CUBA'S NATION BRAND:

WAR AND INTELLIGENCE IN THE FICTION OF NORBERTO FUENTES

by

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Abstract

The use of notable public intellectuals as opinion multipliers has long been a feature of effective cultural diplomacy. Globalization, however, has diluted the uniqueness of many nation brands due to its application of standardized marketing techniques. A great majority of countries today profess generic values such as diversity, economic openness, and innovation—values which, while respectable—are increasingly recognized by audiences as market jingles. Are nation brands today being perceived as mere propaganda? This study considers the lessons of Cold War cultural diplomacy, in which covert entities such as the CIA's Farfield Foundation played a major role. In particular, it examines the war literature and spy fiction of Cuban author Norberto Fuentes, who was, for a time, the Cuban army's primary press attaché. The evolution of Cuba's nation brand as seen through the fiction of Fuentes is an example of how to singularize a national imaginary. This study tracks and discusses the images projected by Fuentes as a function of their sophistication, arguing that the use of such intellectuals can lend credibility to a brand.

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"You cannot treat literature mystically, it is a weapon!"

—Dmitrij Furmanov

Statement of Purpose

In democratic societies, it is relatively easy to be an intellectual. If one has the economic means to make it sustainable, the choice is available to many.

In oppressive regimes, however, being an intellectual is a more delicate matter, and must be done carefully. Literature and high politics do not tend to mix well, though for a quarter of a century, Cuban author Norberto Fuentes has been able to manage it.

This study aims to identify, track, and describe the imaginary of Norberto Fuentes' fictional world through the lens of cultural diplomacy. As a former war correspondent for the Cuban regime, Fuentes was embedded in several conflicts including the internal fight against counterrevolutionaries (the so-called *lucha contra bandidos*, 1959 – 1965) and Cuba's grand international foray into Angola during that country's struggle for independence.

Fuentes is therefore an example of what, in diplomatic jargon, is called an "opinion multiplier." Someone who, thanks to his or her position in the content hierarchy, has a direct influence on public opinion and the shaping of national image. In simplistic terms, Fuentes might be thought of as a propaganda cog, though that is not the position taken in this study.

When Fuentes' contemporary Heberto Padilla—a poet by training—published his collection *Fuera del juego* in 1968, it led to his incarceration for three years. Among the poems included were two whose titles speak for themselves: "Para escribir en el álbum de un tirano" and "Cantan los nuevos césares." In the same year, Fuentes published a book lauding the efforts of the

Revolutionary Army to dislodge the CIA-funded contras operating in the Escambray mountains. *Condenados de condado*, as it is titled, won him the prestigious Casa de las Américas prize for literature in 1968.

Yet *Condenados* was not without its own critiques of the Castro regime. The stories describe some of the brutalities exacted upon the contras and the civilian population which, unfortunately, happened to live around them. Fuentes was reprimanded for this part, but his savvy treatment of one of the Revolution's most important arms earned him the respect of high-ranking military officers who defended him. In particular, that of General Raúl Menéndez Tomassevich, commander at-large of the *lucha contra bandidos* (LCB). Later, Tomassevich would participate in operations against Portuguese colonial troops in Guinea Bissau (1966); with Venezuelan communist guerrillas (1967); and finally, as commander of the Cuban Military Mission in Angola (MMCA) from 1977 to 1979.

Fuentes knew how to choose his masters under the nascent Revolution. He had a thorough grasp of the historical situation in which he was immersed—a Soviet Union still tolerant of its writers and artists—which he knew not to disrupt. When interviewed about the Padilla affair, Fuentes admits, "He wanted to be the Cuban Solzhenitsyn. It was a fatal error."[1]

American diplomat Charles Hill offers a helpful observation on this subject. In his book *Grand Strategies: Literature, Statecraft, and World Order* (2010), he explains that "Authoritarian places nurture a class of recognized intellectuals whose utterances are both carefully listened to

[1] de Llano, Pablo. "Heberto Padilla quiso ser el Solzhenitsyn de Cuba. Un error fatal." *El País*, 17 August 2018. Translation mine.

and strictly controlled. Democracies produce a cacophony in which each voice complains that its own urgent message is being drowned in a sea of pap."[2]

Proof of this phenomenon comes in 1971, when Padilla is released from prison and forced to complete a "self-critique" of the works he had published three years prior. It was a lecture given *à voix haute* before the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists, in Havana.

Perhaps it is Fuentes' subscription to the Cuban Revolution that has caused him to be overlooked by academic criticism. Perhaps some consider him a puppet of the State whose book projects are "offered" to him rather than being personally crafted. In spite of this, Fuentes' insider view of the Castro regime—his admiration for it, which he still professes to a certain degree—puts him in a unique position for analyzing how someone can act as an opinion multiplier.

There has certainly been no shortage of press on Fuentes. From 1989 to 1994, he was placed under virtual house arrest by Cuban State Security. Cars parked outside of his home and followed him in the streets, all after the controversial executions of two of his friends: General Arnaldo Ochoa (revisited in Cuban director Orlando Jiménez Leal's 1988 documentary, *8A*) and Colonel Antonio de la Guardia.

In October 1994, Fuentes attempted to escape the island by boat, but was caught and jailed after his engine failed. At age 51, he began a hunger strike and 23 days in, he was finally allowed to leave Cuba.

It was none other than the celebrated author, Gabriel García Márquez, who intervened on behalf of Fuentes with Fidel. This happened on two occasions in March and July of 1994. After

[2] "Alexander Solzhenitsyn: Speaking Truth to Power." *The Economist*, 7 August 2008, qtd. in Hill, 287.

his second appeal, Fuentes' telephone was cut off entirely from the outside world, though in the end, he leaves for Mexico accompanied by Márquez himself.

"As soon as we got into the plane," Fuentes recalls, "I told Gabo, let's check our bags now, there may be explosives in them."[3]

The ironic part of Fuentes' career is that he is a Hemingway scholar who was granted access by the State to the Finca Vigía in Cuba. There, Márquez explains, "Fuentes concluded that Hemingway had gone deeper into the soul of Cuba than the Cubans of his time had supposed."[4] Like Hemingway, Fuentes would be a war correspondent.

At the beginning of his house arrest, Fuentes had started his campaign novel on the Cuban war in Angola, *El último santuario* (1992). It is therefore intriguing to see how much of a character Fuentes is himself, having known the La Guardia brothers (some of Cuba's top spies) before their unfortunate fates.

Fuentes' literary pedigree comes from the influence of several authors either mentioned in press interviews or his novels proper. André Malraux, Ernest Hemingway, and Dashiell Hammett are just a few that merit a synopsis here.

The novels of Dashiell Hammett find their echo in Fuentes' strategy of deconstructing and reconstructing reality through verbal interactions. Like Hammett, Fuentes' prose is filled with interviews, conversations, and confidences provided in more or less intimate spaces. The offices of the Ministry of Defense; Raúl Castro's personal office; the home of Colonel Antonio de la

[3] Newman, Maria "Conversations: Norberto Fuentes, a Former Cheerleader of Revolution Looks Back in Indignation at Cuba." *The New York Times*, 1994. <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/09/04/weekinreview/conversations-norberto-fuentes-former-cheerleader-revolution-looks-back.html>

[4] Kennedy, William. "He Knew the Wrong People." *The New York Times*, 1994. <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/08/12/opinion/he-knew-the-wrong-people.html>

Guardia; and even Fuentes' own red Lada. All of these spaces are analogous to those penetrated by Hammett's most notable character, "the Op," which stands for "operative" of the Continental Detective Agency.

Carl Freedman and Christopher Kendrick discuss the Op's methods in their study of one of Hammett's most influential novels, *Red Harvest* (1929).[5] Apart from sharing the undertones of Marxism so obvious in Fuentes' early fiction, *Harvest* demonstrates some of Fuentes' inspirations to write.

