

The Reptant Eagle

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*Essays on Carlos Fuentes
and the Art of the Novel*

Edited by

Roberto Cantú

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To
Gigi and Alfredo

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INTRODUCTION

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*Nothing should be left out of literature,
because our time is a time of deadly reduction.*
—Carlos Fuentes, *Myself with Others* (22).

The essays in this volume are expanded versions of papers originally presented at California State University, Los Angeles on May 4-5, 2012, on the occasion of an international conference on Carlos Fuentes.¹ Arrangements had been made for him to attend this forum dedicated in its entirety to his work, unfortunately other concerns and obligations made his visit an impossibility. Fuentes died on 15 May, causing disbelief and consternation in all of us who had been immersed for two days in sessions and discussions, listening to keynote and featured speakers, and rethinking Fuentes's novels, short fiction, essays, and drama.² After a brief spell of email exchanges with conference participants, it was agreed that the recently-presented papers on the work of Carlos Fuentes should turn into a tribute in the form of an in-depth and comprehensive critical reexamination of his work, and this book is the result. It consists of five parts: the first two attend to close readings of *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (1962), and *Terra Nostra* (1975); the other three study the visual arts—paintings, murals, and world film—in the work of Carlos Fuentes, and his

¹ The title of the conference was “2012 Conference on Carlos Fuentes: Ancient Mexico, Modernity, and the Literary Avant-Garde.” Participating Fuentes scholars represented Argentina, Belgium, England, France, Holland, Japan, Mexico, Romania, South Korea, and the United States. For the full conference program, visit: <http://conferenceoncarlosfuentes.blogspot.com/>

² To close the conference, Fuentes's play *Orquídeas a la luz de la luna* was staged under the direction of Mexican actress Alejandra Flores, who played the role of María Félix next to a cast that included actors Cristal González (as Dolores del Río), Ricardo Salcido (the fan), and Manuel Castillejos (musician). This play, attended to full capacity, was free and open to the public and for one performance only.

art or poetics of the novel, his essays, and the translations of his narrative, essays, and plays into Japanese and Romanian. In his fecund and accomplished life as a writer, political analyst and diplomat, Fuentes turned his attention to the major conflicts of our age—national and international—and addressed their cultural, political and literary importance in relation to Mexico, Spain, the United States, and the world at large. Always ahead of his readers, writing and publishing at an untiring and steady pace, Carlos Fuentes bestowed on an international readership an extensive and considerable *oeuvre* in the manner defined by Milan Kundera: as “*the end result of long labor on an aesthetic project*” (96, emphasis in the original). It was the study and discussion of Fuentes’s aesthetic project that brought conference participants to Cal State L.A. from diverse nations around the world.

Born under the sign he would have chosen (Scorpio), and raised in a family headed by a Mexican diplomat, Fuentes’s formative years were spent in major Latin American cities and in the United States, thus being exposed to different cultures, histories, and attitudes. As he recalls in *Myself with Others*, in the United States, he discovered a culture of optimism, boundless energy, and economic well-being; in Mexico, he found an ancient country with a long list of conquests, invasions, and defeats; above all, he learned the meaning of time’s depth. In his words:

The United States had made me believe that we live only for the future; Mexico, [Lázaro] Cárdenas, the events of 1938, made me understand that only in an act of the present can we make present the past as well as the future: to be a Mexican was to identify a hunger for being, a desire for dignity rooted in many forgotten centuries and in many centuries yet to come, but rooted here, now, in the instant, in the vigilant time of Mexico. I later learned to understand in the stone serpents of Teotihuacán and in the polychrome angels of Oaxaca. (1988: 8)

The salient points in this passage find expression in the language of origins and destiny, resolve and will (to be a Mexican writer), and the poetics of time (the past, the future, now, the instant) that comprise Fuentes’s transition from a gestating period as a writer to his literary apprenticeship. Fuentes acknowledged three authors who served as leading lights in his early path toward a life of writing, with choices to be made: Honoré de Balzac, Thomas Mann, and Alfonso Reyes. Of the latter, he remembers: “To be a writer in Mexico in the fifties, you had to be with Alfonso Reyes and with Octavio Paz in the assertion that Mexico was not an isolated, virginal province but very much part of the human race and its cultural tradition: we were all, for good or evil, contemporary with all men and

women” (1988: 23). On his 1951 return home on a Dutch steamer, Fuentes brought from Geneva, Switzerland, the ten volumes of the Pléiade edition of *The Human Comedy* (1988: 26), where he learned Balzac’s device of returning characters and how to imagine and invent a metropolitan city—Paris for Balzac, Mexico City for Fuentes. The fruit of this apprenticeship was his first novel, *La región más transparente* (Where the Air is Clear, 1958), hailed as a visionary representation of Mexico City, and a pivotal and momentous novel in the literary history of Mexico. At the core of this novel—a veritable textual pyramid in its layered narrative composition, a blazing setting for Huitzilopochtli’s rebirth, and the site of a sacrifice—soars Fuentes’s memory with lessons learned years back at Teotihuacán’s Temple of the Feathered Serpent: “Y desde entonces son dos—piensa Ixca Cienfuegos—, el del origen y el del destino, los dos plantados sobre la misma avenida, fuese de agua o de cemento. Del Yei Calli al 1951. Siempre dos, el águila reptante, el sol nocturno” (2008: 304). In this passage, Fuentes’s memory is encrypted in a writer’s code for Mexico (the “reptant eagle,” *águila reptante*), a sign for the ancient ruins of a fallen civilization that continues to be the memory of a catastrophe caused by the mythical fall of Quetzalcóatl, the systemic Feathered Serpent god who functioned as a unifying force in Mesoamerican civilization, and as the embodiment of male and female forces of creation and fertility (hence Tlaloc’s contiguous presence in the temple’s friezes). As mythical accounts tell, Quetzalcóatl was tricked and defeated by Tezcatlipoca (“Smoking Mirror”), a god associated with the lunar calendar, therefore with fate, night (*sol nocturno*), discord, and sorcery.³ In Fuentes’s first novel, the image of the “reptant eagle” could thus be interpreted on two historical levels: first, as a Mesoamerican “featherless” Quetzalcóatl, hence a crawling, slithering snake with memories of its past “international” grandeur as a civilization shared by Mesoamerica’s ancient nations; second, as the national memory buried specifically with Cuauhtémoc’s fate (“falling eagle”) and, on general terms, repressed after the Spanish Conquest of which Ixca Cienfuegos is the emergent, enraged,

