotraficantes mexicanos, pues durante esos periodos pudieron producir legalmente opio y marihuana en nuestro país y exportarlos a Estados Unidos donde, por la prohibición, ya habían ganado un sobreprecio, iniciándose de esa manera el gran negocio del narcotráfico. (35)

[It must be pointed out, then, that there was a time period of six to twelve years – between 1914 when drugs are regulated in the United States, 1920 when Mexico bans marihuana, and 1926 when there is a legislation against opium derivatives- in which the

disparity of legislations provoked an unsurpassable situation for the emerging Mexican drug traffickers, because during that period of time they were able to legally produce opium and marihuana in our country and export them to the United States where, due to their prohibition, they had already earned an overprice, starting in such a way the great business of narcotraffic.]

Paradoxically speaking, it is after these prohibition laws that the illegal production and distribution of these drugs turns narcotraffic not only into a profitable activity, but into a criminal one.

Astorga gives importance to the role of *pharmacies* in the creation and development of this profitable criminal activity in Mexico. Pharmacies provided an easy access for customers to obtain the drugs of their desire, as well as maintaining a status of “legality.” Astorga argues how “algunos boticarios comenzaron a dedicarse por completo al negocio hasta lograr grandes fortunas (...) hubo quien para asegurarse un éxito más completo se metiera a la política” (41) [some pharmacists dedicated their time completely to this business until achieving large fortunes (...) there were some who, seeking better success, got involved in politics]. Obviously, in this organized criminal activity, pharmacies played the role of intermediaries. A possible structure, in general terms, would place the producers and exporters at the top, local distributors (pharmacies, bars, etc.) in the middle, and consumers at the bottom.

Without any doubt, the analysis of the most diverse forms of organized crime in many countries of the world (such as Colombia) has shown that the nature of economic competition within illegal markets implies, necessarily, the use of violence. It is a normal operational tool. Without violence, the expectations of survival of these criminal organizations become almost zero within illegal markets. This is mainly because these illegal transactions are performed out of the reach of state laws. In this context, illegal markets’ “laws” are agreed upon among the individuals involved in these transactions, and the most “convincing” tool to preserve and achieve these agreements is through the use of violence and its most atrocious outcomes. Valdés

Castellanos describes the way in which these criminal organizations make use of violence to secure their illegal transactions in the market:

Si un mafioso engaña a otro y no paga un cargamento de droga o se lo roba, el agraviado no puede recurrir a las autoridades, entonces se hace justicia por su propia mano aplicando un castigo ejemplar: la muerte. Mientras menos confianza exista entre los actores de la economía ilegal la tendencia a incumplir acuerdos y a engañar en las transacciones será elevada y, por tanto, habrá numerosos conflictos entre las organizaciones, provocando el uso generalizado de la violencia. (59)

[If a mafia man deceives another and does not pay the drug cargo or steals it, the victim cannot go to the authorities, then justice is carried out by his own hand through exemplary punishment: death. The less trust between the actors in illegal economy, the higher the tendency not to follow agreements and to deceive in transactions; therefore, there will be numerous conflicts among organizations which will provoke the generalized use of violence.]

In this context, narcotraffic's use of violence can be encouraged by two main factors: 1) the economic benefit of dictating the "rules of engagement" within the global economic market, and 2) the need to secure, through intimidation and threats, the fulfillment of all commercial agreements. However, for these two motives to be maintained firmly, the use of violence must become somehow monopolized by these criminal organizations seeking positions of domination and control within the market. This monopoly of violence will lead these organizations to develop relations of power with individuals located in all spheres of life, but mainly the political one.

Mexico has not been an exception to this obscure structure of political and economic power. First, we have to point out that in general terms, the Mexican government adopted and followed the laws that prohibited the production, manufacturing, commercialization, and consumption of any illegal drug. These measures were motivated by the pressure of some international organizations,¹⁴⁹ mainly from the United States, which sought to counteract the

¹⁴⁹ In 1930, The White House created the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) which sought to criminalize drugs and stop smuggling activities. In 1968, the FBN was merged with the Bureau of Drug Abuse Control, the predecessor of the current Drug Enforcement Administration agency (DEA).

unlawful activity of narcotraffic. However, the lucrative drug activity started to infiltrate and corrupt police officers, politicians, and government officials who, in alliance with drug traffickers, created a much stronger criminal organization that revealed the corrupt “symbiosis” between the state and narcotraffic’s criminal organization. In her article “México: narcotráfico y gobernabilidad,” Mónica Serrano states:

La evidencia disponible sugiere que las relaciones entre el mundo criminal y la clase política en ascenso no sólo fueron reguladas desde el ámbito local, sino organizadas en torno a funciones establecidas. Gracias a las investigaciones de Walker y de Astorga, hoy sabemos que algunas autoridades locales no sólo toleraron, sino que regularon y/o protegieron las actividades criminales a cambio de beneficios económicos y de la subordinación política de los nuevos empresarios criminales. En este sistema de regulación en ciernes, el referente más importante sería el tipo de relaciones simbióticas, a partir de las cuales políticos y empresarios criminales buscaron favorecerse mutuamente. (259)

[The available evidence suggests that the relationships between the criminal world and the emerging political class were not only regulated locally, but also organized around established functions. Thanks to Walker and Astorga’s investigations, we know today that some local authorities not only tolerated, but also regulated and/or protected criminal activities in exchange for economic benefits and the political subordination of the new criminal businessmen. In this system of regulations, the most important aspect would be the kind of symbiotic relationship from which politicians and criminal businessmen sought to favor themselves mutually]

This relationship of reciprocity would eventually help politicians and drug traffickers to establish the foundations of a criminal market regulated with the intervention of a corrupted Mexican government. This model of political power started to become more relevant within the world market after the controversial presidential elections of 1988 when Carlos Salinas de Gortari would inherit the hegemony of his Institutional Revolutionary Party¹⁵⁰ (Partido Revolucionario Institucional – PRI) through accusations of fraud.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ The Institutional Revolutionary Party held power uninterruptedly in the country for 71 years (1929-2000). Its hegemony ended in 2000 with the election of Vicente Fox under the National Action Party (Partido de Acción Nacional – PAN).

¹⁵¹ Manuel Castells states that the PRI’s relevant position of power was due to “the effectiveness of a populist system, socially engineered through networks, familism, and personal loyalties in a vertical chain of reciprocities

Salinas de Gortari focused on ensuring the integration of Mexico into the global economy. Some of his economic measures reflected the implementation of the neoliberal agenda which included, among others, the reduction of public spending, modernizing the communications and telecommunications infrastructure, privatizing most public enterprises, internationalizing banking, liberating trade, and setting the country wide open to foreign investment (*The Power of Identity* 281). However, Salinas also launched an attack to fight corruption and drug traffic, but history would reveal something completely opposite. This fact would expose Mexico's true new role within the global world economy.

Manuel Castells argues how “important sectors of the traditional PRI apparatus, together with state and local officials of various political affiliations, established their own connection to the ‘other global economy’” (*The Power of Identity* 283). This relationship between political power and global organized crime would eventually expose criminal outcomes that would bring destructive consequences not only to the hegemony of the PRI, but to Mexico's emerging political life.¹⁵² On the one hand, we see the emergence of a new decentralized democratic government which would bury the remains of PRI's once absolute power. On the other hand, we observe the reshaping of narcotraffic's organizations that understood that the only way to make their illegal business long-lasting within the world market would be through the reshaping of what has been known as *Captura del Estado*¹⁵³ [State Capture]:

Se define como la intervención de individuos, grupos o compañías legales en la formulación de leyes, decretos, regulaciones y políticas públicas para obtener beneficios

covering the whole country. In this sense, the PRI system was not simply a political regime, but the very structure of the Mexican state, as it existed in the twentieth century.” See *The Power of Identity* (278).

¹⁵² Two examples include the political killings of Luis Donaldo Colosio and Manuel Camacho and the direct link of President Salinas' brother, Raul Salinas, to the drug cartel and to the laundering of hundreds of millions of dollars that would end up involving President Salinas as well.

¹⁵³ This term was initially coined by Luis Jorge Garay Salamanca and Eduardo Salcedo Albarrán in *Narcotráfico, corrupción y Estados*.

de corto y largo plazo, principalmente de naturaleza económica, en detrimento del interés público. Así en la definición original de *Captura del Estado* se omite el uso de métodos de coerción y violencia usualmente empleados por individuos y grupos ilegales para complementar o sustituir el tradicional soborno [corrupción] [...] De esta manera, ampliando la definición tradicional de *Captura de Estado*, puede decirse que cuando intervienen individuos o grupos ilegales, como mafias, narcotraficantes o grupos paramilitares subversivos, podría configurarse un tipo de Captura Avanzada del Estado, gracias a la capacidad para ejercer violencia como mecanismo que sustituye o complementa el soborno. (Valdés Castellanos 322)

[It is defined as the intervention of individuals, groups or legal companies in the formulation of laws, decrees, regulations and public policies in order to obtain short and long term benefits, mainly of economic nature, in detriment of public interest. Thus, in the original definition of *State Capture*, the use of coercive methods and violence usually carried out by illegal individuals and groups to complement and substitute the traditional bribery [corruption] is omitted [...] This way, by enlarging the traditional definition of *State Capture*, it can be said that when illegal individuals and groups intervene, such as mafias, drug traffickers, paramilitary, or subversive groups, a kind of Advanced State Capture could be configured, thanks to the capacity to employ violence as a mechanism that substitutes or complements bribery]

In this context, the interests of the drug traffickers are somehow legitimized and regarded as the interests of the society as a whole. These criminals' interests become *laws*¹⁵⁴ and the use of violence is legitimized to make these *laws* be followed. Mandel suggests that violence usually serves to assert dominance, and that drug traffickers “have been looking not just to operate outside of the law but rather to establish themselves through violence as the law in the area” (*Dark Logic* 74). This type of criminal behavior is only possible in a state in which the government has a corrupt judicial system, an unstable economy, and a large tolerance for crime.

In other words, due to the absence of the state to protect and promote citizens' interests, for example those of peasants with very few options for production, or that of business owners who find in their relationship with drug traffickers a lucrative way to see their business grow; we observe how organized criminal groups take advantage of these opportunities to extend their control in opposition to that of the state.

¹⁵⁴ Among these, the *law* known as “*plata o plomo*,” that is, “accept a bribe or face death” which emphasizes the economic profitability and domination of these criminal groups in exchange for not using their military force.

However, these *laws* cross local boundaries into transnational ones. It is in this transnational context where narcotraffic gains its relevance both as an economic and criminal force within the international global market. This transnational operational mode still reveals a political-criminal organization controlled by powerful politicians, businesspeople, and other corporate lords. This political-criminal nexus shows the collaborative relationships of drug traffickers with state authorities to gain access to, and to exploit for their own purposes, the political, economic, and social apparatus of the state. In return, state authorities seek their own personal benefits such as securing political power and money, among others.

It is this political-criminal nexus that has turned narcotraffic into one of the most pervasive transnational criminal enterprises in the global market. In recent years, and thanks to the weakening of Colombia's cartels, Mexican drug traffickers have risen considerably within the global narcotics trade. According to Liddick, "Mexican cartels control the supply of 70 percent of the cocaine consumed in the United States, 80 percent of the foreign-grown marijuana, and 80 percent of the raw methamphetamine ingredients" (7). In part, the strengthening of Mexico's drug trade in recent years has to do with the collapse of the Caribbean¹⁵⁵ route which consolidated Mexicans as the main cocaine providers in the world.

This shift in cocaine trafficking routes through Mexico in the late 1980s gave rise to Mexico's most powerful drug cartels (the Gulf, Juarez, Sonora, and Tijuana) which produced around \$7 billion annually, \$2 billion more than the Colombian cartels (32). In addition to this, in the first years of this century, there were several changes in the politics of the United States that contributed to make Mexico the main exporter of narcotics. First, President George W. Bush invested 65 per cent of the resources destined to fight the problem of narcotics to the persecution

¹⁵⁵ It included Venezuela, Guyana, Surinam, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico.

of drug traffickers, and only 35 percent to the prevention of consumption and treatment of drug addicts. Second, Bush did not renew the prohibition laws, established by President Bill Clinton ten years before, which prohibited citizens from buying powerful assault, and / or long range weapons (Valdés Castellanos 466). This fact facilitated the development and consolidation of private armies at the service of narcotraffic.

In this context, we could establish a clear connection between the illicit global drug trade and the lucrative traffic of weapons, but more importantly to the high levels of violence that emanate from narcotraffic's criminal practices. For Mandel:

The modern global market in narcotics is unusual in that it entails a 'high level of violence' yet is also professionalized. When transnational drug traffickers do make use of violence, rather than senseless violence, they employ 'violent behavior with low-profile strategies.' Although drug traffickers who conceptualize their trade as an entrepreneurial business normatively prefer business-like transactions to violence, they find its use necessary in order to protect their territory, collect debts, cultivate a reputation of respect and fear within the industry, and deter betrayal within the ranks of their network. (*Dark Logic* 108).

These criminal practices are the subject of our literary and cinematic study in the pages to follow as part of this chapter.

3.3. *Sicarios*: Postmodern Subjects and their Violence as Literary Commercialization

In *The Origins of Postmodernity*, Perry Anderson argues that, contrary to conventional expectations, the terms modernism and postmodernism "were born in a distant periphery rather than at the centre of the cultural system of the time: they come not from Europe or the United States, but from Hispanic America" (3). The Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío, considered the father of *modernismo hispanoamericano*, made of this movement one of the most significant within Spanish-American literary and political circles. This literary movement within Hispanic America sought to declare a sort of cultural and literary emancipation from colonial Spain. On

the other hand, the term *posmodernismo*¹⁵⁶ was first used by the Spanish writer Federico de Onís to illustrate a response that challenged the inability of the modernist's lyrical efforts to produce a more rational, compassionate world.

According to Anderson, it took more than twenty years for the term *posmodernismo* to penetrate the Anglophone world as *postmodernism*, "as an epochal rather than aesthetic category" (5). It is in this context that we observe how literature began demanding modernism's intellectual standards for a more relaxed, diverse society. Harry Levin in his article "What was Modernism?" described this trend as "the sign of a new complicity between artist and bourgeois, at a suspect cross-roads between culture and commerce" (n.pag); implying in such a way a much wider range of tendencies that extended to music, the visual arts, and technology, as well as appealing both to educated taste and popular sensibility. In addition, this complicity between culture and commerce in the era of postmodernism presupposes a somehow problematic relationship between "subject" and "object" where the former experiences a sense of dissolution of his substance, his identity; and the latter loses its use value and becomes a figure of exchange value instead.¹⁵⁷

Thus, we will argue that the advent of postmodernism in Latin America has ironically produced a sort of cultural capitalism. This form of cultural control penetrated the Latin American way of life in the 1980's when the political hegemony of the new right-wing mentality –*neoliberalism*– was established in our countries advocating economic liberalization, free trade

¹⁵⁶ Posmodernismo, in Spanish American literary history, refers mainly to a transitional movement in poetry around 1910 in reaction to the hegemony of Modernismo's aesthetics. Posmodernismo's manifesto was written by the Mexican poet Enrique González Martínez who began his sonnet with the words, "Wring the neck of the swan!"

¹⁵⁷ According to David Harvey, "This kind of post-modernism, it seems to me, seeks some kind of accommodation with the more flexible regime of accumulation that has emerged since 1973. It has sought a creative and active, rather than a passive, role in the promotion of new cultural attitudes and practices consistent with flexible accumulation." See "Flexible Accumulation through Urbanization: Reflections on 'Post-Modernism' in the American City" (253).

and open markets. In this new postmodern neoliberal state, the theme of competitiveness appears as one of the key factors to exemplify what is *different* in a society guided by the laws of a globalized market. In addition, we will state that the so-called “cultural difference” is regarded as a product “to be bought” and “to be sold” within international markets of cultural production. This cultural difference operates as a market mechanism that could be described as *maquila*, and spurs a whole new kind of postmodern neoliberal culture which encourages individuals to transform their cultural manifestations and mentality into spaces of social chaos.

Furthermore, in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson argues that, ironically, the concepts of “equality” and “freedom” that the globalized market system seeks to create suffer a reverse turn in its pragmatic application: “. . . but a pause for reflection allows me to remember that even these unpleasant consequences are also acknowledged, and sometimes even celebrated, by the neoliberals- that in practice this freedom and equality turn out to be unfreedom and inequality ” (261). These concepts of equality and freedom, being contradictory within the market system, cause a subversive response towards the market structure. Jameson argues that “The market is in human nature” (263), and this notion plays a key element in the emergence of the illegal drug trade –*Narcotraffic*–, not only as one of the main economic global market forces, but also as the originator of a new kind of Latin American postmodern culture controlled by the demands of the capitalistic mentality.

George Yúdice, in “Posmodernidad y capitalismo transnacional en América Latina,” argues that in Latin America informal economies and narcotraffic are not necessarily postmodern phenomena, but they offer alternative responses to the *grand récit* of postmodernity built by Lyotard, Jameson and others (68). In this sense, local economies prepare themselves to respond to the colonizing tentacles of a transnational capitalism.

We will, then, concentrate on the analysis of a group of films that depict the influence of the postmodern neoliberal phenomenon within Latin America. These films manifest the damaging influence and the detrimental changes operated in both the individuals and the cultures affected by it. The films are: *Our Lady of the Assassins* (2000) by Franco-Swiss director Barbet Schroeder, *Rosario Tijeras* (2007) by Mexican director Emilio Maillé, and *Tony Manero* (2008) by Chilean film director Pablo Larraín.

However, before analyzing the postmodern phenomenon in Latin America reflected in the selected films, it is important to point out several things that will help build the concept of postmodernism in Latin America. Latin American writers criticize the presence of a strong neocolonialism that degrades Latin American theories and does not take them into account. That is why the majority of Latin American thinkers, who separate themselves from the European-American concept of postmodernism, reject the idea of being recognized as postmodernist intellectuals.

In his book *Postmodern Hollywood*, Keith Booker suggests that the films of Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu should be differentiated from the films made in Hollywood or in Europe (18), which suggests a separation of the culture produced in Latin America and in the West. Part of this way of thinking might have to do with the idea that the engagement of postmodernism in Latin America does not refer to the theme of the end of modernity that is present in the manifestations of the Anglo-European culture, but to the complexity of Latin America's own culture shaped by social and political changes that took place during the 60's, 70's and 80's.

John Beverly and José Oviedo, in *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America*, describe the concept of postmodernism as a new possible form of cultural imperialism that was brought to

Latin America in the 1980's¹⁵⁸ to establish the political hegemony of a new right-wing. In this sense, we can observe how the capitalistic mentality that lies within this New Right, and motivated by its “mode of production”, ends up involving Latin America in a relationship with the United States that suggests the fetishization of the social, cultural, and economic condition of the latter.

