



The Wretched of Medellín: A Fanonian Reading of Fernando Vallejo's *La Virgen de los Sicarios*

Les Damnés de Medellín : une lecture fanonienne de *La Virgen de los Sicarios* de Fernando Vallejo

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Abstract: *This paper explores how Franz Fanon's colonial violence theories manifest in Fernando Vallejo's novel *La Virgen de los Sicarios* (1994) and Barbet Schroeder's film adaptation (2000). The research demonstrates that both works fulfill Fanon's predictions about revolutionary violence becoming perverted in neocolonial settings. Vallejo's sicarios embody fragmented colonial subjects within Colombia's neocolonial framework, where transnational capital and drug cartels replace traditional colonial powers while maintaining exploitation patterns. The analysis reveals how potentially liberating violence transforms into commodified self-destruction, examining the ethical implications of representing marginalized violence for privileged consumption.*

Keywords: *neocolonialism, Franz Fanon, *La Virgen de los Sicarios*, postcolonial theory, literary adaptation*

Résumé : *Cette recherche examine comment les théories de la violence coloniale de Franz Fanon se manifestent dans le roman de Fernando Vallejo *La Virgen de los Sicarios* (1994) et son adaptation cinématographique par Barbet Schroeder (2000). L'étude démontre que les deux œuvres accomplissent les prédictions de Fanon concernant la perversion de la violence révolutionnaire dans les contextes néocoloniaux. Les sicarios de Vallejo incarnent des sujets coloniaux fragmentés au sein du cadre néocolonial de la Colombie, où le capital transnational et les cartels de drogue remplacent les puissances coloniales traditionnelles tout en maintenant les modèles d'exploitation.*

Mots-clés : *néocolonialisme, Franz Fanon, *La Virgen de los Sicarios*, théorie postcoloniale, adaptation littéraire*



My discovery of Fernando Vallejo occurred through encountering Barbet Schroeder's cinematic interpretation of *La Virgen de los Sicarios* (2000). The film overwhelmed me with contradictory impressions—its hybrid documentary-fiction form anchored in HD realism through non-professional actors created disturbing authenticity. Beyond its scandalous elements of pedophilia, prostitution, violence, and blasphemy, the work's most shocking aspect was how abnormality appeared normalized. Schroeder's adaptation illuminated Vallejo's distinctive Latin American prose for broader audiences. Examining *La Virgen de los Sicarios* revealed narrative density and character

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originality. Vallejo's unfiltered exploration of Medellín combines burlesque grotesqueness with desperate realism, incorporating magical realism and religious mysticism that grants sicarios quasi-supernatural qualities. The Virgin of Assassins—protector of both city and young killers—completes this exotic yet familiar landscape. Vallejo's iconoclastic vision perpetuates tragic sacrificial rituals while maintaining the aging narrator as cynical witness to social chaos. This paper uses Fanon's theories to make alternative readings of Latin American modern fiction—illustrated by Vallejo's narrative. The central problematic thesis argues that both Vallejo's novel and Schroeder's adaptation demonstrate how liberating violence becomes perverted within Colombian neocolonial contexts into self-destructive cycles destroying the communities it might empower. Colombia exemplifies how neocolonial structures perpetuate conditions Fanon identified in classical colonialism, yet with a crucial perversion: revolutionary energy that should catalyze liberation becomes systematically redirected into fratricidal violence serving the very systems of oppression it could potentially dismantle. The study posits that Vallejo's sicarios embody what we term "fragmented neocolonial subjects"—individuals possessing the anger and revolutionary potential Fanon identified as necessary for decolonization, but lacking the political consciousness to direct this energy against actual oppressive structures.

This investigation pursues three interconnected objectives that extend Fanon's colonial violence theories to contemporary neocolonial dynamics in Latin America, examine how literary and cinematic representations function as diagnostic tools while interrogating their complicity within neocolonial cultural markets, and contribute to Colombian violence literature scholarship by providing theoretical frameworks that move beyond testimonial readings toward systematic analysis of how cultural production reveals and potentially resists neocolonial control mechanisms. The study employs a postcolonial comparative methodology that synthesizes Fanonian decolonial theory with literary and film analysis, integrating macro-structural examination of global economic forces, meso-institutional investigation of local comprador elites and state violence, and micro-subjective analysis of how characters embody neocolonial subjectification while developing original syntheses of Fanonian concepts with contemporary decolonial theory.