The Op is a relatively unremarkable man, on the short and chubby side, who is recruited to rid the town of "Personville" from gangster activity. He is gifted in the art of moving between registers as Fuentes does between the Cuban working class, its middling bureaucrats, the military elite, and captured counterrevolutionaries. The Op is able to interact with gangsters at their level (in their own argot), as well as with the mining magnate who hires him, Elihu Willsson. He connects with a trade union leader, Bill Quint, and even has liaisons with the local courtesan in Personville, Dinah Brand.[6]

Especially in *Dulces guerreros cubanos* (1992), these same tactics appear to be part of Fuentes' *modus operandi*. He has a mistress named Eva María Mariam (with a second apartment to suit), as well as a formal wife, Lourdes. He goes to the gym with one of the chiefs of Cuban intelligence while keeping a watchful eye on his own back. The language he uses is revealing: "broder," to denote close friendship; "roger that," derived from military jargon; the "TOM," for

[5] Freedman, Carl and Christopher Kendrick. "Forms of Labor in Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest*," 12 – 29. In Metress, Christopher, ed. *The Critical Response to Dashiell Hammett*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994.
[6] Ibid., 16 – 17.

theatre of operations; “echar un palo,” a prison-level expression referring to sex; “la casa de arriba / abajo,” to distinguish between one’s official home and that of a lover. And the list goes on.

Fuentes is even so kind as to provide the reader with brief etymologies of these terms when he uses them. They are a demonstration of his fluidity in each socioeconomic category.

As an individual “agent”—which is what Fuentes is given his job as a writer—he possesses the same linguistic dexterity as the Op. Through his verbal exchanges with each of the classes he encounters (capitalist magnates, union leaders, newspaper editors, gangsters), the Op is able to maneuver his way toward his goal. With the right infusions of real facts and fabricated addenda, he is able to set the rival gang factions against one another until they are exterminated.[7]

Red Harvest is a bloody novel, it is true, but it is a novel which shows an individual agent working for the legal, official authority that is the capitalist Willsson. And the Op does a good job, fulfilling his duties to the letter.

I would not go so far as to say that Fuentes imitates Hammett because he does not belong to the detective genre. But in his methods, his collection of information through verbal means, Fuentes approaches the Op. Leave no paper trail, but act within the law. This is what Fuentes alludes to when speaking about the Padilla case, and it is what the Op does when complying with the various reports he must file with his superior at the Agency, the “Old Man.”

Steven Marcus provides the most influential commentary on the Op’s procedures in his introduction to the Hammett story collection, *The Contintental Op* (1974): “The Op is called in or

[7] Ibid., 19 – 20.

sent out on a case. Something has been stolen, someone is missing, some dire circumstance is impending."[8]

The first pages of Fuentes' *Guerreros* reproduce this situation exactly. A suitcase with $200,000 appears at his door, and he is suddenly called by a high official in the middle of the night. A call to action on which Marcus elaborates: "What the Op soon discovers is that the 'reality' that anyone involved will swear to is in fact a construction, a fabrication . . . and the Op's work is therefore to deconstruct, decompose . . . and to compose or reconstruct out of it a true fiction."[9]

The naivete of Colonel Antonio de la Guardia as he discovers he is under surveillance by Cuban State Security is an example along these lines. Antonio believes his own version of the story. That he and Fuentes are part of Cuba's martial caste, *la banda de los dos*, a two-man show, which is immune from persecution. That his mysterious yachts from Miami, captained by a man only known as *el pelotero* (the baseball player), will not be investigated thanks to *el pelotero*'s past recruitment by Cuban State Security.

In short, a slew of facts and ambiguities that Fuentes must parse through as he tells his own story of survival. As I will demonstrate in the first chapters of this study, some of Fuentes' stories (that of the renegade Pity Hernández comes to mind) exhibit marked elaborations that would be inaccessible to a journalist. These are reconstructions of the official record taken, perhaps, from soldiers in the field. Again—verbal penetration.

Given these qualities in Hammett's fiction, it is easy to see why Fuentes would tag him as an influence. The role of the Op and his position in a Marxist dynamic (between the legalities of trade unions and corporations) condition Fuentes' own operations inside Cuba. Both are men in

[8] Qtd. in Metress, xxvii.
[9] Ibid.

relatively bohemian professions beyond the strictures of wage-labor where the "whole-man" (in Marxist terms) can be exercised.[10] Both are sleuths to a certain degree. And both simultaneously receive facts and distort them to create their final products. The only difference is that the Op's loyalty is to a job, while Fuentes is loyal to an abstract notion—the Revolution.

In an interview with the New York State Writers Institute, Fuentes tells his interlocutor that if you read Hemingway at a young age, you suffer a sort of "electroshock."[11] While Fuentes' fiction does not approach the literary stature of Hemingway's, his treatment of war bears many resemblances.

In fact, *El último santuario*, Fuentes' campaign novel, is in my opinion his most captivating work, and certainly the one of highest literary quality. As a preface, I will cite a passage where he depicts the damage caused by an anti-tank mine on a Soviet armored personnel carrier:

> "The fire sprouted up in fistfuls from the tires and greased fittings of the BTR, and from the uniforms and skin of its combatants, and any other crevice where there was material for combustion. Oil from the differentials or human fat, and the tires were melting."[12]

Contrast this with Fuentes' opening of the novel—an idealization of a helicopter insertion into combat—and Hemingway begins to seep through. *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) is the first title that comes to mind, especially through the character of Frederic Henry. A stoic fatalist, Henry recognizes the two-faced nature of war between its words and its actions. On the one hand, the

[10] Freedman and Kendrick, 13.
[11] New York State Writers Institute. "Norberto Fuentes at the NYS Writers Institute in 2010." 25 February 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zJzd06SppM>
[12] Fuentes, Norberto. *El último santuario*. Madrid: Siglo veintiuno editores, 1992, 24. Translation mine.

abstract notions of patriotism, duty, or glory. On the other the mutilated bodies and devastated families.[13] Both of these permeate *El último santuario* in significant doses.

For instance, Fuentes' memories of friendly FAPLA[14] forces assembling in Menongue show his fascination for the *process* of war and its theoretical organization: "It's not to be missed. There is enough tension and troop movement for one to oust [Robert] Capa from his unperturbable kingdom with a few completely out-of-focus prints, easily acquired from an Mi-8 or BTR."[15]

This picture of the moments before combat reminds the reader of how Hemingway, aside from infusing a certain idealism into his works, was forced to write in an appealing manner for audiences. It is what Margot Norris refers to as the "novel-as-war."[16] In other words, the tension that exists between recounting the war in its bloody mayhem or embellishing it for reader consumption. In Angola, Fuentes is under a similar (governmental) pressure to deliver as a public author while trying to retain some semblance of reality in the tale. For this reason, he tends to shift his "eye" in and out. In for the personal, one-on-one moments with fellow soldiers—his ride and bonding with Antonio de la Guardia aboard an Mi-8, where they simulate radio chatter between close friends. Out for the documentation of war's stupid realities—men lost to crash landings, friendly fire, premature retreats, and other acts that seem neither glorious nor patriotic.

Norris nails the concept down quite well when she states, "if from classical times literature reflects how war lies about itself . . . then Hemingway's own separate peace is to give us a novel

[13] Norris, Margot. "The Novel as War: Lies and Truth in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*," 62 – 63. In Norris, Margot. *Writing War in the Twentieth Century*. Charlottesville, Virginia: UP of Virginia, 2000.
[14] People's Armed Forces of the Liberation of Angola, the military wing belonging to the competing leftist government, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), which vied for control of the government after the Portuguese withdrawal from that country in 1975.
[15] *Último santuario*, 59. Translation mine.
[16] Norris, 62 – 68.

that textually performs just this function of war."[17] This is the kind of novel Fuentes uses as a guide-stick for his narrative, one step beyond Hammett's verbally reconstructed realities.

