

Reconstructing History : A Study of Carlos Fuentes's *Terra Nostra* and *The Campaign*

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Abstract

This paper analyzes two novels written by the Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes, *Terra Nostra* (1976), and *The Campaign* (1990) as significant fictional texts that reconstruct the Latin American colonial encounters and the wars of independence to represent a counter-narrative that can reclaim the cultural identity of the continent. This literary enterprise is crucial to foreground the attempts at a critical assessment of the past to understand issues of cultural identities that could work towards decolonizing the continent's cultural identity in postcolonial times, as is evident through Fuentes's views and his literary engagements.

Keywords: Archival-fiction; Colonialism; Counter-Narrative; Hegemony; History; Latin America; Postcolonial.

Introduction

"The history of Latin America is a history to be lived" (Fuentes, *Myself with Others*).

"The eighteenth-century offered us a linear conception of time...We were told to forget the circular and mythical time of our origin in favor of a progressive, irreversible time, destined to an infinitely perfectible future... this dream proved to be vain...progressive linearity offered too many exceptions for us to put our whole-hearted faith in it, the critique of linear time became positively a way of recovering other times, including our own Latin American time, the recovery times of Latin American culture: times in which the present contains past and future because the present is the place both of memory and desire" (ibid 75-76).

The two quotations cited above are from Mexican author Carlos Fuentes's

(1928-2012) collection of essays, *Myself with Others*. These lines provide an illuminating frame to read the two novels, *Terra Nostra* and *The Campaign* which are important works that challenged the hegemony of a Eurocentric conception of history and imagined the cultural and literary identity of the continent that was besieged by European colonial encounters. Following Stephen Slemon's view that the legacies of the colonial encounter are the notion of history as the few 'privileged monuments of achievements' which 'arrogate history' wholesale to the imperial culture or to erase it from the colonial archive (Slemon), the paper interprets the two novels within a postcolonial frame. The imperial myth of history privileges that which belongs to the center or the colonizer. The postcolonial engagement with 'history' is concerned with the recovery of the peripheral and marginalized histories and fills the gap left by the hegemonic colonial historiography.

Fuentes's engagement with the retrieval of his culture's time aims at debunking the myth of a grand, progressive, and civilizing colonial enterprise. In this sense, the preoccupation with the past goes beyond a deterministic notion of history and opens up the fixity of history by debunking the idea of a homogenous, monolithic, and perfect past. The heterogeneity and fragmentation of the past become an enabling tool to understand the chaotic and fragmented present. Assimilation and an understanding of the conflicted past help to desire and imagine a better future.

This deconstruction of history needs to be located in the context of the twentieth-century debates about history writing and historiography. History is no longer regarded as a mere documentation of facts. This revisionist agenda looked at history as a discursive practice that was written/produced at a specific moment, within and from a specific ideological context, and mediated through an individual historian's subject position. Collingwood's notion of a subjective historian who writes history by critically reflecting on his sources (Collingwood), Foucault's notion of history as one of the discursive practices, and Hayden White's notion of the fictionality of historical discourse (White), revolutionized the theories of historiography. In this deconstructive context where history is seen as one of the many discursive practices, its fictional reconstruction opens up many transformational possibilities. The reconstruction does not aim at annihilating the conflicted past but aims at an imaginative revision. This revision dismantles received notions of history and debunks the hegemonic power structure latent in these versions, thereby becoming the means of resistance against the dominant ideology of the colonizer.

Literature Review

The paper examines how Carlos Fuentes views history, reconstructs and revises traditional historiography by writing about it imaginatively. He views history from the vantage point of the present; therefore, a memory of the past becomes an enabling tool for recovering and refashioning the past. The theoretical framework for the paper is based on Foucault's notion of the archive, Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria's idea of the 'archival fiction' (González Echevarria), and Gerald Martin's (Martin) analysis of the thematic concerns of Latin American narratives.