1. Methodological Framework

This research employs a critical hermeneutic methodology that combines close textual analysis with socio-political contextualization, recognizing that cultural texts both reflect and actively construct social reality while acknowledging the researcher's positioned perspective within academic institutions that may reproduce some neocolonial dynamics under critique. The methodology develops a dialectical comparative approach that examines how different media illuminate distinct aspects of neocolonial dynamics, revealing how literary interiority and cinematic materiality provide complementary insights into psychological and structural dimensions of neocolonial violence rather than treating novel and film as separate objects. The study employs detailed close reading techniques attending to linguistic choices, narrative structures, character development, and symbolic systems within broader social and political contexts, extending to cinematographic techniques, casting choices, and visual symbolism for film analysis. Given the sensitive nature of representing violence and marginalized communities, the methodology incorporates decolonial ethics of representation that take seriously power relationships inherent in academic knowledge production while working toward more

equitable engagement with marginalized experience. The interdisciplinary integration draws from literary criticism, film studies, postcolonial theory, Latin American studies, and critical sociology to develop what Walter Mignolo calls "border thinking"—analytical approaches that exceed disciplinary boundaries to address complex social phenomena while maintaining reflexive awareness that informs analytical approach without paralyzing critical investigation.

2. Theoretical Framework: Fanon's Colonial Violence in Neocolonial Contexts

2.1. Latin American Literary Trajectory

Latin American literature's evolution from magical realism toward post-Boom urban narratives reflects a paradigmatic shift confronting violence as aesthetic and epistemological crisis. Roberto Bolaño's *2666* and *The Savage Detectives* position Vallejo within continental discourse interrogating literary representation's limits when facing systematic brutality. Héctor Abad Faciolince's memoir *Oblivion* exemplifies Colombian literature's movement from García Márquez's mythical Macondo toward testimonial urban violence narratives, complementing Vallejo's fictional exploration of Medellín during narco-violence periods. Jorge Franco's *Rosario Tijeras* establishes "sicaresca" as distinctly Colombian subgenre, dialoguing with Vallejo through marginal youth culture examination while maintaining regional traditions combining social realism with innovative narrative techniques. Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's *Dirty Havana Trilogy* parallels Vallejo's urban degradation aesthetic within broader Latin American engagement with neoliberal social fragmentation, contributing to "literatura del desencanto" characterizing fin-de-siècle regional fiction. These works collectively signal Latin American literature's definitive break from optimistic revolutionary narratives of the 1960s-70s Boom, establishing "post-utopian" writing employing violence not as exotic spectacle but as foundational condition of contemporary urban experience, repositioning regional literary production within global discussions of postmodernity, trauma, and representational ethics.

2.2. Critical Scholarship on Vallejo

Academic engagement with *Our Lady of the Assassins* has developed along multiple trajectories since publication, with early studies emphasizing testimonial dimensions and relationships to Colombian violence literature. Héctor Hoyos positions Vallejo within post-Boom generation's globalized violence engagement, arguing that fragmented narrative structure mirrors epistemological crisis produced by systematic urban brutality in neoliberal Latin America. María Helena Rueda examines how Vallejo's auto-fictional strategy functions as witness testimony and aesthetic object, contributing to debates about ethical limits of extreme violence representation in Colombian letters. Santiago Colás and Gareth Williams situate the novel within postmodern frameworks, with Colás emphasizing national allegory deconstruction and Williams analyzing negotiation between high literary culture and marginal urban experience. Ana María Amar Sánchez emphasizes the novel's position within "escrituras del desencanto," analyzing how Vallejo's cynical narrator embodies collapsed leftist utopian projects in fin-de-siècle Latin America. Luz Mary Giraldo examines controversial reception in Colombian literary circles, particularly regarding national representation questions and violence commodification for international markets.

2.3. Fanonian Neocolonial Control Mechanisms

Fanon's colonial violence analysis provides essential groundwork for understanding neocolonial control through physical and psychological mechanisms. In Colombian contexts, neocolonialism operates through exploitation chains: transnational capital employs Colombian comprador elites deploying state violence for territorial control and resource extraction, while psychological violence internalizes oppression to fragment resistance. Medellín's devastating drug trade represents both symptom and mechanism of neocolonial control. While appearing to challenge state authority, narcotics economy serves neocolonial interests by creating parallel violence structures preventing organized resistance to extraction industries while providing markets for weapons and financial services controlled by international capital. Fanon's framework offers significant insights when examining Colombia's postcolonial trajectory and persistent structural inequalities. His psychological colonization analysis becomes particularly relevant for understanding how Colombian elites internalized European values while systematically marginalizing indigenous and Afro-descendant populations. Economic dependency structures Fanon critiqued are evident in Colombia's continued raw material export reliance and foreign capital dependence.