At the same time, Fuentes observes Hemingway's "comrades-in-arms" approach to literature, whereby real-life characters are fictionalized.[18] In *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), Hemingway transforms one of his closest friends, a German exile general named Hans Kahle, into Robert Jordan's military mentor. "Hans had shown it all to him on his maps of the battle," the narrator explains, "and [he] still seemed marveled and happy at the miracle of it."[19]

Jordan trusts General Hans because of his incisive analysis of the unlikely victory at the battle of Guadalajara, the famous scene where Jordan is sent on the impossible task of blowing up a bridge behind enemy lines. Bunder Pacheco, from Fuentes' fiction, is an example of this, too, modeled after General Raúl Menéndez Tomassevich, the designer of the Cuban army's LCB. Omnipresent and multi-role, Fuentes obviously considered Tomassevich a gifted commander.

In a conversation with army soldiers in *Santuario*, Fuentes is told that Tomassevich "is still a cat," which he then translates for the reader: "The 'cat' is an extraordinary character . . . a highly qualified soldier because he is always at the ready and observes 360 degrees. He is weary and fast and shows his claws before any eventuality."[20]

This *broder* mentality, as Fuentes calls it, is another trait derived from Hemingway. It is the idea that the trauma of war can bind men together in a mutual admiration. For instance, when

[17] Ibid., 77.
[18] Stern, Guy. "Comrades-in-Arms: Models for Fiction. Hemingway and the Exiles from Nazi Germany," 114 – 16. In Luis Costa, Richard Kritchfield et al., *German and International Perspectives on the Spanish Civil War: The Aesthetics of Partisanship*. Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, 1992.
[19] Hemingway, Ernest. *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Garden City, New York: Sundial Press, 1940, 204.
[20] *Último santuario*, 20. Translation mine.

Robert Jordan parallels the above by saying, "Hans was a fine soldier and a good companion."[21] The display of confidence in the other man's abilities is what characterizes the scenes in chapters like "La banda de los dos," from *Guerreros*, or in the account Fuentes provides of Patricio de la Guardia's exploits as a special operations soldier. Whether it is a list of accomplishments proving one's merit, or the resolve before the prospect of the firing squad, Hemingway might have said of Fuentes' heroes that "only the best bullfighters are that detached in the presence of death."[22]

With respect to André Malraux, there is the inheritance of making this fraternity, this mutual admiration under pressure, effective. Again, *Santuario* is the example.

Moving away from his idealized version of the revolution in Cuba, Fuentes develops an affinity for the techniques used to win a war, not to imagine it. "The theoretical concerns and idealized campaign of counterinsurgency," Fuentes deduces, "were displaced at that moment by affairs of a more practical nature."[23] The role of the soldier is to become one with the machinery he is assigned, which explains the increase in technical specifications that begins in *Santuario*.

Grand strategy is also questioned in the way that the characters Hernández and García face off in Malraux's novel, *L'Espoir* (1937). While Hernández considers war an effort for "the most human among men," García tells him that "the most human among men are not to be found in revolutions." Instead, he continues, one will find them "in libraries or cemeteries."[24]

Fuentes maintains a similar view when, for instance, he cites military theorist Otto von Clausewitz. He explains that Clausewitz reveals how all generals tend to prepare for "the previous

[21] Hemingway, 204.
[22] Regler, Gustav. *Das Ohr des Malchus – eine Lebensgeschichte*. Frankfurt: Büschergilde Gutenberg, 1960, 390.
[23] *Último santuario*, 63. Translation mine.
[24] Malraux, André. *L'Espoir, Romans*. Paris: Gallimard, 1955, 612.

war," meaning colonial conflicts such as that of the French in Algeria.[25] Conflicts that involve infantry-level pacification instead of heavy weapons.

Angola, however, has escalated and is no longer the guerrilla war so valued by revolutionaries. "What is needed now," Fuentes admits, "is more tanks and more BM-21 [rocket artillery] to saturate and above all, overrun the enemy."[26] He goes on to explain that no degree of valor in a given infantry unit will make up for sheer numbers. The theory of the Maoist protracted war has expired, and Fuentes recognizes it in his narrative. As a result, Cuban commanders make practical adjustments to their combat tactics.

Malraux's legacy to Fuentes revolves primarily around this idea of the practicalities of war. Geoffrey Harris observes that in Malraux's *L'Espoir*, there is "an antinomy between thought and action."[27] In an interview with *The New York Times*, Fuentes confirms this position by stating that he has "always admired men of action."[28]

It can therefore be said that Fuentes falls into the rubric of the engaged intellectual, a person who is: a) able to maneuver in sensitive or dangerous political environments; b) maintains a complex position regarding facts and fabricated realities; c) participates in war (clandestine or overt); d) understands the techniques and realities of war; e) is able to represent war using both abstract and concrete literary devices; and d) possesses a shifting conception of loyalty to the State.

If one is to understand Norberto Fuentes, one must begin with these traits. Fuentes is a figure who has been unafraid to step into the public realm through his personal ordeal with the Castro regime, while simultaneously retaining a certain respect for it. The adventurous qualities of

[25] *Último santuario*, 133. Translation mine.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Harris, Geoffrey. *André Malraux: A Reassessment.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996, 141.
[28] Newman, par. 7.

Fuentes' fiction see this through, reminding us that exile does not necessarily imply lost loyalties. On the contrary, it complicates them and turns one into an agent—perhaps a "free" agent or partisan—with powers of representation before the public. Fuentes has said before that Castro is "a triumph of the imagination."[29] Perhaps that is all a nation's image and armed forces turn out to be for us back home.

During my analysis, I will consider the evolution of Fuentes' fiction along three main axes: its proximity to war literature, then to spy fiction, and finally, to any historical correlations his work may exhibit in its details. These include, again, the LCB, the war in Angola, but also the controversial arrest and execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa (1989), a hero and icon of the Cuban campaigns in Angola, Venezuela, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua. Before his execution, Ochoa had notably received Cuba's highest honorific title, "Hero of the Revolution," and served as member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

It is unknown whether Fuentes was an intelligence operative under cover for the Bureau of State Security (SDE) or the Directorate of Intelligence (known as G-2). However, there is one mention of him in a dubious Wikipedia article on Cuban Military Units to Aid Production (UMAPs), a project launched in 1965 to improve agricultural output in the province of Camaguey.[30] Among the participants in this project were political dissidents, homosexuals, Catholic and Protestant priests, and other individuals who refused to join communist societies. The article calls Fuentes a "former Intelligence Directorate agent." Its references to the abuse of non-

[29] García de la Granja, Pilar. "Norberto Fuentes: 'La figura de Fidel es superlativa.'" *Huffington Post en español,* 3 December 2016, video no. 2, "Lo mejor y lo peor de Fidel." <https://www.huffingtonpost.es/2016/12/02/noberto-fuentes-entrevista_n_13375630.html>

[30] "Military Units to Aid Production." *Wikipedia*, 26 July 2018. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_Units_to_Aid_Production>

participants in the socialist process can be verified in a report by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH), issued in April 1967.[31]

Nevertheless, Fuentes' fiction does exhibit a tendency to detail the specifications of military equipment. Calibers, capacities, preferred users, and numbers of various weapons and technologies are often inventoried in his work. For this reason, I will be cataloguing the variety of equipment mentioned by Fuentes in order to reconstruct his imaginary, especially up to the point of his most popular and recent work, *The Autobiography of Fidel Castro* (2004), where Fuentes makes a sudden shift in perspective from chronicler of the Revolution to the self-assumed voice of a megalomaniac.

RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT

Believe it or not, the world is becoming a more peaceful place at the level of inter-state conflict. We live in times that are ripe for the humanities to send intellectuals off into the field of foreign affairs, and this is because armed conflict is being eclipsed by the means of soft power, colloquially known as the "war of ideas" or the "battle for hearts and minds."

