

Interpenetration in the Borderlands: Recovering Memory and Rewriting Scripts in Fuentes' *Old Gringo*

By Gregory Stephens

Carlos Fuentes' *Gringo Viejo* is a "historiographic metafiction"¹ about several of the sorts of personal, cultural, and political transformations that have come to be seen as endemic to borderlands. Re-imagining historical events and characters like the Mexican revolution and the North American writer Ambrose Beirce, Fuentes presents a fictional "big picture" of the borderlands that may be truer to this domain than any non-fiction could be. In order to highlight this novel's relevance to borderland studies, I apply the theory of interpenetration to the intercultural, international, and intergenerational in-between-ness in Fuentes' novel. Specifically, I examine how Fuentes uses memory, both in the narrative structure of the novel and in the psychological structure of the characters, to explore memory itself as a kind of borderland which mediates the individual's relationship with family, culture, and nation.

The concept of borderland literature² has roots in social science discourse about frontiers—defined by Lamar and Thompson as "a *zone of interpenetration* between two previously distinct peoples."³ Bradley Parker sees frontiers as a "complicated matrix of overlapping boundaries."⁴ However, partly because of a "stigma" attached to the term frontier (the backlash against the Turner Thesis), historians have suggested alternatives such as the "contact zone," or Richard White's "Middle Space."⁵ Borderlands has come to be favored by many anthropologists over frontiers because it suggests a *series* of "contested boundaries" which "define a geo-political space," as Parker puts it. Literary critics have also found the concept useful to analyze a body of literature that transgresses binary divisions between nations,

languages, and cultures. In this sense, both the social science and the literary uses of borderlands seem applicable to Fuentes.

The political, cultural, sexual and psychological intermixtures that Fuentes describes may be specific to the “contact zone” between the U.S. and Mexico, but they can also be compared to similar processes going on in other borderlands around the world.⁶ Although borderlands are not new historically, they are one pronounced type of the contemporary transnational flows which have created the multi-centered identities so typical of the era of globalization.⁷ *Gringo Viejo* has a certain mythic resonance which has much to do with the way in which dreams are remembered: if in this text dreams have at times a “fierce magic,” as Michiko Kakutani has noted,⁸ they also often carry the terror of nightmares. In fact dreams, and memory, are the primary battlefield of this particular representation of the Mexican revolution. In the Borderlands according to Fuentes, nations, individuals, families, and cultures are torn apart because their memories or their versions of history are in conflict, but Fuentes also suggests that sometimes, in the aftermath of cataclysmic change on the borderlands, a new script emerges.

In *Old Gringo*, the main characters are in the process of questioning the schema that structure how they live.⁹ A revisioning of personal and cultural identity is portrayed as the base from which national identity is also re-imagined and rewritten. For Fuentes, this process is normative in borderlands, emerging especially in times of crisis, such as the Mexican revolution, where human beings are highly susceptible to the kinds of inter-penetration that the novel visualizes, in an often highly cinematic language.¹⁰

MEMORIOUS DUST AND RECOVERING MEMORY

The novel begins with Harriett Winslow sitting alone in her Washington, D.C. apartment, trying to remember her experiences during the Mexican revolution. Fuentes structures the novel

as Winslow's gradual recovery of her memory, but this "recovering memory" is much like a Russian doll: inside each emerging memory are other memories, which in turn open to more previously concealed memories. For instance, Winslow remembers the Old Gringo's memories, but she also remembers the Mexicans remembering the Old Gringo; through these characters begin to emerge collective memories, as the Old Gringo and various Mexican characters begin to express the familial or national memories that have shaped their individual memory.

At age 31, Winslow, a "spinster" teacher, was hired as a governess on a hacienda in Chihuahua, but its owners had already fled, facing an invasion by one of Pancho Villa's divisions. Fuentes contrasts the United States as a "land without memory" (4), and Mexico, a nation burdened by an excess of historical memory. Winslow – "*sinecdoque de la tradicional opinión pública norteamericana*," as Alfonso Gonzalez puts it,¹¹ is a representative of the United States in a variety of ways: in her Puritanism, her missionary complex, the ways in which her entire life is built around a lie, and her lack of memory. Her experience with Mexico and its revolution challenges these old scripts. To write a new script, she must purge herself of the hate that was the residue of her affair with one of Pancho Villa's generals, Tomás Arroyo, and she must recover her memory. In a postmodern novel in a binational setting, the memory asserts itself through "multiple, dissenting points of view," Chalene Helmuth notes.¹²

At first, Harriet remembers only one moment of her experience in Mexico: crossing the bridge (to El Paso), looking back into Mexico (carrying the body of the Old Gringo, we will learn later), and thinking that "she saw the dust marshaling itself into some kind of silent chronology that told her to remember" (3). This advice runs counter to what Miss Winslow is told by her mother, and implicitly, by her country: to forget the past, and to repeat the lies that have become a part of their very social fabric, and to cling to personal myths that reinforce the

national ideology. The rather messy life stories that Harriet represses seem to be a part of the fabric of even the most conservative and patriotic of families, but cannot be publicly admitted, or even privately admitted to consciousness, lest the truth-telling bring down the house (both familial and national), Samson-like.

Both Arroyo and the Old Gringo had told Harriet to remember, to be truthful, and to carry her truthful memories back with her, in order to create a new, more honest life in the U.S. Back in Washington D.C., all that happened in Mexico seems far away: marginal to her life at the presumptive “center of the world” (4).¹³ Still, that “*polvo memorioso*” in Fuentes’ narrative, and in Winslow’s recovering memory, seems almost personified: it “insisted on marshaling itself for her, on crossing the frontier and sweeping over” the continent, across the landmarks of nature that have been mythologized in songs like “America the Beautiful” (“amber waves of grain” and “purple mountain’s majesty” in the song are transmuted into “the wheat fields, the plains and the smoky mountains” in the novel). And this dust sweeps away forgetfulness, all the way up to Harriet’s apartment on the shores of the Potomac, where she sits alone and remembers.

The “memorious dust” of Mexico has penetrated the U.S., but this dust was not something stirred up by the Mexicans alone. Different histories and memories and cultures are penetrating and seeding each other, producing strange new fruit. Arroyo has sexually penetrated Harriet, but her consciousness has also clearly been penetrated by him and by the Mexican revolution in a way that points towards inter-penetration. Harriet Winslow will have to develop a new language and consciousness capable of processing the interpenetrations she has experienced. Allowing memory to come to consciousness, she begins assimilating its lessons to construct a profoundly personal, yet deeply political response.

DEFINING INTERPENETRATION (and Inter-subjectivity)

While in the Cartesian definition, “subjectivity means an isolated, independent, self-sufficient locus of experience,” the theory of intersubjectivity developed by child psychologists¹⁴ denies that an individual’s ego, and the contents of the psyche, can ever be independent of external reality.¹⁵ Psychic contents are socio-cultural in origin. Christian de Quincey refers to a “mutual co-arising and engagement of interdependent subjects (or intersubjects) which creates their respective experience.” Our mutuality “relies on *co-creative nonphysical presence*, and brings distinct subjects into being out of a prior matrix of relationships.” The implication of this theory on borderlands, write the editors of *Debate Feminista*, is that the function of contact between subjects on frontiers is “*la generación de múltiples zonas de contacto que reconfiguran las identidades y sus espacios.*” It is significant that this reconfiguration out of a shared matrix does not require agreement. “In fact, the vitality of this form of intersubjectivity is that it is often heightened by authentic disagreement and exploration of differences,” emphasizes de Quincey.¹⁶

Borderlands themselves, then, are a shared matrix which reconfigure their subjects.¹⁷ Interpenetration can seem counter-intuitive to those whose primary schema of human relations is of oppression and victimization, i.e., unilateral penetration. It is important to proceed from the root verb, penetrate. By examining common-sense usages of penetration, we can recognize that the term often infers a mutual penetration, or some degree of intersubjectivity.