3. Socio-Historical Context

3.1. Comprador Elite and Racialized Stratification

Colombian society employs skin color as fundamental parameter determining social integration and mobility, with skin tone gradation indicating bourgeoisification levels and elite proximity. This pigmentocracy establishes hierarchical systems where European phenotypic features correlate directly with economic opportunities, political influence, and social capital access, while darker skin tones systematically exclude individuals from power and privilege networks. Colombia's ruling class exemplifies what Fanon identified as comprador bourgeoisie—local elites serving transnational capital while deploying state violence to suppress popular resistance and maintain privileged positions. This class perpetuates dominance through systematic exclusion of racialized populations from meaningful political participation, employing institutional mechanisms and extralegal violence to prevent authority challenges. Psychological violence that Fanon theorized as fundamental to colonial domination manifests in contemporary Colombia through educational curricula and media representations systematically teaching marginalized populations to internalize responsibility for structural inequality while celebrating foreign investment and neoliberal policies as inevitable progress markers. This internalized oppression creates psychosocial conditions where young men like Vallejo's sicarios misdirect legitimate revolutionary energy against their own communities—engaging in fratricidal barrio violence—rather than organizing collective resistance against neocolonial systems systematically marginalizing and dehumanizing them.

3.2. Medellín as Neocolonial Space

In Vallejo's narrative, Medellín functions as complex chronotope where spatial organization reflects and reproduces neocolonial hierarchies. Vertical geography—from wealthy neighborhoods to hillside comunas—mirrors social stratification enabling violence while serving local elite and transnational capital interests. The city becomes a "neocolonial

palimpsest" where colonial, modern, and postmodern layers exist simultaneously, revealing how historical exploitation patterns persist through new mechanisms. The narrator's temporal displacement reflects not merely personal nostalgia but broader neocolonial subject conditions caught between autonomous community memories and systematic fragmentation reality. Comunas function as internal colonies within larger neocolonial structures, spaces where states maintain sovereignty through violence while abandoning social responsibility. This creates conditions where young men must survive between state abandonment and criminal employment, embodying fragmented subjectivity Fanon identified as characteristic of colonial conditions.

4. Literary Analysis: Neocolonial Violence in Vallejo's Novel

4.1. The Narrator's Neocolonial Perspective

Fernando Vallejo's narrator returns to Medellín after decades abroad, embodying the expatriate intellectual who internalized European values and perspectives. His initial attitude demonstrates neocolonial thinking markers through refined Spanish contrasting sharply with local vernacular, consistent grammar corrections as superiority markers, and complex literary references establishing intellectual dominance over local populations. Fernando's brothel visit represents his initial transactional city approach, establishing patterns where everything becomes purchasable. This economic disparity reflects colonial exploitation of local resources and people, positioning him as someone satisfying desires through monetary exchange. His purchasing ability in extreme poverty contexts grants tremendous power over local populations, reinforcing superiority and distance from Medellín's brutal social crisis realities. However, Fernando's relationship with Alexis marks transformation from colonial observer to emotionally invested participant. What begins as economic transaction—literally purchasing Alexis's companionship—gradually evolves into genuine emotional attachment. Through Alexis, Fernando confronts Medellín violence's brutal reality, as the young sicario's casual death relationship and matter-of-fact murder discussions initially shock but gradually humanize social crisis he had only observed from privileged distance. Fernando's transformation illustrates Vallejo's broader critique of Colombian society and intellectual class relationships to violence and poverty. The narrator's journey from detached, privileged observer to emotionally invested participant mirrors Colombian intellectuals' need for authentic engagement with their country's crisis.

4.2. Revolutionary Energy Appropriation

Vallejo's most significant portrayal aspect involves how completely revolutionary energy becomes captured by market mechanisms. Sicarios represent "neocolonial subjects"—individuals possessing anger and energy Fanon identified as necessary for liberation but lacking political consciousness to direct this energy against actual oppressive structures. Instead, their violence serves neocolonial systems by eliminating potential resistance while creating weapons markets, providing surplus population employment, and justifying state violence against marginalized communities. Vallejo illustrates this capture through Alexis, whose violent capabilities represent raw energy potentially challenging systemic oppression. When Alexis eliminates the punk insulting Fernando on metro, his actions demonstrate decisive force revolutionary movements historically require. However, this energy divorces from political consciousness or collective solidarity. Alexis describes his

work with professional detachment, as if discussing ordinary employment. This reveals how completely sicarios internalized market logic—their revolutionary energy becomes labor power serving systems oppressing them.

