

Arts, Linguistics, Literature and Language Research Journal

DEVOTION AND VIOLENCE IN ` ` LA VIRGEN DE LOS SICARIOS` ` , BY FERNANDO VALLEJO

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INTRODUCTION

This work, part of the dissertation entitled “Ostentation and ruins: kitsch and violence in *La virgen de los sicarios*”, by Fernando Vallejo¹, aims to read the book by the Colombian writer, analyzing how the devotion shown by the book’s hitmen, the narrator’s criticism of religion, the sexual involvement with the boys, and how the context of violence experienced by the city of Medellín in the early 1990s, especially after the death of Pablo Escobar, subvert the current order and synthesize postmodern society with the trivialization and fetishization of symbols considered sacred. To do this, we will first present the work; then we will analyze the constitution of the hitmen figure in the work, the criticisms made of the church and Catholicism and, finally, the relationship between the narrator and the hitmen.

The work is considered by most Colombian theorists as one of the four pillars of *romance of sicariato*¹, together with the works: *Morir con papá* (1997), by Óscar Collazos; *Rosario Tijeras* (1999), by Jorge Franco Ramos; *Sangre ajena* (2000), by Arturo Álope.

In his novel, Vallejo portrays the socio-political situation of the hitman in the city of Medellín in the early 1990s, a time of extreme violence in which the war between the state, the guerrillas and the drug trade was at its peak, based on the story of a grammarian, Fernando (whose name coincides with the author’s), a mature man who returns to his hometown (Medellín) to die. Upon arriving, he realizes that the city is very different from the one he knew, mainly due to the phenomenon of urban violence.

Fernando, looking for a lover, meets Alexis in a brothel and soon discovers that he is a

young hitman. From then on, the two begin to wander around the city visiting various churches, depending on the religious events that are presented to them (especially the Tuesday processions). In these adventures, based on the narrator’s scathing reflections on Colombian social ills, the hitman becomes an “exterminating angel”, carrying out a “social cleansing”, murdering all those who displease Fernando.

Alexis, in the middle of the story, is killed by a group of hitmen and Fernando goes looking for the killer to get revenge. During the search he meets Wilmar, another hitman, and begins another relationship under the same conditions as the previous one, constantly confusing Wilmar with Alexis. (“Which would you be thanking Alexis, *pardón*, Wilmar, a la Virgen?” –VALLEJO, 2008, p. 95). As they travel through the city, with Wilmar playing the role of the new “exterminating angel”, Fernando discovers that he was the one who killed Alexis. He plans to kill him, taking him to a motel on the outskirts of the city, but fails. Wilmar realizes the attempt and explains to Fernando that he killed Alexis to avenge his brother’s death.

When the sun came in through the window he opened his eyes and then he asked: “Why did you kill Alexis?” “Because she killed my brother”, she replied to me, resting her eyes, waking up. “Ah...” you comment like stupid. We get up, we bathe, we get dressed and we go out. When you pay at the reception, we will offer you a coffee. A “red”, as they say in this absurd country. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 133).

Fernando then suggests that he and Wilmar leave the country. Wilmar accepts the proposal, but first wants to say goodbye to his mother, but he doesn’t return. The next day, someone calls Fernando asking him to

1. They are denominated *romance of sicariato*¹, those works whose plots revisit the problem of hitmen in Colombia. These narratives, according to researcher Angela Adriana Regino Correa (2008), are characterized by portraying marginalized aspects of society; by the tone of denunciation through social criticism, portraying the phenomenon of *sicariato* as a product, a result of the Colombian political and social framework and through the use of *parlache* (slang from the outskirts) as the language that constitutes these characters, so that the narrative acquires strength, becoming loaded with verisimilitude.

identify the body of a young man who had his phone in his pocket, and Fernando discovers that it is Wilmar's body.

Returning from the morgue, the narrator makes his final comments, leaving the reader in the middle of the road, and heads off in his own direction. Apparently, at this point, all the pessimism of the narrator-character is shown, who simply resigns himself to reality and goes "wherever."