In fact, the *Human Security Report (2013)* published by Simon Fraser University in Vancouver heralds the Second World War as the last major high-intensity (more than 1,000 battle deaths per year) conflict of the past millennium.[32] Not since 1999 have we witnessed the peak in

[31] *Informe sobre la situación de los derechos humanos en Cuba.* OEA/Ser. L/V/II.17, doc. 4. Section F. Washington, D.C.: Organization of American States, 7 April 1967. <http://www.cidh.org/countryrep/Cuba67sp/cap.1a.htm#F>
[32] *Human Security Report 2013: The Decline in Global Violence*. Simon Fraser University. Vancouver: Human Security Research Group, 4.
<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HSRP_Report_2013_140226_Web.pdf>

battle deaths most prominent during the post-Cold War period: that of Eritrea, whose recent independence from Ethiopia sparked a conflict with more than 75,000 casualties.[33]

What this means is that for the foreseeable future, relationships between states will be governed more by their informational presence than by the buildup of arms. These are high times for culture, as I learned during my 2017 internship with The Carter Center for Peace. There I discovered how practitioners of public diplomacy were analyzing the narratives behind Islamic State (ISIS) propaganda, coding everything from symbols, to tenants of Islamic philosophy, to the role of women. The goal? To find the fissures and weak points in their discourse so that a different iteration—which may be fact or fiction itself—can curtail their propensity for violence.

It seems, therefore, that hermeneutics is making a comeback, and that humanist professionals across the United States now have an opportunity to impact culture in a very concrete way. This is true, for instance, in the burgeoning field of media literacy, where citizens across the globe are suddenly being tasked with judging the quality of the information they consume (yes, even in fiction). The International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) project in the Ukraine, "Learn to Discern" (L2D), is one such example. From October 2015 to May 2016, L2D trained over 15,000 Ukrainian citizens from all walks of life in critical thinking, source evaluation, and strategies of emotional manipulation in both textual and visual media. The project saw a 24 percent increase in participants' ability to separate fact from fiction, as well as a 22 percent rise in the number of consumers who fact-check their news.[34]

[33] Ibid., 87-88.
[34] Tara Susman-Peña and Katya Vogt. "Ukranians' Self-Defense Against Disinformation: What We Learned from 'Learn to Discern.'" International Research and Exchange Board, 12 June 2017. <https://www.irex.org/insight/ukrainians-self-defense-against-disinformation-what-we-learned-learn-discern>

Even the United Nations is on board, providing free massively online open courses (MOOCs) on media and information literacy (MIL) to youth anywhere in the world. The UN's "MIL Clicks Pact" explicitly states: "I will include references and allow readers to access the source of my comment and make their own judgment."[35]

In Spain, the Ministry of Culture has issued its *Encuesta de hábitos y prácticas culturales (2014 – 15)* to determine how, when, and why the Spanish people consume the cultural products they do. It turns out that at least there, books are still in style, as 62.2 percent of participants reported reading as their primary means of cultural engagement, completing at least one book per year. Fittingly, the most popular genre was the contemporary novel, at 75.3 percent; and subjects in history, philosophy, psychology, and others from the humanities and social sciences topped their preferences in non-fiction.[36]

Country-branding is another facet of the information war. According to the *Country Brand Report for Latin America (2015 – 16)*, "culture" constituted one-sixth of the criteria for ranking the attractiveness of doing business in a country. It is an indicator of political stability, and it forms the "sex appeal" of that country's content engine amid the plethora of state voices. Thus far, the leading country-brands in culture for this region are those of Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Peru. Cuba, which is indirectly the object of this study, sits in fifth place.[37]

In our own national context, we might think of the allegations of Russian-inspired campaigns of disinformation or "fake news." Internet trolls who post content in areas with a high

[35] "Media and Information Literacy: Creativity, Literacy, Intercultural Citizenship, Knowledge, and Sustainability (MIL CLICKS)." United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2016. <https://en.unesco.org/MILclicks>
[36] *Encuesta de hábitos y prácticas culturales (2014 – 15).* Madrid: Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports, September 2015, 42 - 43. <https://www.mecd.gob.es/dam/jcr:ad12b73a-57c7-406c-9147-117f39a594a3/encuesta-de-habitos-y-practicas-culturales-2014-2015.pdf>
[37] *Country Brand Report: América Latina.* FutureBrand, 16. <http://cbramericalatina.com>

mistrust of government (only 18 percent of Americans trust their government, according to a recent study by the Pew Research Center).[38] Russian Television (RT), which was recently suspended from advertising on Twitter. These are just some of the methods used by every nation to pull their weight in the less onerous yet flashier information war. The French have called it *la guerre à zéro morts*. Essentially, it is a war of culture, of fact and fiction—things we humanists deal with every day.

The four-pronged approach to this study will allow me—in a manner similar to that of The Carter Center projects I worked on—to follow the evolution of a narrative with a direct bearing on the public conscience. Though longer in form than might be practical for those working in public diplomacy, a shortened version of this study would permit the identification and following of opinion multipliers in other countries. This, in turn, would facilitate more effective counter-discourses from our nation abroad.

CORPUS AND METHODS

The corpus for this study consists of Fuentes' five novels: *Condenados de Condado* (1968), *Posición uno* (1982), *El último santuario* (1992), *Dulces guerreros cubanos* (1999), and *The Autobiography of Fidel Castro* (2010).

Each work will be carefully dissected according to the framework established here between literature and international relations. Accordingly, each work will receive its own chapter, with the

[38] "Public Trust in Government: 1958 – 2017." Washington, D.C. Pew Research Center. 14 December 2017. <http://www.people-press.org/2017/12/14/public-trust-in-government-1958-2017/>

exception of the two collections of short stories (*Condenados* and *Posición*), which will be discussed in tandem.

The methodological components of this study can be divided into three parts: the applied, the theoretical, and the historical. Together, these aspects compose the framework for our analysis.

The first criteria of application rests upon theories on the use of culture in international relations. "Soft power" is the term originally coined by Joseph Nye in his groundbreaking work, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004). The term refers to the use of culture and information for the purpose of winning over public opinion. However, this is not so simple as to be called "propaganda." Soft power works both ways, projecting itself abroad through exchange programs, art exhibitions, sports diplomacy, and film or mass media. It affects social structures inside a society as well.

The stereotypical perceptions of the United States as a warmonger or international policeman vary from country to country. Some may consider the U.S. a bulwark of defense or an economic leader; others, a source of instability for the world. Yet one fact is certain: at the level of culture, the U.S. has serious room for improvement. Former Cultural Affairs Officer (CAO) John Brown observes, for instance, that with respect to culture, the U.S. is merely perceived as a "shopping mall."[39] Quite an image to improve if we are to leverage more soft power.

Cuba, under the purview of Norberto Fuentes, is not exempt from this problem. Opinion multipliers like Fuentes—who reaches readers invested in the country—fall under the discursive power of what is known as *constructivism* in international relations. This concept is best expressed

[39] Brown, John. "America as a Shopping Mall? U.S. Cultural Diplomacy in the Age of Obama." Washington, D.C. *Huffington Post.* 9 June 2010. <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-brown/america-as-a-shopping-mal_b_606233.html>

by Ted Hopf, who defines constructivism as the influence that identity, practice, and material or discursive power have upon a state's actions.[40] And more critically, how that state's actions are perceived by others.

For example, the deployment of 50,000 Cuban troops to Angola was an action unforeseen by the United States. During the 1970s, it was inconceivable that such a minor power would exert itself to the extent that Cuba did, unless there was a particular sense of identity underlying its actions.

That identity was partially conditioned by journalists and authors such as Fuentes, who disseminated the idea of a morally just war aiding the black population of Angola, against the "white giants" from South Africa. The idea became known as "internationalism," a term which is still present in the Cuban constitution today.

Nevertheless, the United States interpreted this act as a first instance of Soviet meddling in Africa. Cuba acquired the reputation of being the Soviets' exporter of revolution. The long track record of Cuban activity in Latin America helped create this image, and that image was galvanized from within by Fuentes and others.

