

**Otra Vez Fernando Vallejo:
On the Virtues of Effective Testimony
and Self-Fashioned Marginality in
*La virgen de los sicarios***

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*What grows best in the heat: fantasy; unreason; lust.
(Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*)*

Introduction

One of the most controversial novels to appear in the literary context of Latin America at the end of the 20th century, Fernando Vallejo's *La virgen de los sicarios* could be easily perceived as an ambiguous project of (self)representation. The presence of a narrator/protagonist whose name is a homonym of the author's, and who shares with him a substantial number of biographical similarities, problematizes the reception of the novel as an entirely fictional work. Also, Vallejo's fulminating and desacralizing tone does not hinder the authorial intention of reorganizing the present of the Colombian nation from a marginal perspective by demolishing its most sacred institutions, whether these are founded on social, political, or religious traditions. Vallejo's *La virgen de los sicarios* presents otherness and marginality

as a discursive rhetoric that challenges what the Establishment has come to define as the Other. The idiosyncratic self-determinism one encounters in the novel and its revisionist impetus regarding the fate of the nation rely heavily on the characterization of the narrator as an individual whose authority to speak on behalf of Colombia emanates from Vallejo, the writer, and the position he occupies in society.

By relating his experience of material and spiritual exile to that of Colombia's *sicarios*, Vallejo's protagonist-narrator articulates a message that is not only sympathetic to the reality of a particular subaltern class but also implies a form of marginal discourse on the grounds of performance and association. In what follows, I will analyze how the artifice of the authorial signature in *La virgen de los sicarios* works as a textual façade and as a mode of enunciation that utilizes the ambiguity of the author's homonymous character as the principle for validating the textual performance of the authorial self as an ambiguous truth. As I will argue, Vallejo's rhetoric disturbs the notion of the truth regarding the enunciation of the Colombian *sicario* who, in turn, is advanced alongside with the figure of the author as a legitimate agent in process of signifying the historical nation.

Signature and Virtuality

By inscribing his Self in the text through the device of a homonymous signature, thus performing the double-role of "witness and protagonist of his own story" (Bernal 64),¹ Vallejo, the writer, recreates his Self in a representative image that brings the fictive stance of the novel to an ontological crisis. The authorial presence within the borders of the text paradoxically postulates the author's own life and writing as a singular form of articulation, a postmodern paradigm of representation that displaces the subject in favor of its fragmentation, or as Jameson has noted "the end of the autonomous bourgeois monad or ego or individual" (71). When Vallejo's identity as a homosexual and as an exile is placed in parallel to that of his narrator-protagonist, who shares these biographical characteristics, the text risks confusion on the grounds of its proximity to what is diffusely acknowledged as the truth about the origins of the authorial figure. As the reader may notice, the name "Fernando" in *La virgen de los sicarios* narrative defines the symbolic presence of the author only on page 78, when Alexis warns the narrator about the bullets coming from other assassins in charged with exterminating the young *sicario*. From the

beginning of the novel to the account of Alexis' s death, Vallejo's signature is ambiguously implied in the text through the autobiographical tone of the narrative as well as the commonality of Vallejo's use of a homonymous "autofictional" narrator throughout his body of works² (See Forest).

The textual artifice of self-inscription, common to all of Vallejo's novels, implies the authorial presence as not only he who is responsible for the content of the writing but also as someone who is the object of the narrative itself. This consequentially underscores that the principle of representation is governed by a conscious initiative that poses the authorial life as a point of departure for the writing. Certainly, it could be argued that any act of textual representation is intrinsically dependent on the authorial knowledge and his/her experience in translating a particular understanding of life to the textual form. However, as the Barthean paradigm of the "birth of the reader in the death of the author" suggests, the truth of the authorial Self in the deciphering of a particular text may constitute an illusion. The experience of the reader in his/her particular socioeconomic/historical context and knowledge is what ultimately gives ideological direction to a text. As Barthes argues, texts are not merely:

[A] line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but [it is rather] a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres [sic] of culture. (145-46)