1) penetration as incursion - an attack that penetrates into enemy territory. Armies that penetrate enemy territory will most often be penetrated by counter-attacks, and neither side will escape unharmed, or unchanged. Furthermore, if we were to examine the psychological motivations of individual soldiers, we would find that their motives inevitably come out of an intersubjective context. For instance, the Old Gringo, while fighting with Arroyo, imagines an

Oedipal drama in which he is killing his father, but also, symbolically, the Confederacy in the U.S. Civil War.¹⁸

2) penetration as permeation - the act of entering into or through something; “the penetration of upper management by women.”¹⁹ But once women, or minorities, have penetrated the “glass ceiling,” they in turn will be penetrated by corporate culture. Some in upper management will have aspects of their thinking or habits challenged by the new presence of the “other.” The result will be something like interpenetration; at least, a new type of intersubjectivity will emerge. I will later apply this perspective to the ways in which Harriet Winslow’s repressed memories about her father permeate her upper consciousness, and thereby transform her worldview.

3) Penetration as cultural understanding. A critic says: “I haven’t penetrated that CD yet.” Penetration in this sense suggests moving into the internal logic of the work of art, or digesting it. This implies that the spirit of this artform will penetrate the person’s consciousness. They will assimilate it. The collective consumption of commercial art-forms infers several forms of penetration (advertising, for instance), but the end result will be something like interpenetration.

I use the term interpenetration in historical borderlands because I want to retain the sense of intrusion that is inherent in the root word, penetration. I do not want to lose sight of the violence, and sometimes the violation that this process often entails. But I want to argue that the varieties of penetration that we can see in *Old Gringo* often precede, and to some degree pre-structure, a resulting volatile state of interpenetration. Even if the resulting new level of understanding is unwilling, it is nevertheless part and parcel of the process of interpenetration.

TYPES OF INTER-PENETRATION IN OLD GRINGO

A) Memories

In the second chapter, the “memorious dust” seems to be traced back to a scene in which Mexican soldiers are digging up the Old Gringo’s corpse. This disinterral, along with Harriet Winslow’s subsequent reburial of the Old Gringo in her father’s empty tomb in the Arlington Cemetery, are bookends of the novel’s central symbolic act. While excavating the Old Gringo, the Mexicans are forced to confront their memory of him, and hence of the U.S. In bringing the Old Gringo’s corpse back from Mexico, Harriet is forcing herself to confront her memories of her father, but also, implicitly, the way in which she thinks about and remembers Latin America.

The Mexicans come to realize that the North Americans think about frontiers in very different ways. The gringos “spent their lives crossing frontiers, theirs and those that belonged to others” (5). The Mexicans process this understanding of cultural difference primarily in relation to the Old Gringo. Fuentes has modeled this semi-fictional character on the U.S. writer Ambrose Bierce, who went against the grain of the American empire in recognizing the equality, at times even the superiority, of other cultural traditions—at least in Fuentes’ fictional re-imagining.²⁰

The Old Gringo crossed into Old Mexico in the hopes that Pancho Villa would shoot him, so that he could die a heroic death in the manner of his choosing. He was enacting a symbolic penance for personal failings (especially as a father), and for his inability, as a journalist, to spark public opposition to the relentless march (the penetrations) of American empire. What the Mexicans saw in Bierce/the Old Gringo was a figure that seemed to have stepped out of myth: specifically, the archetype of the Western hero, who is always a solitary fighter.²¹ “He didn’t have any family,” one of the Mexicans recalls as he is exhumed. But they also recognize that, despite the Old Gringo’s disconnect from family and nation, his motivations were closely connected to the memory of both his father and his fatherland: “His father had been here, too, as a soldier, when they invaded us more than half a century ago” (6).

While the Old Gringo's motivations never quite seem to escape the bitterness of personal memory, the Mexicans with their "family memory" (6) embody the "collective individuality" that Fuentes identifies as characteristic of "my culture."²² Whereas the gringos seemed to be able to keep moving because they did not have a memory of a connection to a specific piece of the earth, the Mexicans, prior to the Revolution, seldom wandered far from their place of birth precisely because the earth was soaked in so many familial or tribal memories.

Looking into the "sunken blue eyes of the dead man," Colonel García speaks to him as a representative of one collective (the Mexicans of memory) professing to another collective (the memory-less gringos): "Haven't you ever thought, you gringos, that all this land was once ours? Ah, our resentment and our memory go hand in hand" (9). As with so many themes in *Old Gringo*, this one is doubled and echoes back later in the text. Arroyo tells the brave man he calls "Indiana General": "Not much grows here. Except memory and bitterness" (53).

As in a cinematic dissolve, Fuentes' narrative, embedded within Harriet Winslow's memory, then goes back in time, to the Old Gringo's point of view, as Bierce crosses the Rio Grande, headed towards his desired date with destiny. Entering Mexico, his personal obsessions inevitably become intertwined with the historical memory and resentment of the Mexicans. He crosses a frontier which, for the North Americans, is a closely guarded line in space, but which in Spanish, as *la frontera*, is a region which is imprecise in its boundaries, and which is still being fought over by rival groups and shared by extended families who pay at best only cursory respects to more rigid definitions of boundaries—be they political, personal, or cultural. In the novel, Fuentes makes many references to the fluidity of the borderlands, including Pancho Villa's incursions into the U.S., and General Pershing's invasion of Mexico in pursuit of Villa.²³

Fuentes' narration of what the fictional Bierce sees, hears, and smells as he rides south (on a white horse, dressed in black) emphasizes how culture shapes our interpretation of "reality" in different ways. Immediately, the Old Gringo is cut off from Anglo-American understandings of the frontier. Having "searched for his idea of the American frontier," he looks back to see the bridge burst into flames (10).²⁴ *La frontera* of the Mexico-U.S. borderlands was not a dividing line located at an imaginary center of the Rio Grande River. The demarcation where the domain of the gringos ended and the land of the Mexicans began was unclear; the horizon "kept receding as the old man rode on" (11). Soon enough, all of his senses remind him of difference: "He felt like a gigantic albino monster in a world the sun had reserved for its favored, a people of shadow protected by darkness" (15).

At a chance meeting with Arroyo, the Old Gringo gains entry by using a Colt .44 to decapitate the eagle on a Mexican peso.²⁵ Later, Arroyo gives the Old Gringo a lesson on the differences between "the history in the books, which was the story of the gringo" (29) and "the story of this land...the archive of the desert" (28-9). Although Arroyo is illiterate, he has access to other sorts of literacy. "I may not be able to read, but I can remember," he notes. As they cross by train the immensity of the former Miranda estate in the Chihuahuan desert, "repeatedly, the General tapped his brow with his forefinger: all the stories, all the histories, are here in my head, a whole library of words; the history of my people, my village, our pain: here in my head" (30).

Memory can also be confining.²⁶ The more Arroyo obsessively remembers his childhood—spawned by his father's rape of an indigenous woman, and excluded from the "good life" that he felt was his birthright—the less free he seems to be. By contrast, Harriet's recovering memory of her father is liberatory. So Fuentes' text demonstrates that there are no standard recipes for how to deal with memory and trauma. Arroyo's father represents the feudal

world that the Mexican revolution tried to destroy. Harriet Winslow's father was a forerunner of a more inclusive United States still trying to be born.

B) International relations

The paternal legacies that *Old Gringo* explores cross generations, oceans, and national boundaries. The paternal penetrations (familial and national) occasion counter-penetrations; then individuals and cultures which are indelibly shaped by this history of interpenetrations. The U.S. penetrated Cuba and Mexico, and yet Cuba penetrated Harriet's father; eventually, both Cuba and Mexico penetrate Harriet, and through her, the United States. The Old Gringo's father was part of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Mexico in 1848, but the text also indicates that Mexico has penetrated his consciousness in some ways. This informs how the Old Gringo tries to teach Harriet about the relationship of the U.S. with Mexico and Latin America, and also pre-structures in important ways his relationship with Arroyo.

