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Carlos Fuentes and Neoliberalism

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I. Introduction

In the 1980s and until his death, Carlos Fuentes (1928-2012) often wrote about globalization and neoliberalism. This preoccupation, which spans three decades and appears in numerous writings and other types of public interventions in various genres and institutional spheres, has not received the attention it deserves. Now, more than ten years after his passing, and as Latin America and the world seek to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, Fuentes' insights on neoliberal globalization remain relevant. This essay traces the development and evolution of Fuentes' thinking on neoliberalism in both his fiction and non-fiction writing. In the end, it will show how his views on globalization shifted and evolved to accommodate new and ever-changing circumstances. Once a staunch supporter of the Cuban revolution, Carlos Fuentes would briefly become seduced by the promises of a new neoliberal social order, as is exemplified by his writing in support of the signing of NAFTA. This posture often gained him criticism from the Left. For example, in "A Lost Opportunity: Carlos Fuentes, the Essay, and Mexico in English" (2014), Mauricio Tenorio Trillo characterizes Carlos Fuentes' English-language essays as difficult to pin down (slippery like a "wet fish") or outright contradictory:

> But his peculiar use of the essay [for English-speaking audiences] allowed him to always come out clean, like a wet fish in our hands. One day he was at the first line of lobbying for NAFTA, the next he was the critic of neoliberalism,

> but always the friend of Mexican or American presidents—except Nixon and Díaz Ordaz. After all, by the 1990s, he was more than them. Presidents came and went. Fuentes became Teotihuacan or the *Ángel de la Independencia.* (n. p.)

While Tenorio Trillo's mordant critique of Fuentes' English-language essays of the 1990s is valid (particularly regarding his proximity to state power), this essay takes a longer view, from the 1970s to the 2000s, and examines a wide variety of writing (opinion editorials, essays, speeches, interviews, articles, short stories, and novels) originally published in both English and Spanish. It posits that Fuentes was adept at changing his views in light of new information and new contexts, a welcome skill in today's climate of ideological rigidity. Similarly, Russell Cobb (2008) has argued that Fuentes transitioned from "critical intellectual" to "intellectual in the shadow of the state" as his literary fame grew along of that of other writers of the Boom (75). Indeed, on many occasions, Fuentes would explicitly endorse the policies of the Mexican state-PRI complex, a government both him and his father served as diplomats. However, a more extensive study of the writer's public interventions over a longer period will reveal a Fuentes who shifted back and forth from critical to state intellectual, to use Cobb's dichotomy, depending on contexts, audiences, and even writing genres. The idea that Fuentes sold out his leftist ideals (liberal, progressive, socialist, or revolutionary) once he acquired literary fame, prestige, and fortune does not stand up to sustained scrutiny.

Kate Reed (2020), on the other hand, has argued that Fuentes's ideological positions remained remarkably consistent and that his "(mis)alignment with different presidential administrations had less to do with changes in his ideology and more to do with his appraisal of the changing political context" (67). This essay builds upon Reed's arguments. While Reed focuses exclusively on the 1960s, this longer survey confirms that Fuentes did indeed change positions: although he embraced neoliberalism in his support of NAFTA, by the end of his life, Fuentes had changed his mind again, recognizing the danger to humanity and the environment brought about by unfettered markets. In fact, it is very likely that Fuentes began to question his own support of NAFTA the same day that the treaty went into effect (January 1, 1994), when Mexico and the world also learned about the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico. This much is suggested by Fuentes's correspondence with Subcomandante Marcos (the masked-wearing, pipe-smoking leader of EZLN, the Zapatista Army for National Liberation) which is examined below.

This analytical survey begins (roughly) in the 1980s and ends in the 2000s after the new millennium, and it encompasses both fiction (novels and stories) and non-

fiction (editorials, essays, speeches), originally written both in English and in Spanish. Broadly speaking, the critical intellectual is more aligned with the fiction writer, while the state intellectual is more aligned with the non-fiction one. A closer look, however, reveals particularities and nuances.

II. The 1970s and 1980s

In the 1960s, Fuentes stood firm with the Latin American revolutionary left. His novel *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962) opens with a dedication to C. Wright Mills ("verdadera voz de Norteamérica, amigo y compañero en la lucha de Latinoamérica" (111)) and closes with a signature that reads "La Habana, mayo de 1960. / México, diciembre de 1961" (Fuentes (1962) 2000, 405).[1] Indeed, due to his ties to Cuba, Fuentes was twice denied an entry visa to the United States under the McCarran-Walter Act.[2] By the late 1970s, however, he was no longer a staunch supporter of the Cuban revolution nor a *persona non grata* to the U.S. Department of State. In 1971, Fuentes openly broke from the Castro regime in Cuba (if not from the Cuban revolution and its people) over the Padilla Affair.[3] In the early 1980s, Fuentes regularly contributed to the opinion pages of the *New York Times*, mainly writing against U.S. intervention in Nicaragua and El Salvador, but also about U.S.-Latin America relations in general.

Assuming a posture that places him in dialogue with earlier theories regarding the "end of ideologies" (Daniel Bell 1960) and discussions about the "end of history" (Francis Fukuyama 1992), Fuentes often spoke of a historical trend toward an ideologically pluralistic world. This idea appeared first in his op-ed pieces in the *New*

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[1] Mills wrote passionately in support of the Cuban revolution in his text *Listen, Yankee!* (1960).

[2] In 1961, Fuentes traveled to La Habana as a Mexican delegate to the *Congreso de Solidaridad con Cuba* and participated in the *Movimiento Nacional de Liberación* inspired by Mexican ex-president Lázaro Cárdenas. As a result, but without admitting it, the U.S. denied his participation in a televised debate with Richard Goodwin (one of President Kennedy's specialists in Latin American affairs) about the Alliance for Progress. In 1969, arriving at the port of San Juan, Puerto Rico, aboard the *Virginia de Charruca,* U.S. immigration officials prevented him from getting off the ship onto the island. For this and other biographical information on Fuentes, I consulted the appendices "Cronología biográfica de Carlos Fuentes" and the "Cronología bibliográfica de Carlos Fuentes" that appear at the end of the collection of his interviews, *Carlos Fuentes: Territorios del tiempo* (1999). For a throughout account of Fuentes' brushes with the McCarran-Walter Act, see Deborah Cohn (2012) "Carlos Fuentes: Fostering Latin American-U.S. Relations During the Boom" (9-19).

[3] Cuban poet Ernesto Padilla initially supported the Cuban revolution, but by the late 1960s he began to openly criticize it. In 1971, Padilla was imprisoned by the Castro regime, provoking international outrage, and dividing the increasingly famous and influential writers of the so-called Boom. Fuentes and Mario Vargas Llosa (another Boom writer who exhibited a neoliberal turn, although he seems to have stayed a neoliberal hawk) turned against the regime, whereas Gabriel García Márquez and Julio Cortázar continued to defend the Cuban revolution.

York Times during the early 1980s and continued to be present in his political writings up until his death, albeit in shifting hues. Although Fuentes's vocal opposition to North American interventionism in Latin America was constant throughout his career, which itself merits examination, I will concentrate only on those op-ed pieces related to neoliberal globalization.