However, it is still possible to argue that the illusion of an author's existence within a given text can still persuade the reader to come to a particular understanding of the writing. In spite of *La virgen de los sicarios* ambiguous position on fiction and factuality in reference to the narrative "I," the authorial identity still emerges as a force capable of promoting the textual Self as a reality derived from the experience of the writing, as is the case with autobiographies. Consistently verisimilar to certain aspects of its author's life, and yet connotatively hyperbolic, Vallejo's novel promotes the authorial Self beyond fictional boundaries. The author's signature evokes a type of autobiographical sincerity that effectively promotes the novel as a personal account. This literary strategy ultimately causes Vallejo's

fiction to lose its opacity as it becomes a “threat” to the reality outside the text inasmuch as the author’s self-referentiality reaffirms the novel as an imitation of what is commonly apprehended as life. Invention becomes, therefore, mitigated as *La virgen de los sicarios* is advanced as a biographical account that is ambivalent to both the truth of one’s Self and the falsehoods implied in one’s strategies for articulating identity.

This is not to say that the implications of the authorial signature within the margins of *La virgen de los sicarios*’s narrative should lead one to a strict autobiographical appreciation of the work. Nor does the affirmed fictional nature of Vallejo’s novel imply the complete dismissal of the work as a type of memorial project. Vallejo’s signature in the text, if anything, reaffirms the paradigm of self-representation as a variable process of articulation that is intimately tied with ideological necessities. The strength of the author’s poetics resides precisely in the ability of his signature to endow the textual message with a type of authenticity that is often dismissed under the emblem of fiction, but is nonetheless frequently embraced within the premises of the autobiography. The autofictional or autobiographical artifice functions both as a textual façade and an excusatory mode of enunciation that utilizes ambiguity as a rhetorical principle for validating the subjectivity of the Self and its message within the fictional milieu.

Indeed, to approach Vallejo’s homonymous narrator as the authorial figure himself would constitute the dangerous act of allowing the supplement—in this case, *La virgen de los sicarios*’ signature—to become “the complete presence of the author” (Derrida 144). Surely, a certain level of skepticism is often necessary when considering the textual Self a faithful and unbiased project of representation, for the mystification generated from the proposition of one’s being in the form of a text unavoidably leads to literality, which in itself is always restrictive of meaning. Commenting during an online interview with Antonio Ortuño on the artifice of the homonymous protagonist of his novels, Vallejo affirms:

Cuando uno empieza a pasarse al papel, se empieza a traicionar. La palabra es superior a la imagen, pero es también inmensamente limitada para captar lo complejo que es uno y lo compleja que es la realidad.

Uno no escribe lo que quiere sino lo que puede. Por razones literarias, yo construí un personaje lleno de mañas, de mañas, de animadversiones, de fobias y de amores, sacándolo en parte de mí mismo. Pero no, no soy yo. De mí tiene más bien poco.

Thus, in order to comprehend the functionality of the authorial signature in the context of *La virgen de los sicarios*, one must not adhere to Vallejo's presence as a definite reality. Nor should one dismiss it entirely, for the effects of the authorial signature on the reception of *La virgen de los sicarios*' message evokes the illusion of truthfulness and sincerity based on the premise that the author:

[P]erforms a certain role with regard to the narrative discourse, and appropriately gives surety to the purpose of its message ... the author's name serves to characterize a certain mode of being of discourse: the fact that the discourse has an author's name, that one can say 'this was written by so-and-so' or 'so-and-so is its author,' shows that this discourse is not ordinary everyday speech that merely comes and goes, not something that is immediately consumable. On the contrary, it is a speech that must be received in a certain mode and that, in a given culture, must receive a certain status. (Foucault 107-9)

The autobiographical artifice, whether or not partially truthful, releases Vallejo's novel from the conventionality of the traditional untruthfulness of novelistic omniscience while simultaneously authenticating the discourse of his subversive Self in relation to the society he represents. As the author affirms:

Yo resolví hablar en nombre propio porque no me puedo meter en las mentes ajenas, al no haberse inventado todavía el lector de pensamientos; ni ando con una grabadora por los cafés y las calles y los cuartos grabando lo que dice el prójimo y metiéndome en las camas y en las conciencias ajenas para contarle de chismoso en un libro. Balzac y Flaubert eran comadres. Todo lo que escribieron me

suen a chisme. A chisme en prosa cocinera.
(Villoro)