Fuentes locates much of the Old Gringo's teachings, along with numerous other kinds of intentional and unintentional lessons, within a Versailles-model ballroom on the Miranda hacienda with a floor-to-ceiling mirror. Here, several characters glimpse the link between their "family memory" and an international context. This ballroom mirror is a dominant symbol in the novel. Fuentes has long portrayed the Mexican revolution as a social mirror—especially to the previously marginalized campesinos and indigenous peoples who form the bulk of Arroyo's troops. In *The Buried Mirror* Fuentes recounted the scene when Zapata's troops entered Mexico City in 1914; when they occupied the palaces of the upper class, they "saw themselves reflected in the mirror of other people for the first time."²⁷

For Fuentes, the mirror is a metaphor for the borderlands. The ballroom mirror is not a regular mirror, but something closer to spectacle, where new reflections are revealed: it is a hall

of mirrors in which all who enter see distorted reflections of themselves, or merely see what they want to see. “Did you look at yourself in the mirror?” the Old Gringo asks Harriet repeatedly, a question that resonates on several levels. One of them is an inquiry as to whether she has yet left behind her North American preconceptions. Such preconceptions lead the gringos to find whatever they look for when they travel abroad—especially some replica of themselves—rather than look directly at what different cultures really contain, or reveal.

The ballroom was meant to “reproduce in a round of perpetual pleasures” the steps of visiting couples from cities such as Chihuahua, El Paso, or neighboring haciendas (39). This ballroom is a replica of European culture imported into the middle of cattle country in the high Mexican desert. The elite couples in this remote borderland could watch themselves dancing, and watch other people watching themselves, and watch other couples watching other dancers watching them watch themselves—an endless series of reflected interpenetrating gazes which perpetuated the illusion of living within the spectacle of European elite culture. It is important to note that the Miranda hacienda was half the size of the state of Chihuahua (27), and that it took two days to cross the estate by train, across tracks probably funded by the North Americans and Europeans who bought the Miranda’s beef. Thus, the hacienda is a space larger than many European counties, which exists as a sort of semi-autonomous fiefdom that has not been fully integrated into the emerging nation-state.

Different characters see different things in this “gallery of mirrors.” Arroyo’s troops were at first “paralyzed by their own images...caught in the labyrinth of mirrors” (39). They had never seen their whole bodies before. The only reflection many of these campesinos had ever seen was while shaving in a creek (18). When the troops and their women enter the ballroom, they are out of their element. Self-recognition leads to a new consciousness, as they begin to “connect the

dots,” or put together the fragmented images. *Los de abajo* (the underclass rebels) murmur: “Look, it’s you...It’s me. It’s us.” The words made the rounds, and a new collective identity is re-produced in the round. The revolutionaries achieve a new level of group self-awareness through reflection in a European mirror, which reveals previously unseen facets of their identity.

The two North Americans take up refuge in the ballroom as Arroyo’s troops spill onto the dance floor. From Harriet’s perspective, this imagined Europe in the middle of Chihuahua is “violated” by Arroyo’s revolutionary troops, who invade the parquet floor, scratching it with their spurs as they dance to norteña music rather than a European waltz. This appearance of “barbarians at the gates” dismays Miss Winslow, a true believer in the church of private property of the U.S. She imagines her mission to be the protection of this property until the return of the Mirandas, its rightful owners, and her employers. The carnivaleque “misuse” of private property awakens Harriet’s full-fledged missionary complex:

“Look at them, what these people need is education, not rifles. A good scrubbing, followed by a few lessons on how we do things in the United States and you’d see an end to this chaos.”

“You’re going to civilize them?” the old man asked dryly.

“Precisely. And starting tomorrow.” (41)

As the Old Gringo repeats his question, over and over, “Harriet, when we entered the ballroom, did you look at yourself in the mirror?” it becomes clear that she can see neither herself, nor her would-be subjects. She is still blinded by the “civilizing mission.” She wants to ask the Old Gringo, “What is your place here?” Which is what she is really asking herself, of course. They are trying to place each other in a contested space in the hall of mirrors of the borderlands. But the old images, icons, memories, and scripts no longer fit.

“Your father went to Cuba and now you’re going to Mexico,” Harriet’s mother had told her. Almost as an aside, she added: “What a mania the Winslows have for back yards” (44). This is the old script: the gringos think of Latin America as their *patio trasero*. A variety of people try to point Harriet towards a new script, including the Old Gringo, Arroyo, and other Mexicans. Colonel García, the intellectual of Arroyo’s troops, tells her, after she has tried to implement her civilizing mission: “We can govern ourselves, I assure you, señorita” (64).²⁸

By novel’s end, Harriet will have metamorphosed into a pan-Americanist, if not precisely an anti-imperialist. When she comes back into the United States with the Old Gringo’s corpse and faces the national news media, the narrator tells us that she had crossed “the most difficult frontier of all”: “the two gringos...had come to Mexico, he consciously, she unintentionally, to confront the next frontier of American consciousness” (186). This trip is a crossing into a de-centered understanding of the United States of America as one nation state amongst many in the Americas, a hemisphere in which a majority speak Spanish. Crossing that frontier would require confronting, and beginning to find a cure for, the missionary complex of the United States.

When members of the national media ask Harriet questions such as whether she will “testify on the current barbarism in Mexico” so that “we can bring progress and democracy to Mexico,” Harriet responds: “*We* bring? Who?” (185-6). In that italicized *we* is the core of her transformed political consciousness: she no longer perceives “we” as being separate from and superior to Mexico. Thus when she is asked by reporters from San Francisco and Washington if she wants the U.S. “to save Mexico for democracy and progress,” Miss Winslow responds with vehemence: “No! I want to learn to live with Mexico, I don’t want to save it” (187).

Harriet’s confrontation of her own missionary impulses, and her own repressed memories of interracial and international relations, is a gradual process whose outcome never appears

certain. Harriet arrives thinking that “father knows best.” Although she eventually loses the illusion of “saving” some of the unwashed masses of Mexico, at times the knowledge she brings from the fatherland is “superior,” or does at least have a “saving” potential.

The moral complexity of Harriet’s missionary complex, and the gradual and partial nature of her growing consciousness about it, is dramatized in a marvelous scene in which Harriet saves the life of the child of the camp prostitute, La Garduña.²⁹ This occurs after an epiphany in which Harriet realizes that “something was lacking in her dream” about her duty in Mexico. “She tried to invoke a different dream within her dream”; once more she hears the echo of that repressed memory of her father and “a moan from a black pit” (96-97). Her efforts to revive Garduña’s child awaken an extensive interior soundtrack of voices of imaginary American authorities who question her about why she had become involved with the Mexicans. Instincts take over, and Harriet succeeds in forcing the child to spit out the obstructing phlegm. Afterwards, she partially deflects La Garduña’s religious interpretation: “It wasn’t a miracle, but it must have been predestined. It may be what I came to Mexico to do.” She then realizes that the child only lived because she had spanked her buttocks so forcefully. “But I enjoyed spanking her. My anger saved her,” Harriet says in a moment of self-reflection (100).

There is a later scene in which Arroyo, still full of macho pride at having seduced *la gringa*, sweeps up a naked child and “playfully spanked its buttocks” (165). But Harriet’s spanking is of a different order: a type of violence that indeed produced positive results. It may have only functioned in that situation because her quasi-religious conviction in her predestined duty led her to apply the spanking with anger, rather than playfulness—or to merely passively submit to another sort of predestination, that of traditional Mexican fatalism. In this sense, Harriet is still enacting a version of that earlier, Puritanical vision of “lessons on how we do

things in the U.S.” The disciplinary father, even through the agency of a “spinster,” is applying the necessary discipline to the unruly child, and thereby saving that child as its own parents (familial or national) were apparently incapable of doing. It is really only through her affair with Arroyo which brings to light her repressed recognition of her father’s own interracial proclivities that Harriet begins to reconsider and then to rewrite that old script about her “predestined” duty as an agent of a “redeemer nation.”³⁰

C) Inter-ethnic or intercultural relations

Both Harriet Winslow and the Old Gringo carry different sorts of physical and emotional baggage with them when they cross the frontier, which in different ways predetermine the nature of their relationships with Mexicans during wartime. The film version³¹ of *Old Gringo* shows Miss Winslow bringing a car full of luggage across the desert. That would be typical for a woman of her class background and aspirations, but it also symbolizes how much cultural and ideological baggage she carries and how difficult it will be for her to move outside this sort of portable “fortress America” she carries with her.