4.3. Internalized Neocolonial Values

Sicarios internalized their oppressors' values while directing these values against their own communities. They measure success through international commodity consumption—branded clothing, weapons, motorcycles—connecting them to global markets while remaining excluded from global integration benefits. This reflects psychological dimensions of neocolonial control Fanon analyzed: colonized subjects adopt colonizer material culture while remaining excluded from real power. Alexis's brand-name clothing obsession demonstrates how global consumer culture functions as psychological colonization. His insistence on authentic Nike shoes and Calvin Klein clothing shows how sicarios measure worth through international brands while remaining excluded from legitimate economic structures. They become global culture consumers while being denied global economy citizenship. Sicarios' Virgin Mary devotion represents complex internalized neocolonial values. Alexis wears religious medallions alongside consumer symbols and weapons, praying before murders serving structures oppressing his community. Religious consciousness becomes colonized by values legitimizing violence against his own people.

4.4. The Narrator as Consumer and Observer

Fernando embodies educated bourgeois subject positions becoming voyeuristic authentic violence consumers. His sicario relationships reflect broader dynamics through which neocolonial culture transforms marginalized experience into consumable content for privileged audiences, both national and international. This character functions as intellectual complicity critique with neocolonial structures—those benefiting from systematic inequality while seeking authentic experience through victim contact. Fernando's return to Medellín after comfortable exile represents how educated elites maintain emotional violence connections while remaining insulated from material consequences. His relationship with Alexis functions as both genuine affection and voyeuristic consumption—he's drawn to Alexis because the young man represents authentic connection to violence Fernando escaped through privilege. Incapable of transforming city and sicario social reality, Fernando endorses voyeur roles. He becomes violence anthropologist, cataloguing sicario customs with detached fascination. His ability to appreciate violence aesthetic dimensions—style, rituals, intensity—reveals his distance from marginalization's material reality.

5. Cinematic Translation: Schroeder's Neocolonial Realism

During film release, Schroeder explained his connection with Fernando Vallejo, sharing Colombian anchorage (he lived in Colombia from ages 6 to 11). He revealed filming difficulties in a country where people lived under constant pressure. With filming crews, they organized fake shootings and simulations to escape harassment and censorship. When asked about the novel, Schroeder affirmed discomfort with the novel's violence, reducing murder numbers for the script while attempting maximum fidelity to original text. Schroeder's 2000 film adaptation represents sophisticated transformation from literary text to cinematic experience. Rather than pursuing literal adaptation, Schroeder approached

Vallejo's work as source material creating what critics characterized as poetry based on autobiographical novels, developing what *Filmmaker Magazine* described as "magical miserabilism" portraying impossible love against Medellín's violent backdrop.

5.1. Documentary Aesthetics and Material Conditions

Schroeder's documentary-influenced approach creates "neocolonial realism"—cinematic style revealing how abstract economic structures manifest in concrete social and urban spaces. The film demonstrates how neocolonial violence operates not as chaos but as organized terror serving specific economic and political interests. Contrasts between Medellín's natural beauty and systematic violence evidence create visual equivalents to Fanon's analysis of how colonialism destroys organic relationships between people and their environment.

5.2. Autentic Performance and Neocolonial Subjectivity

Casting non-professional actors from depicted communities reflects Fanon's emphasis on allowing colonized subjects to speak for themselves. Anderson Ballesteros and Juan David Restrepo bring lived experience revealing violence social roots while demonstrating humanity neocolonial systems seek to eliminate. These performances show how young men navigate between multiple violence forms—structural exclusion violence, direct criminal employment violence, and cultural stigmatization violence—while retaining community solidarity traces and personal dignity.

5.3. Self-Reflexive Critique of Neocolonial Observation

Schroeder's most sophisticated contribution involves self-reflexive representation treatment. The film reveals how watching marginalized violence acts can become neocolonial consumption forms, where international audiences consume authentic experience while remaining disconnected from structures producing it. This critique extends to broader mechanisms through which neocolonial culture operates—transforming human suffering into cultural commodities providing emotional satisfaction while obscuring political and economic relationships creating such suffering.