In his March 5, 1981, in the *New York Times* editorial "Latins' Pressing Questions", Fuentes rhetorically asked his North American audience: "Do the United States and the Soviet Union really believe that the historical trend toward a world of pluralistic powers can be halted?" (1981, A23). Immersed in the atmosphere of Cold War politics, the underlying premise of the question argues that revolutionary social movements in—mostly, but not limited to—El Salvador and Nicaragua are not the product of foreign Marxist (i.e., Soviet) conspiracies. Instead, they result from problems "bred in the marrow of a colonialism nearly 500 years old." This idea—a historical trend toward a world of pluralistic powers—is expressed again and slightly revised in a March 30th letter to the same newspaper's editor. Fuentes wrote that Milan B. Skacel "certainly missed my ruling premise, i.e., that we are witnessing a shift from Soviet-American hegemony to a new, polycentric world and that U.S. interventionism in El Salvador, as much as Soviet interventionism in Afghanistan, violates this historical trend and tries to restore the comfortable spheres of influence of the 1950s" (A18). Thus, the world of "pluralistic powers" becomes a "polycentric" one in the last piece. This idea is not entirely wishful thinking on Fuentes' part. In his editorials and articles on the subject, Fuentes constantly mentioned the specific ways in which Latin American and European nations provided both symbolic and material support for revolutionary struggles in Central America, challenging, if not rivalling, U.S. influence in the region. In Fuentes' view, North American Capitalism and Soviet Communism were anti-historical agents, seeking to stop a trend in which both see their spheres of influence reduced.

True, nowhere in these editorials did Fuentes mention the phrase *neoliberal* or *globalization*. Nevertheless, during the 1980s, the concept of globalization began to appear in a diverse body of literature within the social sciences (McGrew 1992, 65) and the term is closely associated with neoliberalism. It is also clear that "globalization" often functions in writing as short for "neoliberal globalization." Moreover, the idea of a polycentric world inserts itself within the parameters of globalization discourse, which, as McGrew (1992) has pointed out, is often described in contradictory terms. In his "A Global Society?" Anthony McGrew explores several binary oppositions that have characterized the contradictory "globe talk" in the last two decades:

universalization / particularization, homogenization / differentiation, and integration / fragmentation, among others (74-75). One can discern that from this perspective, Fuentes' stance towards globalization in his op-ed pieces in the *New York Times* leans toward the latter term of each binary identified by McGrew. Globalization (as a movement toward a polycentric world) promotes a differentiated, heterogeneous, and fragmented world. Nations will follow the particularities dictated by their individual needs, cultures, and history on the ideological, cultural, social, and economic planes, while at the same time forging regional alliances.

Throughout the 1980s, Fuentes continued to reflect, write, and speak about the possibilities of achieving a world in which ideological diversity is possible and desirable. In his 1983 Harvard Commencement speech, later updated and published as the last essay on his book *Myself with Others* (1990), Fuentes still denounced U.S. interventionism. He spoke about how, with diplomatic imagination and historical memory, a different Latin America could emerge, "a Latin America of independent states building institutions of stability, renewing the culture of national identity, diversifying our economic interdependence, and wearing down the dogmas of two musty nineteenth-century philosophies" (210). This alternative envisioned by Fuentes (i.e., a movement towards a polycentric world) resembles Samir Amin's concept of "polycentric regionalization," which he proposes as an alternative to neoliberal globalization. In his *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization* (1997), Amin writes:

> This option [polycentric regionalization] proceeds from the contention that nations and the real problems with which nations and regions are confronted are not identical and cannot be in view of their unequal development. It sets for itself the primary objective of reducing this inequality in which the polarization produced by the world expansion of capitalism manifests itself. It recognizes a place for globalization, on condition that it conceives itself in a manner appropriate to serving the primary objective. It recognizes at the same time that the realization of a superior world development requires the completion of regional solidarities and autonomies . . . (51)

Like this Egyptian-French Marxist economist, Fuentes advocated for regional solidarities in Latin America to facilitate north-south disparities and promote development with justice in the region.[4] Latin America's advantage for forging this integration, moreover, resides in its common cultural heritage. Fuentes thus recognized a place for globalization. Still, unlike neoliberal demagogues, he affirmed that the

[4] While the goal of this essay is not to trace intellectual lineages, the flow of ideas, or first coinages ("polycentric world"), it is likely Fuentes crossed paths with Samir Amin. In 1963, Fuentes attended the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, with which Amin is also associated.

world's increasing interconnectedness is a political process, not an organic one, and thus potentially guided with diplomatic imagination and solidarity.

Fuentes's hopes for a movement toward Latin American integration did not come to fruition, however. The Reagan administration insisted on trying to thwart the revolutionary government in Nicaragua and failed to negotiate a diplomatic solution for peace in Central America as proposed by Costa Rica's president Óscar Arias Sánchez. The first Bush administration further damaged diplomatic relations with Latin America with the invasion of Panama and the kidnapping of Manuel Noriega. These failures, together with the ascendance of neoliberal ideology, perhaps explain the outlook of despair and hopelessness reflected in Fuentes' fiction of the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, as is often the case in his dystopian novels, there is room for hope and idealism.

III. The 1980s and 1990s in Fiction

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Fuentes's fiction also showed an increasing concern with neoliberal globalization and its consequences. This section deals primarily with two works of fiction: *Cristóbal Nonato* (*Christopher Unborn*, 1987) and the short story "Las dos Américas" included in the collection *El naranjo* (*The Orange Tree*, 1993). Here, Fuentes used fiction to put forth a sharp critique of contemporary forms of neoliberal globalization. But unlike his editorials and political writings, his creative writing avoids programmatic solutions for his readers. To imagine solutions is not the job of the writer but the reader of these works. The narrator in *Cristóbal Nonato* addresses the reader as "Querido elector," a pun that plays on the Spanish words *elector* (one who votes or chooses) and *lector* (reader).[5]

Set in 1992 (but published in 1987), Fuentes' novel *Cristóbal Nonato* imagines a radically changed, dystopian Mexico. Cristóbal, the narrator, is an all-knowing and fully conscious spermatozoid—and latter zygote and fetus—who will be born at the zero hours of October 12, 1992, the date that marks the fifth centenary of the so-called discovery of America by Columbus—which is also the moment that the novel ends. During Cristóbal's nine-month gestation period, the novel takes us on a mad tour of a

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[5] The novel exudes puns, anagrams, and neologisms, many of them in English or Spanglish that the *elector* needs to decipher. For example, Moctezuma, Tenochtitlan's last emperor, becomes "Mock the Summa," that is to say, "make fun [of Thomas Aquinas'] *The Summa [Theologica]*;" Isabel la Católica becomes "Isabel la caótica" or Isabel the Chaotic, to give a few examples. The novel, in short, calls for an active reader to decode the meaning and imagine ways to avoid the future dystopian nightmare portrayed in the novel.

different and yet uncannily similar Mexico. The country's capital, "Makesicko City," is the most populated, poisonous, and polluted megalopolis on the face of the earth. The territory of the Yucatan peninsula has been "alienated" to the highest bidder, the tourist consortium Club Mediterránée which, through the Fideicomiso Turístico Peninsular, operates the area without any intervention from the federal government in exchange for paying the interest on the external debt, which at the beginning of the novel is symbolically set at $1,492 million, rising to $1,992 million by the end.[6] The states of Chiapas, Tabasco, and Campeche now form the Chitacam Trusteeship, transferred to the ownership of North American oil companies until the principal of the said debt is paid (which is impossible, assuring perpetual possession of Mexico's subsoil resources by North American companies). The lands of the state of Veracruz, on the Gulf of Mexico, from Tampico to Coatzacoalcos, have been lost to an incomprehensible war; depending on which television channel one watched, they were "alienated" either to a guerrilla-led agrarian revolution or an American invasion. Nobody can understand or speak about the states on the Pacific coast. Finally, toward the North now lies Mexamérica, independent from Mexico and the United States, one hundred kilometers north and south of the old border (Fuentes 1987, 26-27).