Conversely, the Old Gringo’s few possessions are “precise,” but also telling: in his folding suitcase is a copy of *Don Quixote* and a Colt .44 wrapped in underclothes. If his black clothing and the pistol are the accoutrements of a gun-slinging Western hero, the Cervantes is an announcement of his intention to take a one-way exit out of the cultural myopia and political arrogance of his own nation. He rehearses a justification: “I want to read *Don Quixote* before I die” (10-11, 67). Clearly the Old Gringo is engaged on a Quixotic quest. He is in some ways every bit as blinkered by romantic ideals as the original knight errant, el *caballero andante*.³² The Mexicans themselves see him in that way—the figure he cuts with his long legs hanging below the stirrups on his white horse draws strange looks from Arroyo’s camp, much the same

way, observes Frutos García, that “the goatherds and rough serving girls had looked at Don Quixote when he came poking into their villages without being invited” (21).

Quijote himself had been thoroughly penetrated by illusions and fantasies about heroes who set off on excursions, or incursions, righting wrongs and rescuing damsels in distress. Cervantes used Quijote as a means of satirizing the myopia of a Spain with one foot still in the medieval world. Fuentes uses this virtual Bierce to interrogate a United States that had not even begun to question the logic of empire, nor rid itself of the endemic corruption of the Gilded Age, nor to revise its über-script of forever conquering frontiers, nor to challenge within mainstream forums a racial mythology which was, at that time, at “the highest stage of white supremacy.”³³ The Old Gringo will directly challenge all those ideologies and the reigning national mood of belligerent self-satisfaction. It is arguable, though, that he only penetrates the spirit of the Quixote he carries via its residue in Mexican/Hispanic culture. He has a predisposition to listen to what the Mexicans have to say, but even so, much of what they say will be a revelation.

After the Old Gringo’s feat with the Colt .44, Arroyo’s troops honor him by attempting to Mexicanize him.³⁴ They give him an over-sized sombrero; “they forced tacos on him, with burning-hot chilis and blood sausage” (25). He swallows the chiles whole without turning red, which further earns him the respect of the Mexicans. They break out the mescal. The Old Gringo begins asking questions about what is in this strange, fiery food and drink that is being “forced” on him. While explaining the worm in the mescal, Arroyo offers a parable about how the preparation and consumption of food expressed very different worldviews of the gringos and the Mexicans:

Gringos complain that they get sick in Mexico. But no Mexican dies of diarrhea from eating or drinking in his own country. It’s like this bottle...If the

bottle and you carry the little worm all your life, the two of you grow old like good comrades. The worm eats some things and you eat others. But if you eat things like I saw in El Paso, food wrapped in paper and sealed so not even a fly can touch it, then the worm will attack you because you don't know him and he doesn't know you. (25-6)

Arroyo has seen enough of life in the U.S. to know that a people who so segregate the food they eat from the environment in which it is grown will end up trying to sanitize everything. They will be voyeurs of a sanitized version of war—as dramatized in the film *And Starring Pancho Villa as Himself*.³⁵ They will become so isolated from the world around them that they will lose the capacity for direct interaction with that world—they will always need a screen, or wrapping paper, to protect them, or to mediate between them and “reality.” The culture that abhors the worm in the bottle will also abhor other forms of mixture. This culture, intent on preventing penetration by “others,” will lose the ability to interact with the natural world or to accept as equals people who still have the flavor of the earth in their speech, in their food, and in their manner of loving, fighting, living, and dying.

Arroyo's perspective carries a natural appeal to the Old Gringo, a man who has spent a lifetime railing against the prejudices and ignorance of his fellow countrymen. Later, he will try to convey some of this message to Harriet. When Harriet continues to cling to the lie about her father—to deny the miscegenation in her own family—the Old Gringo presents the Mexican “mestizo mainstream” as not only a rational alternative, but as indeed superior to what has been practiced in the United States.³⁶

Open your eyes, Miss Harriet, and remember how we killed our Redskins and never had the courage to fornicate with the squaws and at least create a half-

breed nation. We are caught in the business of forever killing people whose skin is of a different color. Mexico is the proof of what we could have been, so keep your eyes wide open. (76)

The Old Gringo's words seem prophetic. It is while Harriet dances with the Gringo, and with Arroyo, and then makes love to Arroyo, that the repressed memory of her father's affairs with African American and Cuban women begins penetrating Miss Winslow's conscious mind.

The familial and national myths to which Harriet tenaciously clings are like a ceiling which traps certain memories in lower, repressed regions of her consciousness. As if they were "excluded minorities," these parts come from below: the memory of her father making love to a "Negress" in a musty Washington, D.C. basement; her gradual admission that her father has not died gloriously in Cuba, but has abandoned family, nation and "race" to live with an Afro-Cuban woman. As these repressed contents permeate her consciousness, the superstructure (the "upper management") must radically change. She must write a new script and imagine a new personal myth that is also a new national and intercultural mythic narrative.

The Old Gringo had warned her that civilizing and educating was two-way processes. When Harriet declared her intent to "civilize" the Mexicans now riotously enjoying life on the previously prohibited Miranda hacienda, he had warned her: "You aren't going to stay to educate anyone. They would likely educate you first, Miss Winslow, and not in a very pleasant way" (42). This is in fact what happens, although some of that education is very pleasurable indeed. As the Mexicans puncture her missionary complex, she comes to recognize that "although I came to teach, I am the one who is being taught" (148). We could say that Harriet has to "reemplot" her life history in order to change the meaning of its events.³⁷

D) Father Figures and Intergenerational Relations

“How subtle...is the knowledge a father inherits from all his
fathers and transmits to all his sons.” (*Old Gringo*, 79)

Just before leading a calvary charge against federal troops, the Old Gringo's mind is 50 years removed, back in the Civil War. “He wanted what he had dreamed: the revolutionary drama of son against father,” we are told (54). The qualifying *dreamed* is important: “he had dreamed that his father was serving in the Army of the Confederacy.” As a young man as well as *un viejo*, the Old Gringo wanted to do the right thing: he wanted to be on the right side—against slavery, against empire. He needed for his father to be on the wrong side. Some readers of *Gringo Viejo* may get the impression that the title character's father in fact fought to defend slavery, but the Old Gringo reveals himself at numerous points in time to be an unreliable narrator (as does Harriet).³⁸ His schema—a “Club of Parenticides” (65)—calls for his father to be his enemy; therefore, he fantasizes about a “revolutionary drama.” By killing the imagined biological father, he will also dispense with another father figure that Bierce feels has corrupted him: William Randolph Hearst.

What the elder Bierce actually said about Mexico, in Fuentes' imagining, is quite different from Hearst's saber-rattling. Harriet remembers the following conversation with the Old Gringo, when Arroyo puts his tongue in her ear as they dance. That sexual tongue also becomes a cultural tongue, which continues the “reverse education” the Old Gringo had predicted. Something of the Mexican perspective comes across the generations and across national boundaries, relayed from the father's experience in Mexico to his son, the journalist, who then conveys this revisionist history to Harriet by way of Arroyo's penetrating tongue:

the old man had told her that in Mexico there was nothing to subdue and
nothing to save. That's what's difficult for us to understand, because our ancestors

conquered nothing, while here there was a civilized race. That's what my father told me following the War of 1848. 'Mexico is not a bad country. It's just a different country'. (110-11)

Both the Old Gringo and Arroyo convert their fathers into mythic figures who may have their origins in lived experience but in memory become new fictions. Thus Fuentes' Old Gringo is guided in battle by Bierce's actual fiction, "A Horseman in the Sky," a story about "a Confederate commander on horseback" who urges on his son, now his enemy: "Do what you conceive to be your duty." And so the fictional story becomes "a ghostly reality," not only for the Old Gringo, but now also for the Mexican federales who see in the charging old man "an avenging white devil," or without his Stetson, "the image of God the Father" (54-55).