Indeed, if one examines Fuentes' description of military officers, one notices how the wide-lipped, perfectly dentured and soft-spoken *negros* often take center stage. White soldiers—of which there were very few in Angola until the advanced stages of the war near 1976—appear as *blanquitos*, *lampiños* (hairless men), or other derogatory names.

[40] Hopf, Ted. "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations." *International Security* 23(1), Summer 1998. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 192-96.

Constructivism thus holds that state practice creates its identity. Its identity ensures predictability, and its predictability leads to stability in the sense of knowing what a state might do. Fuentes is located at the identity stage, articulating what Cuba means to its people and those outside the island. He helps build what Alexander Wendt calls an *intersubjective community*.[41]

The power to control this intersubjective consensus—at home and abroad—is managed today through public diplomacy, the vehicle of constructivism. As such, works such as Jan Melissen's *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (2005) will appear from time to time in our analysis. Another important title is Charles Hill's *Grand Strategies: Literature, Statecraft, and World Order* (2010), which specifically addresses how an understanding of literature and its diverse interconnections is essential to the practice of diplomacy itself.

Rounding out the discussion on constructivism is Paul Sheeran's *Literature and International Relations* (2007), another work that discusses stories as microcosms for the conduct of international politics. Some of the titles appearing in Sheeran's work include those written by former diplomats of the era such as the Ghanean Kofi Awonoor (*The House by the Sea*, 1978) or the Estonian Eduard Vilde (*The Milkman of the Manor,* 1976). And of course, international classics such as Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* (1904).

The second aspect of this study—theory—revolves around three main authors: Phillip Knightley, Beatrice Heuser, and Eva Horn. Together, they help theorize our discussion of the texts as art.

[41] Wendt, Alexander. "Constructing International Politics." *International Security* 20(1), Summer 1995. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 73 -77.

Knightley's work *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth-Maker* (1975) is a comprehensive treatment of war reporting from the Crimean War of 1854 to Vietnam. The practices, dilemmas, and pressures faced by such chroniclers are generously recounted in light of their ties to the state. Chapters nine and sixteen are of particular interest: the first because it expounds on the Spanish Civil War's version of "truth;" the second because of its discussion of state censorship in the portrayal of Vietnam.

In Beatrice Heuser's *The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present* (2010), I find a useful approach to the problem of guerrilla war, a frequent topic in Fuentes' fiction. Heuser traces the origin of guerrillas to the Spanish-Dutch Eighty Years War (1566 – 1609), where they did not wage insurgencies but rather what were known as "small wars." These were essentially skirmishes conducted by special fighting units recruited from the ranks of conquered people. Warriors who knew the local terrain and fighting style and could therefore successfully pacify any resistance to their official uniformed army.

The origins of the guerrilla are therefore not the non-state actors we know today, but rather a special force, professionalized by an empire, for the purpose of operating in specific conditions. For instance, the German *Jäger* infantry and their counterparts, the French *chasseurs*, who were trained to fight in forest and mountain environments, respectively. Both units still exist today.

The actual term "guerrilla" first appeared during the Spanish Peninsular War (1808-12). It referred to a conglomerate of Roman Catholic *cuerpos francos* (free corps), *partidas* (partisans), and *cuadrillas* (sections), all loyal to the Bourbon cause, which fought in this conflict to restore the status quo before the invasion of Napoleon. Note that the term *partisan* surfaces here as an indicator of loyalty to a state or monarch, a fact which would later turn into ideological loyalty.

Carl von Clausewitz, the Prussian military theorist and author of the seminal *On War* (1832), was already in 1810 lecturing about "peoples' wars" at the General War School in Germany. With the arrival of Che Guevara in the 20th century, these peoples' wars would be conducted against an abstract notion (social injustice), not alongside but rather against certain states, with grassroots support from the population.[42]

The *partisan* thus becomes abstracted and deloyalized—one cannot speak of a "loyalist guerrilla" in the 20th century—into a force which, quite conveniently, ties into the notion of the *partisan* in espionage.

Eva Horn's book, *The Secret War: Treason, Espionage, and Modern Fiction* (2013), connects this notion of the partisan fighter to the idea of treason. The most intriguing part of this link is the fact that in traditional war and espionage alike, the partisan is an agent of irregularity. For Heuser, this is an irregularity of space where partisan fighters operate with hit-and-run tactics. For Horn, the partisan represents irregular political action in a depersonalized environment, with little index for what it means to be loyal at all.

Horn cites classic espionage theory such as Rebecca West's *The Meaning of Treason* (1947), André Thérive's *Essai sur les trahisons* (1951), or Hans Enzensberger's essay, "Towards a Theory of Treason" (1982). However, the most substantive explanation of treason as partisanship comes from Margret Boveri's *Treason in the Twentieth Century* (1963). In this text, Boveri argues that because politics has moved away from a feudal understanding of personal loyalty (to a lord, a king, etc.) towards an abstraction (subject to the public sphere), it is no longer clear what loyalty

[42] Heusuer, Beatrice. *The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP (2010), 391- 397.

is. Hence, it is inevitable that all political subjects will at one point or another become traitors, as Fuentes' military friends discover after Angola.

In effect, what occurs is a shift from trust in a person to trust in an idea ("democracy," "human rights," "internationalism"). This shift aligns with that of Heuser in that her partisan fighter also evolves from a professional soldier acting in the interests of a regular army, to anyone who is willing to bear a weapon for the idea at hand. In fact, Vo Nguyen Giap, one of the military geniuses behind the People's Army of Vietnam, extended the qualification of "partisan" to anyone who participated in production efforts during wartime.[43]

Treason characterizes the partisan because the depersonalization of politics erases accountability. In espionage, it becomes ambiguous who the enemy is because he is constructed from files, recordings, and other materials that provide he is a human foe. Human, yes, but a human whose individuality has receded, self-effaced, into a political arena where his purpose is unclear or dictated by distant outside forces.

Carl Schmitt calls this individual a "traitor-hero" because he resorts to irregular acts of aggression: sabotage, surveillance, or terrorism. Ernst Jünger provides a more apt term, that of "the forest dweller," which describes an individual's retreat into his inner self to contemplate who the enemy really is, and whether or not he should act against him. The forest dweller, says Jünger, lives in "the wood" to recover his personality, to reclaim his role in an uncertain political landscape—just as partisan forces retreat into their own woods to recover and reorganize, until they strike again.[44]

[43] Heuser, 412.
[44] Horn, 67 - 81.

It is interesting to note that the depersonalization of politics after World War II (due to its destruction on a unprecedented scale) led precisely to the rise of peoples' wars, peoples' armies, and other forces attempting to recover an image of what should constitute such a "people."

Yet the clandestine agent himself possesses no such personality, Horn explains, because he is an instrument of larger geopolitical forces which are often abstractions in themselves ("the agency," "the service," etc.), and which force him to live a fantasy, a fiction—if anything, for the purpose of completing his mission.

T.E. Lawrence once said of his role in the Arab revolts of World War I that his goal was not to disguise himself as "one of them," but rather to project an image of what the Arab people could be, "to imitate them so well that they spuriously imitate him back to you." The partisan, then, whether military force or spy, will always betray someone in the name of what Lawrence calls "an inspired, dream-palace of their national thoughts."[45] This national dreaming exemplified by Lawrence and recounted by Horn and Heuser bring us to the third aspect of this study: history. For this part, I will be relying on the works of historian Piero Gleijeses.

Gleijeses is an authority on the Angolan Civil War, having published two lengthy accounts of its events: *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa: 1959 – 1976* (2002); and *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa* (2013). He is also one of the only foreign scholars to have been granted access to Castro-era archives of the Cuban regime.

The Cuban interventions in Africa—from their first stirrings in Algeria, to the Congo and Angola—attempted to prop up states under pressure from the outside. Gleijeses documents this

[45] Ibid., 157, 159.

thoroughly, citing unique Cuban documents and cables alongside American, Portuguese, and Angolan texts. The result is a balanced portrayal of the environment Fuentes navigated, which will allow us to see just how far his hero-traitors go in the pursuit of their internationalist ideals. It will also reveal the consequences of those ideals fading after the war.