The novel also provides the reader with a ground-level perspective. Throughout the book, for example, the reader learns that the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) no longer holds the presidency. Still, the mechanisms of political control and manipulation endure when the "clerical" and "right wing" president from the PAN (Partido Acción Nacional) sees himself obliged to govern with the "blocks, organizations, structures of the PRI" and other corporatist political groups from the previous regime, such as pro-PRI labor unions (Fuentes 1987, 30). Bubble Gómez, a unionized truck driver, has been forced by his union to hang in the rear-view mirror of his truck a picture of British neoliberal Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, right next to his image of the Virgen de Guadalupe (32). To cite just one more example, the "alienated" masses are kept in control through all kinds of spectacular mass media shows, festivities, and reality TV contests, an eerily forewarning of the type of television

[6] In this section, Fuentes repeatedly uses the Spanish verb "*enajenar.*" The word means to transfer a property from one person or entity to another. Still, it also implies estrangement and, in a more figurative sense, to lose one's mind. This sense of dispossession, alienation, and madness pervades the novel and some Latin American literature of the period in general. To examine the role of madness in Latin American literature of the 1980s and early 1990s, see René Jara's *Los pliegues del silencio: narrativa latinoamericana en el fin del milenio* (1996), particularly the fourth chapter, "Textura I: Locura y literatura."

programming that became popular in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In fact, one of these imagined TV game shows is the one which gives *Cristóbal Nonato* its narrative impulse: Cristóbal's parents, Ángel and Ángeles have entered the contest for the couple whose son is born on the first minute on the fifth centenary of the discovery, in hopes of winning for their son "free education" during his childhood, the "keys to the republic" at eighteen, and the "regency of the nation" at twenty-one (13-14).

During the 1990s, when historical time met that of the novel's fictional time, some of Fuentes's imaginative constructs became a reality. His predictions for deadly environmental pollution in Mexico City's environment were foreseeable and already evident at the time of the novel's publication in 1987, and today the nation's capital is indeed one of the most dangerously polluted and overpopulated cities in the world. As for the resurgence of guerrilla movements, moreover, Fuentes was off only geographically: on January 1, 1994, the day in which NAFTA went into effect, Mexicans awoke to the new year and the Zapatista rebellion in the state of Chiapas. As a concept, "Mexamérica" has entered the vocabularies of the social sciences and mainstream journalism, and it has become a veritable object of study and, in many senses, a social, cultural, geographical, and political reality.[7] Finally, in recent years, the PAN won three consecutive presidential elections in Mexico: Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000), Vicente Fox (2000-2006), and Felipe Calderón (2006-2012). As predicted by the novel, however, the corporatist structures of the previous regime endured through PAN rule. In retrospect, the wild imaginings of this novel were not that far-fetched.

Although fictive, ironic, and often humorous, the passages of *Cristóbal Nonato* highlighted above succinctly reveal Fuentes' remarkable insight and early understanding of some of the natural and possible consequences of neoliberal globalization.[8] He once mentioned in an interview that he received phone calls from friends every time one of

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[7] For the use of the term *Mexamerica* in popular press, see for example, Jerry Adler and Tim Padgett, "Mexamerica: Selena Country," *Newsweek,* October 23, 1995: 1–11.

[8] The presidency of Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado (1982-1988), when *Cristóbal Nonato* was first published, marks the beginning of the ascendancy of neoliberal ideology in Mexico. A technocrat with no political experience (he had never held political office before the presidency) and with a background in banking and government finance, de la Madrid started the process of selling off some of the less profitable (or bankrupt) national enterprises. It curbed inflation through a "pact" between government, business, and workers (Krauze 1997, 769). The workers suffered the most in this agreement, as salaries were frozen and never adjusted for inflation. The coercion of union workers into this pact, however, would not have been possible without the nod of approval from the leadership of Mexico's largest union, the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (Confederation of Mexican Workers), a de facto arm of the PRI, the corporatist ruling party at the time. It would be neoliberal technocrat champion and Harvard School of Management-educated Carlos Salinas de Gortari who would consolidate the liberalization of the economy and continue the transition from state to market authority.

his "prophecies" from *Cristóbal Nonato* came true (Castillo 1988). Amid this bleak Mexican landscape, however, the novel ends on a positive note. As the plot advances, the reader learns that Cristóbal's future parents have the unique opportunity to leave the chaotic country and set sail for a utopian new world called Pacífica:

> [Niño Perdido, a character in the novel] le tendía la otra [mano] a mis padres (y a mí) vengan con nosotros, vamos a Pacífica, el Nuevo Mundo ya no está aquí, siempre está en otra parte, celebren el quinto centenario dejando atrás su viejo mundo de corrupción, injusticia, estupidez, egoísmo, arrogancia, desprecio y hambre, hemos venido por ustedes: aquí está nuestra mano, el niño nacerá a la media noche, como fue escrito, de prisa, un día, en seguida llegarán las naves por nosotros y saldremos rumbo a Pacífica, Pacífica los espera, allí ustedes son necesarios, aquí son superfluos, dijo el hermano del Huérfano Huerta, no le entreguen su niño por nacer al horror insalvable de México, sálvenlo, sálvense [. . .] (Fuentes 1987, 544)[9]

A few pages later, Pacífica is described further, this time as a technological paradise: "En Pacífica ya ganamos la carrera técnica, y por eso no queremos el poder: ofrecemos el bienestar: quien domina la computadora domina la economía del mundo: nosotros no queremos dominar sino compartir: vengan con nosotros, Ángel, Ángeles, Cristóbal por nacer, dejen atrás la corrupción y la muerte de México [. . .]" (547). The novel's description of Pacífica, however, although somewhat unclear (it is sort of a mirage), implicitly suggests something very similar to the utopian vision of free markets as painted by neoliberal discourse.

During Ángeles' labor at the end of the novel, Ángel Palomar communicates their decision to Niño Perdido and Huérfano Huerta: "ÁNGEL PALOMAR, negó con la cabeza: —No vamos con ustedes" (Fuentes 1987, 562). Very soon, Cristóbal ceases to be unborn and arrives in Mexico with his twin sister, la niña Bah. The novel's last paragraph is no longer narrated by the all-knowing, all-remembering, and conscious fetus but by an omniscient narrator who describes the final scene of Cristóbal's birth as it happens. Disconnected from his mother, he is unable to narrate anymore and "el niño que nace sobre la playa olvida, lo olvida todo olvida todo, olvida. . ." (563).[10]

The novel denounces Mexico's situation—or better yet, its future—but also rejects escaping to the utopian paradise of Pacífica. It offers instead the pursuit of an alternative modernity: an inclusive modernity firmly anchored in its Mexican roots. The

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[9] The novel does not say this explicitly, but Pacífica resembles Japan and China, and Southeast Asia in general. According to world affairs then and now, it is not odd that Fuentes identified Asia as the new possible hegemonic power.