All three major characters in *Gringo Viejo* have full-blown father complexes.³⁹ Each struggles with the knowledge, or the legacy, that their fathers (both singular in a literal sense, and plural in a cultural, symbolic sense) transmit to their children. They are all, in different ways, engaged in a "revolutionary drama" of either confronting, or coming to terms with, their largely fictionalized, mythic fathers. In different ways, the Old Gringo, Arroyo, and Harriet have repressed their awareness of the degrees to which they have become like their fathers. For Harriet, becoming like her father means entering into danger zones that suggest disloyalty to family, race, and nation. Those three are closely interwoven in the memory of her father in the basement—adultery, miscegenation, and through this apparent "jungle fever," a path towards a form of apparent treason. Fuentes structures the gradual return of Harriet's memory of witnessing her father's interracial sexuality as a light that breaks in on her by degrees.⁴⁰

In the first brief return of this repressed memory, the "blackness" of this incident is contrasted to the whiteness of the Washington D.C. façade—the whitewashed national

mythology that Ralph Ellison satirized so effectively in the “Liberty Paints” section of *Invisible Man*.⁴¹ In Harriet’s dream, “the stark whiteness of the pantheon of the city” is placed in opposition to “its black wells.” And in this black underside of D.C., other “inferior” senses become dominant: “and the smell became stronger... the sour-sweet smell of love and blood, of moist armpits and genital spasms as her father possessed the solitary Negress who lived there” (50). The words of that “solitary Negress”—“Captain Winslow, I am very lonely. You may have me at your pleasure”—become a refrain, repeating and intertwining, with the other major repeating theme of the novel: “did you look at yourself in the mirror?” (51, 53). Harriet hears them both at a moment when the Old Gringo kisses her while she sleeps.

Perhaps the voice of *that* father cannot enter her consciousness directly. It is still crowded out by the voice of a larger, national father, whose paternal imperial ideology has thoroughly embedded itself in her consciousness. Far from really thinking about what the Old Gringo is saying about mirrors, she continues to look through the missionary lens, compelled to try to create mirror images of American children, on their way to becoming loyal subjects of the North American “Imperial Democracy.”⁴² Harriet chooses the ballroom as the site to begin what she envisions as weekly classes in true democracy. Although she has heard Frutos García’s words that these people are capable of governing themselves, Harriet still believes that only through her instruction will they be “truly governing themselves, not talking a lot of vague ideas” (94).

That sense of superiority is deeply ingrained. Even when Harriet is slow-dancing with Arroyo, she is still remembering her father through the lens of familial and national myth: “*I am dancing with my father, just back from Cuba... saved by Cuba, savior of Cuba.*” That fragment of “saved by Cuba” seems to foreshadow her re-examination of the missionary complex. But for the moment, she is still in its full throes:

“We went to save Cuba.”

“We’ve come to save Mexico.” (109)

It is sexual attraction across national and ethnic boundaries that brings the memory of the father back in greater force. Smelling Arroyo she smells “Captain Winslow with a slightly different scent”; burying her nose in “Captain Winslow’s” neck, she smells/ remembers, with a language that carries the racial stereotypes of Miss Winslow’s era: “a vegetal cancer rooted in the foundations of Washington, a city moist as the crotch of an aroused Negress: Harriet buried her nose in Tomás Arroyo’s neck and smelled a Negress’s swollen, velvety sex...” (109-10).

It is at this moment that Harriet feels “a different tongue, in her ear”: the Old Gringo’s deflating of nationalist and racialist stereotypes about Mexico (111). Through these interpenetrations—with both Arroyo and Gringo, and the coming to terms with her father that they facilitate—Harriet finally begins to recognize a new, more accurate image of her father. Arroyo points towards a new script: “What did she really want? To have a father like the old gringo, or to be like her father with Arroyo?” Her memory becomes more insistent as Arroyo becomes more amorous: after deciding that Arroyo “was the quintessentially uncomplicated stud,” her imagination takes her “into the arms of her father’s lover” (126). As Harriet enters new realms of her consciousness, she continues to think about “her father’s black woman” and then to transfer that relationship to the present one, which she begins to racialize (138). Eventually, under the Old Gringo’s tutelage (or the pressure he applies), she begins assimilating Arroyo’s suggestion. Shortly before his death, under the older man’s injunction to reveal “your secret” before he leaves, she confesses: “All right. My father did not die in combat. He was bored with us and stayed in Cuba to live with a Negress” (147).

If Harriet's memory of her father is liberating, Arroyo's confrontation with the ghost of his father has very different results. What he sees in the mirror is a family melodrama that constitutes a fatal attraction for him—a sort of Mexican Hotel California which he can never leave. Arroyo had been watching his father at the Miranda hacienda for thirty years before the arrival of the revolution—in fact, he was a voyeur. This close and embittered observation has transformed the father into a poisonous root that has permeated every cell of Arroyo's body.⁴³ For Fuentes, Arroyo is not merely a case study of the Oedipal complex in a Mexican context, but a way of critiquing the way that revolutionaries almost inevitably become like what they hate or oppose. The Old Gringo predicts this destiny for Arroyo: if he were to survive, he would merely lose his youthful glory and become like Díaz, the oppressor. “Do you know any revolution that has escaped that fate, General?” the Old Gringo asks (81). The Gringo reflects that although he had often been accused of “fictional parenticide,” it was “not at the level of an entire people who lived their history as a series of murders of old, no longer useful, fathers” (81). In fact, Arroyo seems entirely unable to imagine an alternative to the Oedipal matrix. His only solution is to determine to die young.

During the tongue-in-ear scene, while Harriet imagines dancing with her father, Arroyo imagines dancing with his mother. But not the biological, indigenous mother: he pictures himself with the clean, fair-skinned, legitimate wife of his father. Although Arroyo professes to have been born to protect that brown-skinned mother, it seems clear that, in fact, he aspires to take his father's place beside the fair-skinned mother (110). Arroyo describes his relationship to the Miranda hacienda as a spell: “Listen, *gringuita*: I have been enchanted by this house since I was born here...The hacienda and I have faced one another for thirty years, as you faced a mirror” (124). He says he has been “mesmerized” and “paralyzed” by the hacienda all those years (127-

29). The revolution broke the spell, leading him and *los de abajo* to rise up “from the bed of the desert...rising as if from a drugged sleep” (128). As a boy, he imagined his best possible future would be to wind the clocks in his old age, as his mentor Graciano had done. The Revolution woke him from that narcotic dream.

He becomes trapped by the mirror once again—the previously excluded now hooked by the perks of power: the illiterate peon entranced by written words on the ancient deed. This brown Quijote is paralyzed by the reflection of anonymous scribblings on old papers, which transmit a tradition of domination.⁴⁴ The papers confirm to him his legitimacy as an insider and therefore confer upon him the power of a cacique. When Arroyo tells Harriet: “Gringa, I am locked in again” (128), it is clear that his infatuation with her is a part of the “privileges of membership” which help keep him spellbound. When the Old Gringo, seeking both to awaken Arroyo from his spell and a pretext for his own death, burns the papers, it is as if for a second time Arroyo’s father has taken away the keys to his birthright.⁴⁵ At this moment Arroyo’s Oedipal drama spins out of control, and he shoots the Old Gringo in the back.