STATE OF THE FIELD

As mentioned, the works of Norberto Fuentes possess a sizeable endowment from the fields of war literature and spy fiction, respectively. Of particular interest to the former is the genre of the *novel-reportage*, which was formerly thought of as a corrupted version of the search for impartial truth. This was the view held by the Hungarian critic Gyorgy Lukacs who, as early as the 1930s, elaborated a theory concerning the artistic merits of *reportage*, of the novel, and finally, of the *novel-reportage* that was beginning to gain traction.

According to his essay *Die Linkscurve* (1932), on a proletarian novel by Ernst Ottwalt, *reportage* alone constituted a scientific reconstruction of reality where facts were used to establish the causes and consequences of a particular event. Individual experience, Lukacs believed, was to be reserved for specific cases which could illustrate the emotions of the facts at hand. For this reason, he claimed, the *reportage* could never be considered "art."

Lukacs believed that true art utilized individuality to make connections between a variety of disparate experiences (those of the characters), in order to recreate reality not through facts, but rather through the lens of each character's subjectivity. This would later become a point of

contention in the United States under "new journalism," which burst onto the scene during the Vietnam War.[46]

Nevertheless, Lukacs' theory was overrun by the vast number of accounts emanating from one of the most documented conflicts of the 20th century—the Spanish Civil War. Ironically, this was the war in which Ernest Hemingway, the darling star in Fuentes' own research, embedded himself and drew inspiration from to write *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). Referring to war, Hemingway himself called it "one of the great subjects."[47] Yet beyond Hemingway, there emerged a canon of reportage-inspired war literature from both the Spanish and English-speaking worlds.

Arturo Bareas' *Valor y miedo* (1980), written around Lukacs' time in 1938, presented a neorealist version of the conflict in which detailed descriptions merged with social norms to produce heroic characters. This is the case of Lolita in the episode "Servicio de noche," when she decides to stay behind at her job with the telephone company to ensure that Paris receives word of the German bombings of Madrid in November 1936.[48] A similar tendency can be observed in Fuentes' early works such as *Posición uno* (1982), which recounts the stories of working-class characters who are metaphors for the general population.

On the other hand, the Spanish Civil war was also the object of postmodern treatments such as Eduardo Zúñiga's *Largo noviembre de Madrid* (1980), where a more chaotic depiction of the war is created by intersecting character dialogues, asides from the narrator, and anti-heroes who have become all but insane due to the stress and trauma of war. In the chapter titled "Nubes de polvo y humo," for instance, a daughter explains her irrational desire to kill her parents as a

[46] Monteath, Peter. "The Spanish Civil War and the Aesthetics of Reportage," 71-72. In *Literature and War*. Ed. David Bevan. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1990.
[47] Qtd. in Percival, Anthony. "The Spanish Civil War Story: From Neo-Realism to Postmodernism," 87. In *Literature and War*.
[48] Ibid., 88 - 89.

psychological defense mechanism. In "Presagios de la noche," a young man attempts to dispel his existential angst by consulting a fortune-teller to see if he will be mobilized for war.[49]

The superstitious nature of these plots not only reveals a lack of commitment to the war effort, but also an anxiety about understanding the present moment. This can be seen in what James Purdon has called the "fictions of emergency" in early British Cold War literature.[50] It is also characteristic of American fiction post-Vietnam, where the introduction of advanced weapons and technology make war so fast that the individual loses cognizance of his own role within it.[51]

One cannot discuss the tenants of war literature without at least a cursory pass over Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Here Mark Rawlinson makes a break by suggesting Tolstoy as the point of departure for any subsequent accounts of war. For Rawlinson, there are only two options: before Tolstoy, and after Tolstoy. And to a certain extent, his claim is correct.

Tolstoy operates around Karl von Clausewitz's premise that war "is an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will." However, through *War and Peace*, Tolstoy is able to negate this statement, implying that war is not as clear as Clausewitz's "duel." It is, in fact, incomprehensible.[52] One simple passage from Tolstoy's novel illustrates the confusion of conflict:

> "For a few seconds the two men looked with frightened eyes into their mutually alien faces, and they were both perplexed about what they had done and what they were to do. 'Am I taken prisoner, or have I taken him prisoner?' Each of them thought."[53]

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[49] Ibid., 89 - 93.
[50] See Purdon, James. "British Fictions of Emergency in the Hot Cold War," 41-58. In *War and Literature.* Eds. Laura Ashe and Ian Patterson. Rochester, New York: Boydell and Brewer, 2014.
[51] Holbling, Walter. "The Impact of the Vietnam War on U.S. Fiction: 1960s to 1980s," 206 - 207. In *Literature and War*,
[52] Rawlinson, Mark. "Does Tolstoy's *War and Peace* Make Modern War Literature Redundant?" 243. In *War and Literature*.
[53] Qtd. in Ibid.

Tolstoy is powerful because he sums up the major problems of not only war *reportage* (i.e. – who does the observing and can he be considered a combatant), but of the sociological intrigue that makes war such a passionate subject for expression. Increasing mechanization, automation, and speeds of deployment: all are factors which cloud the individual's perception and therefore his objectivity in recounting the experience. As Phillip Madison, the protagonist in Henry Williamson's *A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight* (1951), is told: "Even we see only a fractional aspect of the war. It will take thirty years before anyone . . . will be able to settle down enough to write truly about the human beings involved . . . Have you read Tolstoy?"[54]

War literature is as much about confusion as it is disillusion, and to this effect, none other than T.E. Lawrence is distinguished in the matter. Made famous by the journalistic efforts of the American Lowell Thomas, Lawrence served in the British army from 1916 and fought the declining Ottoman Empire as an intelligence officer. By 1918, Lawrence's collaboration with Prince Emir Faisal in the Hashemite Arab revolts helped the British seize Damascus. His memoir *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926) is his best-known work, and the one that captures what Victoria Carchidi has called "the language which undergirds the oppression of disembodied authority."[55]

This is interesting because, for Norberto Fuentes, disillusion is a primary motivation for writing. And that disillusion, in turn, is represented through disinformation. Lawrence explains how the words of command in war have the capacity, he learns, to produce physical violence. When he first departs on his adventure in Arabia, he is a naïf believer in the glory of Clausewitz's "imposition of the will." What he discovers, however, is that the words of war, "the desire to leave

[54] Ibid., 247.
[55] Carchidi, Victoria. "Rebels Against Absurdity: André Malraux, T.E. Lawrence, and Political Action," 117. In *Literature and War*.

some scar on the face of the earth," is nothing more than a moniker for abuse. "The core of it [war] should stand out as a disenchanting, rather squalid experience," Lawrence wrote in his letters.[56]

André Malraux took up Lawrence's story in his *Les noyers de l'Altenburg* (1945), where a calque of the persona of Lawrence, Vincent Berger, follows a similar path of combat, only with the view of writing as catharsis. Art, Malraux believed, was the only redemptive medium for war, the only way to create political community out of its absurdity. The scene which perhaps best conveys this view is that of the gassed Russian soldier in *Les noyers*, where Vincent carries him out despite being an enemy in "the solidarity of all men against a horror." That solidarity was supposedly reached through art.[57]

Nevertheless, it remains that the Spanish Civil War is the strongest reference with respect to Fuentes' fiction. Autobiographical in approach, yet decidedly influenced by imagination, the narratives of war from this conflict show an interest in truth through subjective experience.

Egan Erwin Kisch, Lukacs' most notable critic during the 1920s and 30s, is the one responsible for this approach. Though at first concerned with *reportage* as a "camera" of experience, with "no partiality" and "nothing to justify," Kisch eventually turns to Émile Zola and Gustav Flaubert, who believed that art was truth exposed through a "temperament." That temperament came to be something akin to the etchings of Francisco Goya of the Napoleonic Wars, a collection known as "Desastres de guerra" in which one piece carried the caption, "Yo lo vi."[58]

[56] Ibid., 116.
[57] Ibid., 120.
[58] Monteath, 72. In English: "This I saw," a statement emphasizing the personalized eye-witness approach that Kisch came to believe in.