[10] The last phrase of the novel is arranged on the page to suggest a sliding down, thus graphically representing Cristóbal's passing through the birth canal and his gradual forgetting.

first movement toward achieving this new modernity implies the rejection of the "extralogical imitation" of foreign or inadequate models of modernity or modernization, a critique Fuentes often made of his non-fiction.[11] The rejection of extralogical imitation includes rejecting both the American and Marxist models of development, authored by "falsos revolucionarios, y modernizadores rusos, gringos o nacos" (Fuentes 1987, 554). It involves refusing the violent, often invading "gringos" with their "hipocresía puritana militante," and the Russians who "secularizan la tradición eclesiástica y la ofrecen disfrazada de progreso" (554).[12] The novel suggests that even the Bourgeois modernizers of the Mexican revolution are "totally amnesiac to what happens to the rural and urban poor."[13] The second step toward this more authentic, inclusive, and locally anchored modernity is for Mexico to embrace its Mediterranean, Spanish (Catholic, Arab, Jewish), African, and Amerindian past and traditions. As Ángel tells his wife and unborn child:

> Ángeles, Cristóbal, no quiero un mundo de progreso que nos capture entre el Norte y el Este y nos arrebate lo mejor del Occidente, pero tampoco quiero un mundo pacífico que no merecemos mientras no resolvamos lo que ocurre aquí adentro [. . .], con todo lo que somos, bueno y malo, malo y bueno, pero irresuelto aún; mujer, hijo, llegaremos a Pacífica un día si antes dejamos de ser Norte o Este para ser nosotros mismos con todo y Occidente. (554–5)

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[11] In his 1984 open letter to Henry Kissinger published in *Harper's Magazine* ("Are You Listening, Henry Kissinger?"), when addressing the Marxism-Leninism of the Sandinista revolution, Fuentes discusses French sociologist Gabriel de Tarde's concept of "extralogical imitation." "It consists," he writes, "of adapting the latest, or prevalent, or most 'universal' philosophical mode to our national realities, whether it suits them or not" (34). The tendency to imitate extralogically, he continues, is the product of the postcolonial situation of Latin America. After Independence, there was a perceived need to reject the Spanish and Indian pasts, deemed equally barbaric. Fuentes' concept of extralogical imitation has been theorized on the continent as well by Latin American intellectuals. One example is Brazilian Roberto Schwartz's concept of "ideas fora de lugar" ("misplaced ideas").

[12] Written in a stream of consciousness style, with shifting topics and points of view in extremely long sentences, it is difficult to cite to this and other passages of *Cristóbal Nonato*. Suffice it to say here that the critique of extralogical imitation is carried out over several pages in chapter 9 titled "El descubrimiento de América" (Fuentes 1987, 439-534).

[13] For Fuentes, the Mexican Revolution was two revolutions. The first one was the popular revolution (a guerrilla insurrection, rather) headed by Emiliano Zapata in the south and Pancho Villa in the north, "whose goal was social justice based on local self-rule." The second was led by the professional, urban middle classes, "who envisioned a modern, democratic, progressive Mexico ruled from the center by a strong national government" (1992, 299-309). Although the latter revolution prevailed, the 1917 constitution did make some concessions to the former one, such as the laws of agrarian reform and the protection of labor rights. At the height of neoliberalism in Mexico, those social victories were the first to be sacrificed. Carlos Salinas de Gortari essentially killed the agrarian reform (art. 27) and weakened labor rights (art. 123) via constitutional amendments during his tenure and in preparation for NAFTA.

The section above does not pretend to be a complete analysis of the dense, massive 563-page novel. Instead, the goal is to highlight how Fuentes thought of globalization in the Mexican context and show how he imagined the future. The aerial tour of Mexico by Don Fernando Benítes forces the reader to realize that neoliberal globalization is also a new form of North American imperialism, exerted via finance capital as seen in the tourist paradise of Yucatan or outright military invasion like the one he (re)imagined in Veracruz. Fuentes also renders problematic the much-celebrated new communication technologies, which in his novel are used as propaganda machines and instruments of control, as suggested by the mass media reality TV contests that ironically propel the novel's narrative. Finally, the overall pessimistic outlook of the book does leave room for hope in the future. Ángel, Ángeles, Cristóbal and the niña Bah, now a family, will stay in this Mexico. The challenges that lie ahead, just like baby Cristóbal's, are to remember the forgotten past to forge a better future. But that better future is not programmatically given: the novel encourages the reader/voter (the "Dear elector") to imagine what an authentically Mexican modernity should look like.

In 1993, Fuentes published a collection of short stories under the title *El naranjo*. Revolving around of the legacy and dangers of colonialism, past and present, the stories can be read independently in order as a complete yet fragmented novel. In "Las dos Américas," Fuentes re-imagines Columbus's travel log to connect yesterday's forms of globalization with contemporary forms of colonialism. In this fictional re-telling of the so-called Discovery, Columbus also arrives in the New World, but he does so shipwrecked and alone, abandoned by a mutinous crew. As an outcast, Columbus chooses not to report his findings to the Europeans. The reader learns that he had only used his contemporaries' mercantilist ambitions to finance his utopian project. Columbus, thus, stays in this earthly paradise and enjoys an unusually long life, living in harmony with the indigenous natives. In this re-imagination of history, America and Europe follow separate paths.

Five hundred years after his arrival, the discoverer is paradoxically discovered: "yo no había llegado al Japón, Japón había llegado a mí" (Fuentes 1993b, 252). This time, colonization is not by military conquest and invasion but by finance capital and multinational corporations. Mr. Nomura's conquering Japanese army consists not of conquistadors and missionaries but lawyers, trademarks, and finance capital. Columbus's utopian paradise, just like Cristóbal's Mexico in *Cristóbal Nonato*, is radically transformed into a tourist's and consumer's paradise, with "*Jacuzzi,* champaña*, Porsche* y discoteca" (251). Although the story erases all the violent history of Spanish

colonialism, it nevertheless reveals a preoccupation about the present and pressing issues accompanying colonialism's most recent incarnation. "Las dos Américas" suggests that the new world economy is more a forceful imposition by external agents than a natural and "universal" process of world integration. Furthermore, just like in the original story of Columbus, the story illustrates how inhabitants of the Americas find themselves on the underside of globalization as they are confined to the out-of-sight area of the tourist's paradise and condemned to serve those who can afford a stay in Paraíso, Inc.

After Columbus recovers from the initial shock caused by the radical transformation of his natural paradise into a consumer one, he begins to believe that Paraíso, Inc. is not such a bad thing. After all, Columbus reasons, the many different national flags on cruise ships and planes, and the many visitors of many colors and races from other places are visible proof of the openness and inclusiveness of the market, a diverse multinational and multiracial utopia. (One is tempted here to see the story's protagonist as an alter ego of Fuentes himself, who, as I will show below, was temporarily seduced by the allure of neoliberal globalization.) Not insignificantly, it is a female German activist, Ute Pinkernail, who wakes Columbus from his stupefaction. She sneaks into Columbus's well-guarded chambers and tells him that his new free market and tourist utopia led to the exclusion and marginalization of the great majority of his people and has caused irreparable environmental destruction. Pinkernail explains to him that there are six billion people on the planet; the cities of the rest of the world are about to disappear, buried under garbage and the feces of delirious multitudes. His paradise, accessible to very few, is only the final sewer. Columbus has accomplished his fatal destiny, the enslavement and extermination of his people (Fuentes 1993b, 257).