Otherness as Commonality

Vallejo's rhetoric of self-representation is subversive precisely because of its effective autobiographical sincerity. As dishonest as it may be in terms of misleading autobiographical data, Vallejo builds his narrative through the characterization of a form of solidarity manifested between the intellectual outsider, very much like the author himself, and a particular class of individuals whose existence is not only communally perceived as abject but is also metaphysically manifested as a form of exile. From the opening pages of *La virgen de los sicarios*, one recognizes the essence of Fernando, the narrator-protagonist/represented Vallejo as an outsider, an exiled entity whose story of return to the homeland is configured as a declaredly bitter reunion: "yo volví después, años y años, décadas, vuelto un viejo a morir" (8). As the narrative progresses, Fernando oscillates between memory and the present inasmuch as he is forced to confront a reality where violence and death are presented to him as quotidian events with which he must come to terms. Upon meeting a young *sicario* named Alexis, Vallejo's alter-ego decides to embark on a pilgrimage to Sabaneta in the company of his lover, whose devotion for the local Virgin is purported to be conventional within the *sicario* culture. This processional to the church of Maria Auxiliadora in Sabaneta marks the beginning of the novel as a succession of journeys around the urban spaces of Medellín through which Fernando voices a caustic criticism of the Colombian reality. The memory of the returned exiled writer governs the narrative in a non-linear fashion, as he constantly seeks to convey an explicative synthesis that is able to conciliate the homeland of his youth with the space in decay that he encounters in later years:

Entre los nuevos barrios de casas uniformes seguían en pie, idénticas, algunas de las viejas casitas campesinas de mi infancia, y el sitio más mágico del Universo, la cantina Bombay ... era la misma como yo siempre he sido yo: niño, joven, hombre, viejo, el mismo rencor cansado que olvida todos los agravios.
(13)

The nuances and idiosyncrasies of the *sicariato*³ world, which begins as a curious attraction for Fernando, progressively materialize in the text as the re-arrangement of symbolic codes that are revised in the Other's own terms. Such re-arrangement is evident throughout several passages of *La virgen de los sicarios'* narrative. For instance, soon after Alexis frustrates Fernando's expectations by not stealing a wallet left openly at sight on a table, the narrator asserts that Alexis did not respond to the laws of this world. In this statement, the protagonist emphasizes not only a separation between his reality and that of his *sicario* lover but also a distinction between different levels of marginality. In the context of the narrative, this statement denotes the possibility of contemplating otherness as an existential condition that always carries obvious levels and degrees of individual subordination (Coronil 37). In other words, Fernando's self-proclaimed marginality positions itself in relation to another type of marginal existence, which reveals the protagonist-narrator as a mediator of the *sicario* reality to an audience and not merely a transcriber of this reality.

As the narrator-protagonist becomes aware of the *sicariato* reality, he progressively modulates his own perception of the world according to this class' perspective. Fernando recognizes the *sicario* enunciation as a sincere manifestation of Self that ought to be appreciated as a discursive authority. This idea can be seen in an episode in which Vallejo's protagonists relate to each other their previous sexual experiences. After throwing from the window of his apartment a stereo that he had bought as gift for Alexis, Fernando engages in a discussion with him that culminates with the *sicario* asking the narrator if he had ever enjoyed women as well as men. Vallejo's protagonist answers that that depended on whether the supposed women had attractive young brothers. This amuses the *sicario* as he continues to listen to Fernando, who states that although he had slept with other women in the past and had taken pleasure in doing so, their bodies seemed to lack a soul with which he could identify. Defiantly, Fernando, in return, poses the same question to the young *sicario*, who categorically denies ever engaging in a relationship with the opposite sex:

“No,” contestó, con un “no” tan rotundo, tan inesperado que me dejó perplejo. Y era un “no” para siempre: para el presente, para el pasado, para el

futuro y para toda la eternidad de Dios: ni se había acostado con ninguna ni se pensaba acostar ... Conque eso era pues lo que había detrás de esos ojos verdes, una pureza incontaminada de mujeres. Y la verdad más absoluta, sin atenuantes ni importarle un carajo lo que piense usted que es lo que sostengo yo. De eso era de lo que me había enamorado. De su verdad. (19)

By legitimizing Alexis's answer beyond its immediate lexical connotations, Fernando goes so far as to reveal to the reader that his love for Alexis derived precisely from the *sicario*'s enunciation of the truth, his Self exposed through speech. Vallejo asserts the narrator's affections towards the marginal entity as the recognition of the Other's truth in solidarity with the marginal intellectual. The nature of this solidarity, however, should not be understood as an authorial intent that is explicitly political in nature. After all, Vallejo's narrative does not present any direct apologies for the *sicario*'s class violent actions. Rather, the author presents to his readers the *sicariato*'s symbolic realm as normalcy, a part of the Colombian intellect that is ignored by many but is as essential and responsive to internal and external circumstances as any other form of identity articulated within the space of the nation.