6. Comparative Analysis: Cultural Production and Neocolonial Resistance

This comparative analysis examines how Fernando Vallejo's novel *La Virgen de Los Sicarios* (1994) and Barbet Schroeder's film adaptation (2000) employ distinct medium-specific strategies to represent neocolonial violence in Medellín. While both works engage with the same socio-political crisis, their different formal approaches—literary subjectivity versus cinematic objectivity—produce complementary yet divergent critical perspectives on Colombian marginality, state violence, and the commodification of death within neoliberal capitalism. The following table delineates key formal and thematic differences that illuminate how each medium constructs its critique of neocolonial power structures.

Table 1 : Novel vs. Film Comparaison

Aspect	Novel (1994)	Film (2000)
Narrative Approach	First-person subjective consciousness	Third-person objective visual presentation
Language Treatment	Harsh social critique through profanity	Softened through visual medium authenticity
Character Development	Unreliable narrator; abstract sicarios	Sympathetic Fernando; humanized sicarios
Violence Representation	Voyeuristic literary description	Visceral documentary realism
Geographic Setting	Memory-filtered Medellín descriptions	Actual conflict-period locations
Religious Symbolism	Critical verbal irony	Visual juxtaposition allowing interpretation
Sicario Portrayal	Colonial gaze filtering; dehumanization	Direct presence; authentic performances
Class Commentary	Explicit hierarchical discussions	Implicit visual contrasts
Political Critique	Direct narratorial commentary	Indirect documentary aesthetics
Fanonian Violence	Intellectual theoretical discussion	Embodied performative representation

This table displays the ways how medium specificity shapes neocolonial violence representation. Vallejo's literary approach allows explicit ideological critique through narrator consciousness, while Schroeder's cinematic translation emphasizes material conditions and authentic marginalized subject presence. The novel's subjective filter exposes colonial gaze more directly, whereas film documentary aesthetic creates space for sicario subjectivity to emerge unmediated. Both approaches serve complementary functions analyzing neocolonial dynamics—literature revealing psychological mechanisms while cinema demonstrating material manifestations.

6.1. Fanonian Theory Applications

The following analysis applies Frantz Fanon's theoretical framework on decolonization and revolutionary violence to Fernando Vallejo's *La Virgen de los Sicarios*, revealing both convergences and significant departures from Fanonian thought. While Fanon theorized violence as potentially liberating and transformative within colonial contexts, Vallejo's narrative presents a more pessimistic vision that challenges the redemptive possibilities of anti-colonial violence. This comparative framework illuminates how contemporary neocolonial conditions in Latin America may require theoretical adaptations that account

for the persistent entrapment within cycles of violence that fail to achieve Fanon's envisioned liberation.

Table 2: The Fanonian Lens

Fanonian Concept	Theoretical Framework	Vallejo's Application
Liberating Violence	Revolutionary violence cleanses and enables authentic freedom	Sicario violence lacks revolutionary purpose—cyclical destructive warfare without liberation
Colonial Psychological Damage	Colonial experience fragments identity and consciousness	Fernando's post-exile alienation; disconnection from authentic Colombian identity
Historical Determination	Colonial past determines present; history as burden requiring transformation	Medellín violence rooted in historical patterns; characters trapped by unchangeable social forces
Dispossessed Masses	Urban dispossessed as revolutionary change agents	Young assassins represent urban dispossessed serving destructive rather than transformative roles

This Fanonian analysis reveals *La Virgen de Los Sicarios* as both an extension and critique of anti-colonial theory when applied to contemporary neocolonial contexts. Vallejo's narrative demonstrates how Fanon's revolutionary optimism—his belief in violence as a purifying force capable of restoring authentic subjectivity and collective consciousness—encounters its limits within the specific conditions of Colombian neoliberal violence. Where Fanon envisioned the "wretched of the Earth" as potential agents of historical transformation, Vallejo presents the sicarios as figures trapped within what might be termed "neocolonial nihilism"—a condition where revolutionary consciousness remains perpetually deferred and violence becomes purely destructive rather than constructive. The novel's young assassins embody Fanon's "dispossessed masses" but lack the historical consciousness necessary for transformative action, instead serving as instruments of cyclical destruction that reinforces rather than challenges existing power structures. Fernando's character represents the intellectual bourgeoisie's inability to bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and revolutionary praxis—a figure who recognizes colonial psychological damage but remains incapable of participating in its healing. His alienation reflects what could be understood as "postcolonial melancholia," where the subject remains suspended between colonial consciousness and decolonized possibility without achieving authentic transformation. Table 3 (below) illustrates the main divergences between Fanon's philosophy and Vallejo's vision