³ Fuentes plays with the image of the “mirror” all through most of his novels and essays—for instance, in *Terra Nostra* (1975), *The Buried Mirror* (1992), and *The Years with Laura Díaz* (1999), to name a few—mostly in association with Tezcatlipoca by reason of the god’s association with obsidian (used to make mirrors and sacrificial knives), and to a practice of burying mirrors by the Totonac people in ancient Veracruz (Fuentes’s patrilineal ancestral home) and, not surprisingly, to Lewis Carroll’s writings where mirrors play a significant role as imaginary or dream-like thresholds to other worlds.

and conflicted voice in the novel's opening pages.⁴ Recalling his "origin" as a writer, Fuentes noted: "Language in Mexico is ancient, old as the oldest dead. The *eagles* of the Indian empire *fell*, and it suffices to read the poems of the defeated to understand the vein of sadness that runs through Mexican literature" (1988: 15, my emphasis).

In Thomas Mann, Fuentes admired the courage of a German writer at the service of his country when denouncing Hitler and the Nazi regime, learning in the process an important truth: whereas Mann's art was the product of his own effort, European civilization was a collective, multi-generational creation; in Latin America, on the other hand, "the extreme demands of a ravaged, voiceless continent often killed the voice of the self and made a hollow political monster of the voice of the society, or killed it, giving birth to a pitiful, sentimental dwarf" (1988: 26).⁵ Fuentes's apprenticeship thus matured into a historical sensibility open to the world, and into his idea of "contemporaries" (a key conceptual feature in *Myself with Others*) that would define his literary vocation as well as that of most of the members of the Boom generation.

Fuentes's life-long tribute to Balzac and to Thomas Mann—almost as intense as his devotion to Cervantes—shows no anxiety of influence, but rather his reiterated conviction that a writer is indebted to the past and to a

⁴ For an overview of recent, divergent, and significant studies by Karl Taube and Saburo Sugiyama of the Temple of the Feathered Serpent at Teotihuacán (also known as the Temple of Quetzalcóatl), specifically of the hybrid deity imagery of Tlaloc and Quetzalcóatl, see my introduction to *Tradition and Innovation in Mesoamerican Cultural History* (2011: 4). For a fuller treatment of the Quetzalcóatl and Tezcatlipoca symbolism in Mesoamerica's Post-Classic period (from Toltec to Aztec), see David Carrasco, *Daily Life of the Aztecs: People of the Sun and the Earth* (1998: 190-198).

⁵ Fuentes remembered being in 1950 a "well-read teenager" and living intensely while in his first European sojourn that included his studies of international law in Geneva (1988: 15). His memory takes him back to a dinner at the plush Baur-au-Lac Hotel where he sat at the next table where Thomas Mann was dining ("I, paralyzed with admiration," 26): he is speechless and takes glances at Mann through his readings ("my passionate reading of everything he wrote," 26). Fifty-four years later, in the last essay in *This I Believe* (2005), Fuentes returned to this memory of a long-gone moment but recalled anew: "There was no way I could prove the accuracy of my intuition that evening of my youthful, if distant, encounter with an author who had literally shaped the writers of my generation. From *Buddenbrooks* to the great novellas to *The Magic Mountain*, Thomas Mann had been the surest link in our Latin American literary connection to Europe [...] Watching Mann eat his dinner that evening in Zurich, the two spaces of that spirit, Europe and Zurich, became united together in my mind and would remain as such forevermore" (325).

literary tradition that must be given new life through the writer's work. Milan Kundera, Fuentes's friend and contemporary, sums up similar views regarding the art of the novel and modernity's literary testament: "Because of that *initial freedom* of the novel, Rabelais' work contains enormous aesthetic possibilities, some of which have been realized in the novel's later evolution and others never have been. Well, a novelist inherits not only everything that has been done, but also everything that was possible. Rabelais reminds us of that" (2010: 63, emphasis in the original). Predictably, Fuentes appropriated elements from Cervantes's and Rabelais's literary testament, including aesthetic possibilities created by modern world writers, and immediately modified, improved, and reconfigured what had been received. For instance, in relation to Balzac's device of returning characters, Fuentes conjoined it with that of *revenant* characters taken from Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), and transformed by Fuentes into a signature template with variants that alter or mutate the lives of returning characters in most of his novels, from *Where the Air is Clear* (Ixca Cienfuegos: an ancient sun god, a modern-day character, and a narrative formal device in his role as connecting link with other characters through interviews); *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (the protagonist as the continuity of powerful men in Mexico, from Hernán Cortés to Porfirio Díaz and Plutarco Elías Calles); and *Aura* (Felipe Montero as the revenant of the nineteenth-century Mexican General Llorente); to *Terra Nostra* (Iohannes Agrippa, Don Juan, the Pilgrim, Polo Febo, many names, different centuries, one character). Similar variants are found in *The Orange Tree* (1993), *The Years with Laura Díaz* (1999), and *Inez* (2000). In *La gran novela latinoamericana*, a book that combines literary criticism, literary history, and Fuentes's record of the transition from the Boom to the "Boomerang" generation, he restates his long-standing acknowledgment of Virginia Woolf's "biography-novel":

[E]l *Orlando* de Virginia Woolf, donde el personaje del título recorre el tiempo histórico cambiando de sexo en las distintas épocas que van de un Londres congelado y revivido por la música de Händel, a Constantinopla, a Inglaterra entre las dos guerras mundiales. *Orlando* traza un devenir, al cabo, lineal—del pasado al presente—en el que cambian el tiempo histórico y el sexo del personaje (2011: 431).⁶