Language and Testimonial Self-Fashioning

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the function of Vallejo's narrator in *La virgen de los sicarios* is not merely one of embodying the marginal statement of the *sicarios*; the character Fernando, the represented intellectual-author Vallejo, also legitimizes the ability of the *sicariato* class to produce its own discourse. The legitimization of the Other's testimony is shown as a transcription of the oppressed existence distinctive from the ethnographic process of representation, which claims authorial invisibility when allowing the marginal voice to speak.⁴ Vallejo's intellectual narrator mediates the discourse of the *sicario* Other and that of the lettered city by synthesizing both linguistic universes into a single narrative that departs from Vallejo's alter-ego's self-styled marginality as a homosexual and as an exile. Vallejo's narrator symbolically assumes the position of a "signified Third World informant," (Spivak *The Postcolonial Critic*, 57) a type

of intellectual that re-inscribes the excluded marginal presence by representing its existence to be read by a pluralist audience.

This tendency to represent the *sicariato* class “to the world” can be verified through the signaling presence of the novel’s narratees –its implied audience– to whom the exiled writer relates his story. Such narratees attribute to the text a confessional quality that further emphasizes the novel’s effect as a personal form of testimony.⁵ Vallejo is seemingly aware of the pluralistic readership of *La virgen de los sicarios*, as the narrator Fernando directly communicates his story to an audience that is both aware and unaware of certain facts concerning the specificities of Colombian reality⁶:

Ustedes no necesitan, por supuesto, que les explique qué es un sicario. Mi abuelo sí, necesitaría, pero mi abuelo murió hace años y años. Se murió mi pobre abuelo sin conocer el tren elevado ni los sicarios, fumando cigarrillos Victoria que usted, apuesto, no ha oído siquiera mencionar. (9)

As Vallejo’s narrator constantly explains the terminologies and lexicons that are present within the *sicario* universe, the reader also becomes aware of the writing as a form of oral transcription, whose effects underscore the narrative –and by default the authorial signature– as a live presence in the text.⁷ This is evident, for example, when the narrator reports on Alexis’s wishes to exterminate a punk neighbor whose drum set noise prevents Fernando from sleeping at night. Stating that he “poorly transcribed” the exact words of his lover, Fernando immediately corrects himself: “Ah, *transcribí* mal las amadas palabras de mi niño. No dijo ‘yo te lo mato,’ dijo ‘Yo te lo quiebro’” (28, italics mine).

The implication of a self-correctional act at the moment of writing emphasizes the novelistic account as type of autobiographical narrative inasmuch as the pretense of truth-telling comes to the fore in the alleged illusion of the text as a type of oral articulation. Furthermore, by attempting to relate to an audience the exact words of his lover, Vallejo’s narrator emphasizes the site from where he attempts to communicate the representational image of the *sicario*: from within its own marginal lexicography. The language appropriated by the author, which in effect is as much the represented

narrator's as it is his lover's, thus functions as an ideological weapon in the process of deconstructing traditional perceptions on marginality. As the conventional syntax of the Spanish language is purported to be inadequate to describe the subaltern alterity of the *sicarios*, the destruction and re-composition of semantic value from within the Other's reality becomes not only a form of contestation of authority over the object represented but is also imposed on the text to combat stereotyping. Vallejo's process of re-imagining the Colombian nation from its margins reveals itself, then, as a philosophical quest in which language is articulated as a universe for grabs, to be rearranged and reordered according to the subjectivity of either a particular individual or a social group: "Anfiteatro llaman aquí a la morgue, y no hay taxista en Medellín ni cristiano que no sepa dónde está porque aquí los vivos sabemos bien adónde tenemos que ir a buscar a los muertos" (116-17).