Arroyo repeats to complete (to borrow from psychological language about obsessive repetition), but there is no new script in sight. Harriet had imagined Arroyo as “her Tom Brook”—kind of a latter-day *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*,⁴⁶ a working-class stud with a “perpetual semi-erection” (126). Metaphorically, the Brook is dammed. His life force is dammed up although overflowing: penned up within the limits of his imagination, which cannot see beyond the binary opposition to or fatal attraction towards the Mirandas’ “glamorous life” that he claims to want to destroy but which also forms the zenith of his aspirations.

E) Sexuality

I will now apply the theory of interpenetration to the forms of sexuality described in *Gringo Viejo*. The novel presents instances of apparently non-consensual sex and indeed of rape that have consequences that cannot be adequately accounted for by a linear model of penetration.⁴⁷ The forceful penetration of Arroyo's mother by the Miranda son sowing his wild oats is a trauma from which young Tomás never fully recovers. Yet it is also clear that this pattern of sexual relations becomes another mirror image that he internalizes and then projects. He consistently treats the women he beds as whores; he is shown as being willing to employ force to achieve sexual gratification. The trauma which Tomás and his mother suffered is reinscribed in a larger, supposedly revolutionary social domain, where it is replicated.

Is the affair between Arroyo and Harriet Winslow consensual? Harriet says repeatedly that she is only with Arroyo because of a sort of blackmail. He has made the *quid pro quo* quite clear: "It's up to you whether or not the gringo returns to his country alive" (113). Clearly, the dynamics of their relationship include both penetration and interpenetration. For instance, the recovery of her memory, and Harriet's rethinking of her missionary complex, was kick-started by her sexual relationship with Arroyo.⁴⁸ Both Arroyo and Winslow ascribe political implications to their sexual union. As a macho, and as a patriot, Arroyo believes that he "had fucked the American woman and with one quick ejaculation washed away the defeats of Chapultepec and Buenavista" (120). At least, this is how the Old Gringo reads him. This reading certainly carries historical resonance, as well as psychological relevance for Arroyo's complex attitudes towards his ideal, "clean" mother. This inter-ethnic sexuality does not occur in a vacuum. If Harriet is capable of hurling racial insults like "ugly greaser" in moments of anger (138), then Arroyo is also capable of imagining his conquest of the "white woman" as a sort of

national revenge. In this sense, it is clear that Harriet, and the culture from which she comes, have gotten far inside his psyche.

Harriet also at first imagines this relationship as a form of “conquest” (110). Conquest denied, or violation endured, inspires fantasies of revenge. She tells the old man, “I want you to know that Tomás Arroyo had no right to my body, and that I will make him pay for it” (149). Still, the denouement leaves it unclear who has conquered whom, or had real revenge. Harriet submits, but she “conquers,” later causing Arroyo’s death. Conversely, Arroyo writes a script she follows faithfully. She describes him as being obsessed with death, to the point that Arroyo tells Harriet: “I hope you will see me die” (119). Indeed, she gives him his wish. Thus she is “*asumiendo el sentir mexicano de Arroyo*,” suggests Marta Portal—through this battle with Arroyo, she has been penetrated by Mexican perspectives on death.⁴⁹ On a broader level, Arroyo has indeed succeeded in writing a final act: “When the two gringos left Mexico, he wanted them to say: ‘I have been here. This land will always be a part of me now’...it’s the only thing I ask. Don’t forget us. But more than anything, be us and still be yourself” (113).

CONCLUSION: Literature of the Borderlands

The structure and ideological content of Fuentes’ writing, as with much of borderland literature, challenges or inverts many binaries. The “central becomes the peripheral,” while the peripheral penetrates and becomes “a part of the historical canon,” Charlene Helmuth writes.⁵⁰ The literature of borderlands “pushes the hegemonic monoculture far into the distant horizon,” insists Stacy Alaino.⁵¹ When Harriet Winslow returns to live in Washington, D.C., this “center,” in her restructured imagination, has been radically decentered. Her consciousness, through memory, has taken root on the periphery of the formerly imagined center, through her affiliation with the men she has loved, men who chose to live beyond the boundary.

Economic, cultural, and familial relations precede, transgress, and often outlast political borders. This is what Harriet Winslow learns through the transgressive “memorious dust,” which forever binds her to the other side, to Greater Mexico, with a mixture of love and hate. Symbolically, this memory-laden dust of the Mexican earth has penetrated and indeed fertilized the very core of Harriet’s being. It has in the process expanded her notions of self, kinship, community, and nationality to include a long-standing, on-going narrative of inter-relationships between the U.S., Latin America, and the Caribbean.

John Seabrook has described *Gringo Viejo* as “a parable in which Ambrose Bierce is the organizing symbol.” Perhaps, but I am inclined to agree with María Elena de Valdés: Harriet Winslow, not the title character, is the center of conscience who dominates the narrative.⁵² In this sense she is yet another of the novel’s many subversions: Fuentes has announced a fictionalized Ambrose Beirce as the centerpiece, but it is actually Harriet Winslow’s recovery of the memory of her “treasonous,” miscegenating father that forms the novel’s moral and narrative center.

Like every major character in the novel, Harriet comes from a broken family, and suffers deep psychological wounds. Confronting the open wounds of the borderlands, she comes to terms with her father’s transplanted life in Cuba. In some sense, Arroyo has simply provided her with a new mission: “He would ask her to keep his time, his, Tomás Arroyo’s, when he could no longer do it. And the old man’s time...They would exchange times” (113). In one sense, then, Harriet’s missionary complex is merely revised, rather than cured: “*I shall take home your time, Arroyo, and the old man’s time; I shall guard them, Arroyo. You don’t know it, but I shall be mistress of all the times I won here*” (112).

If she retains a sense of mission, it is no longer a mission bent on converting the “heathen.” La Luna had told Harriet that the Mexican revolution represented “a new time” (150). Perhaps only fiction can do justice to this new, co-created time. When Harriet buries the Old Gringo in her father’s empty grave, beside her now deceased mother, she has merely replaced one lie with another, in literal terms. Psychologically, this co-presence in the tomb of two men who turned their back on the American empire in order to embrace “*nuestra América*” symbolizes Harriet’s acceptance of the inter-penetration of the two Americas. It expresses her allegiance to a new personal, cultural and national “time” within “*una tierra en proceso de redefinición y reimaginación*”: a land in the process of redefinition and re-imagination.⁵³ Harriet Winslow now recognizes that this *Nuevo tiempo y nueva tierra* has been co-authored by her *others*--those previously invisible beneath Washington’s whitewashed surface, but who have now become her tutors in the development of more multi-centered definitions of family, nation, culture, and civilization.

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SOURCES

I use the Spanish and English titles of Fuentes’ novel interchangeably, to acknowledge the bilingual manner and context in which the text was conceived, written, read, and interpreted.

References to the novel within the essay cite pages numbers from Carlos Fuentes, *Old Gringo*, translated by Margaret Sayers Peden and the author (Farrar Straus Giroux, 1985).

Translations from Spanish texts are mine unless otherwise indicated.

1) Historiographic metafiction, Charlene Helmuth, *The Postmodern Fuentes* (Bucknell UP; London: Associated University Press, 1997), 108-110. Fuentes’ language here echoes John Reed’s classic text *Insurgent Mexico* (Greenwood Press, 1969 reprint; originally published 1914). See also Anita Brenner, *The Wind that Swept Mexico* (University of Texas Press, 1984).

2) Some influential studies in the school of “borderland literature” that have primarily focused on Chicanos and Mexican Americans in the U.S. Southwest: Héctor Calderón and José David Saldívar, *Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology* (Duke UP, 1991); Cecil Robinson, *No Short Journeys: The Interplay of Cultures in the History and Literature of the Borderlands* (University of Arizona, 1992); John S. Christie, *Latino Fiction and the Modernist Imagination: Literature of the Borderlands* (Routledge, 1998); Jesus Benito and Ana Maria Manzananas, eds., *Literature and Ethnicity in the Cultural Borderlands* (Editions Rodopi 2002). A more historical and multi-ethnic approach is beginning to emerge: Carmen Cáliz-Montroro, *Writing from the Borderlands: A Study of Chicano, Afro-Caribbean and Native Literatures in North America* (TSAR Publications, 2000).