Jean Baudrillard's writings on the United States have observed this relationship as a form of penetration of the economic realm into the sphere of culture. In *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary*, Steven Connor states that for Baudrillard “it is no longer possible to separate the economic or productive realm from the realms of ideology or culture, since cultural artifacts, images, representations, even feelings and psychic structures have become part of the world of the economic” (51). This is why the ideological concept of postmodernism, as described by Jameson, needs to coordinate new forms of practice and socio-mental habits with the new forms of economic production. All these new forms of economic organization were produced by the modification of capitalism into a more transnational, totalizing stage that Jameson has referred to as “multinational capitalism”, “spectacle or image society”, “media capitalism”, or his most well-known “Late Capitalism”, in which “the ‘postmodern’ is to be seen as the production of postmodern people capable of functioning in a very peculiar socioeconomic world indeed,…” (xv). Let us not forget that somehow Jameson conceives of postmodernism as the dynamic relationship between local cultures and a capitalistic global culture where the modern model of center-periphery starts to disappear. Therefore, new forms of culture and subjects emerge (the “high culture” seems to be replaced by, or coexists

¹⁵⁸ The rise of the New Right was due in part to the imposition and long establishment of military dictatorships in countries of the Southern Cone of Latin America. Among the most influential, we can highlight Chile, Brazil and Argentina.

with, a more “popular” one) as a result of a transnational market system that involves the “developed” countries with those of the Third World.

In this general view, Jameson’s diagnosis of contemporary life marked by a “society of the spectacle,” in which the most developed form of the commodity is the *image* rather than the concrete material product, opens new possibilities to rethink that which shapes the culture, and the identity of subjects in a given society is the particular society’s “mode of production”, which generates cultural commodities or social images that according to Baudrillard produce a “political economy of the sign”¹⁵⁹ where the exchange value (money) and the symbolic value (object) is transformed collectively and institutionally into a *sign* value (luxury and rare object). This operational system of consumption emphasizes new forms of transnational business organizations, division of labor, and new forms of media in an interrelationship which ends up motivating subversive responses of new neoliberal practices like the one of *Narcotrafic*, which transforms both the exchange and symbolic values of money and drugs into the sign value of a new subculture represented by the *sicarios*¹⁶⁰ motivated by the desires of power and violence.

All these responses, focused on the political-cultural offensive of the market economy capitalized by the neoliberal agenda, seek to update the capitalistic project of cultural hegemony. Jameson argues that “postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a

¹⁵⁹ In *For a Critique of The Political Economy of the Sign*, Baudrillard states that in consumption generally, economic exchange value (money) is converted into sign exchange value (prestige, etc.). He provides an example about the nature of the Art of Auction where he argues that the auction of the work of art has this notable characteristic: “economic exchange value, in the pure form of its general equivalent, money, is exchanged there for a pure sign, the painting. So it is an experimental terrain, simultaneously collective and institutional, for separating out the operation of this sign value. The decisive action is one of a simultaneous double reduction — that of exchange value (money) and of symbolic value (the painting as an oeuvre) — and of their transmutation into sign value (the signed, appraised painting as a luxury value and rare object) by expenditure and agonistic competition.” See Chapter 5, *The Art Auction: Sign Exchange and Sumptuary Value* (1)..

¹⁶⁰ “Colombian writer Héctor Abad Faciolince coined the term *sicaresca* to typify a tendency within Colombian literature that deals with the destinies of young hitmen from the marginal barrios of Medellín and Bogotá, - ‘sicaresca’ a play on the Spanish genre denomination, ‘picaresca’.” See Hermann Herlinghaus (135-36).

whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and terror” (5). One of the most influential aspects of this colonizing neoliberal agenda is the “exaltation of diversity” which leads to the same “exaltation of the market,” and therefore to the “exaltation of the media” which crystallizes the new understanding of Latin American culture.

In her article “Cultural Peripheries: Latin America and Postmodernist De-Centering,” Nelly Richard argues that the fall of the European model due to the weakening of its fantasies of domination through the relativization of absolutes and the delegitimization of universals, during the postmodern era, has invited “the subcultures of the margin or periphery to be prominent parts of the new antiauthoritarian modulation of a postmodernity finally respectful of diversity” (160).

On the other hand, in the introduction of her book *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City*, Jean Franco situates her readers in the moment when the Cold War started with Cuba’s Revolution in 1959. This event brought a series of changes to Cuba that mobilized some Latin American writers to make use of their intellectual capacity to defend their political principles. However, the triumph of Cuba’s revolutionary goals did not last substantially due to the embargo imposed by the United States, Cuban emigration, and high levels of poverty. It should not be surprising that, among all political tensions of governments controlled by the military influence of the United States, and intellectuals who seek to free themselves from intellectual imprisonment in their own countries, the majority of the artistic manifestations in Latin America focus on the “marginal” as protagonist: “When, in the 1970’s, the Chilean writer Diamela Eltit kissed a vagabond in front of the video camera, the act marked a recognition that the margin was now in the center” (Franco 14). This act is evidence that the emerging social problems, as product of the phenomenon of globalization and as part of a political neoliberal mentality, have

motivated the emergence of a new kind of *intelligentsia* that will show in their fictional works the *image* of a somewhat simulated reality.

The film *Our Lady of the Assassins*,¹⁶¹ by Barbet Schroeder, depicts the arrival of subcultures of the margin or periphery (*sicarios*) as prominent agents of a new transnational, crime-oriented organization that seeks to place itself within the market system as a non-conventional labor force willing to participate in the opportunities of a globalized world. Nevertheless, and as noted by Jameson, it is not the illegal trade of drugs and the millions of dollars invested for their consumption that really makes the new postmodern social image of commodity in this film, but the image of the *sicarios* itself and the cultural images surrounding this group.

The film's plot is as follows. Fernando is a Colombian writer who returns to his hometown city, Medellín, after an absence of 30 years. He realizes that the once peaceful place he left has been transformed into Colombia's "capital of violence." Fernando meets Alexis, a 16-year-old male prostitute and sicario, with whom he falls in love and starts a relationship. However, their love is challenged on several occasions. Alexis needs no reason to kill, and he will shoot anyone who crosses him. He explains to Fernando the meanings and symbols of the dangerous world of *sicariato* (hitmen's life style), while Fernando, through long walks with Alexis around Medellín's most popular sites, tries to describe the images of his childhood in a Medellín that now looks nothing like the one he once knew. Ironically, Alexis is murdered by a sicario of a different gang. Fernando tries to find Alexis' killer, but instead finds Wilmar, another young sicario of close resemblance to Alexis. Wanting to have the same relationship with Wilmar, Fernando realizes that he is now dating Alexis' killer. Fernando confronts Wilmar who

¹⁶¹ This movie's original name in Spanish is *La virgen de los sicarios*. It is based on the novel of the same name written by Colombian author Fernando Vallejo.

confesses to killing Alexis in revenge for his brother's death. Then, the couple makes plans to leave the country, but their plans are frustrated when Wilmar is killed while saying good-bye to his mother for the last time. Fernando winds up alone in the streets of a city where love seems impossible to be fulfilled.

In *Our Lady of the Assassins*, we observe how Fernando reveals to us the sicarios' way of life by showing us the peculiar way in which they talk, their religious practices, their rituals, their lack of moral values, and their unlimited violent capacity to face death, including their own. Behind this unfavorable representation of sicarios, we can see the mentality of a neoliberal modernity trying to plant the seeds of progress through the proliferation of violence. Fernando does not hesitate to address this issue in the film by saying that "Las armas de fuego han proliferado y yo digo que eso es progreso" [Fire arms have proliferated and I call that progress]. However, it is in this marginal sphere that the need for money and the search for goods, produced by capitalism, becomes a constant obsession and the means to obtain these idealized objects are completely disregarded. Fernando criticizes the way sicarios want to wear only American and other foreign brands, "Reebok, Paco Rabanne, Ocean Pacific, Calvin Klein," and whose names "Alexis, Wilmar, Jason, and Tyler Alexander" also illustrate the colonization and the impact of the United States' globalized market influence.

Néstor García Canclini, in his book *Hybrid Cultures*, states that "the popular does not consist of what the people are or have but what becomes accessible, what they like, and what merits their frequent adhesion or use" (188). This way, the hybrid subculture of sicariato within the context of Colombia's culture, becomes unique, is labeled *different* and is to be commercialized globally within the market system that transforms life into a commodity that can be bought and be sold as an art form.

In Latin America's understanding of the postmodern era, a great deal of the success of the marginal – which transforms it into merchandise - is its powerful and excessive use of violence. This theme of violence can be perceived through the use of a constant sexual content, by the roughness of an eschatological language, and by the presence of characters usually belonging to the lowest social spheres. In *Our Lady of the Assassins*, the main characters engage in homosexual relationships defying all social expectations. This reflects the *dystopian* thought that is characteristic of the postmodern era, where all norms are broken and spaces of social chaos are created. In Colombia, sicarios are expected to be rough, insensitive and manly. However, we should understand the homosexual relationships in the film, not as weakness of sicarios' masculinity, but as sicarios' subversive nature which makes them have no moral or social standards. In addition, the language of the sicarios is loaded with terms like “gonorrea” [gonorrhoea], “pinga” [dick], “mierda” [shit], etc. These terms reflect the low, degraded, and fragmented nature of language usage by the sicarios, which in a way is also the reflection of the characters' damaged and fragmented human experiences.

Sicarios do not have a life project. These beings are lost in the neoliberal economic system of narcotraffic that uses their “labor” to enrich the capitalistic mentality of mass production. Booker states that “workers under capitalism are treated as interchangeable economic quantities, rather than human beings” (x). Sicarios are only worth their economic function, and this function is measured by the number of drug deals they complete and the violent crimes they execute. Booker has described individuals who depend solely on their economic function as the *perfect postmodern character*; they are “all surface and no depth” (xi).¹⁶² In *Our Lady of the Assassins*, Schroeder shows us young Alexis as an individual who has

¹⁶² “Given the deterioration of the education system and the lack of work, killing for the cartel gives boys a sense of empowerment, especially as they earn good money. They are careless of life and lacking in empathy, and their often

no clear reason to live, to die, or even to kill. Alexis is the embodiment of *evil*, and his actions establish no connection with the past, the present or a future that only seems to have in store for him the mark of death.

Many violentologists¹⁶³ argue that an over-exposure to violence can produce in people certain levels of insensitivity. This effect generates a high level of indifference to violence itself, which transforms it into a product of consumption that motivates the commercialization of the so-called “cultural difference.” In the film, we can observe how Alexis kills people in various places –taxi, a subway system, the streets, etc.-, and in front of Fernando and other pedestrians that do not seem to be surprised or moved by the event. In one of the scenes, an assassination takes place in the streets almost at the feet of Fernando, who acts indifferently to the tragic event. A kid of approximately ten years old shows up running in search of other kids of about his same age to “invite” them to go see the man lying dead in the street. The kid’s words were “come see the stiff”, while another bystander adds “That’s two today! We’re breaking records.” Here, we could consider Jameson’s thoughts on the culture of the “spectacle,” where violence becomes an “image” to be looked at more than a social problem to be reflected upon.

Yudice analyzes this mediatic effect in relation to Latin America and argues that violence has become a new form of *maquila*, since cultural industries operate in a market that exerts control from a specific place, but develops in many others: “El resultado es una maquilación de la producción cultural: se controla el proceso de producción desde fuera, y de este modo se abarata el trabajo cultural en las localidades” [The result is some sort of maquila of cultural

primitive methods are deployed in a postmodern world of up-to-date technologies.” In addition to the Colombian sicarios we also find the young members of Mara Salvatrucha “which started among Salvadorian immigrants in Los Angeles, spread to El Salvador, has been active in Honduras and in several US cities, and has garnered an international following through the Internet.” See *Cruel Modernity* by Jean Franco (229).

¹⁶³ Sociologists, anthropologists, and social workers who try to explain the possible reasons and consequences of the problem of violence.

production: the production process is controlled from outside and in this way the cultural work is cheaper at local levels] (44). Literary and film industries around the world have used the Colombian phenomenon of *comunas* in Medellín to produce “merchandise” (books, films, etc) that is controlled by foreign investors, developed in Colombia, and promoted in Europe, the United States and Latin America.¹⁶⁴ We could add that the commercial effect of violence is the product of a neoliberal agenda that seeks to commercialize *cultural difference*.

In this search for cultural difference we see how Rosario, a kind of *femme fatale* and main character in the film *Rosario Tijeras*, breaks with the existing gender stereotypes and prepares the road for the coming out of more powerful female characters in the Latin American film industry. The film presents flashbacks from the point of view of Antonio, a young man from the upper class of Medellín, and one of Rosario’s friends and, ultimately, love partner. While at a Medellín disco one night, both Antonio and his best friend, Emilio, simultaneously lay eyes upon the beautiful Rosario. Emilio pursues her and begins an affair with her. However, Emilio's family rejects the relationship, which crushes Emilio. Antonio continues his own platonic relationship with Rosario as her trustworthy friend. When Rosario's brother, Johnefe, with whom Rosario lives, is killed, Antonio and Rosario grow closer. However, Rosario, who specializes in murdering men while kissing them, is a marked woman, and she eventually meets her tragic moment. Antonio takes her to the emergency room, from where he relates her story.

We could argue that *Rosario Tijeras* has her predecessors in European and American films like the 1990 Franco- Italian thriller film *La Femme Nikita* directed by Luc Besson, or the

¹⁶⁴ George Yudice develops an interesting analysis on the new configuration of politics within cultural markets with special attention on the book industry. He argues how “las empresas europeas controlan los mercados editoriales latinoamericanos más importantes” [... European companies control the most important Latin American book market]. He highlights how the Grupo Santillana has eighteen subsidiaries, Alfaguara being the most visible. See “La reconfiguración de políticas culturales y mercados culturales en los noventa y siglo XXI en América latina” (649-652).

popular 2003 Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill*. However, the Canadian actress of Colombian origin Flora Martinez (who plays Rosario Tijeras) has denied Rosario's resemblance to pop culture characters such as Nikita or Terminator. According to Martinez, Rosario has something that the other two lack: pure sensitivity. She states about her character: "No seré una Rosario Tijeras que parezca Nikita ni una Terminator...es más cuestión de sensibilidad pura" [I will not be a Rosario Tijeras who resembles Nikita or Terminator...it is a question of pure sensitivity] (Bialowas 24).

Even though we could draw a large gap between Colombian reality and American pop culture, both of them seem to coincide in the global markets of neoliberalism. These young Colombian criminals adopt a lot of their *modus vivendi* via Hollywood films, and a lot of this way of life has to do with the *image* concept. Rosario, as well as other young criminals (sicarios), seems to get her models from pop culture characters overexposed by the media, and controlled by the capitalistic industry that projects them as part of a global reality. Jameson argues that "we cognitively map our individual social relationship to local, national, and international class realities;" (52) and in this respect, we observe how these young Colombian killers, illiterate and of low social upbringing, adopt what the visual culture of the (Hollywood) film industry feeds them, offering them the "promising benefits" of a hostile lifestyle through the capitalistic mentality of mass consumerism, where the items of economic transactions become not only the brand (usually foreign) products they acquire but the human lives they take, even with the "approval" of religion itself.

Postmodernism opens opportunities for those alternatives that were usually silenced during modernity. Religion presents itself as one of those alternatives where the religious rituals and prayers of the sicarios become a *request* to kill their victims instantaneously. The belief behind this assumption sustains the idea that sicarios do not want their victims to suffer when

being shot. This act of possible compassion, on the side of the sicarios, reflects more a matter of “style” than a matter of sensitivity. In *Rosario Tijeras*, we observe a scene where Johnefe, Rosario’s brother, follows a semi-religious ritual in preparation for one of his criminal duties as a sicario. The ritual consists of the blessing of his gun, and of a crucifix that he would carry with him as symbol of protection. Johnefe recites what appears to be a prayer while placing his hands on top of his gun and his crucifix. The phrases “*don’t let them get me*” and “*don’t let me bleed*” that come out of his mouth serve as premonition of the tragic event to come. Following the act of blessing, he pours the gunpowder from one of his bullets into a glass containing an alcoholic drink and gulps it down. Then, he leaves his apartment while Rosario observes the crucifix lying down on the table where the ritual was performed.

The religious tone of this scene assumes religious practices as something intrinsically related to the sub-culture of sicarios. However, the religious aspect appears to reverse itself by placing God as the agent of “evil,” an inversion that opens the debate on the concept of pluralism that the capitalistic system of globalization seems to encourage. A clear illustration of this concept of “God as evil” can be found in the postmodern figure of Jesús Malverde, known as the “angel of the poor” or the “Narco-Saint.” Although Malverde’s existence has not been clearly verified, he has been known as a peasant bandit from the Mexican state of Sinaloa. As many other bandits, he was supposedly captured and executed. However, his unlawful activities in drug trafficking have placed him as an object of popular devotion, especially among those involved in narcotrafficking.

In *Nightmares of the Lettered City*, Juan Pablo Dabove argues that “Malverde connects popular traditional Catholicism with modern icons of consumption and mass culture. Furthermore, he ties the old rural *corridos de bandidos* or *corridos de valientes* to the

postmodern urban-rural *narcocorridos* hip among Mexican and Mexican American youth affiliated with the culture of violence” (10). In other words, Malverde’s object of devotion is one more of those cases in which the concepts of *image* and *culture* are blended within the capitalistic mentality as forms of commodification for popular mass consumption. This takes us back to Baudrillard’s assumptions about the impossibility of separating the economic or productive realms from the realms of ideology or culture, since all cultural artifacts, and images appear immersed in the world of the economic.

What is really unquestionable about this outlook on religion is the way in which criminals, especially sicarios and drug dealers, recognize themselves as part of a communal sphere where their beliefs and rituals to kill or perform illicit actions abide by pre-established rules and consequences within their criminal *modus operandi*. In *Chaos Theory and Postmodernism*, Joel Snell argues that “Postmodernism suggest that no matter how we organize religion, we bring together individuals who ultimately have their own beliefs and come together to worship as if there is oneness in a group. God is beyond words and social construction” (275). In this sense, the religious component is altered and rests at the will of human disposition and at the will of the *uncertain*.

In his article “A Disenchantment Called Postmodernism,” the Chilean writer Norbert Lechner argues that in Latin America there is skepticism about the debates that originate in Europe and in North America. One clear example is the debate around postmodernism, which Lechner has identified as political *disenchantment*. Lechner points out that this kind of political disenchantment goes from the mere loss of illusions to the loss of all meaning. In this order, it addresses a change in subjectivity, which seeks to create new forms of interpretation within the sphere of desires. In other words, for Lechner “the world ceases to be a predetermined system

that we must submit to and becomes the object of human will,” (124) where no law or sacred tradition is able to exert control over human desires, and where even the feelings and psychic structures of individuals become part of a world controlled by the forces of the capitalistic market system, which triggers the desires of competitiveness and individualism in a new kind of human subjectivity.