Foucault defines the archive as "systems that establish statements as events and as things... set of discourses that condition what counts as knowledge in a particular period" (AK,128, cited in Flynn, 30). Flynn explains this further and says that "archive is "the set (*l'ensemble*) of discourses pronounced" (45). The archive is discourse not only as events having occurred, but as "things", with their economies, scarcities, and (later in his thought) strategies that continue to function, transformed through history and providing the possibility of appearing for other discourses" (Flynn). The archive as archaeology can then function as "counter-history and social-critique...counter-history because it assumes a contrapuntal relationship to traditional history whose conclusions it more rearranges than denies and whose resources it mines for its own purposes... It is social critique because it radicalizes our sense of the contingency of our deepest biases and most accepted necessities thereby opening up a space for change" (Flynn 33). Foucault's notion of history implies not a history of a period but the history of a problem. The archive also foregrounds the existence of heterogeneous and multiple pasts implying a frisson of our vision rather than a fusion of vision. History in this sense does not trace a linear tradition but foregrounds various transformational events/ archives that serve as new foundations in different times and spaces.

Drawing on the Foucauldian notion of the 'archive' and 'history', Echevarria says that the modern Latin American narrative is a 'foundational or 'archival fiction' that deals with the origin of Latin American culture and which is mythic in a thematic and semiotic way. Here origin implies the beginning of history or a commonly accepted source of culture (González Echevarria174). Fuentes's use of characters and incidents from medieval Spanish history and literature invests them with the role of foundational statements. It also points to the inevitable connections between Spanish history and the history of Latin America. The use of 'history' in these archival fictions is significant because "history is the repository of stories

about the beginnings of Latin America as a culture... Latin American history is to Latin American narrative... a constant whose mode of appearance may vary but which is rarely absent" (ibid 4). The 'archival fictions' are semiotic in that they, "Sort the vestiges of previous mediations and display them" (ibid 175). In other words, they are self-reflexive narratives that foreground the 'processes' of their construction and their refashioning of 'history'.

Other scholars have suggested that *Terra Nostra* tries to "achieve simultaneity" (Ibsen cited in (Oloff); its composition of circles and spirals suppresses chronology and causality (Simson cited in Oloff); while others have suggested that the novel does not deal with any real historical event (Kieren cited in Oloff). According to Oloff, the novel can be read as a metafictional novel that presents a re-coding of the modern Spanish subjectivities which came to the fore in the Spanish Golden Age (Oloff). Abeyta has studied Fuentes's engagement with both the heritage of the Spanish and Aztec legacies through the lens of the exchange economy brought in by the colonizers and the impact on Latin American culture (Abeyta). However, this article attempts to read the novel and *The Campaign* as exemplifications of the postcolonial concern with rewriting the history of the colonized people that can be useful to understand the present time and how neo-liberal forces are attempting to hegemonize the tricontinental and its people (Young).

Fuentes's engagement with the reconstruction of his continent's history can also be viewed as the great Latin American narrative about its own ethnic, national, social, and cultural identity. This self-reflexive narrative is an important constituent formed by "the union of the Indian mother and the European father where the narrator tries to fork out an individual identity formed by these diverse forces" (Martin 8). This myth is essentially about the relationship of the new world to the old and addresses itself to the origin of Latin America, "Is it to be found in native America in its multiple forms? In Renaissance Spain (itself heir to Greece, Rome, and Jesus), or the moment of violation in 1492? Will the future return to a nativistic America or European civilization or will the future be an acceptance of being forever a member of a hybrid culture in a non-European continent?" (ibid11).

Writing History: *Terra Nostra*

Terra Nostra (1976) in the words of Gerald Martin exhibits the "vengeance of Latin American culture against its Spanish paternity, the culmination

of almost a century of literary parricide...to lay claim to a territory and its history through a literary reconstruction" (258). The figure of Felipe II and the royal mausoleum El Escorial occupy center stage in the novel. The Escorial is the royal archive, a storehouse of documents, edicts, manuscripts, memories, books, and bodies, it is also a legal repository of power and knowledge. It hoards power/knowledge by controlling the production of artists, painters, astronomers, and chroniclers. Felipe II as the symbol of power, law, and justice becomes the foundational figure of this archive. He is obsessed with the written word on paper, (he was known as the paper king), everything assumes a real entity only when it is written, becoming a real source of his power, authority, and uniqueness. His unitary power is founded upon the "privileged possession of the unique text, an unchanging norm that conquers, that imposes, itself upon the confusing proliferation of custom...custom falls into disuse, is exhausted, renewed and changes aimlessly and chaotically, but the law does not vary, it assures the permanency and the legitimacy of all acts of power" (*Terra Nostra* 225).