During the Spanish Civil War, this testimonial aspect came to the fore in works such as Stephen Spender's poem, "War Photograph;" George Barker's "Elegy on Spain;" or the famous excerpt from John Summerfield's *Volunteer in Spain* (1937): "And we stood there waiting, steel-helmeted, hung about with arms and ammunition . . . It was as good a war picture as I could think of."[59]

This narrative-as-picture would continue to evolve in the photographs of Robert Capa ("The Falling Soldier," 1936); in the verisimilitude of George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938); and into the modern-day concept of the embedded journalist. Capa most notably captured the idea in his statement that "if a picture is bad, you weren't close enough."[60]

In Fuentes' fiction, he was perhaps too close to danger. But it is that same proximity to the action that lends credibility, and in the information war of today, credibility is the ultimate weapon. Today, the terms "fake news" or "alternative facts" may seem like a novelty of our political circumstances. However, the practice or desire of uncovering an unknown truth is something as old as the Middle Ages. In her work *The Secret War: Treason, Espionage, and Modern Fiction* (2013), Eva Horn explains how three concepts have influenced the information supporting state power over time. Two of them are still relevant today.

The first concept begins in the Middle Ages and is known as *mysterium*, or the unknowable aspects of a monarch revered as a direct descendent of the gods. The "sanctity of the sovereign," as Ernst Kantorowicz calls it, depended upon a series of arcane texts that were inaccessible to the

[59] Qtd. in Ibid., 78.
[60] Ibid.

general public, whether due to language barriers or intellectual complexity. This occlusion of the truth was what granted the monarch his exceptional status, and therefore, his ability to reign.[61]

The second kind of information is known as the *arcana*, which emerged during the 16th and 17th centuries as a set of "means and rules" a prince could follow to strengthen the position of his state vis-à-vis others. This is the first comparative use of information, theorized by such authors as Giovanni Botero, Jean Bodin, and Scipione Ammirato.

The *arcana* consisted of information that was deliberately withheld (from its etymology in *arca*, meaning "chest" or "coffer") in order to create advantage. This could take the form of surprises against the enemy, delays (which allowed time for planning actions), or options for a variety of possible actions that were difficult to predict. Until the 19th century, when politics became secularized and private morality became accountable to the public, the *arcana* existed mostly as family secrets of an intimate nature. Helmut Lethen calls them the rules "of prudence and discretion" exercised by a small group of ruling figures.[62]

Even Tacitus, from the remote times of the Roman Empire, believed that *arcana* were the unsaid privileges never to be exposed to the public. In 1602, his disciple Arnold Clapmarius further differentiated them into *arcana dominationis* (secrets for the stability of the state), and *flagitia dominationis* (mere corruption).[63]

By the 20th century, we begin to discern the initial tenants for today's "fake news" or disinformation. Carl Schmitt's seminal study *Die Diktatur* (1921) brings this to light. According to Schmitt, political secrecy—whether exercised through withholding or manipulating

[61] Horn, Eva. *The Secret War: Treason, Espionage, and Modern Fiction.* Trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2013, 86.
[62] Ibid., 86.
[63] Ibid., 91.

information—is the *sine qua non* for the rule of law and successful operation of state services. In other words, it is the equivalent of a business' trade secrets, the very essence of what keeps a business in operation.

As an example, every state is by definition entrusted with maintaining essential services such as food distribution, transportation, healthcare, electricity, sanitation, and defense. The political secrecy Schmitt refers to—finally called *secretum*—is what enables these systems to function. For instance, in 2002, the United States classified a number of grid and power plant archives in the interest of preventing terrorist attacks against this critical infrastructure. This would be an exercise of *secretum*: an extralegal, morally neutral withholding of information that is done to protect the very heart of a state and the well-being of its citizens. It does not need to be legal because it is what makes legality possible. *Necessitas legem non habet*.[64]

The problem with *secretum* is that it is subject to public debate and speculation, to judgments about what is left unsaid in our country, or what other countries are saying about us through their own media. This is the ground on which intellectuals such as Norberto Fuentes operate: the curiosity, worries, or even paranoia of the public. It is what Richard Hofstadter calls the "paranoia effect" in his work, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (1965).

According to Weslie Wark, spy fiction is constructed around historical events and credible authors, many of whom have served as intelligence officers themselves. What is more is that among officers, it is common to see the cover of the journalist as a means of penetrating enemy territory. There is thus a patent link between the embedded journalist in war literature and his

[64] Translation: "Necessity has no laws." Ibid., 92 - 95.

counterpart in spy fiction. The truth sought by both may be questionable, as Mick Hume makes clear in his work, *Whose War Is It Anyway? The Dangers of the Journalism of Attachment* (1997).

Hume argues that the close proximity between an embedded journalist and his military unit twists his narrative into a moral question of good versus evil, focusing more on the raw emotions of the combatants than on the sociopolitical roots of the conflict. Whereas journalism may portray this inadvertently, in spy fiction and real espionage, achieving such bias is the primary objective. Wark calls this *apparent realism*, a counterfeit reality whose purpose is to leverage the *secretum* in the face of public opinion, so as to modify it. To make people believe what they believe is withheld.[65]

Of course, this topic is all the buzz today, and there are certainly examples of journalists who produce content that makes use of *secretum*. Fuentes is one of them: a war correspondent who nonetheless shows a keen understanding of Cuban intelligence services in his novels.

Another is Ryszard Kapuscinski, the Polish war correspondent who in his lifetime witnessed more than 27 revolutions and was later discovered to be an intelligence officer for the Polish communist regime. His 1991 collection, *The Soccer War,* almost won him the 2007 Nobel Prize in journalism, had it not been for this detail.[66]

And finally, there is Luis Britto García, of Venezuela, a renaissance man (fiction author and playwright) who is also a regular personality in both Venezuelan and international press. Britto was appointed to the Venezuelan Council of State in May 2012 by then-President Hugo Chávez, and is best known for his recent essay on mass media titled *Dictadura mediática en Venezuela*

[65] Wark, Wesley. "Introduction: Fictions of History." *Spy Fiction, Spy Films, and Real Intelligence*. Ed. Wesley Wark. Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 1991, 6 - 8.
[66] Piedmont-Marton, Elisabeth. "War and Witnessing," 247 - 50. In *War: Critical Insights.* Ed. Alex Vernon. Hackensack, New Jersey: Salem Press, 2013.

(2012), where he discusses the phenomena of digital communications as a political force in his country.[67]

Regardless of its contemporary referents, spy fiction ironically did have an impact on the establishment of intelligence services. Even if John Starnes, a former intelligence officer for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), claims that "spy fiction is but a pale shadow of reality," in 1909, a novel by William Le Queux spurred the founding of the British intelligence agency, MI5.[68]

Acting on the British paranoia at the time about German clandestine networks, Le Queux's novel, *Spies for the Kaisier* (1909), was serialized in the *Weekly News* and accompanied by headlines: "Have You Seen a Spy?" or "Foreign Spies in Britain." Citizens actually wrote letters to the editor of the paper in response, denouncing neighbors who did anything from wear wigs to eat sauerkraut.[69]

To understand the novels of Fuentes, it is necessary to retrace the evolution of the spy novel from its origins in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As I will discuss later on in this study, Fuentes makes use of many of the devices and themes of espionage fiction to spice up his narrative. These also serve to further mystify and heroicize the *secretum* at work in his native Cuba. By default an ideological outlier in the Western hemisphere, Cuba had to have an information policy with a special flavor to maintain its stability and the attention of its people.