In his article “La producción de la subjetividad en los tiempos del neoliberalismo,” [The Production of Subjectivity in the Times of Neoliberalism] the Spanish sociologist José Manuel Rodríguez considers how the reorganization of the capitalistic system within post-Fordism has initiated a different notion of the state that promotes a progressive precarization of labor, and a certain isolation of the working class, where individual practices are highly regarded, and collective practices are overlooked. In this new model of the neoliberal state, the theme of competitiveness embraces what is *different* as well as advocating that “el desmantelamiento de los vínculos sociales, el narcisismo y la reivindicación de la privacidad son los productos centrales de esta nueva alquimia neoliberal” [the dismantling of all social ties, narcissism, and the revindication of privacy are the central products of this new neoliberal alchemy] (Rodríguez 91). Within this scope, the film *Tony Manero*, of Chilean director Pablo Larraín, reveals the impact that this neoliberal model has in the production of a postmodern subject restrained by the laws of competitiveness and the market system.

The concept of postmodern subjectivity in *Tony Manero* is built from Raúl’s decay as a social being, whose individuality is affected by his narcissistic and almost mechanical personality. These symptoms are perfectly compatible with the precariousness that labor conditions present within the capitalistic system of production. In the film, we observe how Raúl, the film’s main character, carries out a series of criminal actions to obtain money in order

to achieve his dream: to win the contest as Tony Manero's best impersonator. This dream is nothing else than the impact that the neoliberal socio-economic model has upon our Latin American countries, which promotes the idea that individuals somehow must become their own businesspeople. In this sense, neoliberalism contributes to the establishment of a competitive scenario in which individuals have to be responsible for their own future. Rodriguez argues that "Las identidades 'post-modernas' se construyen en detrimento de la ciudadanía social, son subjetividades sustancialmente autistas y narcisistas" [Postmodern subjects are built to the detriment of social relationships, they are substantially autistic, and narcissistic subjectivities] (91). But, what does Raúl do to respond to the neoliberal necessity of competitiveness?

To consider this, we might have a look at the plot of the film. *Tony Manero* is set in Santiago, Chile, in 1978— during Pinochet times. A middle-aged lowlife named Raúl Peralta is crazy about Tony Manero, the character played by John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever* (1977). He watches the film obsessively, learning the phonetics of every English line. He rehearses the choreography of the film's dance scenes with an amateur company, and enters a TV contest for Travolta impersonators. However, Raúl is a bully who lives in the same house as the people he dances with, acting as a macho leader, and humiliating the whole group by having sex with the three women in the house (teenage, young, and old). But at the beginning of the film, we witness something even more shocking: Raúl helps an old woman who has been mugged by a couple of teenagers, then enters her house and beats her to death, just to steal her TV. The rest of the film, we see him dancing and murdering people for insignificant and almost unreasonable motives.

Initially, it would be convenient to say that the neoliberal model is illustrated during the entire film. Raúl is obsessed, almost to a narcissistic and automated level, with Tony Manero's

character. He stands in front of a mirror to rehearse the movements, with a certain robotic-like expression, that Tony Manero uses in his choreography. Raúl has memorized this choreography after frequent visits to the movie theater to see and learn the steps displayed by Manero in *Saturday Night Fever*. However, the dance is not the only source of learning that Raúl gets from watching the movie. He also learns the English lines of Manero's script in the film. The mechanical repetition of this text to his friends (who do not understand English) constitutes an act of "differentiation" which suggests the idea of control, and in this particular case; the control of the artistic realm that becomes visible, and powerful in the capitalistic structure of Hollywood.

In the film, Hollywood is politically aestheticized through the inclusion of material elements that function, in Marxist's terms, as commodities. The "glass bricks" become the motive of desire -translated into a sign value- for Raúl committing the killing of his "friend." It is clear how Raúl's friend, before selling him the bricks, expresses that the glass bricks meant his "*Capital*" in a system of production where "todo sube de valor" (everything increases its value). These words point to the neoliberal characteristics of a market system always in constant movement, and its economic value will always be determined by those who control the power.

This idea of power control can be observed in the film *Tony Manero* in the risky decisions that Raúl makes to achieve his dream. His actions range from robbery to the murdering of people that become an obstacle to the fulfillment of his goals. Nevertheless, the act of defecating on his friend's -as well as his opponent's- contest clothing constitutes the most significant symbolic act. It presupposes the struggle for power within the neoliberal model where the individual sphere triumphs over the collective one. Raúl is not interested in building an alliance with his friend to defeat the other contestants in the show. Raúl is trying to prevail over a system where "the other" is regarded as a threat.

Tony Manero is set in the first years of Pinochet's dictatorial regime. The film depicts the tyrannical threat imposed by this neoliberal form of government. In the first scene, a woman, who seems to be a producer of the contest, tells the impersonators of Chuck Norris that it is not acceptable to tell dirty jokes or to speak badly about the government. In addition, Raúl's landlady tells her tenants to be back home before the curfew imposed by the government. These rules affect Raúl's behavior. He seems to live in a permanent state of uncertainty and intimidation, easily translated into a state of *paranoia* (one of the main characteristics of postmodern subjectivity), which explains why Raúl is unable to establish relationships of trust with others. Booker argues that "in a world in which globalization has made the lives of individuals all over the planet increasingly interrelated, these same individuals find it harder and harder to feel any genuine sense of connection to anyone" (22). In this sense, we see how Raúl's state of paranoia is observed when he is out in the street. Instead of walking, he runs. When he hears a police siren, he hides. The ironic element of this neoliberal state of paranoia is that Raúl embodies the same danger imposed by the regime, since he has become a threat to his own society.

Neoliberalism does not try to group individuals within a fixed identity. On the contrary, this system offers diverse possibilities that individuals can choose from: They are provided with a great variety of ways to be, a generous offer of products, models of life, and paradigms from which they can build and institute their own subjectivity. As shown, *Sicarios*, *Rosario*, and Raúl chose their life styles (based on their precarious economic situation) according to the possibilities offered by the capitalistic system.

Although the system seems to promote their individuality, we can see at the end of all the films that the structure imposed by the neoliberalist system hampers all possibilities of

“fulfillment” for these characters. Fernando remains alone in a city that is prey to reckless violence. The last scene of the film shows Fernando closing the curtains of his big window, suggesting the end of all potential reconciliation with the world outside. Rosario, on the other hand, dies in a hospital room after being shot by another member of sicariato. Raúl is no exception to the pessimistic outcomes within the neoliberal way of life. At the end of the film, Raúl sings a song with some other participants of the contest which include the lyrics “Es muy tarde para soñar” [It’s too late to dream], and “Nada es lo mismo” [Nothing is the same anymore]. These two phrases can be interpreted as the impossibility of hope in the postmodern neoliberal system of production where both culture and individuals are transformed into elements of social chaos dominated by a system that encourages only one ideology, one language and, more importantly, one strategy of market consumption.

The Mexican writer Carlos Monsiváis has offered a detailed description of what the new form of neoliberal domination constitutes in its development of a new postmodern Latin-American culture:

Cable television. Superhero comics. Quick and poorly translated humor. An Infinity of products which satiate, invent, and modify necessities. Television programs whose weekly apotheosis is nourished by the victories of the North American system of justice. Books (*best-sellers*) where the mechanics of success program the imagination and writing. Extremely refined technologies. Videocassettes. Satellite communications. The ideology of MacLuhan’s¹⁶⁵ global village. Videodiscs. Strategies of consumption whose implacable logistics destroy all artisanal perspective. The “philosophy” of the biggest seller in the world. Movies which have globally imposed the rhythm, themes, and point of view of North American industry around the world. Software and hardware. International news agencies. Contempt for the history of each nation. Homogenization of “desirable” lifestyles. The imposition of a global language. A circuit of ideological transmission which goes from publicity to pedagogy. Control of the “computer revolution.” Magazines which distribute “femininity”. The periodic

¹⁶⁵ Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) is the name most associated with the study of the means of Mass Communications. This Canadian university professor became well-known during the 60’s after the publication of two decisive works in the field of communications: *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964).

reordering of the life-styles adjustable to technological changes. (qtd. in Brunner 40)

This descriptive summary represents the cultural heterogeneity of Latin America's postmodernism that according to José Joaquín Brunner, in his article "Notes on Modernity and Postmodernity in Latin American Culture," constitutes "un producto del mercado internacional" [a product of the international market] (40), where the influence of mass media plays a crucial role. In other words, our identities, desires, and subjectivities have become, through the dissemination of the capitalistic control of mass media, a sphere of the international market, especially in the sector of culture.

3.4. **Mexican Representations of Drug Traffickers in *Perra Brava*, *Fiesta en la madriguera*, and *Los trabajos del reino***

In *chapter one* of this study, we highlighted the important role that the media plays within the neoliberal agenda in the production of social values. The media encourages attitudes associated with individualism, competitiveness, consumerism, the desire to own, personal initiative and creativity, but more importantly the concept of "being successful" measured only in terms of what you are able to accumulate economically and based on what you are able to buy. The social construction of these values provides individuals of a particular society with a sense of identity and belonging, and at the same time allows them to interact with and integrate within that specific society. From this point of view, the "right" way to succeed in this current neoliberal world is to create individuals equipped to compete for and to attain the values of economic freedom, capital accumulation, and mass consumption that the globalized market encourages.

In agreement with this thought, and thanks to the concept of *flexible labor*¹⁶⁶ that neoliberalism encourages, the world market has provoked the emergence of the so-called *narcotraficantes* (drug traffickers). These characters embody a new concept of workers whose skills, competences, and personal characteristics are directed to fulfill their desirable economic quests, in many cases, at all costs. The term *narcotraficante* is widely understood as individuals involved in the production, circulation, and commercialization of illicit drugs. However, being a drug trafficker goes beyond the mere occupational activity. It has also become the aesthetic representation of a new social group whose main motivation is the accumulation of wealth, and which the media has made popular through television, music, and films. These representations of drug traffickers in the media expose a different *taste* in language, clothing, music, architecture, cars, and women, but more importantly in violence. For some people, this *taste* reveals the common, vulgar, and extravagant standards of a “lower-class” that strives to find a place in society by means of their economic utility. Omar Rincón,¹⁶⁷ in his article “Narco.estética y narco.cultura en Narco.lombia,” states:

Lo narco es una estética, pero una forma de pensar, pero una ética del triunfo rápido, pero un gusto excesivo, pero una cultura de ostentación. Una cultura del todo vale para salir de pobre, una afirmación pública de que para qué se es rico si no es para lucirlo y exhibirlo. El método para adquirir esta cultura es solo uno: tener billete, armas, mujeres silicona, música estridente, vestuario llamativo, vivienda expresiva y visaje en autos y objetos. Ah... ¡y moral católica! (148).

[Everything narco is aesthetic, but a way of thinking, but an ethic of quick gain, but an excessive taste, but a culture of ostentation. A culture of everything goes to get out of poverty, a public affirmation of why be rich if you do not show it and exhibit it. The method to acquire this culture is just one: have money, weapons, silicone women, loud

¹⁶⁶ David Harvey argues that for capitalists individuals are a mere factor of production that require certain labor skills to do certain tasks. For him, “Workers are hired on contract, and in the neoliberal scheme of things short-term contracts are preferred in order to maximize flexibility.” These short-term contracts are offered on a customized basis, the state withdraws from social welfare protections (pensions, health care, etc.), and tenure becomes a thing of the past. In other words, neoliberalism encourages a system of “personal responsibility” which substitutes the social protections that were formerly an obligation of employers and the state. See *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (167-68).

¹⁶⁷ Associate Professor of Journalism at Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia.

music, flashy clothes, pretentious houses, and consent to buy cars and things. Ah..., and catholic values!]

This “narco.aesthetics” will be the focus of our analysis in the following pages. This sort of *revolutionary*¹⁶⁸ aesthetics lacks a scientific approach, literary language, or elaborate and embellished arguments. On the contrary, it displays an extreme and uncontainable use of emotions in language and feelings, excessive use of visual images, and an ethics dictated by the search and preservation of power at all costs. All these aspects acquire *violent* characteristics within the intrinsic nature of the narcotraffic activity.

For the purpose of this narco.aesthetics study, we will concentrate on the analysis of three different categories suggested by Omar Rincón in his previously cited article: *narco.body*, *narco.architecture* and *narco.music*. These categories will help us build a broad representation of Mexican drug traffickers as presented in three important contemporary Mexican novels of the so-called *narcoliterature* genre: Orfa Alarcón’s *Perra Brava*, Juan Pablo Villalobo’s *Fiesta en la madriguera*, and Yuri Herrera’s *Los trabajos del reino*. However, before getting into the analysis of these three categories, let us consider *one* that is common to each one of the novels in question since it constitutes the means to *communicate* drug traffickers’ most inherent and extreme emotions, feelings, and ideas: *narco.language*.

3.4.1. Narco.language:

Rincón states that “Narco.lombia tiene su propio dialecto” [Narco.lombia has its own dialect] (153). This dialect was born out of popular classes represented by the *sicarios* and found a more solid position within drug traffickers’ leaders. Its popularity among the youth made it become a part of Colombia’s society. The narco.language establishes a clear connection with the

¹⁶⁸ This “revolutionary” concept can be exemplified by an exaggerated ostentation in luxury, loud music, eccentric clothing, and violent language.

modus operandi of narcotraffic's subculture by displaying an intrinsic *violent* content. This dialect is used in relation to issues concerning drugs, sexuality, weapons, money, people within and out of the business, but especially in relation to the theme of *death*. In this sense, "gonorrea" [gonorrhoea] is not a sexual bacterial infection but a term to describe a person you show low or no appreciation for. Some sort of "scumbag." In the same sense, "muñeco" [doll] o "regalo" [gift] will be used to describe a victim, someone murdered or to be murdered.¹⁶⁹

The same way narcotraffic has influenced Colombia's standard language, it has also influenced Mexico's. In his book *Análisis Lexicológico del Narcolenguaje en Baja California* [Lexicological Analysis of Narco.Language in Baja California], Rafael Saldívar Arreola states that narco.language originated from the combination of the social effects of narcotraffic in some regions of Mexico and the particular way of talking of the individuals of these regions, especially that of peasants (marihuana and coca cultivators) and drug traffickers (28). In this context, narco.language, as a dialectical appropriation of drug traffickers, was meant to reflect the experiences of a community which revolved around the uncertainties and brutality of life always in opposition to the legitimacy of authority (28). Then, we could assume that this kind of new dialectical configuration has characteristics of "insurgency" directly in opposition to Mexico's standard and dominant language.

However, this sort of insurgency is divided and represented by what Saldívar Arreola describes as "áreas de dominio" (38) [areas of domain] which establish variations in the narco.language category according to its users. In this context, we will see how the narco.language will be used in *Perra Brava*, *Fiesta en la madriguera* and *Los trabajos del reino* to communicate the experiences, uncertainties, brutality, and reality of the main characters

¹⁶⁹ Other words of this narco.language include: *Cachiruza* (marihuana), *Chumbimba* (bullet), *Me piso* (I am leaving), *Parcero* (Friend), *Pirobo* (Homosexual), *Sisas* (yes). For a list of more terms, please see Omar Rincón (153-54).

(Fernanda, Tochtli, and Lobo respectively) in order to provide us with a broad representation of Mexican drug traffickers and their peculiar taste in women, luxury, and music. For this, we will concentrate on the representations of drug traffickers as *sexual chauvinists*, *materialistic monsters*, and *pop icons*.

3.4.2. Narco.body:

Orfa Alarcón's *Perra Brava* will serve us to illustrate the analysis of the narco.body category in which drug traffickers are labeled as *sexual chauvinists*. The violence exerted over women's bodies, regarded as sexual objects by these individuals, is directly associated with the network of patriarchal¹⁷⁰ social relations of contemporary societies; which is also inherent to narcotraffic's apparatus.

The narco.body category has its beginnings in the aesthetic stereotyping of women's bodies within narcotraffic's circle, and it has its culmination in the violent abuses endured by these bodies at the hands of drug traffickers who claim these "aesthetic" bodies as part of their illegal economic transactions.

The idea of *beauty as economic means* is one of the factors that has motivated the incursion of women into the narcotraffic's circle. This matter becomes a social problem from the moment women become fascinated by an aesthetic and social *ideal of beauty* directly associated with the desire of acquiring economic power. In this search for money, women tend to disregard the risks that threaten their physical integrity and other possible forms of violence which, in many cases, can lead to an early, and almost always violent, death. However, and despite all stories being told,

¹⁷⁰ "Patriarchalism is a founding structure of all contemporary societies. It is characterized by the institutionally enforced authority of males over females and their children in the family unity. For this authority to be exercised, patriarchalism must permeate the entire organization of society, from production and consumption to politics, law, and culture. Interpersonal relationships, and thus personality, are marked, as well, by domination and violence originating from the culture and institutions of patriarchalism." See Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (134).

women continue to be “prey” of the constant dream of *social mobility*¹⁷¹ sold by the mass media which places narcotraffic as a significant way to achieve such a dream.

In this context, it is not surprising to find the so-called *narcotelenovelas*¹⁷² flooding television channels around the world nowadays. Perhaps, *Sin tetas no hay paraíso*¹⁷³ (Without Breasts There is No Paradise) exemplifies one of the most popular of this genre where extreme value (both aesthetic and economic) is given to women’s *breasts*¹⁷⁴ as an element to gain social mobility within certain social groups, especially that of drug traffickers who seek *cuerpos hechos a la medida* [tailored or made to size bodies] to satisfy both their physical and social ostentation needs. For the drug dealers, this aesthetic meaning of the narco.body has a symbolic value of economic and social characteristics within their narcotraffic organizational structure. These women’s bodies have been “made” as a “product for consumption” to satisfy the drug traffickers’ needs of “sexual service.” However, this aesthetic use of the body as a product for consumption is

¹⁷¹ This idea of social mobility involving sex has been the study of other authors. In *What’s Love Got to Do with It?* Denise Brennan argues how sex tourism in Sosúa, Dominican Republic, appears as one of the consequences of the social inequalities produced by the process of globalization. This sex-tourist trade presents transnational characteristics that Brennan has identified as a sort of global sexual landscape or “*sexscape*,” which involves “(1) international travel from the developed to the developing world, (2) consumption of paid sex, and (3) inequality” (16). Under these circumstances, sex workers (especially women) imagine that their dreams for better lives can be accomplished through the possibility of economic mobility which can only be obtained through establishing a “love” relationship with foreign tourists. This transnational sex trade network revolves around what Brennan has termed *performance of love*, a strategic performance where both sex workers and sex tourists understand that their “love” relationship is grounded on each other’s individual interests: a desirable, exotic sex on the side of the sex tourist, and the possibility of socioeconomic mobility (migration off the island) on the side of the sex worker.

¹⁷² This television genre depicts the lives and stories of drug traffickers emphasizing their dreams, ambitions, and daily problems. It also reinforces values such as individualism, competitiveness, and economic power, as well as including high sexual and violent content.