The written word is Felipe's sacred code, a legitimate and unique signifier of his power. It is important to remember that he is the sole possessor of the manuscripts, the reports, and the chronicles housed in the Escorial, other people do not have any access to them because they are not printed, and hence are unavailable for mass readership. His illusion of 'one truth', 'one reality', 'one text', and his 'unique self' as the possessor of that text (encoding power/knowledge) is shattered by the news of the printed texts being available for the common people. The specter of multiple versions of his sacred and unique text begins to haunt him. The appearance of the three identical youths with six toes and crosses on their backs (his illegitimate brothers) who are propped up as contenders to his throne also destroys the myth of his unique and unchallengeable position. Felipe is forced to contend with not only multiple versions of his unique text, but also multiple versions of himself. For the old Felipe, there was no gap between the signifier and the signified, suddenly he is confronted with multifarious gaps, possibilities, and alternatives.

The debunking of this foundational figure occurs simultaneously with the debunking of the imperial archive. According to Echevarria "the archives' totalization (its complete and closed-form) is an emblem of its power" (181). The Escorial in *Terra Nostra* is an incomplete monument. Its incomplete construction becomes a trope at the metaphorical level to foreground the gaps in its hegemonic capability. This lack is reiterated by the presence of unfinished and mutilated bodies housed in the Escorial.

The decaying corpses in the crypt, the physical degeneration of its inhabitants, the eschatological references, and the perverted sexual appetite of the royal people are other tropes that underscore the gaps in this archive.

The presence of the old and mutilated mad lady Juana also highlights the incomplete foundation of the archive. She is an oracular figure who is both a link with the past and a repository of knowledge like the Escorial. But “her faulty and selective memory and senility foreground the gaps in her archival character as well as the imperial archive” (Echevarria 183). Her death-like life when she’s entombed alive in her crypt also becomes significant, death is the trope for the master gap in the archive. Cervantes’s mangled arm, Felipe’s oozing ulcer, Felipe the Fair’s and Don Juan’s perverted sexual appetites, Juana’s broken stumps, the physical deformity of Barbarica, and the mouse eaten hymen of Isabel are indicators of the gaps in this edifice supposed to be the meta-archive of Renaissance Spain.

Fuentes foregrounds the brutality of the monarchy which forced its citizens to pay for this ‘achievement of Renaissance Spain’. The record of its construction erases the chronicles of the hardships, poverty, sacrifices, and deaths of the common people that made this monument possible. The poor peasants have no rights over their lands, their produce, and their women, everything is marked out for the use of the liege. The empty state coffers are filled by confiscating the properties of the Jews, they are forced to leave the country and are shipped off, the entire town of Toledo and its Jewish inhabitants are razed to the ground, and anyone questioning the faith and the king is mercilessly punished by the Inquisition, the people’s revolt is crushed and thousands die, and state prisoners are forced to cremate plague victims. Ultimately the common people have “nothing to lose, all they have is a long life of pain and death at the end” (*Terra Nostra* 263).

The degeneration and corruption in the old world force the ‘dreamers’ to dream of a better world. The young Felipe wants to recapture what is forgotten, to revive what is dead “new intentions, new positives, new ideals, but Guzman the voice of experience tells him, “However good it was, men would always make of it something different from what Elsenor intended” (*Terra Nostra* 130-31). Ludovico dreams of a world of everlasting grace and salvation, Pedro dreams of an egalitarian commune, Simon dreams of a world of eternal life, unfettered by the ravages of death and disease, Celestina and Isabel dream of a dignified and equal relationship between men and women. But the pragmatic Felipe realizes that these dreams of a different life in distant time and space are chimeras, “Utopia is not in the

future, it is not in another space. The time of utopia is now, the place of utopia is here" (*Terra Nostra*153).