Indeed, the logic behind Fernando's leveling of his existence with that of his *sicario* lover constitutes a subversive act that legitimizes the marginalized Other's idiom outside of conventional rulings. The transference of discursive authority to the *sicario* becomes an imperative principle of representation, for the narrator can only explain the logical functioning of the *sicariato*'s linguistics through the understanding of the rules that govern its sphere of action. Whereas crime and punishment are obviously fundamental norms of societal behavior, Vallejo proposes the *sicario* as an agent capable of speaking of and for his own truth and idiosyncrasies in matters of justice; it is only necessary, however, that one recognizes his idiomatic existence as an equal as well as part of one's communal reality.

This narrative displacement of authority to the marginal *sicario* subjectivity becomes patently obvious when Fernando informs his lover of an episode in which a man is murdered during a car theft attempt. As the narrator tells Alexis, the victim runs away during the event with the keys of his vehicle, screaming out loud that he was now able to recognize the perpetrator, thus insinuating that he would later be denounced for his crime. In an act of rage, the frustrated thief begins to shoot repeatedly until one of the bullets reaches the victim. The narrator describes witnessing the assassin returning to the place where the body was located, further shooting the victim and then proceeding to escape amidst the commotion generated by the

incident. Rather causally, Alexis reacts to Fernando's account by stating that: "El pelao debió de entregar las llaves a la pinta esa" (20). Fernando's subsequent commentary on Alexis's assertion reveals his lover's perspective on the incident to be conclusively logical: "No comentó, diagnosticó: como un conocedor, al que hay que creerle. Y yo me quedé enredado en su frase, soñando, divagando, pensando" (20). The fact that the narrator qualifies what Alexis enunciates as a diagnostic adds value to the marginal utterance in the sense that the statement made by the young *sicario* is placed within the grounds of a rationalized knowledge. Alexis's representation signals the marginalized entity as someone whose analytical procedure is able to identify and isolate the causes and effects of a particular event through a sense of reason that stands outside patriarchal conventions, thus purporting the notion that the marginal universe obeys a concurrent set of rulings to that of the official State. Further into this episode's account, Vallejo's narrator meticulously dissects the significance of his lover's authoritative statement. But instead of attempting to interpret Alexis's enunciation through a long-established reasoning, which unavoidably would elaborate on the horrors, the causes and the consequences of the violence perpetrated by the lower classes, Fernando centers the narrative account on the rational aspects and intricacies of Alexis's linguistic enunciation:

Con el "pelao" mi niño significaba el muchacho; con "la pinta esa" el atracador; y con "dibió de" significaba "dibió" a secas: tenía que entregarle las llaves. Más de cien años hace que mi viejo amigo José Cuervo, el gramático, a quien frecuenté mi juventud, hizo ver que una cosa es "debe" solo y otra "debe de." Lo uno es obligación, lo otro duda. (20)

By characterizing his narrator as a polyglot, an entity capable of transiting between two levels of existence –the intellectual's and the *sicarios'* sphere of exclusion–, Vallejo incorporates his interlocutory protagonist into a linguistic community that validates the Other by recognizing and integrating the *sicarios'* language into the core of the narrative: "Hoy en el centro –le conté a Alexis luego hablando en jerga con mi manía políglota– dos bandas se estaban dando chumbimba" (24). As Vallejo's narrator explains the lexical value of the language uttered by the *sicarios*, his self-articulation becomes that of a character who has gained access to the marginal vocabulary by

proximity and implied co-inhabitancy in its domains: “‘Yo te lo mato –me dijo Alexis con esta complacencia suya atenta siempre a mis más mínimos caprichos –. Déjame que la próxima vez saco el fierro.’ El fierro es el revolver” (25).