THE FIGURE OF THE HITMAN AND THE NARRATIVES OF THE HITMAN

Researcher Herbert Schlenker (2008) notes that the term "sicario" refers to Ancient Rome, where a small dagger was developed, the ideal size to be hidden in the sleeve of the hired killer's toga and go unnoticed during a murder. This small dagger was called a sica (or sicca, as spelled by critic Reyes Albarracín, 2007), a name that may be related to the Latin verb *secare* (to cut). This weapon was the name of this assassin's profession (sicarius) and he himself came to be called sicarium. However, the term only began to be used in Spanish in the second half of the 20th century, as Schenker (2008) points out, being incorporated into the vocabulary through journalistic chronicles. However, the use of "sicario" also implies a label that ends up creating a different type of crime committed by these figures. The term previously used to refer to them was "motorcycle killers." In any case, it was in the 1980s, with the murder of Minister Lara Bonilla, that the figure of the hitman associated with teenagers appeared. The narrator character Fernando refers to this figure more specifically in

``*La Virgen de los sicarios*`` , for which he formulates the following definition:

[...] *I'm going to tell you that he's a sicario: a little boy, sometimes a child, who kills on demand. And the men? Men, in general, no, here the hitmen are children or young boys, twelve, fifteen, seventeen years old, like Alexis, my love..* (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 9)².

Researcher Regino Correa (2008), when describing the figure of the hitman, shows that their actions are not guided by any ideological principle and that they see what they do as work. Furthermore, the use of certain objects has become their trademarks, such as religious insignia (scapulars and seals), the use of motorcycles for transportation and the preference for the mini Uzi, a type of pistol. While the use of religious objects could demonstrate a different relationship with an "adapted" or, in some way, "recycled" deity, the motorcycle and the obsession with the mini Uzi would be associated with the consumer society.

These boys are, in most cases, children who grew up in a fragmented, precarious environment, in which there is no male presence, with the mother being the head of the family. In ``*La Virgen de los sicarios*`` (2008), this becomes quite clear when Fernando visits Alexis' family:

Until then I went up to look for Alexis's mother and to go to her assino. [...] Llamé. I opened her, with a baby in her arms. And she hizo me pass. Other children from a few years ago dragged themselves, half-naked, through this life on the ground floor. I think of a humble woman from my childhood, a servant of my house, who reminds me of her. Evidently, that lejana mujer, who for her age could have been my mother, was not the one she faced, that she could be my daughter. [...] Could it be that over the abyss of time, people and destinies were repeated? What was it? Neither this poor woman nor any of her children recognized a single feature of Alexis, nothing but nothing, nothing of her splendor.

2. [...] I'll tell you what a hitman is: a young man, sometimes a child, who kills on contract. And the men? Men generally, no, here the hitmen are boys or young men of twelve, fifteen, seventeen years old, like Alexis, my love.... (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 9, translation performed by us).

Los milagros are like that, burleros. We talk a lot. She told me that her current husband, the father of these children, had abandoned her; and that another, Alexis's priest, also killed him. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 100)³.

Vallejo, in *La Virgen de los sicarios* (2008) takes as a starting point to compose its story the love affair between the narrator of the book and two teenage hitmen who worked for Escobar, configuring one of those individuals directly affected economically by the death of the drug trafficker. The first one to appear in the text is Alexis, configuring a kind of "gift" given by his friend Jose Antonio, displacing his condition as a human being to a condition of fetish, which is evidenced by his resignation in the face of Fernando's friend's position. And the narrator, in turn, perhaps in an ironic tone, does not consider his friend a pimp and his apartment a brothel. For the narrator:

How do José Antonio gain from entering and leaving many people, criminals, in his house? What's the robaran? What killed him? What happened was his apartment was a brothel? God free and save. José Antonio is the most generous person I know. And I say personaje and not persona or human being because that's what he is, a personaje, like someone from a soap opera and not found in reality, he puts it in effect, it's just that he gives for regaling many people who are the most valuable? "Los muchachos no son de nadie –dice él–, son de queen los necesita ". (VALLEJO, 2008, p12).