For this old world, the time and place of utopia occur at the moment of discovery(conquest) of the new world in 1492. It opens up the possibility of reconstructing a perfect world "to begin a new life, starting from nothing, to give a name and use, a place and destiny to everything" (*Terra Nostra* 434). The old world imagines the new world to be a tabula rasa where it can create itself anew. For the Commendatore, this new world implies a business opportunity to colonize the land and reap its riches of gold and pearls. For Isabel, the new world symbolizes a world of pleasure where she can be a woman without selling her soul to the devil, for Guzman this discovery implies a world of new opportunities where he can be the master of the land.

In reality, the new world turns out to be a terrible extension of the old world, the tyranny, the oppression, the corruption, and the crimes of the old world are replicated in the new land in the name of the Christian faith and western civilization. The white colonizer wreaks havoc and destruction, destroys the land and its people, their temples, their cities, rapes the women, brands men like cattle, overburdens the poor with taxes, and "reconquers a city without inhabitants, a mausoleum of solitude" (*Terra Nostra* 544).

Writing the New World: The Self in History

Fuentes is not content to merely debunk the great colonial enterprise of the old world in discovering (conquering) the new world. The new world in *Terra Nostra* is not a blank space that can be filled by the conquerors with their language, culture, tradition, myths, and legends. This world is already populated by the indigenous civilization with its native culture, myths, language, religion, and system of governance. Therefore, the young pilgrim who lands on the shore of this world cannot impose a name or a culture on this land; in any case, he has no memory and no name. It is the natives of the land who impose a name and memory on him. In a postcolonial inversion, Fuentes transforms the pilgrim (the archetypal colonizer) into Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent, God of life and light of pre-colonial/Columbian Latin America. The colonizer is disinvested of all agency, he becomes a passive tool in the hands of the natives. He is the lost wanderer who has to follow the route the spider spins for him.

Fuentes also debunks the notion of the fearless, brave and valiant white

man who undergoes tremendous hardships to discover the new world. In this fictional reconstruction, the young pilgrim is baffled at every step, instead of being the Lord of this new land he merely performs the role assigned to him in the native myths and legends. He is not even given the power to name this land. The natives caution him to "Fear the power of Mexico" (*Terra Nostra* 498), and he does not even know whether it is the name of the land or a god. It is the Lord of the burning papers who performs the act of final annihilation of the colonizer pilgrim's power. By burning the parchments, the Lord erases all written records about this white god, "Never again will you disturb our order. Today I burned the papers of your legend. There is nothing more written about you... I will convert your memory into ashes" (*Terra Nostra* 541). The revenge of the colonized is complete. If traditional historiography erases the colonized subject's history, then Fuentes's imaginative reconstruction turns the table on the erstwhile colonizers.

Echevarria points out that the presence of an inner historian/chronicler is one of the most important tropes of 'archival fiction'. The inner historian foregrounds the processes by which writing is engendered and comments on the processes by which 'history' is written. In *Terra Nostra*, Fuentes invests Cervantes (1547-1616) in the role of this inner historian. For Fuentes, Cervantes is one of the foundational figures for Spanish literature (linked to Latin American culture/literature). Writing about Cervantes in *Myself with Others*, Fuentes says that Don Miguel is the first author to foreground the gap between words(signifier) and things(signified), appearance and reality, truth, and imagination. *Don Quixote* (1605) is the first text that privileges 'readings' of the text and demonstrates the importance of multiplicity of responses to one text. Given this context, it is not surprising that Fuentes chooses Cervantes to be the chronicler of this narrative. Don Miguel in *Terra Nostra* "concocted a great number of things in his imagination and from invention passed to documentation of the events witnessed and of the world he inhabited...thus he added imagination to truth and truth to imagination...thus the mystery of all written things and painted things, for the more they are the product of imagination the more truthful you may hold them to be" (*Terra Nostra* 276-277). Through the persona of Cervantes, Fuentes himself becomes the chronicler of his culture's past by imaginatively reconstructing what is accepted as 'truth'.