3) Leonard Thompson and Howard Lamar, “Comparative Frontier History,” in *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared*, ed. Lamar and Thompson (Yale UP, 1981), 7.

4) Bradley J. Parker, “Toward an understanding of Borderland processes,” *American Antiquity* (January 2006).

5) Turner, Fredrick Jackson. 1920. *The Frontier in American History*. H. Holt and Company. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge UP, 1991). See also Richard White and Patricia Limerick, *The Frontiers in American Culture* (University of California Press, 1994).

6) Examples of the application of the concept of borderlands in other parts of the world: Touraj Atabaki and Solmaz Rustamova-Towhidi, *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition* (Columbia University Press, 1995; Thomas M. Wilson and Donnan Hastings, editors, *Journal of Borderland Studies* Vol. 1.1 (Spring 2008) ISSN 1938-9094

Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers (Cambridge University Press, 1998); V. Pavlakovich-Kochi, B. J. Morehouse & D. Wastl-Walter, eds., *Challenged Borderlands: Transcending Political and Cultural Boundaries* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2004); and in North America: J. I. Little, *Borderland Religion: The Emergence of an English-Canadian Identity, 1792-1852*; Betje Black Klier, ed., *Tales of the Sabine Borderlands: Early Louisiana and Texas Fiction by Theodore Pavie* (Texas A&M University, 1998).

7) Scholarship on borderlands begins in antiquity. For a good overview of this emerging field of scholarship, with an excellent bibliography, see Bradley J. Parker, "Toward an understanding of Borderland processes," *American Antiquity* (January 2006).

8) The Kakutani quote was originally from a *New York Times* review and is included as a blurb on some editions of *Old Gringo*.

9) schema—a blueprint, map, or "ruling archetype." "We often are able to see the schema triumphing over the experience of the individual," wrote Freud. *Standard Edition* 17, 119; in Michael Vannoy Adams, *The Multicultural Imagination: "Race," Color, & the Unconscious* (Routledge, 1996), 45. Psychological maps are often so powerful that we project them onto realities where they do not fit, seeing what exists only in our inner schema.

10) See for instance the discussion by Luis Rafael Sánchez of "los trucos característicos de la cámara cinematográfica" in his "Prólogo" to the Seix Barrall edition of *Gringo Viejo* (2000: 15).

11) "A synecdoche of *tradicional* North American public opinion." Alfonso Gonzalez, "La intensificación de la problemática de la frontera político cultural en *La frontera de cristal* de Carlos Fuentes y *Columbus* de Ignacio Solares," *Explicación de Textos Literarios*; 12/22/1999.

12) Charlene Helmuth, *The Postmodern Fuentes*, 109.

13) We are clued in early that this *center of the world* is an ideological claim. Now that the "margins" or the "periphery" have penetrated the center, the language of empire, of center and margins, must be interrogated.

14) Colwyn Trevarthen, "Descriptive Analyses of Infant Communicative Behaviour," in *Studies in Mother-Infant Interaction*, ed. H.R. Schaffer (London: Academic Press, 1977); Colwyn Trevarthen, "The Foundations of Intersubjectivity: Development of Interpersonal and Cooperative Understanding in Infants," in *The Social Foundations of Language and Thought*, ed. D. Olson (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980).

15) Christian de Quincey, "Intersubjectivity: Exploring Consciousness from the Second-Person Perspective," <http://www.deepspirit.com/sys-tmpl/intersubjectivity/>. Mats Winther, "Critique of Intersubjectivity" (2005); <http://home7.swipnet.se/~w-73784/intersubj.htm>.

16) Christian Quincey, "Intersubjectivity," *Ibid*; "Fronteras, intersticios y umbales," Editorial, *Debate Feminista* 17:33 (abril 2006); <http://www.debatefeminista.com/edito33.htm>.

“The function of the crossing and the contact between subjects [is in] the generation of multiple zones of contact which reconfigure identities and their spaces.”

17) This is a process similar to what Ralph Ellison called “antagonistic cooperation.” Gregory Stephens, *On Racial Frontiers: The New Culture of Frederick Douglass, Ralph Ellison, and Bob Marley* (Cambridge UP, 1999), 4-5.

18) Steve Boldy, “Intertextuality in Carlos Fuente’s *Gringo Viejo*.” *Romance Quarterly* 39:4 (1992): 489-500. Fuentes’ scene of the Old Gringo’s fantasies during his first battle with Arroyo has an intertextual relationship with Ambrose Bierce, “A Horseman in the Sky,” in *The Collected Works of Ambrose Bierce*, with an Introduction by Clifton Fadiman (Citadel, 1946), 3-9.

19) Penetration as incursion and permeation:
<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/interpenetration>

20) Useful biographical information relevant to Fuentes’ fictionalization of Bierce: Don Asher Habibi, “The experience of a lifetime: philosophical reflections on a narrative device of Ambrose Bierce,” *Studies in the Humanities* (December 2002).

21) On Fuentes’ use of archetypes, see Gloria B. Duran, *The Archetypes of Carlos Fuentes: From Witch to Androgyne* (Archon Books, 1980). On the archetypal pattern of the solitary hero who sets wrongs right through violence, see Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

22) “collective individuality,” Raymond Leslie Williams, “La Edad del Tiempo: An Interview with Fuentes,” in Williams, *The Writings of Carlos Fuentes* (U. of Texas Press, 1996), 151.

23) Fuentes’ focus on the life and customs on both sides of the border—which he describes as *una herida* (wound) is “como una columna vertebral, el cuerpo de lo novela” (like a spinal column, the body of the novel)—uniting/separating two ways of life. Marta Portal, “*Gringo Viejo*: Diálogo de Culturas,” in Georgina García-Gutiérrez, compiladora, *Carlos Fuentes desde la crítica* (México: Taurus, 2001), 234-35.

24) the bridge burning refers to a scene in *Los de Abajo* where Memetrius Macías looks back at his burning home. See Williams, *The Writings of Carlos Fuentes*, 119.

25) Like the hallucinogenic eagle of the national seal at the beginning of Ralph Ellison’s *Juneteenth* that will not stay put, this eagle also seems to symbolize national instability. Gregory Stephens, “‘What’s become of our Bliss’: Transracialism and Transfiguration in Ralph Ellison’s *Juneteenth*.” *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology* 30:1 (June 2002). Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (Routledge, 1990). On the symbolism and history of the Mexican eagle, see David Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire: Myths and Prophecies in the Aztec Tradition* (University of Colorado Press, revised edition, 2001).

26) As Senator Sunraider says in *Juneteenth*, to escape bondage to the past we must know how to forget as well as to remember. Personal and collective emancipation requires us to “remember selectively, creatively.” Ralph Ellison, *Juneteenth*, edited by John F. Callahan (Random House, 1999), 19.

27) Fuentes on Revolution as mirror, Maarten van Delden, *Carlos Fuentes, Mexico, and Modernity* (Vanderbilt UP, 1998), 33. “Mirror of other peoples,” Fuentes, *The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 308.

28) The character of the intellectual who explains the meaning of the revolution to the troops, or who translates his leader’s ideals into literary, or legalistic language, is so widespread in the literature as well as the history of the Mexican revolution as to constitute an archetype. See for instance Luis Cervantes, in particular the speech he gives to Demetrio Macías, in Mariano Zauela, *Los de abajo* (Penguin, 1997/1915), 40. A real-life counterpart is Emiliano Zapata’s relationship with Otilio Montano, which is discussed in most biographical treatments of the drafting of *El Plan de Ayala*. I discuss the phenomenon of the “Camp Intellectual” in Mexican literature in a master’s thesis, “Indigenismo in Zapatista Discourse: Re-visioning the Mexican Revolution Through Mayan Eyes” (University of West Indies-Mona, 2007).