3. I went up there looking for Alexis' mother and, at the same time, for his murderer. [...] I called. She answered me, with a child in her arms. And she invited me in. Two other children, only a few years old, were dragging themselves, half-naked, through this life and across the dirt floor. I thought of a humble woman from my childhood, a maid in my house, whom she reminded me of. Evidently that distant woman, who could have been my mother because of her age, was not the one in front of me, who could have been my daughter. [...] Could it be that across the abyss of time people and destinies repeated themselves? Whatever it was. Neither in this poor woman nor in any of her children did I recognize a single trace of Alexis, nothing, but nothing, nothing of his splendor. Miracles are like that, playful. We spoke very little. She told me that her current husband, the father of these children, had abandoned her; and that the other, Alexis' priest, had also been killed. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 100, translation performed by us).

4. [...] So that the deal goes through, so that it doesn't miss its target and so that they get paid. This is according to sociologists, who are investigating. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 18, translation performed by us).

5. For three of those bullets entered my boy's body and stayed there, without coming out: one in his neck, another in his forearm and another in his foot. "Where exactly do you wear your scapulars?" "Uh-huh." "And when they shot you were already wearing them." "Uh-huh." "If you were already wearing them then the scapulars are useless." Yes, they were useless. If he hadn't been wearing them, they would have shot him in the heart or in the brain. "Ah..." Against this divine logic, one could not argue with this. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 29, translation performed by us).

This quote inevitably refers to the condition of the hitman, who "belongs to those who need them", and is at the mercy of anyone who requests his services. In the book, we notice that these figures are portrayed as being fifteen, sixteen or seventeen-year-old boys, as Fernando rightly puts it – and he even adds that adult men are not hitmen, obviously in an attempt to show how short the lives of these boys in this environment can be, given that they never reach adulthood. Hitmen also have strong religious beliefs, as well as macho values and consumerist obsessions. The first thing that Fernando notices about Alexis, in the butterfly room, are the three scapulars he wears, one around his neck, one around his wrist and one around his ankle: "so that they don't do business, so that they don't miss the point and so that they pay. This is according to sociologists, who are investigating" (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 18)⁴. In a later episode, the boy's faith in the symbols he carries becomes evident:

I put three of these balls in metieron in the body of my little boy and then they fell, without leaving: one in the cell, the other in the forearm and the other in the foot. "Just where do you take the scapulars from?" "Act." "When did you shoot them?" "Act." "If you take them then the scapulars don't fit." That's right, that's good. If he didn't take it away, he would give a peace in his heart or in his brain. "Ah..." Against this divine logic, one could not reason. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 29)⁵.

With Alexis' death, Fernando meets Wilmar when he bumps into him on the street. Wilmar appears to be an extension of Alexis himself and Fernando does not add much to his descriptions – nor is the space given to him in the book large – the greatest impact being caused by the relationship between the two, which shows, in its intensity and configuration, to be under the same prerogatives as Fernando's relationship with Alexis.

THE CHURCH AND CATHOLICISM

In *La Virgen de los sicarios* (VALLEJO, 2008) a grammarian is the person responsible for the narration and is constantly in dialogue with the reader, in addition to using his profession to position himself as a figure of authority. Fernando is an erudite man and is familiar with universal culture and literature.

In addition, the narrator-character is also almost a misanthrope, expressing his contempt for almost all human beings, disbelieving in any promise of the future, except for the pair of hitmen he falls in love with (and who we can consider to be one person). Assuming this condition, we notice that, throughout his narrative, Fernando leaves no stone unturned: equally playing the role of a radical critic, he directs his criticisms at all social institutions, just as he dedicates himself to criticizing all men. As the title of the book indicates, his main target is the Catholic Church – the title of the book itself alludes to Mary Help of Christians, to whom the hitmen pray for success in their “works”. At the beginning of the work, Fernando highlights the country's condition by comparing it to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, associating the blood spilled with violence and death:

[...] *the Heart of Jesus. Do you know who he is? We had one another in the room; in the living room of the house on Calle del Peru in the city of Medellín, capital of Antioquia; In the house where I was born, in the room enthroned the sea (because I don't know) blessed one day for the cure. Colombia, my patria, is consecrated to it. It's Jesús and he's touching his chest with his finger, and his chest is open and his heart is bleeding: gothics of living red blood, lit up, like the candle of the globe: it's the blood that will spill Colombia, now and always for the siglos of the siglos amen.* (VALLEJO, 2008, p.7-8)⁶.