⁶ Fuentes's intermittent acknowledgments and references to Virginia Woolf can be traced from his early writings to more recent ones, such as *The Years with Laura Díaz* (1998; English translation, 2000), where the title puns with Woolf's novel *The Years* (1937), and its thematic treatment—similar to Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1900)—of a family history (the Pargiters), profiled from the 1880s

to the 1930s. In *The Years with Laura Díaz*, Fuentes includes a character by the name of Orlando Ximénez who appears in Laura's life from their youthful years to their old age, thus running parallel to Laura's "education" and integration of her personality as an artist and photographer. The transition from unhappy wife to her life as an artist in Mexico City is narrated as follows: "She had, for the first time in her life, the famous 'room of one's own' that Virginia Woolf had said women deserved so they could have their sacred zone, their minimal redoubt of independence: a sovereign island of their own" (453). In addition, Laura's grandfather, don Felipe Kelsen, is a German emigré who in the 1860s turned farmer in Catemaco, Veracruz. One reads that Don Felipe's father, "Heine Kelsen [...] owed his position to a commercial and financial arrangement, subordinate but respectful, he had with old Johann Buddenbrook, a citizen of Lübeck" (21). In this allusion to Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, the reader is in a position to anticipate a parallel family history of economic rise, decline and fall, allowing for the emergence of artists: Laura, in Fuentes's novel; two novelists in Mann's "real" family history (the model for his 1900 novel): namely, Heinrich Mann and Thomas Mann. While reading this novel by Fuentes, one witnesses the manner in which the art of the novel is being redefined in front of one's eyes, while one attempts simultaneously to interpret the cryptic allusions to family history and works of literature Fuentes admired and revered. An illustration can be found in *Instinto de Inés* (Inez, 2002), dedicated to the memory of Fuentes's son, therefore a novel where kinship ties and literary references turn hermetic, but for the same reason an inducement and allure to interpretation. In this novel, a variant of Laura Díaz appears in Inés Rosenzweig, a Mexican opera singer with the artistic name "Inés Prada" known for her independence of character, and (so the reader imagines) her María Callas-like singing talent. In a dialogue darkened by German bombs being dropped in London in 1940, Gabriel Atlan-Ferrara makes a literary association while addressing Inés: " 'Now, because of the war, the lighthouse there is blacked out. *To the Lighthouse!*' Gabriel laughed. No more Virginia Woolf" (35). Two pages later, Inés is described as a woman with red hair (thus as Orlando) and as "a woman with no age" (37). This novel is suggestively close to Thomas Mann's *Dr. Faustus* (1947), with a composer (instead of a conductor in *Inez*) associated by musical ambition to Mephistopheles (referred to as "Mephisto" by Fuentes, thus recalling the title of Klaus Mann's novel). The themes of ambition, pride, isolation, suicides, and personal grief run through the pages of *Inez* in a narrative that ranges from an Eden-like origin (an Adam and Eve couple) and their modern revenants or counterparts who are connected by an inherited gift: a seal of crystal defined as "an object of unalterable form" (4), thus as an analog of a shared destiny that spans the time of humanity from the primeval couple to Gabriel and Inez. Read as a cluster of novels—from *Diana, the Huntress who Hunts Alone* (1995), and *The Years with Laura Díaz* (1998), to *Inez* (2002)—a cohesive interpretation would require a close analysis beyond a mere "psychobiography." These are novels in which Fuentes writes darkly but with enough luminescence so as to keep his readers in a penumbra or ambiguous setting, therefore in the belief that one has understood just about everything. And yet the mystery remains, perhaps stored in other lives, other

Fuentes brushed aside the notion of “influences” in artistic creation, and conceived of the relation of the writer to an artistic heritage as one that contains the possibility of an aesthetic project enlivened by a creative energy often associated with avant-garde features in the Boom generation: “El escritor pertenece a una tradición y la enriquece con una nueva creación. Se debe a la tradición tanto como la tradición se debe al creador. La cuestión de ‘influencias’ pasa a ser, de este modo, parte de la facilidad anecdótica.”⁷ Attentive to tradition, Fuentes was not interested in “making it new” but in the aesthetic surprise, in the art’s power to marvel and amaze, in other words in the extraordinary that is understood as the foundation of any awakening and “recreation”; in other words, for the work and reader to come to life again: “Cocteau’s famous ‘surprise me’ was for [Gabriel Atlan-Ferrara] something more than a simple *boutade*. It was an aesthetic. Let the curtain rise over Rodolfo’s mansard or Violetta’s salon and we see them for the first time” (2002: 74). What opera is to the audience, the novel is to the reader.⁸ In reading *Don Quixote*, the reader gallops on Rocinante for the first time.

Fuentes’s wide-ranging narrative cycle, announced under the title “La edad del tiempo” (the Age of Time), includes fourteen categories, with

suicides, such as Woolf’s, Thomas Mann’s son (Klaus) and, above all, Rita Macedo’s, Fuentes’s first wife. This is the scope of work that awaits a future biographer of Carlos Fuentes, one that transcends the mere tools of literary criticism. As examples of such biographies, see Herbert Marder, *The Measure of Life: Virginia Woolf’s Last Years* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Donald Prater, *Thomas Mann: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Fred Kaplan, *Henry James: The Imagination of Genius* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1992).

⁷ See Fuentes, *La gran novela latinoamericana* (198). See also my essay “Leer para abrir los ojos: el conocimiento y la imaginación en la narrativa de Carlos Fuentes” (2012: 30-34).

⁸ For a reading of Fuentes’s language of breaks and transitions in his life as a writer, as well as his Calvinist-like commitment and loyalty to his work, read the following lines in *Diana*: “Far from Diana, far from my past, I still felt close to the literary joy I’d recovered. I did not burn the pages I’d written in Santiago with Diana at my side [Gringo Viejo?], but I had leapt from them, with more strength and conviction than ever, to the work that was waiting for me, that summoned me, and that gave me the greatest happiness in my life [...] No novel gave me so many intelligent readers, readers who were close to me, who were permanent, who mattered to me...With that novel, I found my real readers, those whom I wanted to create, discover, keep. Those who, like me, wanted [...] another level of communication and discourse: language, history, epochs, absences, nonexistences as characters, and the novel as the meeting place of times and beings that would never otherwise encounter one another” (196-107).

five bearing the word “time” (romantic, revolutionary, political, and so forth); eight corresponding to titles of published novels, and one category to the topic of education: *Las buenas conciencias* (The Good Conscience, 1959), and *Zona sagrada* (Sacred Zone, 1967). The fourteenth and concluding category includes only one novel that puns with the cycle’s title: *El naranjo o los círculos del tiempo* (1993, translated as The Orange Tree, 1995). This novel is one of Fuentes’s major narrative achievements, drawing from his readings of Bernal Díaz del Castillo (but reading him “in reverse,” as in Jerónimo de Aguilar’s initial account), Polybius, Cicero, and Appian, therefore from ancient Greece and Rome, to the “savage” Spain of Numancia and the Age of Discovery, and from post-Conquest to modern Mexico.⁹ Historical irony: the rise and fall of civilizations is explained by the transient grip and grasp of human triumph and power. Fuentes’s long labor on his own aesthetic project—envisioned as Mexico’s “Human Comedy”—shall keep readers and literary critics beguiled and occupied for many generations.