¹⁷³ *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* tells the story of Catalina, a seventeen-year old country girl, who becomes obsessed with the idea of having a breast augmentation in order to be more attractive to the drug dealers who prowl her neighborhood. Thus, in exchange for sexual favors, she can have access to the circle of ostentation and luxury that characterizes this life style. To have access to her implants, Catalina gets involved in situations of domination and physical risk, including sexual abuse. After a short but intense and dramatic experience in the world of narcotraffic and prostitution, Catalina loses her will to live and ends up committing suicide. See Lina Ximena Aguirre (122). A pesar de enfocarse inicialmente en una realidad social altamente sensible,

¹⁷⁴ The so-called Colombian *prepagos* (prepaid) are usually prostitutes (many of them are university students) who have sex with drug traffickers in exchange for money, gifts, or social status. These women become obsessed with getting breast implants in order to satisfy their customers’ sexual desires and to overcome poverty.

usually manifested through violence which brings us to the main point to be discussed in our first narconovela.¹⁷⁵

Alarcon's *Perra Brava* (Brave Bitch) was published in 2010. Alarcon uses Monterrey, the third-largest metropolitan area in Mexico, as the setting for her novel. Fernanda Salas, the main character in the novel, is a university student and girlfriend of a cartel leader in Mexico. Fernanda embodies the typical university-aged student who devotes all her time and love to please her drug trafficker boyfriend (Julio Cortés), who is constantly surrounded by members of his criminal gang. Most of the time she comes off as a weak adolescent who is hindered by her fears, especially that of blood. Her mother was killed by her father in a drunken rage when she was young. This event could have led her to the road of an abusive relationship at the hands of her boyfriend Julio. However, by the end of the novel, we witness the transformation of Fernanda into a "brave bitch," to which the title refers.

In the opening paragraph of *Perra Brava*, the symbolic value of women's bodies as a product for consumption is clearly evident:

Supé que con su mano podría matarme. Me había sujetado del cuello, su cuerpo me oprimía en la oscuridad. Había atravesado la casa sin encender ninguna luz ni hacer un solo ruido. No me asustó porque siempre llegaba sin avisar: dueño y señor. Puso su mano sobre mi boca y dijo algo que no alcancé a entender. No pude preguntar. Él comenzó a morderme los senos y me sujetó ambos brazos, como si yo fuera a resistirme. (11)
[I knew he could kill me with his bare hands. He had grabbed my neck, his body oppressed me in the darkness. He had walked across the house without turning on any light or making a single noise. He didn't scare me because he always arrived unexpectedly: owner and lord. He placed his hand over my mouth and said something I didn't understand. I couldn't ask. He began to bite my boobs and held both of my arms as if I were to resist]

¹⁷⁵ Amanda L. Matousek highlights some of the main characteristics of the narconovelas genre: "(...) where realism is driven to the extreme; reality is invented; the prose is brutal, butchered, and incoherent; there is a feverish structure, controlling and powerful violence combined to form a homicidal narrative; death wins over the futility of life; and impermanence, irrational actions, and a feeling of emptiness prevail (...)." See *Shades of the Borderland Narconovela from Pastel to Sanguine* (129).

Even though Alarcon states that Fernanda enjoyed this kind of “sexual game” with Julio, it is after she reveals how Julio had sexually abused her by covering her body with the blood of one of his victims that we witness the representation of Mexican drug traffickers as *sexual chauvinists*.

Alarcon seems to be revealing the way in which impunity for sexual domestic violence at the private level is connected to the dominant patriarchal system that has influenced Mexican *machismo*. In her article “Afterword: Goddess Murder and Gynocide in Ciudad Juarez,” Jane Caputi states how the theft of female energy is stolen by the patriarchal power:

Domineering and destructive men, cultures, and institutions still are always trying to seize ‘female creative energy’ and redirect it into the crushing concern of ego, father-dominated family, church, state, corporation, and empire. Proclaiming omnipotence, they evince what is actually impotence and parasitism, dependent as they are on the stolen energy of others. (288)

The violence of Julio’s *machismo* is exerted here over Fernanda’s existence and is exemplified by the subjugation of her body to Julio’s depraved sexual assault. The description of the scene is brutal and hard to grasp, especially after recognizing in Julio’s narco.language words that Fernanda has a certain repulsion towards blood: “Así que no me vuelves a salir con que no puedes freír un *pinche* bistec porque te da asco” (13) [So don’t tell me again you can’t fry a fucking steak because it makes you sick]. But even more degrading than Julio’s words is Fernanda’s reaction to her realization of her sexual victimization:

Entonces entendí las palabras de Julio: al tomar la pasta de dientes me descubrí frente al espejo con la cara llena de sangre. Los senos, las manos, la entrepierna. Grité. Como si viera el fantasma de mi madre. Grité tan fuerte que me quedé ronca. Julio entró al baño y me abofeteó. (12)

[Then I understood Julio’s words: when grabbing the toothpaste I discovered myself in front of the mirror with my face covered in blood. My boobs, hands, and crotch as well. I screamed. As if I were seeing the ghost of my mother. I screamed so loudly that I almost lost my voice. Julio came in the bathroom and hit me]

Julio’s chauvinistic and sadistic attitude of subjugating Fernanda’s body to his sexual assaults is one of the most common representations of Mexican drug traffickers within the narco.body

categorization. This category is also sustained by the idea that narcotraffic embodies a patriarchal structure linked to the capitalist system. Thus, drug traffickers make use of their capital power and their production means to exert domination over those in their organizational structure. Women, for the purpose of sex, are at the bottom of this structure. Anthony Walsh' definition of *patriarchy* is relevant to support this idea:

Patriarchy literally means “rule of the father”, and is a term used to describe any social system that is male dominated at all levels from the family to the highest reaches of government and supported by the belief of overall male superiority... Patriarchy occupies the same despised place among most feminist scholars that capitalism occupies among Marxists. The owners of the means of production (the bourgeoisie) are the oppressors in Marxist theory; the owners of the means of reproduction (all men) are the oppressors in the feminist theory. (*Feminist Criminology through a Biosocial Lens* 8)

In this context, drug traffickers, as owners of the means of production, will make use of their economic power in order to own and acquire all “rights” over women’s bodies. These rights need to be understood as the commercialization of women’s sexuality within a capitalist system that strengthens, in Harvey’s terms, the idea of the *commodification of everything*. In the novel, Fernanda’s body is perceived as “property” in relation to Julio’s narco-patriarchal status. As property, Fernanda’s body, as those of many other women surrounding Julio, becomes a disposable good with an expiration date.¹⁷⁶ Fernanda is aware that Julio’s sexual needs were also satisfied by many others: “Aquella había sido la única vez que me vio llorar: la primera vez que descubrí que él se acostaba con otras, muchas, nunca supe cuántas” (24) [That was the only time he saw me cry: the first time I learned he had sex with other women, many, who knows how many]. Moreover, she seems to be aware that her role in Julio’s life is part of a temporary

¹⁷⁶ A similar example to support the concept of women as disposable objects at the service of drug traffickers’ sexual needs can be observed in another of the novels of this study (*Fiesta en la madriguera*). In this novel, Youlcaut, father of the protagonist, is an ambitious and powerful drug lord who strives to create a successful and comfortable lifestyle for himself. “When Quecholli, the woman who is the current object of his sexual gratification, is brutally slain he hastily finds a replacement.” Women are “reduced to objects to manipulate. He does not mourn or cry over the loss of Quecholli. Showing sadness and emotion is perceived as weak, ‘marica’ and against the narco-moral code.” See Donald Bret Gadbury (7).

transaction: “El día que vayas a dejarme, antes de que salgas por esa puerta, me metes un tiro por la nuca” (24) [The day you leave me, before you cross that door, shoot me in the back of my neck]. Thus, we could conclude that Fernanda’s understanding of her situation in relation to Julio revolves around the idea of a relationship based on a “short-term contract” for sexual services rather than a long-lasting love relationship in general terms. Fernanda has been reduced, in Julio’s *sexual chauvinism*, to a material item that strengthens the idea of drug traffickers’ capital as purchasing power, women’s bodies being among the most desirable goods.

3.4.3. Narco.architecture:

This category will be used in this analysis as a tool to demonstrate ostentation for everything that is owned, and for those things that are not possessed yet. This category not only includes the ostentation in luxurious, and extravagant mansions and buildings, but also for other items such as clothing, jewelry, animals, security, and – obviously – weapons. Omar Rincón states how narco.arquitectura es “lo que no gusta al gusto ‘ilustrado’ [what is not pleasing to the ‘educated’ taste]” (154), in other words, a taste for what is popular, excessive, and filled with symbols that “buscan dar estatus y legitimar la violencia” [seek to give status and legitimize violence] (155).¹⁷⁷ All these aspects will allow us to produce a representation of drug traffickers as *materialistic monsters* by considering the “goods” they own and enjoy having as part of their materialistic world immersed in the commodification of everything.

Juan Pablo Villalobo’s *Fiesta en la madriguera* introduces Tochtli’s perceptions of an environment surrounded not only by sicarios, servants, and corrupt politicians, but also by

¹⁷⁷ “Pablo Escobar, la leyenda, construyó un zoológico a campo abierto con animales africanos. El ex-gobernador del departamento de Cundinamarca, en una de las mansiones más costosas de Bogotá, colecciona cabezas de elefante. El presidente Uribe expone su capacidad de gobierno montando a caballo mientras toma café de Colombia y no derrama ni una gota.” [Pablo Escobar, the myth, built an open field zoo filled with African animals. The former governor of Cundinamarca, in one of the most expensive mansions in Bogotá, collects elephant heads. President Uribe shows his governing skills by riding horses while he drinks Colombian coffee without spilling a single drop]. See Omar Rincón (154).

material things as product of his consumerist whims fed upon the mentality of wealth accumulation that neoliberalism encourages.¹⁷⁸ From the first pages of the novel, Tochtli makes us witnesses not only of this transnational capitalist mentality surrounding the world of narcotraffic but also of the code of protection, secrecy,¹⁷⁹ and loyalty that must be part of any criminal organization:

Sí, nuestro palacio, Yolcaut y yo somos dueños de un palacio, y eso que no somos reyes. Lo que pasa es que tenemos mucho dinero. Muchísimo. Tenemos pesos, que es la moneda de México. También tenemos dólares, que es la moneda del país Estados Unidos. Y también tenemos euros, que es la moneda de los países y reinos de Europa. Me parece que tenemos miles de millones de los tres tipos, aunque los que más nos gustan son los billetes de cien mil dólares. Y además del dinero tenemos las joyas y los tesoros. Y muchas cajas fuertes con combinaciones secretas. Por eso conozco poca gente, trece o catorce. Porque si conociera más gente nos robarían el dinero o nos harían una tranza como a Mazatzin. Yolcaut dice que tenemos que protegernos. De eso se tratan también las pandillas. (19)

[Yes, our palace,¹⁸⁰ Yolcaut and I own a palace, and we're not even kings. What happens is that we have a lot of money. Too much. We have pesos, which is Mexico's currency. We also have dollars, which is the currency of the United States. And we also have euros, which is the currency of the countries and kingdoms of Europe. I think we have thousands of millions of the three, although we prefer the one hundred thousand dollar bills. Besides the money, we have the jewels and the treasures. And a lot of safes with secret combinations. For that reason, I know a few people, thirteen or fourteen. If I knew more people, they would steal our money and they would rip us off as they did to Mazatzin. Yolcaut says that we have to protect ourselves. That's what gangs are also

¹⁷⁸ The plot of the novel exposes the life style of a drug trafficker through the eyes of his child: "Tochtli has no friends he has bodyguards and servants. He does not have siblings he has a tutor who is bound to betray them. Tochtli has no confidants to share his feelings with but he has a cook who offers advise and wisdom. Tochtli amuses himself by reading the dictionary, acquiring exclusive hats, playing playstation, watching samurai movies and developing particular narco-traits as a member of the family gang where he feels acceptance and unity. The contentment ends when Tochtli literally stumbles upon a secret, his father withholds some details about his business ventures. The infuriated Tochtli vows to be mute until his father makes it up to him, this goes on while Yolcaut, Tochtli's father tries to convince his son to talk through endless gifts. Finally they embark on a safari to Libya as he wants a Liberian Pygmy Hippopotamus to add to his wild animal collection. His father hopes procuring a hippo will cure Tochtli's muteness. In the wake of their return Yolcaut discovers the betrayal of the tutor Mazatzin who had used that position as pre-cover to his mission to publish information about the Rey and his operations. Along the way we learn of Tochtli's physical pain caused from neglect and the fulfillment he seeks through his consumerism." See Donald Bret Gadbury (6-7).

¹⁷⁹ The term *madriguera* exemplifies the idea of *secrecy* since the word refers to "an animal den or lair" which provides images of "dark, dirty tunnels and a place only habitable by hermitlike creatures." Ibid., (11). In addition, Azcatl and Itzcuahtli, two of the servants in Yolcaut and Tochtli's palace, are mute. This fact also reinforces the metaphore of *secrecy* and *silence* within narcotraffic's circle. See Juan Pablo Villalobos (22-23).

¹⁸⁰ For a more detailed description of the palace see *Fiesta en la madriguera*, Juan Pablo Villalobos, Anagrama, 2010, (21)

about]

This neoliberal mentality, and following Mónica E. Lugo Vélez's development of her interpretation of *monsters*, among other things, as “those who do not follow the system established by the law” (*La narcoliteratura produce monstruos* 22) will serve us to elaborate our own interpretation of drug traffickers as monsters at the service of capital and violence.

Lugo Vélez argues how the world of narcotraffic is presented as a “mundo caótico” [chaotic world] where the concept of power can be unstable and ephemeral, thus producing a constant state of anarchy (20). This anarchy is expressed through the brutality of the narco.language which narrates not only the characters' acts of violence, but also their relation to their chaotic world of material things. In this sense, the culture of commodification inherent to narcotraffic controls these characters' external habits and desires.

Donald Bret Gadbury argues that through the observation and internalization of his father's consumerism, Tochtli starts to acquire and consume goods himself which ends up defining him. Gadbury calls this phenomenon “narco-socialization” which emphasizes that through consumerism “Tochtli becomes his father” (*Narco-Socialization and Child Consumerism in Mexico* 7), in other words, he learns all the necessary tools to follow his dad's steps in the world of drug traffickers and become, eventually, the heir to the “narco-throne” (7). Thus, Yolcaut becomes the first source of nurturing of Tochtli's materialistic mentality through the granting of all of Tochtli's gift wishes: samurai movies, trips, and unconventional animals such as eagles, falcons, tigers, lions, and a Liberian pigmy hippopotamus.

However, one of Tochtli's main products of consumption is hats. His extravagant and uncontrollable desire for hats has caused him to accumulate hats from “todo el mundo” [all over the world] and from all “épocas del mundo” [ages of the world] (13). However, the meaning

behind his hat collection is tied to another important aspect within narcotraffic's materialistic mentality: *power*. According to Tochtli, hats are "como las coronas de los reyes" [like kings' crowns] (12) which provide a sense of *distinction* among and over others; in other words a symbol of importance, significance, and high status. In the world of narcotraffic this distinction can only be reached through the possession of money which enables the consumption of material things, and through the use of violence which provides the sense of protection, security, and control sought by drug traffickers. For protection, drug traffickers also make use of their economic power to invest in the material devices that will provide the sense of security and will reduce the feelings of paranoia:

Porque Miztli and Chichilkuali se encargan con sus rifles de la protección de nuestro palacio las veinticuatro horas del día. Veinticuatro horas quiere decir que a veces Miztli no duerme y otras veces Chichilkuali no duerme. Y eso que para protegernos tenemos una barda altísima. Y eso que encima de la barda hay vidrios y alambres de púas y una alarma de rayos láser que a veces hace ruido cuando pasa un pájaro cerca. Y eso que vivimos en el medio de la nada. (22)

[Because Miztli and Chichilkuali are in charge of the protection of our palace with their rifles twenty four hours a day. Twenty four hours means that sometimes Miztli does not sleep and some other times Chichilkuali does not sleep. Despite the fact that to protect us we have a very tall fence. And on top of the fence there's glass and barbed wire and a laser beam alarm that makes noises when a bird flies nearby. Despite the fact that we live in the middle of nowhere]

This economic power, besides providing the means for protection also provides the means for violence which turns drug traffickers into monsters outside the law, following Luz Vélez's previously cited interpretation of monsters. This violence exemplifies the main source to gain control of the highly competitive business of narcotraffic which assures a *winner* or *leader* depending on the number of killings accumulated. Tochtli's words reinforce this fact: "La corona es de metales y diamantes. Nos costó mucho dinero porque para ser rey en África tienes que matar a mucha gente. Es como una competencia: el que lleva la corona es el que ha acumulado más cadáveres" [The crown is made out of metal and diamonds. It cost us a lot of money because

to be a King in Africa you have to kill a lot of people. It's like a competition: the one who wears the crown is the one who has accumulated the most number of dead bodies] (29). This idea communicates the concept that within narcotraffic's circle, power control is attainable through the control of capital and the control of bodies, in this context, dead bodies. In this sense, and following Foucault's concept of *bio-power*, the economic power structure of narcotraffic exerts control over life for its own social, political, and economic interests through the means of violence.¹⁸¹ Thus, violence is commodified and becomes another "good" to be bought as part of drug traffickers' material world. On the one hand, in the form of weaponry which in Tochtli's materialistic world also becomes an "item" to be played with.¹⁸²

Las pistolas están escondidas en cajones y los rifles están escondidos dentro de un clóset. No tuve tiempo de contarlas, porque no quería que Yolcaut me descubriera, pero como mínimo debemos tener unas mil pistolas y unos quinientos rifles. Tenemos de todos los tamaños, hasta tenemos un rifle con balas gigantescas. Ahí me di cuenta de que Yolcaut y yo estamos jugando mal el juego de los balazos: con un balazo de ese rifle seguro te conviertes en cadáver, no importa dónde te lo den, menos en el pelo que ya está muerto. Deberíamos jugar el juego de los balazos diciendo el número de balazos, la parte del cuerpo y el tamaño de la bala. (45)

[The guns are hidden in drawers and the rifles are hidden in a closet. I did not have time to count them because I did not want to be discovered by Yolcaut, but we should have at least a thousand guns and five hundred rifles. We have them in all sizes, and we even have a rifle with large bullets. There, I realized that Yolcaut and I are playing the shooting game poorly: a bullet from that rifle will turn you into a cadaver, no matter where they shoot you, except in the hair which is already dead. We should play the shooting game by saying the number of shots, the part of the body, and the size of the bullet]

¹⁸¹ In "War, Violence, and Homicide in Mexico," the author develops a typology of violence in the context of Mexico by adopting a distinction between political, mercenary or criminal, and interpersonal violence. He states that "political violence occurs in the context of political struggle" and is geared to certain political goals such as the acquisition and retention of power. Mercenary or criminal violence "involves the pursuit of material advantage by means of force: often individual, sometimes 'collective' in a 'small group' sense (e.g. bandit gangs or, recently, narco cartels)," and interpersonal violence is described as directed "neither political nor mercenary goals." For more information on other forms of violence (macro-political, micro-political, etc.) see Alan Knight (12-47)

¹⁸² Another game involving violence consists of finding the wall with the most number of bullet holes on it. See *Fiesta en la madriguera*, Juan Pablo Villalobos, Anagrama, 2010, (69).