It is well to reiterate here that Vallejo does not suggest a discursive posture that integrates the language of the Other as a mere employment of particular vocabularies or lexical expressions. To the contrary, the author synthesizes the Other’s language into an arbitrating form of expression that is capable of translating its marginal origin as a potential contesting force. Vallejo’s use of a hybrid type of linguistic articulation symbolizes neither the subaltern’s nor the Establishment’s discursive essence but rather a form of discourse that is ambivalent to both, generated by both the *sicario* and the intellectual. The linguistic convergence of two implied forms of authority ultimately validates *La virgen de los sicarios*’ narrative as a relativist account of the truth inasmuch as the text effectively works as an ambiguous testimony in which the represented marginal intellectual speaks for a more oppressed Other. In other words, the novel effectively works as a text in which a declaredly marginal subject “gives witness to oppression to a less oppressed other” (Spivak “Three Women’s Text,” 7), with editorial control varying in degrees but never ceasing to exist completely. As Vallejo unfolds into a self-representation that purports marginalization as a fundamental characteristic of the source of the enunciation, it is possible to apprehend the figurative function of the narrator Fernando as someone who simulates the responsibility of a marginal agent that “assumes the editorial or critical subject ‘de-centered,’ in rather an empirical way” (Spivak “Three Women’s Text,” 8). The author assumes a deconstructionist stance that not only claims the source of enunciation –the dubious autobiographical “I”– as alterity, but also proposes the representation of the *sicarios*’ otherness as a testimony of the degrading circumstances that characterize the present of the Colombian nation.

Disrupting the Self/Disrupting the Nation

From an intellectual perspective, Vallejo’s discourse does not patronize the representation of the subaltern *sicario* by exposing his linguistic constitution as superficial narrative artifice. What Vallejo’s writing suggests is a type of literary “de-skilling” in which the

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unlearning of one's privileged discourse corresponds to an imperative mandate when intellectually postulating the expression of otherness as an experience capable of being leveled. As argued in this paper, the explicatory tone employed by Vallejo's alter-ego throughout the pages of *La virgen de los sicarios* subversively acts under the conviction that truth itself corresponds to a representation that is essentially linked to agencies of power. As the character Fernando affirms:

Yo hablo de las comunas con la propiedad del que las conoce, pero no, sólo las he visto de lejos, palpitando sus lucecitas en la montaña y en la trémula noche. Las he visto, soñado, meditado desde las terrazas de mi apartamento, dejando que su alma asesina y lujuriosa se apodere de mí. (21)

The controversy and critical reactions which followed *La Virgen de los sicarios'* publication, both inside and outside the Colombian literary circles, suggest the unsettling quality of the novel as a subversive anti-establishment message. From a unique autofictional perspective, Vallejo crafts his literary Self not exclusively as a means to speak on behalf of the nation but rather to provoke audiences to rethink that which is perceived as a officiality by an intellectual elite. And it is in this sense that *La virgen de los sicarios*, like so many other dystopic contemporary Latin American narratives⁸, emerges as a disruptive text inasmuch as it claims the marginal representation as a paradigm of the nation's present, thus engaging in competition against a traditional intellectual segment for the very meaning of the postmodern truth.

Notes

¹ Elaborating on the commonality of the autobiographical recourse in Vallejo's works, Alvaro Bernal states that: "el recurso autobiográfico permite [a Vallejo] darle vida a esa realidad tan cercana para el escritor con nombres propios, evocarla, pensarla, sentirla, habitarla y ser definitivamente testigo y protagonista de su propia historia" (64). Also, vouching for the ambiguity of Vallejo's

narrative as an autobiography, one can find in the publication of *El desbarrancadero* (2001) the authorial signature present at the cover of the novel, which bears a picture of Vallejo and his brother Darío, whose real life death from AIDS constitutes the central motif of the narrative.

² The term “autofiction” was first coined by French author Serge Dubrovsky in reference to his novel *Fils* in 1977. For a connotative study of the term, see Forster.

³ *Sicariato* is meant here as a class description.

⁴ See Bellenger 44 and Slodowska 81.

⁵ For a detailed study on the function of implied narrators, see Prince.

⁶ Another example of the narratee function can also be found in the following example: “En Manrique (y lo digo por mis lectores japoneses y servo-croatas) es donde acaba Medellín y comienzan las comunas o viceversa” (129). Thus, as can be noted, Vallejo’s *La virgen de los sicarios* certainly denotes a level of authorial consciousness of its contemporary inscription –whether ironically intended or not– as a product intended for “global” consumption. The novel’s implied pluralistic audience (national and international) and the explicatory tone employed by Vallejo on the particularities of the nation can vouch for such a statement.

⁷ For a similar argument see Sánchez 50.

⁸ See, for instance, novels such as Paulo Lins’s *Cidade de Deus* and Patricia Melo’s *Inferno*, which postulate the notion of dystopia no longer as a future possibility but rather as a consummated event.

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