The Reptant Eagle: Essays on Carlos Fuentes and the Art of the Novel opens with five different approaches to one of Fuentes’s novels known for its structural innovations: *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (1962). In the lead essay, Steven Boldy recalls the revolutionary and demanding techniques that Fuentes brought to the art of the novel and, in particular, to *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, among them: the novel’s structural fragmentation, the narrative’s multiple and synchronous temporal planes, and the reader’s groping (at first) through the incomprehensible narrative that, thirty years afterward, according to Boldy, turns visible and transparent. The novel has remained the same, but not the reader: through repeated readings, Boldy acquired better-suited interpretive habits. Of the thirteen chapters that compose this novel, Boldy claims that “1934: August 12”—a chapter little studied till now—is where Artemio Cruz encounters a turn or curvature in his life, and the axis where Artemio’s amorous passion—Laura Rivière—spins according to the beat and cadence of its own origin, decline, and death. A chapter that treats themes such as adultery (Artemio and Laura), a romance in major cities (New York, Paris), various art forms (paintings by Renoir, Monet), drama (Pedro Calderón de la Barca), and music (Händel’s *Concerti Grossi*), “1934” marks the apogee in Artemio’s desirous and

⁹ The impact of Carlos Fuentes on the Chicano novel can be noticed in Alfredo Véa’s *Gods Go Begging* (1999), a novel in which Chicano soldiers in Vietnam play the “supposing game”: “Just imagine what would have happened if Hernán Cortés and his men had been blown far off course and landed at Plymouth Rock instead of Veracruz” (113). For more details, see my article on Alfredo Véa (2005:151-174).

sensuous life, endowed with a sensorium that extends its reach to the world through sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing. True to Artemio's "capitalist" inclinations, he exults in acquisition and gratification. Boldy unveils the correspondence between the four separate references to Händel's music in this chapter and the couple's psychological changes from optimism and celebration to one of fall, rejection and, ultimately, Artemio's decision not to share a life with Laura—a choice he will later regret. Boldy's close reading functions like clockwork in terms of its complex but reliable machinery: he alludes to the reappearance of Artemio and Laura in Fuentes's *The Years with Laura Díaz* (1999), a Balzacian technique of returning characters but with a difference, this time with the emphasis on Laura Díaz who decides not to share a life with Orlando—never to regret it. In his conclusion, Boldy observes that *The Death of Artemio Cruz* is Proustian in its formal and thematic scope: as in *In Search of Lost Time*, Fuentes's novel illustrates the tyranny of "real" time in its flow and passing; in Time's dominion in Artemio's consciousness and memory; and in the novel's literary composition structured synchronically in superimposed temporal levels.

Maarten Van Delden's essay holds our attention on the signaled references to hands, arms, and fingers in *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, found generally on two different realms: touch and gesture. The analysis unfolds throughout various instances in the novel where such realms function thematically or culturally involving characters associated with Artemio, from his wife Catalina to his son Lorenzo, and women who loved him, such as Regina and Laura, thus pointing to social meanings related to intimacy, friendship, recognition, desire for possession, and erotic desire. Van Delden argues that *The Death of Artemio Cruz* has been read for the most part as a psychological novel due to the primacy of the interior monologue throughout the narrative; his innovative reading, however, turns our attention to bodily experience as paramount in Fuentes's novel, basing his argument on recent theoretical models that posit the human body as central to modernism, reform movements, aesthetic gratification, and experiential authenticity. Reminiscent of Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964) on the transformation of one's sensorium in response to new technologies, Van Delden's argument deals frontally with writings by Constance Classen and her description of a cultural break, development, and transition in Western society: namely, its transformation from a tactile and "hands-on" common social body, to a "hands-off" world of the social individual with a proclivity toward the visual and a detached way of life. The essay closes with two questions: since Artemio Cruz lives mostly in a "hands-on"

world, does it mean that he has not made the transition to the modern era? or, is Fuentes “leading a modernist rebellion of the senses”? Van Delden offers an answer, but on this matter, one must remain detached and hands-off, allowing the reader to find out for her/himself.

A novelist and literary critic, Eliud Martínez reads *The Death of Artemio Cruz* with his native Texas in mind, therefore with the emphasis on terms often associated with Carlos Fuentes, a writer whose work is international in thematic content, cosmopolitan and global in worldview, and encyclopedic in the intertextual breadth of his writings. Tacitly challenging the parochial view held in Texas during his generation that Mexicans constitute a “race,” Martínez uncovers in Fuentes’s novel the representation of Mexicans as a people with “multiple ancestries”—indigenous, Spanish, African and, among others, Asian and Jewish—with its “multi-racial” vitality embodied in Artemio Cruz and his Afro-Mexican ancestry as the promise and premise of the New World since the age of its Columbian discovery. In terms of its global scope, *The Death of Artemio Cruz* ties the main character to several continents—Africa, Europe, and North America—and to different world cities, such as New York, Paris, and Mexico City. A traveler, astute gazer, and keen to emerging opportunities for acquisition and profits, Artemio Cruz is the expression of a major historical force: the modern age. Modernity thus becomes, according to Martínez, the warp and woof of Fuentes’s novels, with an encyclopedic array of references to film, history, mythology, philosophy, politics and world literature. As Martínez claims at his essay’s end, Carlos Fuentes is Mexican and a citizen of the world.

Fuentes’s life-long fascination with cinema is a topic that achieves full projection in James A. Hussar’s thorough and detailed reading of the structural, thematic, and narrative levels in *Citizen Kane* (1941) and in *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, turning his attention as well to the biographical and historical similarities that most critics have found between Charles Foster Kane and Artemio Cruz. Hussar’s interest is to argue for their “key differences,” particularly as these are portrayed through memory (Artemio) or interviews (Kane). Another major difference: Kane’s life runs through seventy years, while Artemio’s is recounted in a time lapse of twelve to twenty-four hours, but over hundreds of pages as opposed to the film’s less than two-hour duration. Hussar brings to his detailed analysis the theoretical work of Gerard Génette to study the novel’s “story time” and “story’s length,” and its triadic narrative structure—“I,” “You,” and “He”—that he claims results in an intrinsic ambiguity and simultaneity through fragmentation and repetition of phrases in the novel. According to Hussar, Fuentes’s desire not to follow but to go beyond *Citizen Kane*

corresponds to his incessant search for innovative and unfamiliar modes of artistic expression in the novel, a search that is the ‘hallmark of modernism.’”