Table 3 : Theoretical Tensions

Fanonian Vision	Vallejo's Counter-Narrative
Liberating Violence	Violence as endless repetition without redemption
Historical Progress	History as inescapable trap; transformation impossibility
Revolutionary Consciousness	Consciousness remains fragmented and alienated
Collective Redemption	Individual isolation; violence-destroyed community bonds

This table highlights fundamental tension between Fanon's revolutionary optimism and Vallejo's neocolonial pessimism. While Fanon envisions violence as transformative force breaking colonial chains, Vallejo presents violence as historically determined fate perpetuating rather than breaking oppression cycles. Sicarios embody Fanon's dispossessed masses but without revolutionary potential—they become historical determinism products rather than historical change agents. This divergence illuminates how neocolonial mechanisms evolved to capture and redirect revolutionary energy into self-destructive cycles serving existing power structures. The novel's departure from Fanonian optimism suggests that contemporary neocolonial conditions may require theoretical frameworks that account for the ways in which global capitalism and drug economies create new forms of entrapment that resist traditional liberation narratives. Rather than rejecting Fanonian insights, Vallejo's work points toward the need for evolved anti-colonial theories that address the persistent reproduction of colonial relations within formally independent postcolonial states.

6.2. Complementary Neocolonial Dynamic Explorations

Both Vallejo's novel and Schroeder's film function as sophisticated diagnostic tools for understanding how neocolonial violence operates through the complex intersection of global economic structures and local psychological dynamics. This complementarity reveals the multidimensional nature of contemporary neocolonialism, which operates simultaneously through material and ideological mechanisms that require distinct analytical approaches to fully comprehend. Vallejo's literary exploration of interior colonial mentality provides crucial insight into how neocolonial subjects internalize and reproduce hierarchical violence through psychological mechanisms that persist long after formal decolonization. His narrator Fernando embodies what might be termed the "neocolonial intellectual"—a figure who possesses critical consciousness regarding structural inequality yet remains psychologically invested in maintaining cultural and class distinctions that reproduce colonial relations. This internal colonization manifests through language, aesthetic preferences, sexual relationships, and spatial navigation of the city, revealing how neocolonial power operates through the intimate sphere of subjectivity. Schroeder's materialist demonstration complements this psychological analysis by showing how these internalized mentalities manifest concretely in social space through institutional arrangements, economic relationships, and embodied practices. The film's documentary aesthetic captures the material conditions—spatial segregation, economic marginalization, state absence—that create the structural context within which colonial mentalities reproduce themselves. By focusing on authentic locations and non-professional actors, the film reveals how neocolonial violence is not merely psychological but deeply embedded in the organization of urban space, labor relations, and access to resources.

Together, these works reveal the sophisticated mechanisms through which neocolonialism maintains control in the absence of direct colonial administration. First, they demonstrate how neocolonial power creates internal violence markets that channel resistance energy into self-destructive cycles rather than collective organization against structural inequality. The sicario economy represents a paradigmatic example of how global drug markets create local employment opportunities that simultaneously serve international capital accumulation while destroying community solidarity and political consciousness. Second, both works illuminate how neocolonial strategies fragment working-class solidarity

across racial, territorial, and generational lines. The violence between different barrios and sicario groups prevents the formation of broader coalitions that might challenge the economic structures generating marginalization. This fragmentation serves neocolonial interests by ensuring that the urban dispossessed remain divided against themselves rather than organizing against the systemic forces creating their dispossession. Third, they reveal how neocolonial power structures successfully channel legitimate resistance impulses into forms of violence that ultimately serve existing power relationships. The sicarios' rebellion against poverty and marginalization becomes co-opted into a violence economy that reinforces rather than challenges the very structures creating their exclusion, demonstrating the sophisticated ways in which neocolonial power neutralizes resistance by incorporating it into its own reproduction mechanisms.