On the other hand, violence is also commodified through the media by selling its aestheticized images as a product of consumption, especially to reveal the unconventional methods perpetrated by drug traffickers: “Desde que regresamos de Monrovia las cabezas cortadas pasaron de moda. Ahora en la tele se usan más los restos humanos. A veces es una nariz, otras veces es una tráquea o un intestino. También las orejas. Puede ser cualquier cosa menos cabezas y manos” [Since we came back from Monrovia severed heads became old-fashioned. Now the TV prefers to use human remains. Sometimes a nose, some other times a traquea or an intestine. Also ears. It can be anything except heads and hands]¹⁸³ (84). Thus, drug traffickers not only have control over the way they choose to communicate their implementation of violence but also they control the information that the media seeks to communicate about their illicit and criminal circle: “Eso fue lo que hizo Yolcaut cuando se enteró del reportaje. Dio las órdenes por teléfono para comprar todas las revistas donde salía el reportaje de Mazatzin” [That is what Yolcaut did when he heard about the article. He gave the orders by phone to buy all the magazines containing Mazatzin’s article] (95). These two aspects confirm the fact that drug traffickers’ economic power can buy them anything and everything for their illicit and criminal organization. Therefore, the narco.architecture category used in this analysis to provide a representation of drug traffickers’ as *materialistic monsters* reveals that the economic power produced by drug traffickers through their illicit business, not only provides them with the means to have access to their desirable “goods,” but also allows them to exert control over individuals (inside and outside of their circle) and over the means of violence. Tochtli sums it up well in the following description:

Lo sabía, lo sabía: Mazatzin no es ningún santo, es un patético traidor. Ha escrito un reportaje en una revista donde cuenta todos nuestros secretos, nuestros enigmas y

¹⁸³ “Beheadings are forceful messages, forms of publicity that demonstrate that there is only one head – the head of the gang.’ See Jean Franco, *Cruel Modernity* (226).

nuestros misterios. El reportaje tiene fotos de nuestro palacio y se titula: ‘Dentro de la madriguera del Rey’. Habla de nuestros millones de pesos, de nuestros millones de dólares, de nuestros millones de euros, de los anillos de oro y diamantes que usa El Rey, de las pistolas y los rifles, de Miztli y Chichilkuali, de los políticos, hasta de Quecholli. Y en la portada sale una foto de la jaula de nuestros tigres. (93)

[I knew it, I knew it: Mazatzin is no saint but a pathetic traitor. He has written an article in a magazine where he talks about all our secrets, our enigmas, and our mysteries. The article has pictures of our palace and it is titled: ‘Inside the King’s Den.’ He talks about our millions of pesos, our millions of dollars, our millions of euros, the King’s gold and diamond rings, the guns and rifles, Miztli and Chichilkuali, the politicians, and even Quecholli. On the cover there is a picture of our lions’ cage]

A final thought to highlight in this description, in addition to the clear representation of drug traffickers’ as *materialistic monsters* (as individuals outside the law), is that Tochtli - through the process of narco-socialization¹⁸⁴ proposed by Gadbury- recognizes himself as one more of the narco-circle through the use of *our*, which reveals “appropriation” for all things mentioned (*our* secrets, *our* dollars, etc.). In other words, the culture of consumerism which Tochtli has been exposed to within narcotraffic’s circle has made him first an *apprentice*, and then a *successor* within narcotraffic’s culture of extreme consumption and violence.

3.4.3. Narco.music:

Hermann Herlinghaus has identified *narcocorridos* as “a primitive form of balladry” in which “music intervenes into public consciousness, however, and serves as an affective force of border identity that seems to rely on epic adventures derived from today’s cross-border drug traffic” (31). According to Herlinghaus, the narcocorrido originated from the traditional ballad known as *corrido*¹⁸⁵ which was brought to the New World by the Spanish conquistadors and was

¹⁸⁴ Another important aspect of this narco-socialization appears in the way “children perpetuate the behavior that is acceptable for the particular gender to which they belong. Children will readily repeat things that elicit rewards and positive responses from their parents, teachers, and friends.” Tochtli has adopted the behavior acquired as part of drug traffickers’ life style, which is the only one available to him. Thus, we observe how Tochtli’s games involve bullets (finding the wall with the most shots on it), his description of women is objectified in measurements (ninety, sixty, ninety), and his language is brutal (sissy, fucking, pathetic, etc.). In other words, he has internalized the violent culture of narcotraffic. See Donald Bret Gadbury (22).

¹⁸⁵ “It may be useful to remember that the corrido tradition has unfolded deep in the shadows of a Western canon that bears the stamp of Christianity, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, ‘Progress,’ and Neoliberalism; and a

appropriated by the indigenous people. Since then, this narrative has reemerged within many different historic contexts including colonization, independence, revolution, and the most recent border context, especially between Mexico and the United States.¹⁸⁶

In this context, narcocorridos appear to be linked to the conflicts marking the U.S. – Mexican border relation in connection to the emerging cross-border illegal traffic of drugs that emerged during the first two decades of the 20th century.¹⁸⁷ This fact turns narcocorridos into a transnational narrative “yet looking surprisingly localist in tone and style” (31). Despite the many different dimensions that contribute to making narcocorridos a transnational phenomenon (language, themes, violence), we will focus on the representation that this musical narrative portrays of drug traffickers, especially as transnational popular icons or *pop icons*.

In general terms, a pop icon has been described as a character (mainly a celebrity) whose exposure in popular culture is widely regarded as constituting a defining characteristic of a given society or era. Pop icons have followers that identified with them, their practices, and the messages they seek to communicate. In most cases, pop icons are controversial figures surrounded by an environment that encourages alcohol and drug abuse, violence, but above all an extreme search for individual freedom.

As previously developed in this study, one of the main goals encouraged by neoliberalism is the search for economic growth leading to individual freedom. In this context, the figure of the drug trafficker appears as the embodiment of this search/goal. Thus, drug traffickers become the

balance is not entirely unlikely, according to which corridos would finally succumb to uncontrolled violence and the spell of the narcotics industry.” See Hermann Herlinghaus (34-35)

¹⁸⁶ “This medieval narrative form that has reemerged in the border region between Mexico and the United States, especially after the Mexican-American War of 1848, achieving tremendous popularity during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) and living an aftermath as bootlegger ballads during Prohibition, has experienced a new upturn that is attributed to the so-called phenomenon of *narcocorridos*.” Ibid., (31).

¹⁸⁷ For additional information on the history of this cross-border drug traffic relation, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation, *Narcotraffic: The Mexican Case* (129).

“model” to be followed, and narcocorridos become one of the main sources of such representation. Rincón states:

La filosofía, las historias, los personajes de lo narco se cantan. Filosofía que celebra un destino trágico por ser hijos de la injusticia social y la pobreza, la corrupción política y el desprecio de los ricos, la falta de padres y el querer a las mujeres, el orgullo patrio y la culpa de EEUU. Las historias son las mismas que cuentan los periódicos, pero en su otra versión como héroes, valientes y leales; como seres nacidos del pueblo y luchadores por el pueblo; como robin hoods que dan lo que la ley y el gobierno quitan. Las historias comienzan contando el cultivo, el proceso de preparación, la exportación, la celebración de la burla a las autoridades y, sobre todo, cómo se vive con dinero y para qué se usa: mujeres, carros, armas y alcohol. (157)

[The philosophy, the stories, the characters of the narco are sung. Philosophy that celebrates a tragic destiny for being sons of social injustice and poverty, political corruption and the contempt of the wealthy, the lack of parents and the love for women, national pride and the fault of the US. The stories are the same ones told in the newspapers, but in different versions as heroes, brave, and loyal; as beings born of the people and fighters for the people; as robin hoods who give what the law and the government take away. The stories begin by telling of the growth, preparation process, exportation, and celebration of having mocked the authorities, but, above all, how to live with money and what to use it for: women, cars, weapons, and alcohol]

In this context, narcocorridos help to construct an idealized figure of the drug trafficker as a symbol of social claim for the dispossessed,¹⁸⁸ but also as a figure of power that is only achievable through the possession of money. Moreover, narcocorridos depend on the artistic responsibility of musicians (composers and singers) to communicate this idealized representation of drug traffickers as popular icons who seek to offer a different alternative to modernity through the means of capital accumulation and its unimaginable purchasing power at the reach of individuals.

Without a doubt, Los Tigres del Norte is the Mexican musical group that has given global presence to the narcocorridos genre. According to Elijah Wald, “Since the rise of Los Tigres in the early 1970’s, the narcocorrido has been taken up by thousands of bands and singers, first in

¹⁸⁸ “A considerable number of narcocorridos appear to be related to human and logistical situations that have emerged from the conditions of globally enforced inequalities, often linked to poverty and violence.” See Mark Cameron Edberg (27-28).

Mexico and the United States, but now as far afield as Colombia and wherever the Latin American drug traffic thrives” (*Narcocorrido* 2,3). Thus, the more popular narcocorridos become, the more drug traffickers turn into pop icons through the idealization of their exploits, and life style almost to the level of objects of popular devotion.¹⁸⁹

Yuri Herrera’s *Trabajos del reino* tells the story of Lobo, a marginalized¹⁹⁰ musician/singer who constructs the inside world of a drug trafficker’s cartel through the narcocorridos he composes. Most of the story develops within the limits of the drug trafficker’s palace which, in our effort to construct the image of drug traffickers as pop icons, reveals to us their powerful desire for luxurious houses. For Lobo, the palace “Era como siempre se había imaginado los palacios. Sostenido en columnas, con estatuas y pinturas en cada habitación, sofás cubiertos de pieles, picaportes dorados, un techo que no podía rozarse. Y, sobre todo, gente.” [It was as he had always imagined palaces to look like. Held by pillars, with statues and paintings in every room, sofas covered in fur, golden handles, a ceiling too high to touch. And, especially, people] (19). The palace, in addition to the image of desire for material things, also communicates the drug traffickers’ desire to keep their privacy and protection from the rest of the outside world.

As any other pop icon, drug traffickers can only protect themselves within the spaces and through the people they are able to control. In this sense, the leader of the drug cartel – el Rey [the King] - in *Trabajos del reino* has given certain control of his privacy and business protection by allowing Lobo (also known in the story as “el Artista” [the Artist] into his domains. Lobo, in

¹⁸⁹ Jesús Malverde became an object of popular devotion after his death. Even though his existence is still debated, he is remembered as a peasant bandit from the Mexican state of Sinaloa. He was captured and then executed. Then, he became the patron saint of drug traffickers (*el narcosantón*) and the Culiacán chapel was dedicated to him. See Juan Pablo Dabove (9).

¹⁹⁰ Lobo was sent to the streets by his parents in order to make a living as a musician; however, the streets became a very hostile environment for him. See Yuri Herrera, *Trabajos del reino*, Periférica, 2010, (15-16).

a paparazzi-like embodiment, has been given the task of revealing and constructing in his narcocorridos the representation of “el Rey” as a figure worthy of admiration due to his bravery and good nature:

No era una historia nueva, pero nadie la había cantado. La había hallado a preguntas muchas sólo para escribirla y regalársela al Rey. Hablaba de sus agallas y de su corazón, puestos a prueba a mitad de una lluvia de plomo, y con final feliz no sólo para el Rey sino también para los jodidos que siempre cuidaba (...). Cantó la historia con la fe con que se cantan los himnos y con la certeza de los pregones, pero, más que todo, la hizo sentir pegajosa, para que la gente la aprendiera con la cintura y las piernas y pudiera repetirla después. (24)

[It was not a new story, but nobody had sung it. He had found it through many questions only to write it and give it to the King. It talked about his guts and his heart tested in the midst of a rain of bullets, and with a happy ending not only for the King but also for the screwed that he always took care of (...). He sang the story with the faith with which anthems are sung and with the certainty of a proclamation, but, more than anything, he made it catchy so people could learn it through the hips and legs and could do it once again later on]

In this context, the dance and music of the narcocorridos becomes an important tool of the stories being told since they aim at popularizing drug traffickers’ image through constant repetition and public dissemination.

Another important tool that contributes to build and spread the representation of drug traffickers as pop icons is the radio and its broadcasting power. Pop icons need the media to build and sustain their image and fame. In *Trabajos del reino*, we encounter a journalist whose job will be that of making Lobo’s music heard through his personal connections in the radio: “Luego, el Periodista se va a ocupar de mover la música a través de sus contactos en la radio – le dijo el Gerente” [Later, the Journalist is going to make the music be heard through his connections on the radio- the Manager told him] (31). This fact attests to the unlimited power that drug traffickers can have both inside and outside their immediate drug business circle. Drug traffickers manipulate the information even to the extreme of making believable what is just not true: “Para entretener a los necios con mentiras limpias el Periodista tenía que hacerlas parecer

verdades” [To entertain the foolish with white lies, the Journalist had to make them seem true] (35). In this sense, drug traffickers help construct an image of themselves as celebrities through the manipulation of information which is intended to praise, respect, elevate, and support their public image to the level of pop icons.

Nevertheless drug traffickers, as most celebrities, need the assistance and support of an *entourage*.¹⁹¹ This group of people, besides providing for the drug traffickers’ material needs and desires, turns their service into a form of spiritual devotion: “A algunos el Rey les acariciaba el cabello o les aconsejaba en tono grave. Luego ellos le querían besar la mano o se abrazaban a sus rodillas, el Rey dejaba que lo adoraran un momento y después los quitaba con tierno rigor” [To some, the King stroked their hair gently or advised them gravely. Then they wanted to kiss his hand or hug his knees, the King allowed them to praise him for a moment and then he would remove them with tender sternness] (59). The entourage embodies the faithful followers to whom drug traffickers owe their prestige, reputation, the possibility to remain current within the public sphere, and even more, the opportunity to become social legends. However, there is one distinctive aspect that separates drug traffickers from the great majority of pop icon figures. This aspect refers to their inclination or predisposition to violence. Herlinghaus states that:

What keeps narcocorridos alive is their proclivity for common heroes whose affective appeal is more ambiguous than the word “bravery.” It relates to their unbound stoicism, an attitude detached from normative morals, even if this means, in the case of those heroes, the odds of violent death are higher than those of desire luck. (53)

In other words, drug traffickers’ proclivity to death, both their own and that of others, is a key component in their representation as pop icons. The more violent the deaths they commit are, the

¹⁹¹ This is the group of people in charge of attending to celebrities’ needs and desires.

more respectful and feared by others they become both within their circle and in the public sphere that learns about their exploits through the media and other means.¹⁹²

From the very first pages of the novel, the King provides evidence of his violent methods when confronting a drunken man at a bar who was trying to rip off Lobo after his musical performance:

Le acercó la pistola como si le palpara las tripas y disparó. Fue un estallido simple, sin importancia. El briago peló los ojos, se quiso detener de una mesa, resbaló y cayó. Un charco de sangre asomó bajo su cuerpo. El Rey se volvió hacia el borracho que lo acompañaba:

- Y usted, ¿también quiere platicarme?

El borracho prendió su sombrero y huyó, haciendo con las manos gesto de No vi nada. El Rey se agachó sobre el cadáver, hurgó en un bolsillo y sacó un fajo de billetes. Separó algunos, se los dio a Lobo y regresó el resto.

- Cóbrense, artista – dijo. (12-13)

[He aimed the gun at him as close as if he could touch his intestines and shot him. It was a simple gun shot, something unimportant. The drunk man opened his eyes wide open, tried to hold on to a table, slipped off and fell down. A pool of blood showed under his body. The King faced the other drunken man accompanying the other:

- And you, wanna talk to me also?

The drunken man grabbed his hat and ran away, moving his hand like signaling I saw Nothing. The King bent towards the dead body, rummaged in his pocket, and took out a wad of bills. He put some aside, gave them to Lobo, and returned the rest.

- Here's your money, Artist- He said]

This thirst for violence is motivated in many cases, as mentioned before, by their quest for accumulation of wealth, but in other cases, it seeks to claim a space in the cultural, political, and economic spheres of social life. In this sense:

The cartels can now buy up políticos of different stripe and, at the same time, outgun the police. Indeed, they can, after the manner of Hobsbawn's famous 'social bandits', garner a good deal of popularity, on the grounds of being generous, brave, resourceful and patriotic. (Eric A. Johnson et al. 46)

¹⁹² Jean Franco points out how the proliferation of documentary and feature films, *narcocorridos*, novels, poetry, and expository writing serves a tool to produce a violent representation of drug traffickers due to the scandalized images produced by the brutality of the deaths, the torture and mutilation of bodies, and the impunity of the perpetrators. See *Cruel Modernity* (217).

In *Trabajos del reino*, the generosity of the King is regarded as one of the main characteristics of his popularity. Lobo tells the stories of the King's entourage by acknowledging who makes them possible: "Sí, eres chilo, porque te lo permite el Rey. Sí, qué valiente eres, porque te inspira el Rey" [Yes, you're cool, because the King allows it. Yes, how brave you are, because you're inspired by the King] (34). In return, these faithful servants of the King owe their leader loyalty and support to make him greater and more powerful: "-Para esto servimos – dijo el Joyero – para darle poder" [-For this we serve him – said the Jeweler – to give him power] (60). This idea of power is ultimately the means that helps transform drug traffickers into pop icons not only through the impact of the media and its dissemination of narcocorridos, but also through the control of capital and its unlimited purchasing power.

3.5. Conclusion:

Thus, Omar Rincón's narco.aesthetics reveals how drug traffickers display an extreme use of emotions in language to communicate their excessive control and preservation of power at all costs through the violent manipulation of women's bodies as an illegal economic transaction, the desire for material things as part of a world based on the commodification of everything, and a culture of violence that situates drug traffickers at the level of popular icons to be praised and followed in a modern neoliberal world. This world encourages attitudes associated with individualism, competitiveness, and consumerism, but more importantly the concept of "being successful," measured only in terms of what you are able to buy.

The aesthetic representation of drug traffickers as sexual chauvinists, materialistic monsters, and pop icons are proof of a new social group whose main motivation is the accumulation of wealth; and as characters who rely on the media to shape up, increase, and disseminate their distinct taste in language, music, architecture, and women, but more

importantly in violence. This violence is commodified and becomes another “good” to be bought as part of drug traffickers’ material world in the form of women’s bodies, luxurious mansions and music.