According to researcher Cesar Valencia Solanilla, in his text *La virgen de los sicarios: The sacred hell of Fernando Vallejo* (2001), this image could represent *“the blood spilled in the violence of a society that seems condemned to devour itself, being paradoxical despite the fact that for reasons of power and state, the Colombian nation is consecrated to this image”*. In the text, Fernando still associates the sacred heart with the ritual of releasing balloons in his childhood, a red balloon, he remembers, possibly contrasting the passions of life in childhood with the passions and death of that present. The transcendental imaginary evoked by religion loses its meaning and acquires a new one, because, in the present, this imaginary is totally corrupted by the country's violence. After spending the night together, Fernando and Alexis continue together in the plot, and because of Alexis – Fernando says emphatically – the two begin an itinerary through Medellín that includes visits to churches. It is through this itinerary, parallel to the narrator's memories, that the reader gains access to the reality of the place, becomes aware of the control that the religious institution maintained over the city, whose

6. [...] *The Heart of Jesus. Do you know who it is? We had one in the living room; in the living room of the house on Calle del Perú in the city of Medellín, capital of Antioquia; in the house where I was born, in the living room enthroned or (because I know you won't know) blessed one day by the priest. Colombia, my homeland, is consecrated to him. He is Jesus and he is showing his chest with his finger, and in his open chest the bleeding heart: drops of bright red blood, lit, like the lamp of the balloon: it is the blood that Colombia will shed, now and forever, for centuries and centuries, amen.* (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 7-8, translation performed by us).

ostentation of this power takes place through the construction of an innumerable number of temples, giving an artificial and burdened aspect to the city, considered in the 90s as the capital of widows. According to Fernando:

I know fifty churches in Medellín, barely counted, often like cantinas, an exaggeration, and discounting the communes that only go up to my God with an escort, all of them with me. All, all, all. I went to look for them all. For the most part, the clocks are closed and the clocks are stopped at different times, like the ones in my friend José Antonio's apartment where we met Alexis. Watches that are dead hearts, without their ticking. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 62)⁷.

At this point, Fernando uses the image of stopped clocks to compare them to the church. We can think, considering the fact that the narrator-character always seeks out these temples in search of silence and to remember his childhood, that the stopped clocks of the church show that the power displayed by Catholicism through its sumptuous temples is frozen in a past era and no longer serves any purpose in the present. In other words, the Catholic institution in particular, and religion and transcendental values in general, are in ruins, no longer capable of accounting for that reality or promoting any hope. The clocks mark death, nothingness, time running out, and remind us of the level of decadence in which not only the religious institution itself finds itself, but also the supposed values and morals belonging to a culture. Furthermore, since the church is frozen in time, the buildings

– which are empty of ideas and soul, and have dead hearts in the form of clocks that do not work – would form a kind of bridge between the past and the present, where Fernando was able to communicate with his past. Regarding one of these visits, Fernando comments:

The murmur of prayers rose to the sky like the buzzing of a beehive. The outdoor light filtered through the stained glass windows to offer us, in multicolored images, the perverse spectacle of the passion: nitrogenous Christ, fallen Christ, crucified Christ. Among the anodyne multitude of viejos and viejas searched for many people, the sicarios, and in effect, they swarmed. This sudden devotion of youth caused me astonishment. Y yo thinking that the Church is more bankrupt than communism... Whatever, it's alive, it's breathing. Humanity needs to live myths and lies. If you only see the truth, you hear if you catch a shot. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 16)⁸.

However, if the narrator claims that the church is alive and breathing amidst these ruins, what does it live on or what does it breathe? The church's biggest regulars and new devotees were the hitmen who, as we have seen, asked Mary Help of Christians for protection so that they could escape death and perform their service well.