"Las dos Américas" also comments on the loss of national sovereignty that comes with neoliberal reforms, which are often dictated from the outside. It shows how colonization by finance capital forces a nation to abandon the forging of an egalitarian paradise on earth: Columbus is President of the Administrative Council of Paraíso, Inc., and as such, the "only visible head of this new anonymous empire" (Fuentes 1993b, 255). Nevertheless, the moment he tries to exert that power to recuperate his version of paradise (in which "men governed themselves with uncorrupt reason and in the constant search of good"), he is forcibly exiled and sent back to Spain aboard an Iberian Airlines plane. He was only a puppet, a curious relic, and a façade for the transnational corporations that colonized his paradise.

Once again, however, Fuentes closes the story leaving room for hope and optimism. Columbus secretly carries the orange tree seeds that give the collection its title during his flight back to Europe. His desire to replant them in Europe suggests the possibility of the resuscitation—albeit elsewhere—of utopian hopes. More than anything, in its fantastic recreation of Columbus's tale as a present-day incarnation of colonialism, the story implies that we have not reached the end of history. But once again and just like in *Cristóbal Nonato*, there is no prescription, just space for the reader to imagine where to plant once again the seeds of hope.

IV. The 1980s and 1990s in Non-Fiction

> Every time someone proclaims that the era of ideological diversity has come to an end, I wonder about the proclaimer's ideology.
>
> —Carlos Fuentes

The first sentence of Fuentes' 1991 essay "The End of Ideologies?" in the epigraph above implicitly invokes Francis Fukuyama's famous thesis of the ultimate triumph of Capitalism and liberal democracy over socialism and Soviet Communism, as well as other theories associated with postmodernism.[14] The rhetorical question that gives the essay its title foretells the argument the author will be making in the body of the piece: that to claim the end of an ideology is, in itself, an ideological position. It also reveals, as will become apparent in this section, Fuentes' continuous desire to forge an alternative modernity in Latin America, like the one envisioned in *Cristóbal Nonato* and other essays and books.[15] In his essay, Fuentes discusses the potential of new communications technologies as well as the new problems they create; compares and contrasts the ideologies of Capitalism and liberal democracy with those of Communism and socialism; talks about the "yet unpublished" forms of hegemony "from the bottom to the top" and "from the margins to the center" that are emerging in Latin America (1991b, 29); and, finally, reflects on one of the main challenges for the future: the

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[14] Although Fuentes' essay's title echoes Daniel Bell's 1960 book *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, Fuentes responds primarily to Fukuyama, although not mentioned by name in the essay. The essay also seems to indirectly engage the claims of postmodern philosophers for whom the metanarratives of modernity have ended (Lyotard).

[15] In his *Valiente mundo nuevo* (1990), a book of literary criticism, he makes explicit the sort of modernity he envisions for Latin America. See the first chapter, "Crisis y continuidad cultural."

euphemistically-named issue of multiculturalism, or as Fuentes calls it, the urgent problem of xenophobia that everybody will face in the globalized city.

In Fuentes' view, Soviet Communism fell not because capitalism won the Cold War. Instead, Communism was crushed by its own weight because it fossilized after eliminating internal criticism. Capitalism, in contrast, thrived with the "incentive of relentless self-criticism." Here a thought-provoking turn takes place: it was always, Fuentes argues, the "socialist criticism of capitalism" that allowed for its "socialization" (1991b, 27). The danger that Fuentes sees in the celebration of the triumph of liberal democracy and Capitalism over Communism and socialism, then, is that "self-criticism will cease; it will dance all over Stalin's tomb only to return to the unchecked habits of its past. This danger is all too real for the U.S. and Europe, as well as for Latin America. Devoid of competition or criticism, the kingdom of ideological oneness portends the worst, the most insidious and implacable of dictatorships" (27).

However, for the Latin American Left, Fuentes argues, there is a reason to celebrate. After the end of the Cold War, the Latin American Left now has more room to act rather than less. Social movements (reformist or revolutionary) in Latin America, on the one hand, do not have to "look in the rear-view mirror for signals from the Kremlin," while, on the other hand, the "U.S. has lost the pretext of its anti-communist zeal" (Fuentes 1991b, 29). The Mexican essayist is not naïve, however. Fuentes knows that the United States will find a new enemy outside its borders if the need should arise. One fears he was right then and that he is right today. During the presidency of Donald Trump, for example, anti-immigrant rhetoric reached an almost hysterical level, and the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border continues.

In his novel *La frontera de cristal* (1995) and editorial pieces, articles, and interviews in small Spanish-language newspapers in the North American southwest (such as *Semana* in Houston, Texas) and in more widely distributed ones such as The *Los Angeles Times*, Fuentes explored the tension at the U.S.-Mexico border through the lenses of racism, xenophobia, sexuality, the maquila industry, immigration, corruption, and globalization. In his "border" articles, Fuentes criticized the application of the death penalty to Mexican nationals in the U.S. and denounced hate crimes against Mexicans, such as the hunting down of migrant workers by ranchers in Texas and Arizona. On the Mexican side of the border, he wrote on the topic in Mexico City's left-of-center newspaper *La jornada* and smaller newspapers published on the border area.

During this time, Fuentes was still optimistic about civil movements making a difference in Latin American societies. Furthermore, the Mexican writer did not seem

to feel the anxieties these movements provoke for the traditional Left. He was not afraid of civil movements that seemed to have overcome the barriers of conventional party politics or even the "traditional notion of statehood" (1991b, 29). As he insisted since the 1980s, if given a chance (i.e., without American or Soviet interventionism), revolutions and social struggles will always find institutional channels.

Fuentes' hope for a diverse civil society that can exert positive, progressive change and act was firmly rooted in recent Mexican history. On September 19 and 20, 1985, earthquakes struck Mexico City, killing over ten thousand people. President Miguel de la Madrid, in an irresponsible outburst of nationalism, declared to the national and international press: "Estamos preparados para atender la situación y no necesitamos recurrir a la ayuda externa. México tiene los suficientes recursos y unidos, pueblo y gobierno, saldremos adelante. Agradecemos las buenas intenciones, pero somos autosuficientes" (cited in Elena Poniatowska 1988, 24). The PRI government was unable or unwilling to act. It was the *pueblo* alone—the survivors, in an extraordinary display of solidarity—who launched and coordinated rescue operations, many times without any other means than their bare hands, and who rescued many of the survivors trapped in the rubble. Invoking pre-Hispanic mythology (see, for example, the cataclysm of the "Quinto Sol" in *Cristóbal Nonato*), Fuentes often commented on how this terrible event of death and destruction gave way to a new cycle of life and renovation.