The narrative is replete with other figures of narrators/chroniclers who are engaged in producing texts, oral or written, of their individual experiences and events. Brother Julian, Guzman, the young Pilgrim, Felipe II, Mad Lady, the first Magus, and Donno Camillo narrate and record these

events. These numerous narrative voices present us with multiple and alternative modes of perceiving one event or statement. Thus, Isabel's fall in the courtyard, the judgment of Pontius Pilate, the conception and birth of Jesus, the Orvieto painting, and the stories of the three youths are some of the events that are narrated by different voices in different spaces. These manifold perceptions emphasize the impossibility of recording one 'true' interpretation of an event; they signify the presence and equal validity of different perceptions /interpretations of one particular event.

The narrative also addresses the question of what is 'History' and demolishes the "logic of a perishable and linear history" (*Terra Nostra* 748). In the words of the first Magus, "History is circular...the story is repeating itself does not end ...(it)remains latent, waiting perhaps another time...another space...another opportunity in which to manifest (itself) other names to call (itself)" (*Terra Nostra* 750). 'History' becomes the investigation and interpretation of events as well as testimony of what the historian perceives. The times and space of Fuentes's continent chronicled in the floating texts of memory, myth, literature, and history assume shape and form only when he as the author recovers them and writes them. They become alive through his experience of relieving them through his writing.

Freedom and Independence: *The Campaign*

The Campaign (1990) is an account of a decade of the Latin American wars of independence fought between 1810-1820. Writing on the themes of contemporary Latin American fiction Gerald Martin says that "liberation becomes a permanent theme and revolution the accepted norm and socialism a standing item on the historical agenda" (Martin 15). Fuentes himself says that the "revolution gave us the totality of our history and the possibility of a culture and the real struggle for Latin America is then a struggle with ourselves, within ourselves... we must assimilate this conflicted past" (*Myself* 200-206). For assimilating this past, the revolution becomes an enabling trope to question and critique the 'archive' of the Latin American war of independence and nationalism. The war of independence and nationalism is the 'archive' because it is the 'accumulated existence of discourses' about one of the foundational events of Latin American culture, namely the struggle against colonial domination.

Traditional historiography regards the revolution as a great national struggle against Spanish domination which united the Latin American people into one cohesive entity. Fuentes's reconstruction in *The Campaign* debunks this received notion of the revolution. He follows Benedict An-

derson's formulation about 'creole nationalism' (Anderson). According to Anderson, these wars were dominated by the elite Creoles who were deeply suspicious of the marginalized sections of their societies, and hence there was "a certain 'social thinness' to these Latin American independence movements" (49) in terms of its participatory politics. This class also came to power after independence and hence perpetuated its power over the marginal sections of these societies even after the end of colonial rule. Fuentes's reconstruction foregrounds the elite creole foundation of the revolution fought by the rich and influential creoles to preserve their rights and privileges. He shows that these great wars of liberation were liberating only for a chosen few, the majority of the underprivileged, the gauchos, the blacks, the cholitos, and the Indians remained the oppressed classes. The revolution merely replaced the foreign colonial hegemony with a native dominant power and hierarchical structure.

Navigating the Continent: The Traveling Self

Baltasar Bustos's journey through the continent becomes the trope to expose the gaps in the 'archive' of the Latin American independence struggle. Bustos is a young creole seduced by the ideas of revolution, equality, fraternity, his books, and the legacy of a colonial Jesuit education. He is the archetypal mestizo consciousness- formed by the union of his Indian self and ideas imported from the European other. What Gerald Martin calls the mestizo consciousness is akin to Bhabha's notion of the 'hybridity' of the colonized subject. This hybrid mestizo subject receives the ideas of resistance and revolution from the colonizer; these ideas do not emerge from a native space. "Look behind every new idea and you will find an old one which might turn out to be Catholic and Spanish" (*The Campaign* 9). In his self-deluded state, Bustos is driven by the vision of a political idyll by a "new idea of faith in the nation, its geography, its history" (ibid 4). His delusion is similar to Felipe II's delusion in *Terra Nostra*. Felipe wants to create a new Spain, to eradicate all Arab influence "purify all Spain, to be left with humiliated but pure bones" (*Terra Nostra* 18-19). Both these men are driven by the vision of pure culture and tradition of an unadulterated nation. The narratives strive to divest them of their illusory notions. They are made aware of their hybrid cultures and are forced to accept problems, contradictions, and untenable options. Their labyrinthine journey forces them to problematize and doubt all received notions of truth, history, and their selves.