In other words, if on the one hand the profane becomes inseparable from the sacred, on the other hand it would show the church's ability to synthesize contradictory discourses, not to mention the absurdity of the hitmen's thoughtless action of reproducing certain customs in a mechanical, meaningless way. Furthermore, if we go a little further, we could

7. Medellín has one hundred and fifty churches, barely counted, almost like bars, an exaggeration, and excluding the ones in the communes that you can only go to with an escort, I know them all. All of them, all of them, all of them. I went to all of them to look for him. They are usually closed and their clocks stop at the most disparate hours, like the ones in my friend José Antonio's apartment where I met Alexis. Clocks that are dead hearts, without their ticking. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 62, translation performed by us).

8. The murmur of prayers rose to the sky like the buzzing of a beehive. The light from outside filtered through the stained-glass windows to offer us, in multi-colored images, the perverse spectacle of the passion: Christ scourged, Christ fallen, Christ crucified. Among the anodyne crowd of old men and women, I looked for the boys, the hitmen, and sure enough, they were swarming. This sudden devotion of the youth astonished me. And I thought that the Church was more bankrupt than communism... No way, it is alive, it breathes. Humanity needs myths and lies to live. If someone sees the dry truth, they shoot themselves. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 16, translation performed by us).

think that the hitmen are the true suffering people of that contemporary context, in search of consolation. However, this devotion of the hitmen is, in a certain way, particular, and does not prevent them from vandalizing the environment that they themselves consider sacred, by attacking temples and rituals, according to Fernando's words in the following excerpt:

What church is open to what demons! Keep them closed so they don't get stuck. We don't fall into Medellín or a solo oasis of peace. It says that it attracts the baptisms, the weddings, the wakes, the funerals. That they kill in full mass or reach the cemetery to those who are alive accompanying the dead. What if a plane crashes and loots the corpses. That if a car runs over you, charitable brothers will take the ticket out of you while they give you the favor of getting into a taxi that takes you to the hospital. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 24)⁹.

We also notice that Fernando's criticisms of the church and religion are numerous and contradictory: at the same time that he reaffirms his devotion to Mary Help of Christians – “*la virgen mía, de mi niñez, la que más quiero*” (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 17) – and refers to the churches, as we can see in the quote, as an “oasis of peace”, the words directed at religion (especially the Catholic religion and, more specifically, the Salesians) are the most derogatory:

It took me five hundred years to understand Luther, and there is no bigger problem about this land than the Catholic religion [...]. A little more, a little more and I would live to see the plague of this country exterminated from this land. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 77)¹⁰.

Thus, we notice how religious elements are subverted in Vallejo's work. All the power displayed by the church and all the teachings propagated by religion are nothing more than ruins in a present marked by violence and a lack of perspective in life.

THE LOVE RELATIONSHIP

The starting point of the book is precisely the homosexual relationship between the narrator Fernando and the hitmen Alexis-Wilmar. Very little has been written about this, perhaps in view of Vallejo's claims about the autobiographical nature of the work. Even so, given that both the culture of Medellín, as well as the culture of much of Colombia, has a strong echo of this religious morality, the relationship between the narrator-character and the hitmen could, in itself, be a form of violence against this system. If we look carefully, Fernando's homosexual condition is what leads him to relate to the hitmen, a kind of gateway to getting to know the “hell” of Medellín, that is, the only characteristic, among those shown, that in some way betrays his stance as a reference for order. Furthermore, we can consider that the passion for the hitmen configures a passion for violence itself. Another meaning could be attributed to this love affair that refers to the fact that Fernando, upon returning to the city – remembering that he says he returns to Medellín to “die” –, distanced from the present, from space and time, tries to get closer to that new reality, however he fails, marking a situation of rupture between the past and the present.

9. What church would be open, not for the devil! They keep them closed so they won't be robbed. There's not a single oasis of peace left in Medellín. They say that baptisms, weddings, wakes, and funerals are robbed. That they kill those who are still alive while they're still with the dead, during mass or when they get to the cemetery. That if a plane crashes, they loot the corpses. That if a car runs you over, charitable hands steal your wallet while they do you the favor of putting you in a taxi to take you to the hospital. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 24, translation performed by us).