Soon after "The End of Ideologies?" however, Fuentes himself went through an ideological makeover. In the early 1990s, Fuentes, like many of his contemporaries, embraced neoliberalism and advocated for free markets and NAFTA. The key difference compared to his earlier ideas (polycentric or Pan-Latin American regionalization) was that he began to back North American integration—that is, Canada, the United States, and Mexico. It is not clear why he converted to neoliberalism. One reason, perhaps, is that Carlos Fuentes always kept an intimate relationship with Mexico's PRI, and NAFTA was the brainchild of Carlos Salinas de Gortari.[16] It is difficult to discern how well Fuentes was been able to keep a critical

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[16] Fuentes spent his childhood living in embassies in Latin America, the United States, and Europe, the son of a Mexican diplomat. He did not come to live in Mexico until he was sixteen. English is almost his first language because as a child, Fuentes lived—and attended school—in Washington before coming to Mexico with his family. As a grown man, he entered the diplomatic corps himself, serving, for example, as Mexican ambassador to France in the 1970s. He also met all and befriended many Mexican presidents since Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940).

distance from the party under which he had often served. Perhaps, on the other hand, he was seduced by the charm of Bill Clinton, with whom, he admitted, he had more than one dinner in Martha's Vineyard before the passage of NAFTA in 1994 (Fuentes [1994] 1997). Most likely, however, Fuentes' conversion was a response to the very disenchantments of the Left following the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s, a sort of "structure of feeling" (Williams) that permeated the period. After all, the Sandinista revolution, which he always defended, was ousted from power via the voting booth in 1990, not by a ring wing military coup supported by the CIA. Whatever the reason, this transformation took root in the Mexican writer for a short time. Around the same time that "The End of Ideologies?" came out in English, Fuentes published a widely distributed newspaper opinion piece (in Spanish, Mexican, and Portuguese newspapers, and soon translated into English, from where the following quotations are taken). There he expressed, once again, his vision for polycentric regionalization. This time, his proposals were specific and programmatic. In "Latin America's Alternative: An Ibero-American Federation" (1991a), Fuentes once again calls for economic integration not with North America but in the form of an "Ibero-American" federation that would reconcile nationalism with global integration. This federation would include Spain, Portugal, and Latin America and would function as a bridge between Europe and the Pacific. Fuentes endeavored to out-Bolivar Bolivar himself. He even provided a kind of foundational text as the "secret" to implementing such federalism: Hamilton, Madison, and Jay's *The Federalist Papers*, which "should be distributed by the millions" (16).[17] It seems then that in the early 1990s, Fuentes, just like his Christopher Columbus in "Las dos Américas," began to believe that neoliberal economic integration and the unfettered markets that came with it were not such a bad thing.

V. Neoliberal Fuentes in the 1990s

His November 1993 article "Embracing NAFTA and the 21st Century" (published in English a month before the commercial treaty went into effect, but probably earlier in Spanish) begins with the following anecdote: "A little while ago, I made a bet with my friend, Mexican political scholar Jorge Castañeda. If the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is approved by January 1, 1994, Castañeda

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[17] One may accuse Fuentes of the exact "extralogical imitation" he often criticizes by proposing the *Federalist Papers* as a model to follow. However, in this essay, he recognizes that the two-hundred-year-old ideas of *The Federalist Papers* cannot be universally applied. Furthermore, he advocates a form of political integration (one that balances strong federal unity while respecting local needs or desires), not an ideology, such as capitalism or communism.

will take me to dinner. If not, I will take him to dinner" (1993a, 20). Fuentes believed the treaty was going to be approved, "if only because it is the national interest of the United States" (20). Then he argued that the U.S. and Mexican economies are already codependent and integrated, providing trade statistics. He concluded that the treaty would benefit both the United States and Mexico and give North America a competitive edge against Europe and Japan.

It is important to keep in mind that Fuentes' defense of NAFTA is also a response to the thinly veiled racist attacks on the treaty by Texas billionaire and 1992 presidential candidate H. Ross Perot. Fuentes defended NAFTA by arguing that the lost jobs on the north side of the border would not be Mexico's fault. The competition the U.S. faces in the new world economy would come, he argued, "from the high-productivity, high-technology, high-salary economic club—Japan and the European Community—not from Mexico, with its low-productivity, low-salaries and low technology" (Fuentes 1991a, 20). On the other hand, from a Mexican perspective, Fuentes argued that Mexico's best hope is to have "at least one foot inside one the economic blocks," to face the challenge of economic integration in Europe and Japan (21). Furthermore, Fuentes viewed NAFTA as a sort of anticipation of the now-abandoned FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas), for "the border between the United States and Mexico is also the border between the United States and the rest of Latin America" (1993a 21). The treaty is the only diplomatic and positive multilateral policy initiative that has surfaced in the Americas in recent decades: "NAFTA amounts to the only dynamic U.S. initiative towards Latin America in a long time. Our relations stagnated under Ronald Reagan's obsession with Nicaragua and George Bush's efforts to prove his misplaced machismo by invading Panama and kidnapping Manuel Noriega" (21). With the agreement's passage, Fuentes wanted to see increased investment in Mexico and thus reduced unemployment with a corresponding decrease of emigration to the United States. This occurrence would benefit both countries, he contended.

For Fuentes, however, the passage of NAFTA was not the panacea for Mexico's social, political, and economic problems. However, he insisted that the increased competition brought about by foreign investments would invigorate, not weaken, the labor movement south of the U.S.-Mexico border, showing that he bought into the faulty direct link between free markets and democracy promoted by the propaganda of neoliberal discourse. Toward the end of the article, Fuentes, perhaps writing with a North American audience in mind, reverts to a disturbing cheap shot.

Cheap because it warns the U.S. about a resurgence of leftist nationalism in Mexico and Latin America if the deal did not pass; disturbing because he exoticizes as violent the very country he is supposed to be speaking in favor of:

> The Salinas government is the first in the recent history of Mexico that has linked its future to better relations with Washington. If, despite his efforts, Salinas finds himself against an abruptly closed door, the violent nationalist reaction in Mexico would soon begin. The leftist opposition will take advantage of it in a presidential election year [1994]. Salinas himself might find it necessary to spearhead the nationalist reaction so as not to become its victim. How will the rest of Latin America take a U.S. rejection of NAFTA? Surely as convincing proof that Washington is still the capital of a self-centered country that is unworthy of our trust; a politically blind colossus unable to recognize its long-term interests. (1991a, 22)

This unnerving paragraph, however, can be understood in two lights. First, paradoxically, it is a sort of nationalist-leftist reaction on Fuentes' part. As mentioned above, the op-ed piece explicitly targets the anti-Mexican rhetoric of Texas billionaire H. Ross Perot. In other words, Fuentes wrote this article against what Steger has called the "Nationalist-Protectionist" anti-globalization Right, for whom Perot (along with, most notably, Pat Buchanan) was one of the most outspoken representatives in the United States. Steger (2002) mentions how many of Perot's "public utterances on the subject [of NAFTA] often conveyed thinly veiled anti-immigration sentiments" (88). Within this context, Fuentes was writing against someone whose racist comments deeply hurt the Mexican writer. During his entire career as a writer, diplomat, and political commentator, Fuentes reacted strongly against any treatment that was less than respectful—an approach anchored in a firm and long Mexican diplomatic tradition that he learned from his father.[18] From this perspective, then, Fuentes can be seen as reacting against Perot's rhetoric of disdain toward the southern neighbor of the U.S. He refused to tolerate North American arrogance, whatever its manifestation: racist assumptions, paternalist posturing, or outright deception. On the other hand, Fuentes may very well have been using his cultural capital to advance both the Mexican and North American free-trade agenda. He was, after all, close to both Presidents Carlos Salinas de Gortari and Bill Clinton. As the article's title suggests, the movement toward North American integration via NAFTA is, according to Fuentes, the trend the three countries need to "embrace" for the twenty-first century. Ultimately, and perhaps unintentionally, he nevertheless succeeded in demonizing the Left (to which he always

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[18] See the last chapter of *A New Time for Mexico* (Fuentes [1994] 1997) to examine Fuentes' ideas about Mexican foreign policy and its diplomatic tradition.

claimed to belong) as nationalist reactionaries ("violent nationalist reaction") and a backward oppositional force to the inevitable natural and historical processes of economic integration ("embracing the 21st century"). In the next section of the article, Fuentes argues that economic integration is unavoidable. He even suggests that if NAFTA is not approved, Mexico would still benefit from signing new deals with Europe and Japan. Any way one looks at it, he argues, Mexico is open for business, and it is up to the U.S. to take this opportunity.