The section on *The Death of Artemio Cruz* closes with an essay by Valentín González-Bohórquez, who raises questions central to Fuentes’s novel, from Artemio’s education to his maturation and acquired knowledge of the ways of the world, themes of character development that define the literary genre known as *Bildungsroman*. González-Bohórquez observes that the novel resembles an autobiographical account of a man in his deathbed, reduced to relive unconsciously the deep-seated memories of his life mostly through interior monologues and their interplay with the other two narrative voices (“He” and “You”), hence his argument that Fuentes’s novel is an *anti-Bildungsroman* in the sense that Artemio is portrayed in a fragmented and splintered condition that draws him to the sphere of modernity and its cultural discontents. As such, Artemio moves from a pastoral existence in his native Cocuya, and from the idealism stemming from literacy and radicalism learned from don Sebastián in Mexico City, to his participation in the 1910 Mexican Revolution, followed by his progressive greed and corruption. In his rise and fall, Artemio mirrors the history of post-Revolutionary Mexico and its possibilities for immense fortunes made by a few. In addition to the analysis of Fuentes’s novel as an *anti-Bildungsroman*, González-Bohórquez takes up again the close examination of the novel’s three narrators—“I,” “You,” and “He”—and Fuentes’s early indebtedness to the critique of Mexican traditional culture and sense of history found in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950), by Octavio Paz.

The second part of this book draws the reader’s attention to Fuentes’s novel *Terra Nostra*, considered a masterpiece and his most ambitious literary achievement. The French scholar Florence Olivier opens this section with an emphasis on “colloquy” (dialogue), thus on a Platonic tradition based on conversation and cross-examination, essential to the Socratic dialectic as the art of reasoning, and its critique in Fuentes’s novel in which a true *combattimento*, a conflictive encounter, and a polemical interaction take place throughout the novel’s breath-taking length. A novel that celebrates the nonconformist, the eccentric, and the heretical in its pages, inevitably represents faith itself as no longer standing as reason’s rival: it is now the dream, utopia, imagination, and knowledge.¹⁰ Olivier

¹⁰ Fuentes learned early as a writer the importance of making choices, later to be understood as the meaning of the Greek word *haireticus*: “he who chooses” (2002: 77). The language of heresy runs through most of Fuentes’s novels, and plays a central role in *Terra Nostra* (1975).

regards *Terra Nostra* as Fuentes's work of maturity, therefore as a spirited phase of transition where questions about the "old world" and the "new world"—ruled by concerns of "what really happened"—are subordinated to more pressing ones facing the "the next world," to be defined as what could have been, hence the importance of new searches and desires for the "no-place" of utopia and the missed opportunities, and the claim that the past must be resurrected and brought to memory in order for characters to choose again. Olivier holds that the narrative structure in *Terra Nostra*, divided into three parts that stand for three different worlds—the old, the new, and the next—follows a dialectical pattern of conflict and (momentary) resolution that "resurrects" kindred works of art in literature (Dante's *Divine Comedy*) and painting (Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*), works based on a metaphysic with its own hell, purgatory, and paradise. Fuentes's utopia or golden age, posited as his desire to "choose again," signals the sixties as a fundamental generational quest that was truly global in its search for love, justice, health, and knowledge. In a language that combines the high diction of poetry and lucidity—thus of the dream and reason—Olivier guides the reader through *Terra Nostra* as our Virgil in a dark, superb, and bewildering forest, all along providing us with a map of the entire novel. Fuentes would agree: it had to be someone born in France who could unveil in *Terra Nostra* the exact point of balance—moral, sexual, intellectual—that marks the tension between the old and the new, the Anglo-Saxon and the Latin, the Germanic and Mediterranean that, in his view, continue to tear us apart. Olivier's art of reasoning is fully anticipated in *Terra Nostra*: "reason is the intermediary between God and the Devil" (1976:197).

Michael Abeyta's essay conjoins his readings of *Terra Nostra* and of Fuentes's *Cervantes, o la crítica de la lectura* (1976), a dual task whose success and novelty is due to Abeyta's literary and philosophical background. *Terra Nostra* gains a greater degree of legibility, Abeyta claims, when read as Fuentes's "burlesque" of Hegel's dialectic of the master and the slave through what he calls "the deconstruction of the legacy of absolutism," an argument that leads to the close study of two main characters: Celestina and Felipe, thus of a "serf" and a monarch, or slave and master. At the core of Abeyta's wide-ranging analysis is the idea of the "gift" (a lesson learned by the Pilgrim upon arriving on the shores of the New World), potlatch, and an *herencia* understood as a cultural legacy, therefore as an ancestral "gift" that is both a burden and a promise, a received civilization (mainly Mediterranean and of the New World) spread globally after the Age of Discovery, resulting in the "Latin" imperative to revive, transform, and reinvent. Abeyta draws from Fuentes's 1976

essay—a theoretical and critical companion piece to *Terra Nostra*—to illuminate the scope of Fuentes’s ambitious narrative enterprise that includes *inherited* ideas from works by Georges Bataille (France, 1897-1962), and Jorge Luis Borges (Argentina, 1899-1986), not to mention references in *Terra Nostra* to an entire library that would include works by Fernando de Rojas, Miguel de Cervantes, Tirso de Molina and, among many others, Luis Buñuel and Julio Cortázar.¹¹ Abeyta’s own quest for totality is made evident in this comprehensive essay that, in an animated and broad direction, takes the reader throughout *Terra Nostra*, frequently suspending the flow of his argument in order to question, critique, and move beyond other studies of *Terra Nostra*, thus fully engaged in critical meditations on Fuentes’s writings and inspired by the spirit of dialectic, polemics, and his desire to transform and revive our reading of Fuentes’s masterpiece.