10. It took me five hundred years to understand Luther, and that there is no greater filth on this earth than the Catholic religion [...]. A little more, a little more and I would live to see the plague of this filth exterminated from this earth. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 77, translation performed by us).

As already discussed, upon meeting Alexis, the scapulars that the boy wears immediately catches Fernando's attention:

He quits his shirt, quits his shoes, quits his pantaloons, quits his midsection and his trunk, and he's naked with three scapulars, which are the ones that carry his headgear: one on the hip, the other on the forearm, the other on the other ankle and they are: so that they get the business, so that their aim does not fail them and so that they get paid. This is according to sociologists, who are investigating. I don't ask. Be what you saw and forgot. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 18)¹¹.

And during one of these journeys, on the way back from a pilgrimage, Fernando and Alexis meet a punk who had bothered Fernando a few days before – and whom Alexis had proposed to kill – and Alexis does not hesitate, killing him. It is interesting to note that Fernando's comment, made shortly before, and perhaps in a symbolic way, is understood by the hitman as literal – and why not immediately? –, which leads him to fulfill the grammarian's desire that seemed distant. From then on, the list of people killed by Alexis grows. If Alexis has almost no voice in the book, he is given the power to act according to Fernando's conscience and in her name. The narrator-character, in the first minutes of the first death, is perplexed, but then begins to see a sense in it. The critic Hermann Herlinghaus (2006) states that this occurs because the grammarian takes on a messianic role by assuming the position of, in his own judgment, carrying out a social cleansing. In the critic's words:

Only a Mesías could interfere with the reign of terror and re-establish purity, by participating in the image of the product of the relationship between homosexuality and the sublime masculine strength of action. (HERLINGHAUS, 2006, 192)¹².

And this image of the Messiah is linked to the image that Fernando has of Alexis and Wilmar, when he sees both as a guardian angel and as his Exterminating Angel carrying out, in allusion to the biblical figure, the work of destruction at the behest of God, the one who holds the verb, in this case, Fernando in his role as "the last grammarian of Colombia" (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 58). Furthermore, the image that Fernando has of Alexis and Wilmar shows that their relationship with the boys is not just something physical, quite the opposite, Fernando considered this emotional relationship as something pure and sincere, as can be seen in this excerpt.: "*And I'm with Alexis, my love... Alexis still hugs me and nothing, but nothing, nothing disturbs his dream*" (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 46)¹³ and in so many others where it is possible to see that Fernando maintains the image of "an idyllic love, constantly referring to Alexis with terms such as 'mi amor', 'mi niño', 'mi niño', 'mi darling', 'mi angel de la guardian' and 'mi angel exterminador'" (MENTON, 2007, p. 197)¹⁴.

However, despite the significance that the hitman has for the narrator, he is a character without a voice in the story. Despite the number of crimes, he commits and his preference for televisions and stereos, which Fernando despises but buys to satisfy his

11. I took off his shirt, he took off his shoes, I took off his pants, he took off his socks and underwear and was left naked with three scapulars, which are the ones that hitmen wear: one around the neck, another on the forearm, another on the ankle and they are: so that the deal goes through, so that they don't miss their target and so that they get paid. This is according to sociologists, who are investigating. I don't ask. I know what I see and I forget. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 18, translation performed by us).

12. Only a Messiah could interfere in the reign of terror and reestablish purity, by participating in the image produced by the relationship between homosexuality and the sublime masculine force of action. (HERLINGHAUS, 2006, 192, translation performed by us).

13. And me with Alexis, my love... Alexis sleeps hugging me with his underwear on and nothing, but nothing, nothing disturbs his sleep. (VALLEJO, 2008, p. 46, translation performed by us).