4. Chapter Four

Migration & Femicides¹⁹³

This conjunction of arid desert, tortured corpses, and sophisticated foreign-owned factories is a stark revelation of how economic development brought enterprises that employed young women workers who had to cross the desert wasteland to get home, thus facilitating criminal savagery.

Jean Franco¹⁹⁴

In *Continental Divides: International Migration in the Americas*, Katharine M. Donato¹⁹⁵ et al. argue that in the past few decades, migration has emerged as a critical issue across all nations in Latin America by changing its historical position “from a net migrant-receiving region to one of the leading sending areas of the world” (6). In this context, and according to the Mexican

¹⁹³ As mentioned in the introduction, this work will support the use of *feminicide* (feminicidio) instead of *femicide* (femicidio) based on the work of the feminist anthropologist Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos who describes *femicide* as the mere homicide of women, but *feminicide* as the ensemble of violations of women’s rights, which contain the crimes against and the disappearances of women. According to her, “Feminicide is one of the extreme forms of gendered violence; it is constituted by the whole set of misogynist acts against women that involve a violation of their human rights, represent an attack on their safety, and endanger their lives. It culminates in the murder of girls and women. Feminicide is able to occur because the authorities who are ommissive, negligent, or acting in collusion with the assailants perpetrate institutional violence against women by blocking their access to justice and thereby contributing to impunity. Feminicide entails a partial break-down of the rule of law because the state is incapable of acting in keeping with the law and to uphold the law, to prosecute and administer justice, and to prevent and eradicate the violence that causes it. Feminicide is a state crime.” See Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos (xxiii). On the other hand, the term *femicide* was first brought to attention by feminist sociologist Diana Russell in the late 1970’s. She defined it as “the killing of females by males *because* they are female” and sustains male dominance over women. For more information on this term see David Carey Jr. and M. Gabriela Torres (143).

¹⁹⁴ “Apocalypse Now,” *Cruel Modernity*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2013 (218-19).

¹⁹⁵ Katharine M. Donato is a professor and chair of sociology at Vanderbilt University and editor of *American Sociological Review*. Her research interests include international migration between Mexico and the United States, social determinants of health, immigrants in the U.S. economy, and ethnic and gender stratification. See “U.S. Migration from Latin America: Gender Patterns and Shifts,” *Continental Divides*, Katharine M. Donato (78).

Migration Project¹⁹⁶ (MMP) and the Latin merican Migration Project¹⁹⁷ (LAMP), the Mexico-U.S. migration appears as the largest sustained migratory flow between two nations in the world.

Based on these findings, Donato et al. developed an interesting study in the field of international migration¹⁹⁸ which includes four fundamental aspects related to the movement of people across borders. The first aspect concerns the *individual determinants and basic processes of movement* which refers to the circumstances that lead individuals to make the decision of leaving or staying behind. The second line refers to *larger structural causes*, which reveals how macro-level changes in socioeconomic and political organization affect micro-level decision making and determine the composition of migratory flows around the world.¹⁹⁹ The third aspect focuses on the *reshaping of culture and society at origin and destination*, in other words, the significant consequences that migration has on individuals, households, and communities in sending and receiving nations. Finally, a fourth area that emphasizes *social policy* which refers to the governmental attempts to control the quantity and quality of international migration (Donato el al. 12). Despite the importance of these four aspects to understand the implications of international migration, there is one more aspect that Donato identifies as crucial to comprehend the latest migration processes in the world, but especially the Mexico-U.S. migration relationship: *gendered migration*.

In “U.S. Migration from Latin America: Gendered Patterns and Shifts,” Donato states that since 1965, after the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act was passed, studies began to recognize

¹⁹⁶ The MMP (1982) is based on a method data collection known as the ethnosurvey, which combines qualitative interviewing and ethnographic fieldwork with representative survey sampling to generate information on Mexico-U.S. migration. See Katharine M. Donato et al. (8).

¹⁹⁷ The LAMP was established as an extension of the MMP (1998) to facilitate the understanding of international migration from other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Ibid., 10.

¹⁹⁸ For an interesting study in relation to the language of migration - *migrant vs immigrant*- see Amelia Frank-Vitale (29-30)

¹⁹⁹ Questions such as the education level of migrants, employment vs unemployment, professional vs laborer, men vs women are considered in this second line of inquiry.

a shift in women's legal presence among U.S. immigrants. For Donato, women went from making up less than one-third of all U.S. migrants in 1900 to becoming one-half by the 1980's: "Women's share grew among immigrants from many nations, including Mexico, which had had a long history of sending mostly men to the United States" (79). Even though the reasons for female migration to the United States vary, many of these women are known to migrate with an illegal status "as single women who cross with assistance from relatives and friends or paid smugglers" (Donato 81). The connection between these two areas of legal vs illegal migration of women is precisely the obscure domain that directs our attention to the study of the so-called *feminicidios*²⁰⁰ or *feminicides*; and in this particular case, in the context of the border between U.S. and Mexico.

The focus on feminicides began over the crime cases against girls and women in Ciudad Juárez²⁰¹ since 1993, one year after the signing of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This treaty facilitated the installation of "maquiladoras" - assembly plants for transnational corporations (80% of them American-owned). As a consequence, widespread migration to the border, especially female, skyrocketed. According to Laura Barberán Reinares:

Taking 'signs for wonders,' many saw these maquiladoras as a capitalist-God-sent blessing, feeling that they would bring a much needed boost to the Mexican economy. In fact, during their stay in Ciudad Juárez - the largest border city, literally within walking distance of El Paso, Texas - these plants allowed the municipality to boost the lowest unemployment rate of all Mexico (and, later, less glamorously, the highest incidence of domestic violence in the country). ("Globalized Philomels" 52)

Because of the horror caused by these *feminicides*, Ciudad Juárez became known worldwide for crimes committed against women. This reputation as one of the most violent cities in the world was built through the intense work of the media (print, radio, and television), academic work (literary, photographic, and filmic), and both governmental and non-governmental organizations.

²⁰⁰ Another use of this term is described as *the serial killing of women*. See Ileana Rodríguez (153).

²⁰¹ A Mexican border city opposite El Paso, Texas.

According to Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos, the intense movement to denounce these crimes gave rise to a variety of political expressions including:

...demonstrations, rallies, religious rituals, protest encampments, exhibitions, and installations. It has also engaged in broad creativity and skill building and capacity building with groups, organizations, and individuals to become informed of the situation, acquire certain knowledge, and even get academic training and dealt with all kinds of individuals and philanthropic, financial, and solidarity institutions, in Mexico and elsewhere, with whom it should engage. (“Feminist Keys for Understanding Femicide” xi).

All these political manifestations of solidarity are motivated by the profound commitment to contribute to the analysis of the situation in order to take and redirect all actions to eradicate the phenomenon of these crimes against women.

In an attempt to understand this phenomenon, we cannot ignore what Ileana Rodriguez has identified as “the shift from modern to postmodern forms of labor” (153) which highlights the *maquiladoras* or *maquilas* as “one of the newest forms of labor organization that high-tech, corporate capitalism has devised” (*Liberalism at its Limits* 153). In this system of labor, Rodriguez recognizes the importance of *borders* as “free zones” of transit or anonymous places where transactions and transitions are hunted down by the law, both political and disciplinarian (154). However, in these flexible borders or “free zones,” the execution of the law is exerted by the means of violence and labor exploitation to the benefit of powerful transnational corporations at the service of the neoliberal agenda.

In this equation, women come to represent the victims of sexual abuses and murder but also symbolize the violence of low wage labor in the neoliberal global exchange of power and capital. That is why the crimes in the context of the reality of the U.S.-Mexico border need to consider the economic status, class, and power of the female victims and the perpetrators, as well as the impact of the cross-border assembly plants or *maquiladoras* on the topics of social development, marginalization, and poverty.

For this purpose, we will initially analyze the violent implications of what has been understood as *Accelerated Modernity* and its close connection with Ciudad Juárez's rapid growth as the result of the *maquiladoras* and the advent of migrant workers attracted by them. Roberto Bolaño's *2666* will continue this conversation through the literary depiction and analysis of *feminicides*, consisting of hundreds of unsolved sexual abuses and murders of Mexican women as a consequence of the economic transaction controlled by these transnational *maquiladoras*.

4.1. Ciudad Juárez: Its Accelerated Modernity and Sex Crimes

The Mexican-U.S. border is one of the most unique geographical spaces where a rich and a poor nation meet and collide. In relation to the border cities of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, Maria Cristina Morales et al. state:

Both cities are located in the physical and political fringes of their respective countries. The city of El Paso is in the Southern most portion of the U.S. and is largely occupied by people deemed as unwanted by society – impoverished communities and racial minorities. Indeed, El Paso is one of the poorest cities in the U.S. and approximately 85% of the people are of Latina/o, mostly of Mexican origin. Also in the fringes is the city of Juárez where in the eyes of transnational corporations represented an ideal site to experiment with globalization due to a perceivable surplus of exploitation labor- brown people from a developing nation. (“The Mexican Drug War” 84)

It is in this border space or “free zone” where the City of Juárez has been identified as the city where “anything goes” and where people are dehumanized, exploited, and considered disposable.

Ciudad Juárez' characterization as the city where “anything goes” gave it relevance to become an experimental site for globalization. According to Maria C. Morales, the border connection between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez experienced the first wave of globalization in 1965 with the Border Industrial Program known as the *maquiladora*, and was followed by a second wave under the guise of “free trade” with the North American Free Trade Agreement

(NAFTA)²⁰² which encouraged cross-border movement between the Mexico- U.S. border cities (85). This possibility for migration due to economic changes also opened another possibility for a new implementation of violence in the city where “anything goes.” In this context, both migration and violence appear to be common consequences of social transformations associated with the globalization of markets.

This process of massive migration not only alters the city landscape but also alters the social dynamics due to its accelerated form of urbanization and modernization. The rapid urban modernization produces a city where the industrial and residential centers contrast radically with the proliferation of marginal neighborhoods and with the multiplication of crime and delinquency. Thus, Ciudad Juárez’ border situation transforms it into a space of compulsive, accelerated modernization motivated by the capitalistic mentality of the neoliberal agenda.²⁰³ In *The Femicide Machine*, Sergio González Rodríguez states that:

By the end of the twentieth century, Ciudad Juárez encapsulated the hardships of a border city. Its rapid demographic growth and a lack of infrastructure, services, and quality of life occurred within an institutional context where informal economies – like contraband and goods piracy, the underground economies of drugs, arms and human trafficking, money laundering, extortion, theft, prostitution, and child/teen exploitation – were interconnected with the formal economy. (20)

These changes in the socio-economic structure motivated by the arrival of the neoliberal agenda made possible also the transformation or metamorphosis of the classical forms of violence (wars of independence, revolutionary wars, etc.) into more flexible forms. Patrick Dove argues that

²⁰² “Ironically, part of the NAFTA agreement stipulated assembly plants would be exempt from taxation in the host country, so the costs of social services and infrastructure generated by the influx of these migrant workers could never be met by the city’s already meager budget. As a result, the city’s slums grew exponentially, while basic services such as electricity, sewage, transportation, and public safety for these areas lagged behind, creating a breeding ground for these crimes for which Ciudad Juárez became notorious: the femicides.” See Laura Berberán Reinares (53).

²⁰³ Sergio Villalobos parallels the phenomenon of accelerated modernity in Ciudad Juárez with the phenomenon of economic liberalization (neoliberalism) implemented in Chile during Pinochet’s dictatorship between 1973 and 1990. See *Soberanías en suspenso* (54).

Ciudad Juárez is synonymous with new forms of capitalist accumulation, production and distribution aligned with neoliberalism and NAFTA, the rise of drug trafficking and cartel-related violence, including but not limited to the unsolved serial killings of hundreds of women due to the rapid expansion of the *maquiladoras* in the wake of NAFTA (“Literature and the Secret of the World” 142).²⁰⁴ An important aspect of this process of accelerated modernity depended, a great deal, on Ciudad Juárez’s strategic location as a border city. The city became a major point of entry and transportation into the United States, and experienced an important industrial growth made up in large part by more than 300 *maquiladoras* located in and around the city. González Rodríguez states that Ciudad Juárez:

...has been subject to rapid modernization and industrialization over the last fifty years; processes determined by economic and political power structures that oscillate between the formal and the informal, the legal and the illegal. This illegality allowed for the inclusion of organized crime within the city, accompanied in turn by its perverse effects: institutional corruption and impunity for criminals. This development mode – a global pragmatic production complex based on a depredation of the labor force in the name of the highest profit – unleashed intense population growth. Migrants arrived in Ciudad Juárez in search of work, and at the same time, local birth rates²⁰⁵ remained high. (8)

Thus, the city is then transformed into a powerful center of industrial assembly that demands women’s labor due, mainly, to being substantially cheaper than men’s labor. This situation motivated an internal migration from the south and center of Mexico to the north (and in some cases directly from Central America) producing a process of rapid urban modernization, or accelerated modernity, which stimulated the proliferation of marginal neighborhoods and,

²⁰⁴ The growth of killings and violent encounters between local gangs and the drug dealers for the control of the border as well as the control of the North American market have made possible the appearance of what critics have called *violencia postfordista* [Post-Fordist Violence] or *Violence of Financial Capitalism*. This exemplifies the kind of violence that is exerted with regards to a specific reason, usually of financial matters.

²⁰⁵ An interesting study of the implications of Mexican immigrant and Mexican-origin women’s reproductive capacities states how “Latina reproduction as an object of discourse produces a limited range of meanings, with an emphasis on ‘over’-reproduction and on a fertility and sexually depicted ‘out of control’ in relation to the supposed social norm. Latina biological reproduction combines with its social reproduction to produce fears about the population growth of Latinos in American society, which in turn positions them as a possible threat to the ‘nation,’ that is, the ‘people’ as conceived in demographic and racial terms.” See Leo R. Chavez (69).

therefore, high rates of crime or as González Rodríguez puts it “The immediate consequences of this growth were increased poverty, marginalization, and a scarcity of quality of life” (8).

The incorporation of women into the structure of labor, due to the *maquiladoras*, also produced some changes in the structure of gender issues. The *maquiladoras* became the center of the border economic model. In this context, Ciudad Juárez developed into what González Rodríguez identified as a *city-machine* and eventually a *femicide machine* (9). For him, Ciudad Juárez involved more than the mere representation of an industrial city, by supporting a structure defined by “mass economic regulation on an international, macroeconomic scale, and by an assembly line production that differentiates products via flexible, automated methods, information technology, and specially categorized labor,” (9) which allowed for the exploitation of both material and human resources, especially women’s labor.

Unfortunately, Ciudad Juárez’s *femicide machine* is filled with a misogynistic component that has instigated violence towards women. The city is famously known by the great number of crimes, many of sexual connotation, which have caused the death of thousands of women.²⁰⁶ What makes these crimes even more “visible” is the atrocious and sadistic forms carried out to commit them. Furthermore, we may wonder where the government authorities and their police forces are to counteract this crime wave. However, investigations of Ciudad Juárez’ murders have revealed a well-structured system of corruption that involves not only the population,

²⁰⁶ The assassinations of women in Ciudad Juárez have taken the forms of intimate femicide and systematic sexual femicide. According to the Femicide Database (1993-2005) compiled by El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, “women and girls age 10-29 accounted for 239, or 54.1 percent of the total 442 cases. Added to these were 84 cases of women age 30-39, whose numbers made up 19 percent of the cases. This puts the median age of the victims at 26 (Comisión para Prevenir 2005). Regarding women’s activities and occupations outside the home at the time of death, there was information compiled for some cases. Among those employed, 2 were security guards; 22 were unemployed; 51 were employed in nonspecified work; 35 were students; 2 were indigent; 25 were minors; seven were drug traffickers; 46 were maquiladora workers; 38 were dancers, sex workers, or bar waitresses; 8 were professional women (4 teachers, a model, a reporter, a nutritionist, and a doctor); 17 were business owners; and 45 were homemakers.” See Adriana Carmona López et al. (164-165)

corrupt government officials (including the police force), and common gang members; but also criminals at the service of narcotraffic who take advantage of the process of accelerated modernization and their flexible patterns of doubtful legislation to position themselves within the everyday more competitive world market.

Ileana Rodríguez argues how politics (in the context of Mexico) has reached a degree of permeability and saturation to the point of erasing the divide between civil and political society and giving path to a new idea of governmentality understood in terms of the merging of the criminal and the political. In this sense, *feminicidio* appears as a clear symptom of this merge and partakes of the benefits of all kinds of labor, both legal (*maquiladoras*) and illegal (traffics – of drugs, people, and pleasure) (160). What is at play in this equation is the obscure participation and intervention of the political society (Mexican state) in the unsettling of the social, especially in regard to the impunity of the criminals responsible for the so-called *sex crimes* linked to the structure of labor in Ciudad Juárez.²⁰⁷ For Rodríguez, the only way of unraveling this mystery is by “connecting illegal forms of labor – that is, ‘traffics’- and the *maquila*” as the most organized form of labor devised by high capitalism (161).

Even though there has been extensive work suggesting private (domestic) reasons for Ciudad Juárez’ *feminicides* which include women provoking men, being attacked by family members (especially their male partners), or being sex workers, there are other studies that push the killing of women away from the personal sphere into a more social (public) one connecting

²⁰⁷ “The United Nations committee that recently investigated the murders and disappearances of women in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua concluded that these had to be seen not as isolated cases but as a product of a ‘situation of violence in a structurally violent society.’ It therefore recommended ‘combating criminality concurrently with the structural causes of gender violence, including domestic, intrafamilial and public incidents such as sexual abuse, homicides, kidnapping, and disappearances.’ Its report associates these cases with the high density of the cities bordering the United States and with the establishment of *maquilas* and the predominance in them of poorly paid female workers.” See Mercedes Olivera (51).

the *maquiladoras* and its structure of capitalist labor.²⁰⁸ According to Julia Estela Monárrez Fragoso, “The analysis of the production, construction, and economic exploitation of women’s bodies is essential to understanding femicide under patriarchal hegemony and capitalist hegemony” (“The Victims of the Ciudad Juárez Femicide” 60-61). From this point of view, the body of the woman is the product of both a gender system and an economic system which “construct it” for their own circulation, consumption, exchange, and final disposal.²⁰⁹ In other words, the body of the woman is transformed into a commodity that after its commercialization - and in many cases destruction- will, eventually, meet the fate of the *disposable worker*²¹⁰ (169) described by Harvey, since its economic value will expire.

Rita Laura Segato, in her study about the new forms of wars, has identified the *femicides* in Ciudad Juárez as a new target for war scenarios. For Segato, the destruction of women’s bodies has always been present since the beginning of tribal and conventional wars until the first half of the 20th century; however, nowadays “La rapiña que se desata sobre lo femenino se manifiesta tanto en formas de destrucción corporal sin precedentes como en las formas de trata y comercialización de lo que estos cuerpos puedan ofrecer, hasta el último límite” [The degradation that has affected the feminine is manifested both through forms of body destruction never ever imagined, and through the commercialization of what these bodies can offer, until the last limit] (*Las nuevas formas de la guerra* 17). Her analysis of sexual aggression

²⁰⁸ In domestic violence the relationship is apparently one to one and usually begins at home and ends in the best cases in hospitals; while public violence encompasses an agreement between organized groups and all kinds of public institutions which, in the worst cases, involve the exercise of extreme forms of collective violence such as executions, mutilations, and rape. See Ileana Rodríguez (163).