This section on *Terra Nostra* closes with an essay by Young Mee Park, a scholar born in South Korea but with an educational background gained at the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*, therefore with an avowed condition as a transnational that strikes through and crosses out the “Latin” in *Terra Nostra*, resulting in a *Terra* that is virtually *Nostra* in a global sense. With Bakhtin’s study of Dostoievsky as a reference point, Park argues for a renewed approach to the reading of *Terra Nostra* that would transcend the “content” or mere story-line of the narrative. She proposes a study that includes the compositional form and structural innovations that best define *Terra Nostra*. With this objective in mind, Park grounds her study on the novel in question and on Fuentes’s *Cervantes, o la crítica de la lectura*, thus anchoring her all-embracing study in Fuentes’s own poetics of the novel. Her method of reading begins with the internal construction of the narrative (the fictional level), followed by her critical analysis of *Terra Nostra*’s external construction or metafictional level. In the course of her analysis, Park reflects on the role of various characters—Celestina, El Señor, the Pilgrim, and Ludovico—with attention to the different tales “told” in the narrative and to the historical sequence that ranges from the Old and New to the Next World. As Park observes in her essay, the characters do not play a conventional unitary or static role; on the contrary, *Terra Nostra*’s characters transform themselves and change through time, from the age of Tiberius to the year 2000, thus justifying one refrain in the novel: “several lifetimes are needed

¹¹ See my analysis of Tirso de Molina’s *El Burlador de Sevilla, o el convidado de piedra*, with references to Julio Cortázar’s novel *Rayuela* (Hopscotch, 1966), and to a major character in *Terra Nostra*: Don Juan (2013: 95-114).

to integrate a personality” (769).¹² In addition to Tiberius’ curse, the “reincarnation” of the Pilgrim (and that of other characters connected to him, such as Celestina, Ludovico, and Felipe), functions as a trope for metamorphosis, simultaneity, and an Otherness that confirm Maestro Valerio’s “cinematic” principles in his Theatre of Memory: “The images of my theater bring together all the possibilities of the past, but they also represent all the opportunities of the future, for knowing what was not, we shall know what demands to be: *what has not been, you have seen, is a latent event awaiting its moment to be, its second chance*” (561, my emphasis).

The section on the visual arts in Carlos Fuentes sets off with an essay by Georgina García Gutiérrez Vélez, a personal friend of Carlos Fuentes and author of several books on his novels and short fiction.¹³ In her essay, she argues for the two “renaissances” produced by Diego Rivera and Carlos Fuentes, with the first taking place in 1921 when Diego Rivera returned to Mexico from Europe; the second, in 1958, with the publication of Fuentes’s first novel, *La región más transparente* (Where the Air is Clear, 1958). Both artists discover Mexico and represent it in a manner that shocks, angers, or mystifies Mexicans of the first half of the twentieth-century. According to Vélez, three factors play an important role in the manner in which Rivera and Fuentes spark cultural renaissances in Mexico: in both artists, the spirit of an avant-garde unifies a sense of social consciousness with the intellectual’s inclination to critique “reality,” and

¹² This is fundamentally the plot in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*: the main character acknowledges that she (formerly a male) is constituted by many selves (“For she had a great variety of selves to call upon,” 226) and, therefore, the question as to when she will find unity and totality of being is central to the narrative. And the integration of the self happens, just before midnight: “she was now one and entire [...] She saw the intricacy of the twigs of every tree. Each blade of grass was distinct and the markings of veins and petals [...] I can begin to live again. I am the Serpentine, she thought, the little boat is climbing through the white arch of a thousand deaths. I am about to understand” (235-236). The stroke of midnight takes place on “Thursday, the eleventh of October, Nineteenth-Hundred and Twenty-Eight” (241). A British joke: this date corresponds to the date of publication of *Orlando* (thus its unified “birth” as a book). Fuentes must have observed another aspect of this novel’s conclusion: he was born exactly a month later: November 11, 1928.

¹³ See her most recent book, *La región más transparente en el siglo XXI: Homenaje a Carlos Fuentes y a su obra* (México: UNAM, 2012), published on 25 October 2012, thus five months after Fuentes’s death on 15 May 2012.

that of the creative artist who is critical of the arts.¹⁴ In their international view of Mexican culture and history, both run against a post-revolutionary nationalism and conservative sectors in Mexico with no tolerance toward Rivera's portrayal of Lenin and Trotsky as the political horizon of the nation, or of Fuentes's cosmopolitanism and "expatriate" joys while living abroad in Switzerland, England, France, or the United States. Due to their strong personalities and the scope of their artistic creations, Vélez claims that Rivera and Fuentes break with tradition and create pathways for Mexico's modernity, one in painting, the other in literature. In this essay, Vélez recalls the attacks and verbal venom that both Rivera and Fuentes encountered in Mexico, no doubt a symptom of a pre-modern society unable to understand much less appreciate murals by Rivera or novels by Fuentes. One learns that the stand Rivera and Fuentes took against tradition and intolerance produced two major results: first, a new generation of artists and writers who opposed a narrow and State-sponsored nationalism of the early phases of the revolution and, second, that through their art, Rivera and Fuentes forged a national identity open to the world. Vélez states that Carlos Fuentes was the unifying force in the two renaissances thanks to his constant inclusion of the arts—e.g., literary traditions from diverse parts of the world, painting, music, architecture, and film—in his novels, short fiction, and essays.

The essay by Lanin A. Gyurko rests on many years of robust research and on four major scholarly books on Carlos Fuentes's novels, drama, short fiction and on their interconnectedness to world film. Gyurko looks into the background of Fuentes's fascination with world film since his childhood, beginning with *Sunset Boulevard*, *Casablanca*, *The Maltese Falcon* and—to limit the list to U.S. films alone—*Citizen Kane*. The passion for film led Fuentes to marry his first wife, Rita Macedo (1925-1993), an award-winning Mexican movie actress. Gyurko notes that Fuentes's constant interest in film is visible in his "cinematic" novels, such as *Where the Air is Clear* (1958), and *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (1962), unfortunately with failed attempts to take them to the screen; or in *Old Gringo* (1989), a novel successfully adapted to film by Luis Puenzo. According to Gyurko, Fuentes's passionate attention to the silver screen, and his charisma, dashing looks, and love of public acclaim, could have catapulted him as a movie star; on the other hand, as a world-renowned writer and engaging speaker, Fuentes was perceived as a celebrity, with long lines of people waiting to enter auditoriums to listen to his lectures.

¹⁴ On the political and aesthetic forces that breathed life into the avant-garde during Rivera's time, followed by its decline, see Andreas Huyssen (1986).