Bustos is moved by a vision of total communion with the natural landscape of his continent. This revolutionary who is excited by ideas of equal-

ity, cannot conceive of a future with gauchos in it. They spoil his vision of an ideal future because “they were nomads who would never take root anywhere, mobile negations of the sedentary life he identified with civilization” (*The Campaign* 36). Fuentes foregrounds the complexity of the ethnic stratification of Latin American society. Society is not only divided into the peninsular colonizers and the native colonial subjects. The conflict between the civilized peninsular and the barbaric colonized subject is replicated in the conflict between the majority of creole Portenos and the gauchos. These creole Portenos driven by ideas of civilization imported from Europe negate a sizeable part of their society—the gauchos, blacks, mestizos, Indians, and mulattos are branded as the barbaric ‘other’.

Bustos is excited by the law announcing the abolition of slavery proclaimed by the Buenos Aires Junta because of the opportunities for freedom and equality it entails. But the reality of the society belies his expectation and his vision of a political idyll under the revolutionary government. The fashionable and elite society of Buenos Aires and Lima thrives on the services of the blacks and mulatto slaves, the abolition remains a paper reform. The armies of the Junta, Spain, and warlords are commanded by educated elite officers and Indians remain the beasts of burden under all three. The laws of the revolution proclaim equality but “The Creole republic turns its back on the slavery issue...there will be freedom but no equality” (*The Campaign* 56-57). The new law against the gauchos forces them to abandon their ‘barbarous’ wandering and ‘useless’ customs and asks them to settle down. Governed by their imported ideas of ‘civilization’ and ‘progress’ the creoles fail to acknowledge that the gauchos and caudillos have their indigenous systems of law, authority, and traditions that are useful and valid for them. Like the colonial dominators, the creoles wanted to ‘civilize’ the ‘barbaric others’.

Bustos’s grandiose reading of the proclamation of freedom, equality, and the abolition of slavery to a group of kneeling Indians becomes interesting to note given the above. Fuentes emphasizes the futility of Bustos’s mission; he does not speak the Indian language, he reads out the edict in Spanish, and his target audience does not comprehend a single word. For the Indians, he remains the arrogant outsider, as despised as the colonial dominator. Miguel Lanza tells Bustos “Portenos come to implement revolution...proclaiming liberty, equality, and fraternity while their soldiers raped, robbed and burned everything down” (*The Campaign* 98). The underprivileged remain neglected and exploited under colonial domination, the military Junta, and the warlords. The commoners for whom this war is supposedly being fought simply erase their collective memories

about the revolution “Bustos found no evidence of war; no one knew anything about the old battles and not a soul remembered the heroes” (*The Campaign* 186). This willful erasure remains their only form of resistance against the hegemony of the creole bourgeoisie.

Like other ‘archival fictions’, *The Campaign* also foregrounds its self-reflexive nature and possesses its inner historian. Significantly, Manuel Varela is a printer of smuggled books. As a printer, he makes the books available to many readers thereby dismantling the encoded structure of power/knowledge and hegemony inscribed in the notion of a unique text. One recalls Guzman in *Terra Nostra* “power is founded upon the text. The only legitimacy is the reflection of one’s possession of the unique text” (695). In the old-world Felipe II feels threatened by the news of printing as it threatens his position of power as mentioned earlier in the paper. In the new world, the possession of books and the act of communal reading threatens the colonial administration. The availability of books invests the colonized subject with power/knowledge and helps them to formulate their basis for resistance. The burning of the courthouse by the mob in *The Campaign* is another significant event that denotes the resistance of the dominated. The courthouse symbolizes the colonial archive, it is the repository of law, registers, racial discrimination, and property exclusion. Its burning and destruction erase the literal symbol of colonial hegemony, similar to the burning of the parchments of the white God by the Lord of burning in *Terra Nostra* analyzed above.