At the end of the article, Fuentes returns to his opening anecdote. He writes: "The only certainty is that Jorge Castañeda and I will get together for dinner on New Year's Day, 1994. I'm knocking on wood" (1993a, 22). One can presume that on January 1, 1994, Castañeda picked up the tab for their dinner. Perhaps they also watched television and read newspapers during the meal, seeing the news coverage not about the widespread acceptance of NAFTA, but about the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas. Fuentes' real Mexico, the *México profundo* of Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, had once again collided with his legal Mexico, the Mexico of Ángel Rama's *La ciudad letrada*. My contention is not that Fuentes' belief in economic integration was a mistake. Instead, the point is to underline that Fuentes linked economic integration with democracy—suggesting that the free trade area would invigorate the labor movement in Mexico and thus the democratic process—while failing to consider, for example, that NAFTA was never even publicly and democratically discussed in Mexico, as it was in the U.S. In other words, Fuentes simplistically linked free markets with democracy.

VI. Neoliberalism Reconsidered: Fuentes and the Zapatista Rebellion in Mexico

In the chapter dedicated to 1994, "The Year of Living Dangerously: A Diary of 1994," in his book-length essay *A New Time for Mexico* (*Nuevo tiempo mexicano*, 1994; English translation 1997), Carlos Fuentes considered the Zapatista rebellion. He opened with a January entry that tells the story of Chiapas' two previous great uprisings, the first in 1712 during the time of Spanish colonialism and the second in 1868, during the Republican Era. His point is that while these uprisings had religious beginnings, they both became political soon after starting. In both instances, too, the army crushed the rebellion and executed its leaders. Fuentes fears the same would happen to the Zapatistas. It is safe to assume that the Zapatista rebellion allowed Fuentes to rethink the processes of neoliberal globalization.

His diary from 1994 examines the centuries-long exploitation of the Indians in the resource-rich state of Chiapas. Beginning with the exploitation of the colonial

period, he explains how the Mexican revolution (and agrarian reform) failed to reach the state. He then criticizes contemporary failed attempts by the federal government to alleviate Chiapas' century-old problems. For example, Salinas' Solidarity program, which in the years before the rebellion flooded the state with federal monies, did not achieve any real change in Chiapas because the economic aid did not include political reform. Instead, in old PRI tradition, the Solidarity program aimed more at scoring electoral points for the party during election periods and less at exerting any real change in the poverty-stricken state. Fuentes also argues, along with many other critics, that the monies spent by the federal government in Chiapas before the Zapatista uprising sought to delay the emergence of the guerrilla movement in the state. At the same time, Salinas was negotiating the NAFTA agreement with the North Americans. A military strike against the Zapatistas before January 1, 1994, would have jeopardized the passage of the trade agreement.

Fuentes continues the chapter by recounting, month by month, Mexico's turbulent year of 1994: on March 22, the PRI presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio is assassinated on the campaign trail. Conspiracy theories abound, but two weeks before his murder, Colosio had broken his alliance with Salinas' project (even though it was Salinas who had decided he would be Mexico's next president).[19] Many believe that Colosio planned to continue Salinas' economic program and implement radical democratic reforms within his party and the nation. With some other factions of the PRI, however, he made a radical reformist speech at the Monument of the Revolution on March 6, 1994, and was assassinated two weeks later. Then, in September, another political assassination shocked the country: Francisco Ruiz Massieu, the PRI's secretary-general. The crime was later connected to the brother of ex-president Salinas, Raúl Salinas. Salinas served a ten-year sentence for the intellectual authorship of the assassination, money laundering, embezzlement, and connections to narco-trafficking.

At the end of the 1994 chapter in *A New Time for Mexico*, Fuentes includes two appendices. The first is a letter sent to him by Zapatista insurgent leader Subcomandante Marcos. In his message, Marcos invites Fuentes to participate in the EZLN-organized National Democratic Convention. The second appendix is Fuentes' reply to Marcos. An analysis of the exchange between the novelist-diplomat and the

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[19] In the PRI's Mexico, the outgoing president chose the candidate/successor at his sole discretion (the infamous *dedazo*). The anointed one would then become president and made an unspoken promise not to touch the previous president, his family, or his money.

guerrilla leader reveals how the Zapatista insurgence compelled Fuentes to re-examine his positions regarding neoliberalism, free markets, democracy, and Mexico, and to rethink his understanding of the meaning of modernity for his nation.

Marcos cleverly opens his letter by citing Fuentes' foreword's long paragraph about the John Mason Hart book *El México Revolucionario*. In that foreword, Fuentes had identified, Marcos reminds him, the two main "ingredients" that are "immediately perceived" when reading Hart's Mexican history book—and thus Mexican history in general:

> One is the continuity of the social struggle in Mexico: The Mexican Revolution . . . actually began the day after the fall of the Aztecs to the conquistador Hernán Cortés. The second is the tension, within that continuity, between the dynamics of modernization and the values of tradition. This implies, at every stage of Mexican history, an adjustment between past and present whose most original feature is admitting the presence of the past. (Fuentes [1994] 1997, 122)

Fuentes and Marcos then conceive this dynamic of perpetual clashes between tradition and modernity as paradoxical and dialectic. Thus, Marcos appropriates Fuentes' conception of history and exploits the same rhetoric of paradox in his message:

> I know it might seem absurd, but you will agree with me that if anything distinguishes this country, its history, and its people, it is that absurd paradox of opposites which meet (they clash, yes, but meet nonetheless in past and future, tradition and modernity, violence and pacifism, military and civilian. Instead of trying to negate or justify this contradiction, we have simply accepted it and recognized it and try to turn our steps as it dictates, not so capriciously after all (Subcomandante Marcos, quoted in Fuentes. [1994] 1997, 123)

Marcos continues that the National Democratic Convention is paradoxical: "a convention of civilians, convened by military men (revolutionary but military nonetheless). Yes, a peaceful convention convened by violent people. Yes, a convention that insists on legality, convened by the outlawed. Yes, a convention of men and women with names and faces, convened by unnamable persons with hidden faces" (Subcomandante Marcos, cited in Fuentes [1994] 1997, 123).

In his reply to Marcos, Fuentes declares that his letter prompted much reflection:

> Your letter compels me to think about many things. The first is the debate about the old and the new, tradition and modernity that you cite at the onset. The first debt I owe you is for having made us ponder anew what we mean by modernity. An excluding modernity, which leaves by the wayside those unable to enter the race toward progress? [. . .] Or should we rethink inclusive modernity, which does not leave out any possible contribution toward a

> genuine future—that is, a future laden with a past, with experience, with memory? ([1994] 1997, 124).