²⁰⁹ Any attempt to understand femicides “without appreciating the political-economic context may result in the distorted portrayals of Mexicans, or of Juárez residents, as murderous people without morals, governed by corrupt forces, and better kept on the other side of the border.” See Deborah M. Weissman (225).

²¹⁰ “They (women) simply do not enjoy the benefits provided by social institutions to citizens. To defend themselves they have only their own physical selves, their bodies and muscle power, and it is their vulnerable flesh that turns them into perishable, disposable beings, at times living only zoological forms of existence – just take a look at the shantytowns- more proper to natural than to civil or political societies.” See Ileana Rodríguez (168).

against women places women's bodies as weapons of war production where violence represents the instrument that causes both material and moral damages, but also recognizes these aggressions as part of a more complex system that involves state and parastatal²¹¹ dimensions.

In this context, criminal organizations, the parastatal repressive paramilitary forces of dictatorial regimes, the police with its state and parastatal forces, and private security groups are examples of Segato's complex system of new forms of wars. These types of *corporaciones armadas* [armed corporations], which make use of the so-called *violencia corporativa* [corporate violence] (Segato 22), express through the violence exerted over women's bodies the destruction of their enemies.²¹² This is what Segato identifies as *violencia expresiva* [expressive violence] whose main goal is to communicate to the enemy (as a collectivity) a message of power which involves an unlimited violence capacity and low levels of human sensitivity:

Toda violencia tiene una dimension instrumental y otra expresiva. En la violencia sexual, la expresiva es predominante. La violación, toda violación, no es una anomalía de un sujeto solitario, es un mensaje de poder y apropiación pronunciado en sociedad. La finalidad de esa crueldad no es instrumental. Esos cuerpos vulnerables en el nuevo escenario bélico no están siendo forzados para la entrega de un servicio, sino que hay una estrategia dirigida a algo mucho más central, una pedagogía de la crueldad en torno a la cual gravita todo el ejercicio del poder. (56)

[All violence has both an instrumental²¹³ and an expressive²¹⁴ dimension. In sexual violence, the expressive one prevails. Rape, all kinds of rape, is not an anomaly of a lonely human subject, but a message of power and appropriation communicated in society. The purpose of that cruelty is not instrumental. Those vulnerable bodies in the new war scenario are not being forced for a service delivery, on the contrary, there is a strategy directed to something more crucial, a pedagogy of cruelty around which all the

²¹¹ It exemplifies those institutions, industries, or organizations that serve the state indirectly and have some political authority and/or power.

²¹² "Several hypotheses circulate, with great credibility, which tie the homicides of girls and women to other criminal activities and groups, such as the selection of the victims and the use of their damaged bodies as coded languages among powerful men, businessmen, or among criminals and their gangs. It is presumed that there are ties between the homicides of girls and women and organized crime and drug trafficking." See Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos (xiv).

²¹³ Instrumental violence refers to those behaviors that presuppose the obtaining of benefits. It is deliberate and it is controlled by external reinforcements. This kind of violence is exerted as a means of reaching a goal such as resources, or social status. For more information on this term see María José Velasco Gómez (275)

²¹⁴ Also known as "reactiva" [reactive] since it usually produces disproportionate, mainly hostile, responses to situations. Ibid., (274)

exercise of power gravitates]

In this sense, the so-called sex crimes in Ciudad Juárez need to be understood beyond the ordinary interpretation of gender crimes, and need to be analyzed within the space where both state and parastatal organizations coexist and compete for the control of power and the control of *bodies*, which in terms of Foucault's analysis of his *biopolitics* constitutes an important element in the development of capitalism due to the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and its implications on societies' economic processes.

For Ileana Rodriguez, one of the most controversial issues provoking public interest in the case of the *feminicides* in Ciudad Juárez has to do with the obscure connection between crime, labor, and government which exposes the “essence of power into the open” (164) where two forces co-exist: the state (represented by the police force) and the crime (represented by delinquents such as gangs, drug mafia, etc.), both directly interconnected with the investment of capital under the guise of the *maquiladoras* and its high-tech developed form of labor.

The investment of capital via *maquiladoras* reconfigures the public space and allows for a new socialization of labor which not only encourages low salaries without the possibility for solidarities or benefits of any kind, but also gives rise to different types of informal, illegal, and criminal forms of economies such as that of prostitution and drugs. All of this counts with the complicity of the state which loses its governmental presence against the neoliberal, high-tech capital and encourages what Rodriguez quotes as *neoslavery* (167). According to Héctor Dominguez-Ruvalcaba and Patricia Ravelo Blancas, “Governmental institutions find it difficult to solve and prevent the *feminicides* in Ciudad Juárez because they have submitted to the will of more powerful groups that control them through corruption, threats, or blackmail,” which explains the impunity of these crimes due to the Mexican government's inability to fight

organized crime.

In this equation, women appear as the most vulnerable sector due to their unfavorable cheap labor in the *maquiladoras* and to their brutal profile of victims of *sex crimes* represented through the *feminicides* in Ciudad Juárez. In this sense, Lagarde y de los Ríos' understanding of *feminicides* as a *state crime* becomes relevant within the social, political, and economic spheres of Ciudad Juárez's institutional analysis since the state's failure to guarantee women's rights to live a life free from violence is already in itself a human rights violation. Thus, when considering *feminicides* in Ciudad Juárez as a state crime, we acknowledge that the state's inability or negligence to provide protection contributed to a climate of impunity that supported and covered up the most atrocious violations against women's rights, and, even more shocking, women's lives through *sex crimes*:

Sexual crimes are a social warning to everyone, an act of power and discipline, a sign of masculine, brutal, natural, social, and political power, and an invasion of the public space- when not a complete takeover. Thus women's bodies are multiply articulated and plurally narrated, and misogynist perversion fully takes flight. A woman's body under high-the corporate capitalism is a heteroglossic, polymorphic sign of labor and tenacity, a cyborg arm, a factory, an instrument of biological reproduction, and the ideal site for demonstration of social resentment, perverse eroticism, and jouissance. (Rodriguez 70)

In other words, women's bodies appear in part as a social construction of gender, but also as a social construction of capital. Therefore, in both cases, a social construction of power also reflects the tensions between a weak state and an emerging corporate capitalism under the guise of neoliberalism. In the most hegemonic sectors of society which include the political class, some entrepreneurial groups, the media, and intellectuals, the prevailing opinion is that "the victims of the violence are less of a priority than the city's image and economic development" (Dominguez-Ruvalcaba and Ravelo Blancas 185). In other words, the value of the lives of

women is diminished and/or regarded as *devaluated* which supports, once again, Harvey's concept of the *disposable worker*.

4.1. **Roberto Bolaño's Depictions of Femicides in 2666:**

Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño's novel 2666²¹⁵ was published in 2004. The novel is divided into five parts of which the last one depicts the horrors of the 20th century by revealing the *femicides* of Ciudad Juárez, *Santa Teresa* in the novel:

What city is it? She wondered. Let's see, what city is it? I want to know the name of that damn city. She meditated for a few seconds. It's on the tip of my tongue. I don't refrain myself, ladies, especially about a case like this. It's Santa Teresa! It's Santa Teresa! I see it clearly. They kill women there. They kill my daughters. My daughters! My daughters!" (Bolaño, 546-47).

Starting with the finding of Esperanza Gómez Saldaña's dead body, Bolaño describes the killings of women that took place between January of 1993 and December of 1997.

According to Nilia Viscardi, Bolaño makes use of the *novela negra*²¹⁶ to reflect upon "...el mundo del gansterismo y de la criminalidad organizada, producto de la violencia y corrupción de la sociedad capitalista de esa época" [...the world of gansterism and organized criminality as product of the violence and corruption of the capitalistic society of the time] ("On

²¹⁵ The first part of the novel, "The Part About the Critics," develops an academic plot of four European scholars of German literature (residing in Paris, Madrid, Turin, and London) in the search for an elusive author, Benno von Archimboldi, whose works they read, discuss and publish on obsessively. Their scholarly relationship becomes entangled with erotic games, jealousy and violence, and their search finally leads them to Santa Teresa, where Archimboldi is rumoured to be headed. The second part, 'The Part About Amalfitano,' features Óscar Amalfitano, professor at the local university (in Santa Teresa) unravelling in the wake of a familial tragedy and the loss of his only daughter, provides a counterpoint image of the Mexican academician to that of the European fellow academics, adrift and doomed in the Mexican city over which death and violence hang like a fog. The third part, 'The Part About Fate,' takes place mostly in Santa Teresa and links two journalists, one American, Oscar Fate, one Mexican, Rosa, the daughter of Amalfitano, to the fate of the jailed femicide suspect, Klaus Hass, a German and U.S. citizen residing in Mexico. The fourth part, 'The Part About Archimboldi,' travels back in time to 1920 in Prussia where Hand Reiter is born at the court of baroness. Their fates become entangled during the war, along with that of other characters. At the end of this part we find out an unexpected link between Klaus Hass and Archimboldi, via Hans Reiter's history. The fifth part, 'The Part About the Crimes,' engages directly the murders of poor women in Santa Teresa and the half-hearted effort of the authorities at documenting and investigating the murders." See Camelia Raghinaru (147).

²¹⁶ A subgenre of the detective novel which originated in the United States at the beginning of the 1920's. The narrative structure consists of the following line of events: a crime has been committed, a detective/police investigation is carried out, a discovery is made, and a search for the criminal(s) begins.

Dead Women and Policemen” 113). More than providing definite answers and results about the crimes, Bolaño’s use of this narrative style will aim at questioning the relationships of power that come into play in the case of the *feminicides* in Ciudad Juárez by considering and exposing the cruelty of a modern world at the hands of a neoliberal, capitalistic mentality.

According to Camelia Raghinaru, the critique of this neoliberal capitalism reveals a new interpretation of law “predicated on violence and exploitation of surplus humanity, in this case, the poor female maquiladora workers at the U.S./Mexico border” where “Narcotrafficking and misogyny are symptomatic of a juridical and economic order that revolves on exploitation as central to the working of transnational capitalism” (“Biopolitics in Roberto Bolaño’s 2666” 146). Therefore, the analysis of this systematic form of modern violence involves different criminal actors or perpetrators of this violence which include members of the Mexican police force, drug cartels,²¹⁷ government, and transnational business (maquiladoras).

2666 allows us to inquire about different forms of violence (urban, criminal, organized, etc.) that are associated with forms of sexual violence. Bolaño’s search, more than aiming at clarifying the motives behind the *feminicides* in Santa Teresa (Ciudad Juárez), should be understood as a political act or response to the social, cultural, and economic fragmentation motivated by the neoliberal model of domination. Unfortunately, this model of domination has permeated all sectors of social life by “legitimizing” the use of violence in different scenarios and executed by different actors:

El modo en que Bolaño relata las muertes permite una mirada cabal a nuestros actuales *modelos de dominación social* y de construcción de *legitimidad* que supera la aparente fragmentación del relato al mostrar las formas asociativas de la violencia institucional (el Estado, la policía, la justicia), de la violencia estructural (economía, cultura y política), de

²¹⁷ The relationship between violence and the economy of narcotraffic is one of the most obvious; however, sexual violence appears as a form of “subsystem” within narcotraffic which is characterized by affective mechanisms rather than economic ones. See Arndt Lainck (147-48).

la violencia cotidiana (violencia doméstica y de género) y simbólica (prensa y figuras culturales). (Viscardi 119)

[The way in which Bolaño narrates the deaths allows for a full look at our current models of *social domination* and construction of *legitimation* which overcome the apparent fragmentation of the story by displaying the associative forms of institutional violence (State, police, justice), structural violence (economy, culture, and politics), daily violence (domestic and gender violence), and symbolic (press and cultural icons)]

All these forms of violence come together in 2666 as an act of denunciation that claims the natural rights to *life*, at the hands of violent actions that exclude it, marginalize it, and destroy it. In this sense, women's dead bodies become that permanent act of denunciation that reveals not only the brutality of a masculinity that needs to kill to recover its patriarchal status but also the violence of cultural and socioeconomic changes originated as product of the current neoliberal model of domination.

In 2666, Santa Teresa (Ciudad Juárez) owes its development and wealth to its geographical position of border town with the United States which, as examined before, has promoted cheap labor to the *maquiladoras*, has caused an accelerated development in population, and has created larger levels of poverty and marginalization. In "The Part About the Crimes," we observe the close connection between *el basurero* [Landfill or Dump] called *El Chile* and the number of women's dead bodies found there. Bolaño states in 2666:

Los habitantes nocturnos de El Chile son escasos. Su esperanza de vida, breve. Mueren a lo sumo a los siete meses de transitar por el basurero. Sus hábitos alimenticios y su vida sexual son un misterio. [...] Todos, sin excepción están enfermos. Sacarle la ropa a un cadáver de El Chile, equivale a despellejarlo. La población permanece estable: nunca son menos de tres, nunca son más de veinte. (466-67)

[El Chile's nocturnal inhabitants are scarce. Their life expectancy, short. At most, they die seven months after living in the dump. Their food habits and sexual life are a mystery. [...] All without exception are sick. To remove the clothes from one of El Chile's dead bodies is equivalent to skinning them. The population remains stable: they are never less than three, never more than twenty]

In this sense, Santa Teresa (Ciudad Juárez) faces some sort of systematic violence that observes the crimes as symptomatic of a society that places human life at the level of debris and/or waste.

In other words, some sort of dehumanization is caused by an accelerated modernity and its agenda of “progress” at the hands of those with the power of capital and the power to buy the complicity of corrupt governments and corrupt corporations.

In *Las figuras del mal en 2666* de Roberto Bolaño, Arndt Lainck states that *El Progreso* industrial park, constituted by a group of *maquiladoras*, represents not only the source and foundation of Santa Teresa’s economic development but also the source of feminicides “... en una sociedad que progresa de forma más bien violenta” [..., in a society that progresses mainly in a violent way] (132). In an effort to denounce this system of violence, Bolaño makes use of a key component within the narrative of the *novela negra*: the detective figure.

Pedro Negrete embodies the figure of the detective, but he is not the stereotypical one that solves crimes and is motivated by a sense of justice. On the contrary, he is motivated by a sense of corruption which exposes the dishonesty, the incompetence, and the inefficiency of the state in providing safety and protection for its citizens. Negrete’s indifference to these killings not only reinforces our previous argument about impunity in the case of the *feminicides* but also sustains the assumption that Santa Teresa (Ciudad Juárez) has been permeated by certain levels of violence (domestic, socio-economic, drug cartels, pornographic, etc.) which enable impunity and hinder citizens’ rights. In this particular case, women’s rights to protection and freedom. Nevertheless, one thing for sure that comes out of this sense of impunity is that the *feminicides* have been committed by men and that the criminal structure behind these crimes reveals the brutality of a modern world that replaces the value of human life by the value of commodification, women’s bodies being one example of the so-called disposable forms of commodities:

Solo queda claro que una violencia desatada por hombres, que al inicio figuran como psicópatas, a veces tomados por la furia, a veces por el odio y que cíclicamente atacan

contra mujeres de diferente edad, va dando un giro hacia una violencia estructural vinculada a la pornografía, bajo sus formas más truculentas, que emerge en una sociedad marcada por el machismo, el narcotráfico y la explotación económica y quita todo valor a la vida humana. (Viscardi 126-27)

[It is clear that a violence unleashed by men, that at the beginning are identified as psychopaths, sometimes understood in terms of their anger, sometimes by their hatred, who cyclically violate women of different ages, starts to turn into a structural violence linked to pornography under its more truculent forms, which originates out of a society influenced by chauvinism, narcotraffic, economic exploitation, and which removes all value from human life]

Unfortunately, this dehumanization or deprivation of women's basic right to life is exerted through the most horrific forms of violence which include rape, torture, beatings, mutilations, and assassination. Likewise, this violence is carried out by various kinds of criminals such as rapists, church desecrators (El Penitente), corrupt police officers (Pedro Negrete), mercenaries, businessmen, and powerful local citizens.

Both the horrendous ways of dehumanization of women's bodies and the sense of impunity in the novel are described by Bolaño in disturbing terms. In relation to the mutilations, Bolaños states: "Ojalá solo hubiera tres, dijo Pedro Negrete. Tres mujeres muertas a las que les han cortado el seno derecho y les han arrancado a mordiscos el pezón izquierdo, dijo el judicial Ernesto Ortiz Rebolledo." [I wish there were only three, said Pedro Negrete. Three dead women whose right breast has been cut off, and whose left nipple has been bitten away, said Officer Ernesto Ortiz Rebolledo] (589). Regarding the theme of impunity, Bolaños adds: "Acto seguido las actividades del MSDP hablaron de la impunidad que se vivía en Santa Teresa, de la desidia policial, de la corrupción y del número de mujeres muertas que se crecía sin parar desde el año 1993" (631-32). [Following the activities of MSDP, they talked about the impunity that they were experiencing in Santa Teresa, the sloth of police force, the corruption, and the growing number of dead women since 1993]. In this sense, we observe women in Santa Teresa as disposable beings vulnerable to poverty, exploitation, and murder, whose right to life and

economic justice has been denied within the dominant economic order under a neoliberal capitalism and its cheap, unskilled labor system promoted by the *maquiladoras*.

The logic of neoliberal global economy posits that development be accompanied by exclusion and subalternity (Raghinaru 148). Thus, the success of capitalism is based on the exclusion and marginalization of its “waste,” embodied by the maquiladora system and the women victims of femicide who are disposed of in landfills or dumps such as *El Chile*. Most of these women are described by Bolaño as migrant undocumented workers searching for work at the border:

La primera muerta de mayo no fue jamás identificada, por lo que se supuso que era una emigrante de algún estado del centro o del sur que paró en Santa Teresa antes de seguir viaje rumbo a los Estados Unidos. Nadie la acompañaba, nadie la echó en falta. Tenía aproximadamente treinta y cinco años y estaba embarazada. (450)

[The first dead woman of May was never identified, so it was assumed she was a migrant from some central or southern state who had stopped in Santa Teresa on her way to the United States. No one was traveling with her, no one had reported her missing. She was approximately thirty five years old and was pregnant]

Unfortunately, as in the example above, many of the *femicides* in 2006 remain unsolved because as Grant Farred argues “‘Why’ cannot be answered without the full commitment of the state to understanding and acting against the violence done to women, the neoliberal disenfranchisement and the exploitation of women who live(d) and work(ed) in the time of the maquiladora” (“The Impossible Closing” 699). In other words, the impunity of the *femicides* reveals the obscure and systematic complicity of the state and the neoliberal through the established exploitative conditions of women in the *maquiladoras*, conditions which they cannot escape from.