Fuentes also problematizes the notion of what is ‘history’. For Bustos ‘history’ (is) “the conglomeration of ideas, facts, and desires which he fought for or against came to be only in the company of others, in something shared with others” (*The Campaign* 43). Father Julian has no “Personal history and his history has no meaning outside History” (ibid 136). The individual histories of both are part of and outside of public histories, what Fuentes foregrounds is an inescapable link between the two. The text becomes a common space where they both coalesce. Varela and Dorrego feel that they can only “fix their clocks and stand in the front of maps of the continent to trace the imaginary movement of non-existent armies... (thus transforming) History into the presence of an absence...another name for ideal perfection” (ibid 142). Their clocks thus become tropes of ideal perfection and also symbolize the simultaneity of all time; the recollected past, the present, and the imagined future. All these ideas come together to bolster Fuentes’s agenda to write about the presence of an absence, about a “history that isn’t Spanish but Argentine, Chilean, Mexican” (ibid 6).

The question of law, legality and the importance of the written word are colonial legacies inherited by the mestizo consciousness. The written word and the law signify the power/knowledge of the ruler (analyzed in the discussion of the two novels). This hegemonic discourse becomes the site of power for both the colonial and the native dominator. The revolution and its leaders inherit this colonial legacy. The overabundance of archives, mountains of papers, sheets upon sheets, secretaries, scribes, and lawyers in Veracruz symbolize “a rhetorical volcano” (*The Campaign* 201). For these notaries only that which is written becomes real. Quintana says that law is reality itself “the circle of the written closed over its authors, capturing them in the noble fiction of their own inventive powers: the written is the real and we are its authors” (ibid 215). Baltazar’s letters that constitute the manuscript of this narrative which Varela possesses “must wait a long time before being published” (ibid 238). Its wait is finally over when Fuentes retrieves it and writes about it. Bustos’s journey makes him aware of the need to problematize issues and ideas, “don’t give your faith to any ruler, any secular state, any philosophy, any military or economic power without adding your confusion, your complication, your exception, your damned imagination that deforms all truth” (ibid 229). Bustos’s realization and Fuentes’s reconstruction/retrieval both coalesce at this notion of problematization.

It is difficult to agree with Gerald Martin’s observation that the Latin American narrative is a grand patriarchal narrative. Indeed, the dominant narratorial voices in both *Terra Nostra* and *The Campaign* are male. These male voices objectify the women and make the female body a site for their sexual fantasies. But both the novels expose the dominant patriarchal system and move toward some kind of revision of gender inequalities. Felipe II and Bustos idealize Isabel and Ofelia as chaste virgins. But these two women are delineated as individuals with their rights who live according to their own rules. The patriarchal society in the narratives was unable to dominate the world while women knew the secrets, “So they joined together to divest them of their dignity... invented a lie that is indispensable to the foundation of man’s power” (*Terra Nostra* 605). Forced into the position of subservience and marginality, these women resist the male domination on their terms. Isabel refuses to remain a chaste virgin, and Celestina takes her revenge by transmitting the venereal disease to Felipe. Ofelia retains her maiden name and becomes a spy for the revolution. The male bias is explicitly exposed in Sabina’s case. She is denied education and is condemned to a life of hard work and drudgery. Her frustrated and repressed sexuality finds expression in the violent killing of the dogs. She has to suppress her sexual desires because it is considered to be unfemi-

nine to exhibit such urges, but for Bustos sex becomes a liberating and fulfilling experience and a trope for communion with larger forces of nature.

Conclusion:

Fuentes's engagement with the 'history', identity, old world, new world, writing, law, and gender issues aims at problematizing received ideas and subverting them. These two novels foreground the impossibility of constituting a holistic/universal world view of one identity, one tradition, one culture, and one 'history'. The imaginative revision of 'history' and retrieval of the mestizo and marginal voices becomes the only possible alternative to assimilate the contradictory and fragmented past. His narratives do not provide any clear-cut answers to the issues, they only manage to raise important questions about these issues. In this context it becomes important to imagine, write, and narrate them. To conclude in his words "reality is not the product of an ideological phantasm. It is the result of history. And history is something we have created ourselves. We are thus responsible for our history. No one was present in the past. But there is no living present with a dead past. No one has been present in the future. But there is no living present without the imagination of a better world. We ... made the history of this hemisphere. We ... must remember it. We... must imagine it" (*Myself* 214).

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