29) As camp prostitute, La Garduña is an intertextual sister of “La Pinta” in *Los de Abajo*. See María Elena de Valdés, “La Trinidad femenina en *Gringo Viejo* de Carlos Fuentes,” in García-Gutiérrez, in *Carlos Fuentes Desde la Crítica*, (El Colegio de México, 1981/2000).

30) Ernest Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America’s Millennial Role* (Chicago, 1968).

31) film version, I mostly agree with de Maria de Valdés dim view of the film, in particular, Jane Fonda’s one-dimensional Harriet Winslow. *Carlos Fuentes desde la crítica*, 254.

32) The recent lit on Cervantes and *Don Quixote* is enormous. Among the studies I have been reading: Roberto González Echevarría, ed., *Cervantes’ Don Quixote: A Casebook* (Oxford UP, 2005); Anthony J. Cascardi, *The Cambridge Companion to Cervantes* (Cambridge UP, 2002), and María Antonia Garcés, *Cervantes in Algiers: A Captive’s Tale* (Vanderbilt UP, 2002).

33) John W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (Cambridge UP, 1982).

34) Mexicanized: Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935* (University of Alabama Press, 1992); José E. Limón, *American Encounters: Greater Mexico, the United States, and the Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon, 1998). I have examined this phenomenon in “‘I Have Become Terribly Mexicanized’: Intercultural Identification in Poniatowska’s *Querido Diego*.”

35) Bruce Beresford, dir., *And Starring Pancho Villa as Himself* (HBO Home Video, 2003). *Gringo Viejo* contains a reference to a Mr. Walsh who is filming Villa’s exploits. “Let

Mr. Walsh and his cameras go fuck themselves,” Villa says, after ordering an “execution” of the dead gringo (176). This is Raoul Walsh, who discusses his cinematic and human relations with Villa in *Each Man in his Time: The Life Story of a Director* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974). See also Aurelio de los Reyes, *Con Villa en México: Testimonios de camarógrafos norteamericanos en la revolución* (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1985).

36) The “genesis of a new mestizo mainstream” can be seen in John Sayles’ film *Lone Star*, writes José Limón in *American Encounters: Greater Mexico, The U.S., and the Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon, 1998), 161. I also have in mind from Albert Murray’s reference to the “mulatto mainstream” of the United States, in *The Omni-Americans* (Dutton, 1970), 112.

37) “Re-plotment” is a theory from psychoanalysis that has been applied to literary criticism by Hayden White in “This Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Gen. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch (Norton, 2001), p. 1717. The idea is that a patient usually refuses to admit to a complex, but defuses it by replotting it (as Harriet shows).

38) An unreliable narrator’s “account of events appears to be faulty, misleadingly biased, or otherwise distorted, so that it departs from the ‘true’ understanding of events shared between the reader and the implied author. The discrepancy between the unreliable narrator’s view of events and the view that readers suspect to be more accurate creates a sense of irony...A classic case is Huck in Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884): this 14-year-old narrator does not understand the full significance of the events he is relating and commenting on.... the reader is offered the pleasure of picking up ‘clues’ in the narrative that betray the true state of affairs.” *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford UP, 2004); Michael W. Smith, “Understanding Unreliable Narrators: Reading Between the Lines in the Literature Classroom” (National Council of Teachers, 1991); Bruno Zerweck, “Historicizing unreliable narration: unreliability and cultural discourse in narrative fiction unreliable narrator,” *Style* (March 22, 2001). Both Harriet and the Old Gringo “inventaron episodios de su pasado” notes Tittler (229).

39) A dictionary definition of complex: “a group of related, often repressed ideas and impulses that compel characteristic or habitual patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior.” Also see C.G. Jung’s definition of complexes in *Psychological Types* (Princeton UP/Bollingen, 1971):

The term “autonomous complex” ... is meant to indicate the capacity of the complexes to resist conscious intentions, and to come and go as they please...[T]hey are psychic entities which are outside the control of the conscious mind. They have been split off from consciousness and lead a separate existence in the dark realm of the unconscious, being at all times ready to hinder or reinforce the conscious functioning..... They are the “sore spots,” the *betes noires*, the “skeletons in the cupboard” which we do not like to remember and still less to be reminded of by others, but which frequently come back to mind unbidden and in most unwelcome fashion. They always contain memories, wishes, fears, duties, needs, or insights which somehow we can never really grapple with, and for this reason they constantly interfere with our conscious life in a disturbing and usually a harmful way. (508-9)

40) *Old Gringo* is thus, like the film *Lone Star*, about the recovery of “a repressed interracial narrative lodged deep within the national imaginary.” Rosa Linda Fregoso, *meXicana Encounters: The Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands* (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 2003), 62. John Lye, "Some Attributes of Modernist Literature (1997); <http://www.brocku.ca/english/courses/2F55/modernism.html>. "By degrees" is an allusion to Frederick Douglass' awakening to abolitionism: "the light broke in upon me by degrees." The idea illustrates an implicit opposition to Paul's mythic version of instantaneous, light-on-the-road (to Damascus) conversions. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*. With an Introduction by Peter J. Gomes and a New Afterword by Gregory Stephens (Signet Classics, 2005), 56

41) Gregory Stephens, "Invisible Community: Ralph Ellison's Vision of a Multiracial Ideal Democracy," in *On Racial Frontiers* (Cambridge UP, 1999).

42) Imperial Democracy, adapted freely from Octavio Paz's essay "Posiciones y Contraposiciones: México y Estados Unidos," in *Sueño en libertad: Escritos Políticos* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2001), 167-86, and "Mexico and the United States," in *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings* (Grove Press, 1985), 357-76.

43) Pol Popovic Karic, "La Búsqueda del Padre en *Gringo Viejo*," in Karic, compilador, *Carlos Fuentes: Perspectivas Críticas* (Siglo Veintiuno/ITESM, 2002), 173.

44) Carmen Perilli, "Entre molinos de viento y metrópolis de cartón: La novela en Carlos Fuentes," *Espéculo: Revista de estudios literarios* (2001); http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero18/c_fuentes.html

45) Burning / taking keys, Pol Popovic Karic, "La Búsqueda del Padre en *Gringo Viejo*, 186.

46) D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Ed. Michael Squires, Illustrated by Chester Brown; with an Introduction by Doris Lessing (Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition, 2006/1928). Men of the lower class were sexualized much as Europeans have traditionally sexualized darker-skinned peoples. Both were seen as closer to the earth, simpler, and thus more vital.

47) Like Arroyo, Artemio Cruz was also the product of rape; they are symbols of how the unprocessed traumas of one generation are visited upon the next. Kathleen Cunniffe, "The fragmented psyche of Mexico: the narrative structure of *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* through the lens of Francisco Gonzales Pineda," *MACLAS Latin American Essays* (March 2002).

48) Debra Castillo, "Tongue in the Ear: Fuentes' *Gringo Viejo*." *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* 124:1 (1989).

49) Sentir mexicano, Marta Portal, "*Gringo Viejo*: Diálogo de Culturas," *Carlos Fuentes desde la crítica*, 240.

50) Charlene Helmuth, *The Postmodern Fuentes*, 116-17; 22.

51) Stacy Alaino, "Multiculturalism and Epistemic Rupture: The Vanishing Acts of Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Alfredo Veja Jr.," *MELUS* (Summer 2000).

52) María Elena de Valdés, La Trinidad femenina en *Gringo Viejo* de Carlos Fuentes,” in García-Gutiérrez, in *Carlos Fuentes Desde la Crítica*, 246. John Seabrook, “Review of *The Old Gringo*,” *The Nation* (Jan. 18, 1986).

53) “Fronteras, intersticios y umbales,” Editorial, *Debate Feminista* 17:33 (abril 2006). This editorial was co-written by Lucía Megar and Marisa Belausteguigoitia.