Gyurko's essay—thorough, intriguing, informative—studies Fuentes's major works in light of films by famous directors, such as Billy Wilder, Otto Preminger, Luis Buñuel, Sergei Eisenstein, and movie stars María Félix, Dolores del Río, and Jane Fonda, to name a few. Among his many disclosures: Guillermo del Toro will be co-producing a film adaptation of *The Death of Artemio Cruz*.

Wendy B. Faris opens the section titled “Carlos Fuentes and the Art of the Novel” with an in-depth study of *Una familia lejana* (Distant Relations, 1980), a novel where Fuentes brings focus to his concerns regarding ruins—of Mexico, the world, of literature, of language itself—and engages the “glocal” (the global and the local), and the transatlantic interchanges between Paris, France, and the Toltec ruins of Xochicalco in Morelos, Mexico. Faris sparks one's attention with questions that take us to the core of the novel: why Xochicalco, and what thematic and structural resonances in relation to the novel itself does that choice reveal? The aesthetic value of ruins, argues Faris, stems from their condition as the “totality of remains” that can be recycled by the Baroque imagination into hybrid cultures, akin to Alejo Carpentier's poetics of the New World Baroque. The novel's oscillating narrative between historical enclosures in Paris and in Xochicalco points to its hermetic composition, unmistakably written for an elite readership that will appreciate the historical associations—imaginative more so than literal and factual—between the former as the site associated with the *Ancien Régime* and the French Revolution, and the latter with a ceremonial place of Toltec rule where Quetzalcóatl and Tlaloc were major deities identified with the nobility and fertility, respectively. Known as the place of water, Xochicalco's stone friezes are decorated with a flow of interlocking plumed serpents and Tlaloc-related water glyphs that reveal the true purpose of this Toltec “architext”: it was the site of a state cult for the cultural elite. Such are the “distant relations,” argues Faris, which define the cosmopolitan dimensions of *Una familia lejana*, with Mesoamerica and France as the two determining forces that have shaped the “glocal” in Fuentes's writings.

In his essay on Carlos Fuentes's *Aura* (1962)—a novella that extends its skeletal, Gothic hands to films, such as *Ugetsu Nibigatary*, by Japanese film director Kenji Mizoguchi; to Fuentes's memories of Maria Callas, and to writings of Henry James (“The Aspen Papers”)—Pablo Baler brings “disorder” to the academic understanding of the Gothic literary tradition (mainly English), emphasizing instead Fuentes's own claim, namely: the imperative for Latin American writers of the “Boom” generation to create a new foundation for language, and a literature of “disorder” that would replace the calcified and false idea of “origin” in Latin American culture.

Baler proposes that the origin of Latin American culture and identity has been read repeatedly in its foundational narratives (meaning “official” or institutionalized)—for instance, in *Facundo, civilización y barbarie* (1845). Quoting Vasari and his views of Gothic architecture (of Goths, thus the work of barbarians, as opposed to classical rationality and perfection of architectural form), Baler’s approach to *Aura* is akin to Rimbaud’s call for the “derangement of the senses” as the only possibility to be an “Other.” Such a turn in our reading possibilities begins, Baler claims, in *Aura*’s second-person narrator (“you”), where Felipe Montero and the reader coincide and merge as one, lured and pulled by Consuelo into an old mansion with a labyrinthine architecture composed of three levels, a spiral staircase, a tiered necropolis, and an old crone with a young double: Aura. Reading the term “sacrament” as a repetition and representation of a story/history, Baler’s “sacramental” reading is of a higher order in which *Aura*’s language of animated graves (Consuelo’s promise to return), and the architecture of haunted colonial mansions are in themselves the hope for the reconstruction of a new space and time for Latin American identity. Baler’s claim finds confirmation in one of Fuentes’s last books, *La gran novela latinoamericana* (2011), in the language of architecture (*puerta, techo, sótano, recámara*) and Otherness (*amor*):

El lenguaje en la novela, portadora constante de la duda frente a la fe ideológica, la certeza religiosa o la conveniencia política, no puede dejar de lado ni ideología, ni religión ni política. Tampoco puede, la novela, ser dominada por cualquiera de ellas. Lo que puede hacer es convertir ideología, religión o política en problema, abriéndolas a la puerta de la interrogación, levantando el techo de la imaginación, bajando al sótano de la memoria, entrando a la recámara del amor. (354)

Iliana Alcántar recalls how Fuentes, a leading member of the “Boom” generation, passed the torch to the “Boomerang” or “Crack” generation (as they call themselves) at the 2004 International Book Fair, thus officially acknowledging the literary heirs—Ignacio Padilla, Jorge Volpi, Pedro Angel Palou, among others—and new protagonists in contemporary Mexican literature. Alcántar’s essay examines and clarifies the complex fragmentation and regional differences among contemporary Mexican writers, and lists four additional groups that would specify important moments in Mexico’s literary history: la Onda generation (1960s), writers of the desert or northern frontier (1980s), feminist literature (1980s), the “Crack” group (1990s), and among the “unclassifiables”: Enrique de la Serna’s “dirty realism” (2000-present). Alcántar’s path-breaking and

detailed study of contemporary Mexican literature points to a splintered and diverse cluster of writers with no unifying bond, nor the hemispheric reach, that distinguished the Boom generation. Certainly, history does not unfold in a linear, chronological sequence. Thus, it might take years for another generation to emerge in Latin America with shared views on writing, on the art of the novel, and on the need to read and grow from literary traditions beyond the national. Pertinent to Alcántar's closing arguments is Carlos Fuentes's own assessment of the Boom generation:

La novela del boom recuperó la amplitud de la tradición literaria. Hizo suyos a los padres de la nueva novela, Borges y Carpentier, Onetti y Rulfo. Reclamó para sí la gran línea poética ininterrumpida de Hispanoamérica, de la lírica náhuatl a los poetas del barroco colonial a los grandes contemporáneos, Neruda, y Vallejo, Huidobro y Lezama Lima...Le dio a la novela rango no sólo de reflejo de la realidad, sino de creadora de más realidad...Amplió espectacularmente los recursos técnicos de la narrativa latinoamericana; radicó sus efectos sociales en los dominios del lenguaje y la imaginación y alentó una extraordinaria individualización de la escritura, más allá de los géneros. (2011: 291)