6.3. Neocolonial Representation Ethics

Both works engage with fundamental ethical questions about representing marginalized violence for consumption by privileged audiences within neocolonial cultural markets. This ethical dimension reflects broader questions about cultural production's role in either reproducing or challenging neocolonial power relations through the politics of representation, consumption, and cultural exchange. The ethical complexity emerges from the recognition that any representation of marginalized violence risks becoming complicit in what could be termed "neocolonial voyeurism"—the consumption of subaltern suffering by privileged audiences in ways that provide aesthetic pleasure or moral satisfaction without generating genuine solidarity or structural change. Both Vallejo and Schroeder demonstrate awareness of this risk through their formal strategies: Vallejo's unreliable narrator explicitly thematizes the bourgeois gaze's problematic relationship to marginalized suffering, while Schroeder's documentary approach attempts to minimize the filtering effects of elite consciousness by allowing marginalized subjects to appear with greater agency and authenticity. However, both works also demonstrate the potential for cultural production to contribute meaningfully to understanding and solidarity when approached with appropriate ethical frameworks. They suggest that responsible representation requires acknowledging the power relationships inherent in cultural production while working to create possibilities for more equitable engagement with marginalized experiences. This involves what might be called "neocolonial cultural ethics"—representational approaches that take seriously the colonial legacies embedded in cultural institutions while working to transform them into instruments of decolonial understanding. The ethical framework emerging from both works suggests several principles for responsible cultural engagement with neocolonial violence. First, the necessity of reflexivity regarding the producer's own position within neocolonial structures and the ways this position shapes representational choices. Second, the importance of creating space for marginalized subjects to appear as agents rather than mere objects of representation, even while acknowledging the structural limitations on such agency. Third, the commitment to using cultural production not merely for aesthetic consumption but as a tool for generating critical consciousness and solidarity with decolonial struggles. The novel and the film ultimately suggest that the ethics of representing neocolonial violence cannot be resolved through formal strategies alone but requires ongoing engagement with the political and economic contexts within which cultural production occurs. This involves acknowledging that cultural works themselves become commodities within neocolonial

markets while working to maximize their potential for generating critical understanding rather than mere consumption.

7. Contemporary Neocolonialism Understanding Implications

7.1. Colonial Psychology Persistence

The enduring relevance of Fanonian analysis lies in its demonstration of how colonial psychology persists and adapts through new mechanisms within formally decolonized societies. Rather than disappearing with political independence, colonial subjectivity transforms itself to operate within neocolonial conditions, creating new forms of psychological fragmentation and alienation that serve contemporary power structures. The sicarios in both works embody the fragmented subjectivity that Fanon identified as characteristic of colonial violence while operating within economic structures that maintain dependency relationships with international capital. Their psychological condition reflects what might be termed "neocolonial schizophrenia"—a splitting of consciousness that results from the simultaneous experience of formal equality and structural exclusion, of national sovereignty and economic dependency, of cultural pride and material marginalization.

This fragmented subjectivity manifests through several mechanisms that both works explore. First, the internalization of racial and class hierarchies that position marginalized subjects as inherently inferior while simultaneously celebrating their "authenticity" or "street knowledge." Second, the temporal fragmentation that results from living within economic structures that offer no meaningful future while being surrounded by consumption imagery that promises immediate gratification. Third, the spatial fragmentation that results from urban segregation patterns that create parallel worlds of wealth and poverty within the same geographical space. The sicarios' violence serves neocolonial interests precisely because it emerges from and reinforces this psychological fragmentation. Rather than developing the revolutionary consciousness that Fanon envisioned as emerging from colonial violence, the sicarios remain trapped within what could be called "neocolonial nihilism"—a condition where violence becomes purely destructive rather than transformative, serving to prevent the organization necessary for collective resistance while providing justification for state violence and international intervention. The two works demonstrate how this psychological condition is not simply a remnant of colonial history but is actively reproduced through contemporary economic and cultural mechanisms. The drug economy creates employment opportunities that require psychological numbing and moral fragmentation, while media representations provide identification models that celebrate violence while obscuring its structural causes. Educational and religious institutions continue to reproduce colonial hierarchies while claiming to serve liberation, creating the ideological confusion that prevents clear analysis of structural conditions. The persistence of colonial psychology within neocolonial conditions suggests that decolonization requires not only political and economic transformation but also sustained attention to the psychological mechanisms through which colonial relations reproduce themselves at the level of subjectivity. This involves developing new therapeutic and pedagogical approaches that address the specific forms of trauma and fragmentation created by neocolonial conditions while building the collective consciousness necessary for structural transformation.