14. [...] an idyllic love, constantly referring to Alexis with terms such as 'my love', 'my little boy', 'my boy', 'my darling', 'my guardian angel' and, in allusion to Buñuel, 'my exterminating angel'. (MENTON, 2007, p. 197, translation performed by us).

desires, his speeches are limited to a few lines, which the narrator pays attention to later in the text, when Alexis is killed by a group of hitmen on a motorcycle. The same thing ends up happening to Wilmar, whom Fernando often confuses with Alexis, to the point of seeing the exterminating angel(s) as the only one. Obviously, this relationship highlights not only the liquidity of relationships in contemporary times, but also brings to the fore the cyclical side of violence (just as Alexis is gone and his place is given to Wilmar, Wilmar is also gone, leaving space free for any other young person in the same condition to take his place) and the conditions of these young people as perpetrators and victims of this violence that begins in Medellín, in Fernando's words, but continues throughout the world.

Ospina (2010) shows that the love relationship between Fernando and Alexis also highlights a kind of subversion of the code, of moral values themselves, because – in addition to homosexuality itself, of course – unlike a relationship between someone older and someone younger, it results in a positive influence on the younger person, giving him a direction in life (configuring itself in the *bildungsroman*), in: ``*La Virgen de los sicarios*`` (VALLEJO, 2008), it is the young hitman who becomes responsible for the grammarian's learning, while the older man becomes the recipient of all the negative energy from the younger man until Fernando becomes completely contaminated by Alexis' criminal logic.

But we came back a moment ago when they forgot me about the taxi of the dead: a treat and a defender of the poor. At the bottom of the atrium, on the outskirts of the cathedral, he was a mocking treat, imitating the way of walking as an unsuspecting passer-by had passed by, but always and when he was someone defenseless and decent, he was never faced with a knife from the canal.

And the people of the corridor laugh, with the carcajadas, celebrating the scam [...]. Then the angel fired. El mimo staggered a moment before falling, before falling, with his expressionless mask painted white: crying from his face in front of him, his bullet and the red tint on the white face of his face. When the muñeco fell, one of them in a low voice, which I believed anonymous, commented: "Eh, what a shame, here I don't have to work for the poor". It was the last one he commented on because he saw the angel, and shot him in the mouth. Per aeternitatis aeternitatem. Terror seized everyone. Cowardly, reverent, he lowered his eyes to see Ángel Exterminador because they felt and understood that seeing him was condemned to death because he was not known. Alexis and I continued along the static street. (VALLEJO, 2008, p76).

As we can see, throughout the narrative, the narrator, who previously appeared as a figure holding order and authority, plunges into the chaotic reality of Medellín, after being guided through this world by the figures of the two hitmen.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The hitman is a phenomenon of urban origin, as is the space where drug trafficking is most prominent. We know that the vast majority of hitmen come from the outskirts of large cities, although they can operate in other regions. And the hitman has been studied in different areas of knowledge – such as sociology, anthropology, social communication –, while at the same time, after Escobar's death in 1993, it began to be widely portrayed both in cinema and in literature, in books and films such as: *Rodrigo D.*: ``*no futuro*`` (film released in 1990), *Rosario Tijeras* (book released in 1999, film released in 2005, novel released in 2010), ``*La Virgen de los sicarios*`` (book released in 1993 and film released in 2000). In these artistic contexts, the hitman is usually represented as a figure who acts

violently and through whom several instances of parallel power converge, especially those linked to drug cartels. At the same time that he is a product of a decadent environment, the hitman aggravates the situation of decadence of this same environment through his actions. Therefore, the relationship between the real hitman and the hitman represented in literature is quite close, which results in the strength of the narrative of the hitman and the charge of verisimilitude.

However, it is important to highlight that in narratives that cover the issue of hitmanship, for example: ``*La Virgen de los sicarios*`` (VALLEJO, 2008) we noted an effort to give space to these marginalized

individuals, by showing them as a product of a broader framework, but without losing sight of the aesthetic, the literary. Furthermore, in literature, we could consider that the hitman, metaphorically, becomes a kind of synthesis of postmodern Colombian society when he transforms himself into the compendium of a violence that becomes intelligible, according to Von Der Walde (2001), channeling both traditional values, such as belief in the divine, Christian rituals - through a recycled, adapted elevated religious belief - and postmodern values, by being in a position to contradict a current order in a relationship of violent rupture with the established political-social form.

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