The women working in the *maquiladoras* cannot imagine life outside the realm of their ordinary, daily, and regular sequence of death. For Farred, “there is no time outside the

maquiladora: the maquiladora instantiates the neoliberal state that incarnates death.”²¹⁸ (695).

Furthermore, this death (within the neoliberal order) is presented as uninteresting and irrelevant.

In the novel, we find several instances that demonstrate how the *feminicides* are regarded as an irrelevant matter. The first one deals with the theme of *humor*. In 2666 we perceive a depraved police mentality regarding the female victims they are supposed to protect. The jokes they tell about their horrific death conditions are as violent as the crimes committed against them:

Y se contaban chistes. [...] Y abundaban aquellos que iban sobre mujeres. Por ejemplo, un policía decía: ¿cómo es la mujer perfecta? Pues de medio metro, orejona, con la cabeza plana, sin dientes y muy fea. ¿Por qué? Pues de medio metro para que te llegue exactamente a la cintura, buey, orejona para manejarla con facilidad, con la cabeza plana para tener un lugar donde poner tu cerveza, sin dientes para que no te haga daño en la verga y muy fea para que ningún hijo de puta te la robe. [...] Y otro: ¿en cuántas partes se divide el cerebro de una mujer? ¡Pues depende, valedores! ¿Depende de qué, González? Depende de lo duro que le pegues. (689-90)

[And they told jokes. [...] And most of them were about women. For example, a police officer would say: what is the perfect woman like? Well, half a meter, with big ears, flat headed, toothless, and really ugly. Why? Well, half a meter so she can reach your waist, you fool, with big ears so you can handle her easily, flat headed so you can have a place for your beer, toothless so she cannot hurt your dick, and really ugly so no son of a bitch can steal her from you. [...] And another: ¿in how many parts is divided a woman’s brain? Well, that depends, you advocates! Depends on what, González? It depends on how hard you hit them]

This indifference towards the violence against women and death itself reveals a second important aspect of neoliberal violence: its *aestheticization*. This aestheticization of violence is in direct relation to Jameson’s *society of the spectacle*²¹⁹ and to the levels of violence *desensitization* due to overexposure to violence. This over-exposure to violence has proven to produce in people

²¹⁸ “The death or rape of a woman (or ten per day) in Santa Teresa can no longer be, insofar as any death or rape can be, ordinary or disconnected (much as it might be) from the event. It is the event that can never, in the time of Santa Teresa, belong to any time but the perpetual present of the maquiladora murders. Santa Teresa, like neoliberal spaces everywhere (and the states to which those spaces belong), lives in the time of the maquiladora. That is why every homicide, every rape, every single body found on a garbage dump must, out of sheer historical force, belong under the sign of some political event under which it may or may not be properly categorized.” See Grant Farred (695).

²¹⁹ The *society of the spectacle* is understood as a new form of economic organization produced by the modification of capitalism into a more transnational, totalizing stage controlled by the Mass Media. It is also known as “spectacle or image society” or “media capitalism.” See Fredric Jameson (xviii)

certain levels of insensitivity. This effect generates high levels of indifference to violence itself, which transforms it into a product of consumption and motivates its commercialization. In this sense, violence is *aestheticized*²²⁰ and regarded as something “artistic,” something to be bought and to be sold within world markets.

Bolaño shows how the *feminicides* in Santa Teresa are sold as a form of entertainment through the so-called *snuff-movies*. These “movies” reveal real killings of women, and their film production is carried out through the complicity of corrupt government officials and the monetary power of drug lords. Bolaño states: “Lo único que era necesario para hacer una película snuff, les dijo, era dinero, sólo dinero, y dinero había habido antes de que el narco asentara sus reales y también su industria pornográfica y sin embargo la película, la famosa película, no se había hecho” [The only necessary thing to make a snuff movie was money, he said, money, just money, and money had been there even before the money of narcotraffic and its pornographic industry, however, the movie, the famous movie, had not been done yet] (671). Some critics have identified this kind of Post-Fordist violence as “violence for the sake of violence,”²²¹ and it is very characteristic of the neoliberal agenda and its flexible post-fordist²²² system of production.

²²⁰ Here, we could consider Jameson’s thoughts on the culture of the “spectacle,” where violence becomes an “image” to be looked at more than a social problem to be reflected upon.

²²¹ In contemporary Latin American literature, Horacio Castellanos Moya’s *El arma en el hombre* (2001) constitutes an allegory of this Post-Fordist violence. Castellanos Moya reveals how violence has lost its ideological motivations and its territorialization, and has metamorphosized into a more vulgar and flexible form of violence at the service of world market requirements. His main character, *Robocop*, embodies the flexibilization of this Post-Fordist violence.

²²² “In the 1980s, ‘flexibility’ had become a buzzword in the corporate world to indicate a shift from Fordist, mass production techniques toward more responsive systems. Essentially this shift indicated a move away from the mass production technologies that pumped out high volume based on standardized production procedures, large inventories, and the presumption of constantly growing demand. Flexibility indicated a move toward batch production of variable product models and labor systems that responded to constant shifts in market demand. This transition toward flexibility also meant that workers were to become more flexible as well and to respond to changes in production requirements by altering their work patterns. Workers in flexible facilities are not the ‘fixed-purpose’ automatons of mass production, who perform the same tasks over and over again; they are thinking and responsive members of a flexible system that constantly conforms to changing market demands.” See Melissa W. Wright (50).

In this sense, we can read the violence exerted over women under the label of *violence for the sake of violence* since it reveals a close connection between the market mentality that drives the entertaining snuff film industry and the still obscure motivations of the *femicidas*. In this respect, Barberán Reinares argues that Bolaño “opens a new can of worms in an already ugly scenario: raping, mutilating, and killing third-world women in a Mexican “set” to be sold and consumed by anonymous DVD viewers who can pay for those illegal and expensive movies from a safe distance anywhere in the world” (“Globalized Philomels” 62). Therefore, we could say that the existing and prevailing economic neoliberal system dehumanizes women’s lives by not only employing millions of third-world women working under different degrees of exploitation in its *maquiladoras* (more like sweatshops) but also commercializes the different degrees of violence to which these women are subjected for the sake of those who regard violence as an object of consumption.

This neoliberal dehumanization of both women’s lives and labor has somehow become *institutionalized* through the *maquiladoras* which rely on a disposable female population that must perform highly technical and specific work by keeping the production line moving twenty-four hours a day. In this sense, Barberán Reinares suggests:

...that the typical maquiladora worker has a productive life of about five years; after that, she is usually disposed of because by then her body has lost dexterity and her value has diminished. Plant managers explain that to keep a maquiladora worker longer would translate into losses (the same goes for firing them before the five-year deadline, as the time invested in their training has not yet been amortized). The result is a constant turnover of workers ‘who are hired and fired at will.’ (“Globalized Philomels” 64)

This fact supports our argument on how the neoliberal system, through the use of their U.S.-Mexico border *maquiladoras*, has motivated not only female labor exploitation and dehumanization of women’s value, but also extreme sexual violence towards them in the form of *femicidas* in order to enhance neoliberalism’s economic, political, social, and somehow,

criminal dominant mentality. Unfortunately, this neoliberal order counts on the obscure and also criminal complicity of the (Mexican) government which condones such exploitation and violence for its own economic and political power.

4.3. Conclusion:

As we have seen in this chapter, even though the reasons for female migration to the United States vary, many of these women are known to migrate with an illegal status in search of better economic opportunities. This search has led migrant women to the U.S.-Mexico border where they are employed in the so-called *maquiladoras*. As part of this economic transaction, these women entered into the neoliberal system of economic exploitation that will cancel any labor benefits and will reduce them to disposable items of production and consumption. In other words, these women are lost in the neoliberal economic system that uses their labor to enrich the capitalistic mentality of mass production.

For Booker, workers under capitalism are treated as interchangeable economic quantities, rather than human beings, who depend solely on their economic function. He has described them as the *perfect postmodern character*, since they become “all surface and no depth” for the neoliberal system that seeks to exploit them and dehumanize them (xi). In this equation, both the process of women’s migration and the implementation of the economic system of the *maquiladoras* in the U.S.-Mexico border motivate an accelerated form of urbanization and modernization in the Mexican border city of Ciudad Juárez. This rapid industrial and residential growth produces the proliferation of marginal neighborhoods and multiplies the cases of delinquency and crime, especially those perpetrated against women and known as *feminicides*.

As studied here, this *feminicide* structure (or *Femicide Machine* in terms of Sergio González Rodríguez), reveals an institutionalized system that involves different forms of

capitalist accumulation aligned with neoliberalism (NAFTA), the rise of drug trafficking and cartel-related violence, a patriarchal misogynistic culture, and the complicity of a corrupt Mexican government that enables the impunity of these crimes for its own economic and political power. The most striking of these *femicides* is that women's bodies are regarded as the product of both a gender system and an economic system which manipulate them for their own circulation, consumption, exchange, and final disposal. In other words, women's bodies are transformed into a commodity that after their economic value expires – through the exploitation of their labor- will, eventually, meet the fate of the *disposable worker* described by Harvey.

5. Conclusions

This work has shown that *neoliberalism* emerged in Latin America during the last two decades of the 20th century as the prevailing social, political, economic, and cultural hegemonic mode of discourse that dictated the way individuals should interpret, live in, and understand the world. Its incorporation into world societies motivated changes in social relations, labor force, technology, life styles, but more importantly, it motivated the rise of new forms of contemporary violence which developed and nurtured themselves from the political and economic opportunities that the same neoliberal system has created.

These new forms of neoliberal violence identified in this work as *narcotrafic*, and the relationship *migration-femicides* reveal the continuing effect of colonialism in Latin America within the age of globalization, as the main socio-economic structure of the world market. These new forms of violence, and their literary and cinematic representations within Latin America's interpretation of the neoliberal order during the last three decades - with special emphasis in Colombia and Mexico - , support the idea that violence has never ceased but transformed. This continuity of violence, pertaining to this work, provides an analysis on how violence has never ceased to exist since the colonization or conquest of America and it reveals a historical connection to what we have come to understand as today's neoliberal violence. However, this continuity of violence has been possible due to the changes or transformations suffered by the market and its mentality of wealth accumulation which, directly or indirectly, perpetuate the relationships of domination, exploitation, and oppression of those who have the means to compete within the globalized economic world network over the ones that are left out of that economic network.

In this sense, the agenda of economic expansion of the powerful economic countries continued to exert a violence that adjusted itself to the new demands of the changing patterns of capital accumulation. Thus, drawing on earlier ideas, we see the transition of an economy characterized by the possession and exploitation of nature by means of a trade monopoly of land and manpower through serfdom or slavery (16th and 17th) into an economy based on industrial development and highly characterized by a more intense production and a more clear dependence on the market (18th and 19th). This industrial development gives way to an economy characterized by the domination of big capital in the hegemonic centers, and its expansion abroad through investment in the production of raw materials and agricultural products for consumption in the hegemonic centers (20th) which will eventually transform into an economy based on multinational corporations which invest in modern industries highly characterized by its dependence on technology and on social life relations (21st). What is relevant about these changes in the pattern of capital accumulation is that *violence* itself also underwent a series of parallel transformations to accommodate itself to the necessities of those who have possessed the means to control *it* and use *it* over the less fortunate in a world of globalized economies.

Furthermore, this work also emphasizes that these three distinctive forms of contemporary neoliberal violence - *narcotraffic*, *migration*, and *femicides* – have had (and continue to have) violent political, economic, social, and cultural repercussions in Latin America's way of life. That is why, themes such as economic and social inequalities, corporate power, capital accumulation, marginalization, cultural homogenization, cultural diversity, postmodernism, and economic competitiveness were useful topics in this work to understand how neoliberalism has motivated in individuals, and societies as a whole, a constant search for economic gain, but more importantly how individuals have created their own cultural practices,

their own interpretations of law, and new forms of violence.

In this new configuration of economic power, transnational corporations have played a crucial role by disregarding borders or boundaries, spreading their modern colonial mentality, and adhering more world countries and citizens to their neoliberal agenda under the implications of a desirable economic growth and an active participation and/or performance within the market network. Obviously, what is left out of this progressive neoliberal mentality are the disastrous disadvantages that such economic measures represent for the vast majority being left out of the network.

Nevertheless, one of the key characteristics of this new economic, political, and social world order is the declining of sovereign nation-states. The new sense of power control that *neoliberalism* has created supports a “*decentered* and *detrterritorialized*” apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. In other words, *neoliberalism* advocates for a lack of boundaries which emphasizes no limits for its rule over the world, absence of nation-states, regulations over human social life (*biopolitics*), and enormous powers of oppression and destruction.

In *Violence and Civility*, Étienne Balibar argues that the struggles and the conflicts of today’s world cannot be depicted as an antagonistic battle between *negative* and *positive*, keeping in mind their political expressions, their interpretation of conflict, and their ideological motivations. For Balibar, “violence is not the ‘last resort’ of social and political antagonisms, their ultima ratio, but a condition of permanent horizon of their political evolution in a wide variety of degrees and forms that cross the frontiers of ‘public’ and ‘private’ and pass constantly into one another” (27). In this context, the passage of the structure of colonial rule to neoliberal rule has revealed not only the continuing presence of *violence* as a perpetual tool to carry out and

sustain domination, but also the increasing control over world economies and social life production.

In the context of Colombia and Mexico, this study has shown how *neoliberalism* has created new forms of economic, social, and political marginalization by “selling” the idea of economic growth and economic power. Likewise, these phenomena, under the guise of the capitalistic neoliberal mentality, have continued to reproduce *inequalities* which have encouraged the emergence of violent social problems such as *narcotraffic*, *migration* (mainly of illegal characteristics), and *feminicides*.

In the case of *narcotraffic* -both in Colombia and Mexico-, the neoliberal measures fueled a narco-economy which prospered to the extent of being regarded as a transnational commodity and whose more powerful “weapon” is constituted by its capability to infiltrate and corrupt the political, cultural, and economic spheres of social life. For this purpose, cartel leaders established alliances with the political elite to develop new models of economic, social, and political structure. In this case, we argued that the more *narcotraffic* situates itself within the “legality” of the conventional government structure, the more its illegal activities seem to be less visible. Even though the use of physical violence is still a *must* in many cases, coercion plays a more defining role within the business environment. Thus, we talked about a relationship between cartel power and political power of the state, which somehow complement each other within the present structure of the global market. In sum, we argued that the profitability of the illegal drug industry comes to represent one of the forms of power control of greater appeal not only in Colombia and Mexico, but also in Latin America and the world as a whole. To a great extent, *narcotraffic* has continually involved acts of corruption that touch all the political, economic, and social sectors.

In relation to the literary and cinematic expressions of the theme of *narcotraffic* in this

work, we analyzed the impact that *neoliberalism* and its market mentality have on individuals and their culture. We provided a look at the *sicarios* (*Our Lady of the Assassins* and *Rosario Tijeras*) as key agents of *narcotrafic*'s transnational, crime-oriented organization. These characters try to succeed, through their violent methods, in the neoliberal market system that promotes great economic opportunities and which also encourages a new culture (*postmodern*) from which they feed their desires and actions. We argued that *sicarios* do not have a life project and possess an unlimited capacity for violence. These beings are lost in the neoliberal economic system of *narcotrafic* that uses their "labor" to enrich the capitalistic mentality of mass production. This way, *sicarios*, as stated by Booker "...are treated as interchangeable economic quantities, rather than human beings" (x) and are labeled as *different*, which transforms them, and their violence capacity, into a commodity that can be bought and sold as an art form within the world market.

Moreover, we considered the representations of drug traffickers as *sexual chauvinists*, *materialistic monsters*, and *pop icons*. These representations revealed a *narco.aesthetics* which reinforces drug traffickers' particular *taste* in language, music, architecture, and women, but more importantly in violence. In all these scenarios, the violence exerted is directly associated with the network of patriarchal social relations of Latin American societies; which is also inherent to *narcotrafic*'s apparatus. Thus, the violence against women (in *Perra Brava*), the violence of consumerism (in *Fiesta en la madriguera*), and the violence constructed through the *narcocorridos* (in *Trabajos del reino*) are representations of the embodiment of a patriarchal structure linked to a capitalist system that uses its power of capital to exert domination over those in their organizational structure. Finally, we analyzed the influential impact of the media in understanding *narcotrafic*'s violence as a commodity. The media helps to construct an

aestheticized representation of sexual violence against women, extreme consumerism of goods, and music production as unconventional items of consumption promoted by the subculture of *narcotraffic*.

The correlation *migration-feminicides* was analyzed in relation to the theme of gendered migration with special attention on female cross-border migration movement between the Mexico- U.S. border cities. This possibility for women's migration due, mainly, to economic reasons, opened other possibilities for a new implementation of violence in the border city of Ciudad Juárez (Mexico), also known as the city where "anything goes" or "The City of Crime." The process of massive migration in Ciudad Juárez as a consequence of the implementation and the rapid expansion of the *maquiladoras* in the wake of NAFTA not only altered the city landscape but also altered the social dynamics due to its accelerated form of urbanization and modernization and brought up as a consequence one of the most horrendous forms of neoliberal violence: *feminicides*.

Unquestionably, one of the most controversial issues provoking public interest in the case of the *feminicides* in Ciudad Juárez has to do with the obscure connection between crime, labor, and government which exposed the obscure and coexistent connection between the forces of the state and the forces of crime; both directly interconnected with the investment of capital under the guise of the *maquiladoras* and its high-tech developed form of neoliberal labor. Farred states:

It is capital, source of a fatal "flourishing," that makes Santa Teresa [Ciudad Juárez] possible. That is why the women flock there in the first place, and it is that same self-capital that creates the maquiladora as the space for these women's death. It is not that capitalism makes life precarious, but that life without the attendant precariousness, in Santa Teresa or anywhere else, is an anathema to, an unsustainable within, capitalism. (697)

In this sense, the changes in the socio-economic structure motivated by the arrival of the neoliberal agenda have not only transformed the old forms of capital accumulation and labor into

more flexible ones but have made possible the transformation or metamorphosis of the classical forms of violence into more decentered, deterritorialized, and flexible forms that emphasize a powerful capital and transnational mentality at the hands of a corporate elite that favors high-tech mechanisms to manage and control labor, all aspects of social life, and, more importantly, *violence* as permanent resort to protect its economic interests and power hegemony.

As analyzed in this work, this *neoliberal violence* has motivated the emergence of, and interconnects with, severe social, political, and economic consequences in the form of criminal organizations such as *narcotraffic*, social conflicts such as *migration* and *feminicides*, and reveals that violence has served, throughout history, to strengthen the power of a capitalistic mentality which has always profited through the means of production and labor exploitation and that continues to reproduce inequalities under new circumstances and new forms.

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