Fuentes moves on to argue that, from his perspective, the EZLN need not have taken up arms, though he declares that he is "not a campesino from Chiapas. Perhaps I lack the mental clarity or experience needed to put myself in your place and feel what you feel" (127). Citing Mexican cultural critic and satirist Carlos Monsiváis, Fuentes acknowledges that one's view of another depends on one's locus of enunciation: "As Carlos Monsiváis has so splendidly said, 'When the weak rebel, we call it violence. But when the powerful exercise violence, we call it impunity'" (127). Here, the Mexican ex-diplomat concedes how far he is from Chiapas and how close he is to the center of power.

The Zapatista rebellion alone was not responsible for transforming Fuentes' views on how Mexico should approach the globalization game. Many other factors came into play in this complex story: the political assassinations of Ruiz Massieu and Luis Donaldo Colosio (in whom Fuentes deposited democratic hopes); the implosion of Salinas' "economic miracle," when his successor Ernesto Zedillo devalued the artificially over-valued Mexican peso at the beginning of his term; the resurgence of narco-political scandals; and the arrest of the brother of Salinas for masterminding Massieu's murder. However, with time, it became clearer that Fuentes must have realized that the economic promises of a free-market economy were seriously failing to materialize, and that democracy continued to erode. Again, as will be seen in the last section of this analytical survey, Fuentes would revise his views on globalization relatively soon after 1994 and 1995.

VII. The New Millennium

In *En esto creo* (2002), a collection of essays and a sort of literary autobiography, Fuentes tackles once again the problem of globalization, the latest "political and socio-economic themes that have occupied people's attention in the 20th century" (2002b, 86).[20] In the essay "Globalization," he defines it as an all-present two-faced process, but

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[20] The characterization of Fuentes' *En esto creo* as a sort of literary autobiography comes from the book's back cover. It is comprised of forty-one "voices," or short essays, ordered in a personal alphabet, that go from "Amistad" to "Zurich," passing by "Balzac," "Buñuel," "Cine," "Familia," "Hijos," "Izquierda," "Novela," "Política," "Revolución," "Sexo," "Velázquez," etc. The quotation above comes from the essay that corresponds to the letter *G*, "Globalización." For Fuentes, the other great political and socio-economic themes of the twentieth century are 1) revolution, fascism, and economic crises between 1928-1939; 2) the Second World War; 3) the Cold War. The fourth is, of course, globalization.

one that society needs to face: "globalization is the name of a system of power. And, like the Holy Spirit, it knows no borders. But like Mount Everest, it is there. And like the law of gravity, it is an irrefutable truth. But like the Latin God Janus, it has two faces" (88, my translation).

While acknowledging the more positive side of this dualistic process, Fuentes spends some time examining the negative consequences of the path followed thus far in neoliberal globalization and offers his ideas for altering the course. He argues that the Friedmanite rhetoric of anti-statism from the Reagan-Thatcher years has demonstrated its hypocrisy and insufficiency. The state, Fuentes explains, is declared obsolete except when rescuing bankrupt banks, fraudulent financiers, and spoiled weapons industries. Globalization, he continues, does not diminish the state's role but rather augments the areas of public competence (2002b, 90). He argues that the entrepreneurial, industry-owner state era might end, but this should give way to a strong normative and regulating one, especially in regions of economically weak agents, such as Latin America. The mission of the social collective that we call the nation, says Fuentes, is to give its centrality back to human and social capital—the values of work, health, education, and the promotion of savings (88-90).

In the second part of the essay, Fuentes enters the much-discussed local and global dynamics theme. He argues that to ensure that social and human capital is valued over financial capital, first there is a need to strengthen local governance:

> Las políticas de desarrollo, bienestar, trabajo, infraestructura, educación, salud y alimentación que se inician localmente a fin de crear el círculo virtuoso de un Mercado interno sano como condición para contribuir a un Mercado global vigoroso, pero más justo, realmente global en la medida en que incluye a más hombres y mujeres en el proceso del mejoramiento real de sus vidas. (2002b, 98).

The second step would be international organization, but "reforzada por políticas locales y viceversa. Avenidas de doble circulación, es cierto, pero si la comunidad nacional no crea sus propios instrumentos para resolver localmente sus problemas, la ayuda internacional puede irse a un pozo sin fondo en el que, lo sabemos todos, la corrupción es el más insaciable de los monstruos" (Fuentes 2002b, 99). With this reform of local governance and international organization as the first steps, Fuentes outlines some ideas for a political program that would help solve the crisis of today's globalization, a conservative globalization that does not want to conserve anything.

In an earlier piece, written in 1999, Fuentes had given a first and last name to this political program he envisions for Latin America. In an exchange between Fuentes

and Portuguese Nobel Prize for Literature winner José Saramago, published as "Looking at Latin America's Future" in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Fuentes, expressing the fear that Latin America could embrace authoritarian capitalism China-style after the failure of that region's neoliberal model, believes that the only way to solve the grave problems of the area is "democratic socialism" (Fuentes and Saramago 1999, 28). In contrast to conservative philosophies, Fuentes asserts that a "Socialist society [. . .] would, I hope, be capable of finally creating a balance between tradition and progress, between roots and renewal. There would be no contradiction in the socialism I envision among political democracy, social justice, and economic development. They would be inseparable from each other, a kind of *troika*". He argues that the quest for growth, inseparable from justice and democracy, would be "informed by Latin American culture as an element of continuity" (28).

VIII. Conclusions

This substantial—but not exhaustive—survey of Fuentes' fiction and non-fiction writing about neoliberal globalization in the last four decades of his life reveals several shifts in attitude, from the insinuated to the precise. Although he became a neoliberal enthusiast and NAFTA supporter during the 1990s, it is fair to say that Fuentes became disillusioned, perhaps when Mexico's economic miracle failed to materialize. In Mexico, now more than two decades after the passage of NAFTA and more than four decades after having adopted the neoliberal model of globalization, it is increasingly evident that social and economic conditions have gotten worse rather than better. Before his death, Fuentes deemed globalization the last challenge of the twentieth century and the very first crisis of the twenty-first. His final vision for democratic socialism—understood as a system that finally balances social justice, political democracy, and economic development—was a response to the situation he witnessed in Mexico and the world. Still, Fuentes always saw the dangers and potentialities in the process, always championing ideological diversity and the need for Mexico to create its own modernity. He advocated for an "inclusive modernity," which would not marginalize the people neoliberalism purports to uplift.

Fuentes had a leading role in the literary, editorial, commercial, and artistic movement known as the Latin American Boom. His education, connections, book knowledge, and cosmopolitanism endowed Fuentes with a considerable sum of what Bourdieu has termed *cultural capital*. He invested this capital wisely, in the sense that he used it to share his ideas for Mexico's (and the world's) future with large audiences in

Mexico and abroad. This work took stock of his essays, lectures, articles, and editorials published at home abroad. Ultimately, this survey suggests how Fuentes' views about globalization and its accompanying ideology, neoliberalism, changed and evolved according to ever-shifting circumstances, underscoring the importance of thinking long and hard about the issues we face today.

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