This section closes with Blanca López de Mariscal's meticulous description of a lecture given by Carlos Fuentes in Monterrey, Mexico, on 14 March 1996, shortly after the publication of *La frontera de cristal* (The Crystal Frontier, 1995). The lecture, never published by Fuentes, was video-taped in its entirety by López de Mariscal and focuses solely on Fuentes's theory of short fiction. Her summary consists of four "moments" or phases in Fuentes's exposition of fundamental narrative principles: (a) unlike the novel, the short story is governed by urgency and a brevity that should not exclude profundity; (b) includes an epiphany that follows James Joyce's definition, namely: a sudden spiritual manifestation in everyday or memorable situations; (c) illustrations of the short story's structure in works by Julio Cortázar and Jorge Luis Borges, with the former emphasizing the closed and hermetic and, the latter, the story that opens to other stories; (d) Fuentes's conclusion with the explanation of his own short stories and their polyphonic, circular, and interconnected structure, as found in *Burnt Water* (1981), *The Orange Tree* (1993), and *The Crystal Frontier* (1995). Woven through Fuentes's exposition are references to Balzac, Chekhov, Poe, Propp and, among others, Tolstoy. López de Mariscal's summary and in-depth explanation of Fuentes's lecture will be of interest to his readers.

The fifth part of the book, "Carlos Fuentes, the Essay, and the Art of Translation," is launched by Reindert Dhondt's theoretical reflections on

Fuentes's essays and, more specifically, on the core questions dealing with modernity and the reinterpretation of the Baroque, the latter understood by Fuentes not as a European architectural style exported to the colonies, but as a critique of absolutes and authoritarianism made possible by ambiguity, indeterminacy, and paradox—in other words, alternatives for critique, irony, and cultural change that emerged in Europe thanks to Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* (1511), and Cervantes's novel *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1605). Dhondt deftly takes the reader through different interpretations of modernity as defined in a European context—frequently correlated with the Enlightenment—followed by his critical examination of the work of distinguished Fuentes scholars (Maarten van Delden, Raymond Leslie Williams) who, according to Dhondt, judge Fuentes's work as (a) caught in a “fundamental ambivalence” in regard to national identity and the development of a democratic society, or else (b) interpret Fuentes's alleged views in *Terra Nostra* (Latin America's “curse” stemming from the Rome of Tiberius to medieval and Renaissance Spain) as the determining legacy of Hispanic culture. Dhondt alludes to Latin American theoretical transformations of the discourse of modernity (Alejo Carpentier, Walter Mignolo) that take modernity away from the eighteenth century (England, France), and position it either in the age of discovery and European imperial expansionism (Walter Mignolo) or, in regards to the New World Baroque, as transhistorical, transcultural, and one of amalgamation and hybridity (Alejo Carpentier). In Dhondt's words: “For Fuentes, the Baroque culture of Latin America arises precisely from the shock of different civilizations. By integrating these multicultural sources, the Latin American Baroque deviates from the metropolitan prototype, giving birth to a Modernity that is different from the European paradigm.”

Alejandro Bárcenas frames his essay on historicity and culture, on the unfolding through time of Hispanic and Latin American civilization, and on a study and reinterpretation as described in *El espejo enterrado* (The Buried Mirror, 1992) that Fuentes wrote to commemorate the Quincentennial of the Discovery of (or “encounter” with) America. Bárcenas opens with a reference to a conversation between Fuentes and Guy Scarpetta, held in London in 1993 with specific references to a television series titled “Civilization” (BBC, 1969), written and narrated by Kenneth Clark. Fuentes recalled Clark's claiming that Spain and Latin America had not been included in his series because Hispanic culture had not contributed to Western civilization. To set the record straight, Fuentes later wrote *El espejo enterrado* and accompanied it with a five-hour television series, also written and narrated by Fuentes. By 1992, Bárcenas reminds us, studies in Latin American culture were almost non-existent,

and the history of philosophy in the Hispanic world had succumbed to obscurity and indifference. In his comprehensive study, Bárcenas traces Fuentes's readings of Hegel and Vico, philosophers of history whose ideas are tied and connected to *El espejo enterrado*. Bárcenas also reflects on the degree to which the Quincentennial commemorations led to a questioning and rethinking of the importance of the Age of Discovery and its legacy in the Hispanic world, and thus to a retrospective view of major writers and thinkers who shaped the Hispanic world, much of it brought back for reflection and commentary in Fuentes's book.

Victor Fuentes devotes his attention to *Personas*, Carlos Fuentes's personal memoir of people—writers, statesmen, economists, film directors, presidents, and teachers—released posthumously on 20 June 2012. The book's twenty-three biographies include persons who through friendship, writings, or courageous acts inspired Carlos Fuentes. These persons include Alfonso Reyes, Manuel Pedrosa, Arthur Miller, William Styron, Simone Weil and, among others, María Zambrano and Lázaro Cárdenas, president of México from 1934-1940. As Victor Fuentes observes, this posthumous book is an "incomplete dialogue," an interrupted conversation cut short by the death of those whose memories are brought back to life through the word and the knowledge—learned from Albert Camus and Luis Buñuel—that there is no possibility of a paradise without the company of other men and women. Victor refers to Fuentes's grief in losing so many friends, and to the lesson learned from Simone Weil: never to admire those in power, never to hate one's enemy, and not to despise those who suffer. This late book of essays by Carlos Fuentes is a sketch of an autobiography and a testament to other writers and readers.

Manuel Azuaje-Alamo traces the importance of Japanese literary magazines, such as "Sea," in the diffusion, reception, and literary prizes awarded to new and acclaimed writers born in Japan or abroad. This literary magazine dedicated part of its October 1978 issue to the life and poetry of Octavio Paz. Japan's national acknowledgment of the death of Carlos Fuentes on 5 May 2012 was viewed as an enormous artistic loss to a continental literary heritage now known to the Japanese, and through irony or chance accompanied simultaneously by the 2012 translation into Japanese of Fuentes's first novel, *La región más transparente* (1958), rendered by Japanese scholar Ryuukichi Terao. Azuaje-Alamo's essay follows the translations of Fuentes's novels from 1978 (the year in which *Zona sagrada* was translated into Japanese) to 2012. The translation of Fuentes's novels into Japanese follows a centuries-long tradition: Japan opened its shores to foreign literature and ideas during the Meiji Period