7.2. Cultural Production as Neocolonial Analysis

Vallejo and Schroeder demonstrate the capacity of literature and cinema to serve as sophisticated instruments for analyzing neocolonial dynamics while simultaneously raising critical questions about their own complicity within neocolonial cultural markets. This dual function—analytical tool and potential reproduction mechanism—reflects the contradictory position of cultural production within neocolonial conditions. As analytical instruments, both works provide insights into neocolonial operations that purely academic or journalistic approaches might miss. Literature's capacity for exploring interiority allows access to the psychological mechanisms through which neocolonial subjects experience and reproduce colonial relations, while cinema's embodied presence creates opportunities for marginalized subjects to appear with greater agency and complexity than traditional representational forms allow. Together, they demonstrate how cultural production can contribute to what might be called "decolonial epistemology" - ways of knowing that emerge from and serve liberation struggles rather than reproducing colonial knowledge hierarchies. However, both works also acknowledge their own positioning within cultural markets that operate according to neocolonial logics. The international circulation of both novel and film involves their consumption by audiences whose relationship to Colombian marginalization is mediated by their own positions within global hierarchies of power and privilege. This creates the possibility that even critical representations of neocolonial violence might serve to reinforce rather than challenge existing power relations by providing aesthetic satisfaction or moral superiority without generating genuine solidarity or structural change. The ethical framework emerging from both works suggests that authentic engagement with neocolonial conditions requires both theoretical understanding and embodied encounter, while acknowledging the ethical responsibilities that such encounters entail. This involves recognizing that cultural consumption alone cannot substitute for political engagement, while also acknowledging cultural production's potential to contribute to the development of critical consciousness necessary for effective political action. Both works point toward the possibility of what could be called "decolonial cultural practice"—approaches to cultural production and consumption that explicitly serve liberation struggles rather than reproducing colonial relations. This involves developing new forms of cultural circulation that connect marginalized communities across national boundaries while avoiding the appropriation mechanisms characteristic of neocolonial cultural markets. It also involves creating cultural forms that contribute to the development of collective consciousness and political organization rather than merely providing individual aesthetic experience. The implications for contemporary cultural practice involve several key principles. First, the necessity of reflexivity regarding the producer's and consumer's own positioning within neocolonial structures and the ways this positioning shapes cultural engagement. Second, the importance of developing cultural forms that serve marginalized communities' own liberation struggles rather than external consumption. Third, the commitment to using cultural production as a tool for building the collective consciousness and political organization necessary for structural transformation rather than merely providing aesthetic or moral satisfaction for privileged audiences.

Conclusion

Fernando Vallejo's *Our Lady of the Assassins* and Barbet Schroeder's film adaptation represent sophisticated explorations of how Franz Fanon's colonial violence theories

manifest in contemporary neocolonial contexts. Both works demonstrate Fanon's analysis accuracy while revealing how neocolonial mechanisms evolved to maintain colonial relationships through new forms of economic dependency, cultural domination, and systematic violence. The Colombian case illuminates how neocolonialism operates through transnational capital, local comprador elite, and internalized oppression intersections creating conditions where revolutionary energy becomes systematically redirected into self-destructive violence. Sicarios embody tragic consequences when revolutionary consciousness fails to accompany revolutionary energy, resulting in community fragmentation that might otherwise resist neocolonial exploitation. The novel and its adaptation reveal how neocolonial violence functions not as chaos but as organized terror serving specific economic and political interests. The drug trade, rather than representing state authority resistance, actually serves neocolonial structures by creating parallel violence economies preventing organized resistance to extraction industries while providing markets for international weapons and financial services. Literary and cinematic explorations function as complementary investigations of mechanisms through which neocolonial systems maintain control: violence commodification, oppressive value internalization, and collective solidarity fragmentation. They demonstrate how cultural production can serve as both diagnostic tool for understanding neocolonial dynamics and potential instrument for developing political consciousness necessary for authentic liberation.

Most significantly, both works warn about consequences of revolutionary energy divorced from political organization within neocolonial frameworks. They suggest genuine decolonization requires not just opposition to oppressive structures but simultaneous construction of new consciousness forms and community capable of sustaining alternative ways of being that resist neocolonial capture. These works' enduring relevance lies in their capacity to transform audiences from passive marginalized violence consumers into active participants understanding and addressing neocolonial conditions producing such violence. They reveal how neocolonialism operates through internalizing values presenting exploitation as natural while criminalizing resistance, thereby maintaining dependency relationships serving transnational capital while fragmenting local solidarity. Ultimately, both Vallejo's novel and Schroeder's oeuvres demonstrate that effective neocolonialism resistance requires understanding how colonial psychology persists through new mechanisms while developing cultural production forms contributing to political consciousness and ethical engagement genuine liberation requires. They function not merely as cultural artifacts but as instruments in ongoing decolonization work, revealing both neocolonial control mechanisms and resistance possibilities emerging through critical engagement with marginalized experience.

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