And in the beginning, spy fiction was just that: a recipe for stability. The earliest spy novels dealt not with espionage proper, but with terrorism. The brief history provided by David Trotter

[67] The full text of Britto García's work can be found at:
<http://www.psuv.org.ve/temas/noticias/dictadura-mediatica-venezuela-luis-britto-garcia/#.W329hOhKjIU>
[68] Starnes, John. "Why I Write Spy Fiction," 205. In *Spy Fiction, Spy Films*.
[69] Trotter, David. "The Politics of Adventure in the Early British Spy Novel," 31. In *Spy Fiction, Spy Films*.

becomes useful here. On 13 March 1880, the assassination of Tsar Alexander II; three years later, an attempt on Kaiser Wilhelm I with an explosive device; from 1884-85, the Fenian bombings conducted by Irish republicans against the British; and in February 1892, the suicide detonation of French anarquist Martial Boudin, right in Greenwich Park.[70] This latter event would become the inspiration for Joseph Conrad's terrorist novel, *The Secret Agent* (1907).

Clearly, then, terrorism is not unique to modern society. In Fuentes' revolutionary Cuba, the circumstances were no different: naval sabotage and mining by the CIA; the exile-led invasion of Playa Girón; internal counterrevolutionaries; and the tipping point for Fuentes' own fiction—drugs and arms smuggling.

Spy fiction emerges precisely at these points where national power appears to be in decline. As a result, the first British terrorist novels frequently depict enigmatic secret societies that seem to be intruding on the state; organizations that are in partial control of the state's *secretum* and threatening to dismantle it from within. Trotter explains that these are often terrorist cells which, once joined, can never be left behind. They are also ubiquitous: "in the air one breathed, in the ground one trod, in the hand of an acquaintance that one might touch."[71]

The abounding terrorist threat continues in novels such as Robert Cromie's *The Crack of Doom* (1895), where an anarcho-scientist named Herbert Brande develops a super bomb that will be deployed in two separate locations. One of the bombs is diffused by the hero, while the other is never found. It "has not returned," the narrator admits, "nor has it ever been definitely traced."[72]

[70] Ibid., 33.
[71] James, Henry. *The Princess Casamassima*. London: MacMillan, 1886, 436.
[72] Qtd. in Trotter, 34.

Many critics allege that the first proper spy novels were by E. Phillips Oppenheim. *A Maker of History* (1905) is an excellent example of the British gentleman awakened to his political responsibilities by accident. In the story, the protagonist Guy Stanton, a well-to-do fellow from the upper classes, "stumbles" upon a secret meeting between the German Kaiser and Russian Tsar. A page of their treaty falls into Stanton's hands, from which point he decides to save the British Empire: "his days of calm animal enjoyment were over," the narrator explains, "He had passed into the shadows of the complex life."[73] The novel is modeled after the historical Anglo-French alliance of 1904, since at its end, Britain is able to convince France to join forces and defeat the Russo-German threat.

Oppenheim and his colleagues, Erskine Childers and John Buchan, form the first stage of British spy fiction to which Fuentes is indebted. It is marked by the theme of the "accidental spy," someone who haphazardly or involuntarily becomes an agent. This spy is often a member of the upper strata, a British gentleman who suddenly experiences adventure and realizes that his empire is threatened by other states.

The second stage in spy narrative includes the seminal Graham Greene, Somerset Maughan, and Eric Ambler. Here the focus becomes not outside agents seeking to terrorize society, but more complex issues from within the state itself. Individual personalities and interests gain importance, rather than grand strategy plans for invasion. The second stage takes place in the 1920s and 30s and is less Darwinist in approach than Oppenheim and company. The threats are less about inevitable conflict, the "kill or be killed" mentality, and more about class strife, economic depression, or the rise of left-wing politics. All of which are historical features of this age.

[73] Ibid., 44.

By the 1950s, there is the rise of formal intelligence agencies—with the exception of the British, who had begun much earlier—after World War II. Ian Fleming's character James Bond is the dominant figure in this era.

Bond's concerns deal with the role of the individual in a world of state secrets. Professionally trained and acting as a "company man," Bond is far from the naïve Richard Hannay of Buchan's earlier trilogy. He has the support of an entire organization, though his individual agency is in question. How can a single person influence the conduct of international affairs in the shadow of the atom bomb and mass military production?

Bond's novelty rests upon the fact that despite overwhelming forces, he is able to maintain his virtue and righteousness while restoring world stability. The quintessential British gentleman (in contrast with "the loud American") who, aside from being effective, has a good time doing it. Finally, Bond's narrative is marked by consumerism, global travel, and sexual liberation; a simplified view of history called "OK History" that emphasizes current events.

However, in the "New School" of the 1960s—John LeCarré and Len Deighton—the issues return to the complexity of Graham Greene's generation. A patchwork of actors, rogue or state-controlled; secret terrorist societies; the development of cheaper, faster, and deadlier armaments; civil unrest. In short, the most complex version of the spy, which will carry into the 1980s in such characters as Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan, or even the 21st century through Robert Ludlum's Jason Bourne. The New School gives well-rounded treatments to character personalities and details the financing, weapons capabilities, and methods of its clandestine networks.[74]

[74] Wark, 2 - 14.

The field shared by Norberto Fuentes is therefore a rich nexus between war literature and the fiction of espionage. From the Spanish Civil War to Afghanistan, and from the amateur sleuth to the professional killer, Fuentes draws on a variety of techniques to fill the gaps of the revolutionary chronicle he is assigned.

In the course of this study, I will examine said techniques in order to better understand the imaginary intended for audiences interested in Cuba. Perhaps a journalist's account, perhaps a war myth. The only thing one can be sure of in Fuentes' fiction is the hazily emitted (dis)information ever so relevant to media literacy today.

Chapter Outline

1. “Hometown Heroes”

The first chapter will address Fuentes’ initial works: *Condenados de Condado* and *Posición uno*. Together, these constitute what might be called his social realist phase, where his writing is negotiating fact and fiction from the position of the journalist. The construction of collective characters such as “Bunder Pachecho” or “the Cuban people” will be explained, as will that of “the enemy.” Here I will rely on the theoretical anchors of Knightley, Morgan, Horn, and Bevan.

Condenados de Condado is Fuentes’ first work and the recipient of the 1968 Casa de las Américas prize in short story. It is a fictionalized account of the Cuban army’s campaign against counterrevolutionary forces that were incited by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Fabián Escalante documents some of these activities in his work *The Cuba Project* (2004), including the insertion of such forces under the command of Colonel Napoleón Valeriano, a known assassin from the Philippines who had specialized in counterinsurgency warfare and, circa June 1960, had trained counterrevolutionaries at the Retalhuleu Farm in Guatemala.[75]

In several of his stories, Fuentes discusses the tactics and procedures used against these insurgents. The *peine*, or sweep, which was an orchestrated march to root out the fighters; the interrogations, some of which are conducted by Fuentes himself; and the crimes against humanity committed by both sides. All of these form the subject matter of his first work, stories about the “necessary costs” of the Revolution that would precede a more stable state of affairs.

[75] Escalante, Fabián. *The Cuba Project: CIA Covert Operations, 1959-62*. Trans. Maxime Shaw. North Melbourne, Australia: Ocean Press Books (2004), 49-50.

With *Posición uno*, Fuentes expands on the heroic nature of the Cuban people through what are allegedly journalistic articles published between June 1965 and May 1978 in such venues as *Granma, Cuba*, and *Hoy*. These articles are a marked departure from the fictionalized accounts of *Condenados*, yet suspect in their own way due to the construction of the same heroic figure, a certain "Bunder Pachecho," who is not only commandant of the Cuban army's counterinsurgency forces, but a metaphor for the struggle and timelessness of the Revolution. Rolando Hernández-Morelli, in his dissertation on Fuentes' works, qualifies such characters as heroic due to their desire to do right, to be moral, and to persist through adversity. Or, at times, to accept the absurd nature of the material and emotional shortages of wartime.[76]

Posición is, for its part, more testimonial in tone. It portrays Fuentes on the scene, conducting interviews with the average Cuban. Among the issues discussed are: the rapid reaction of the armed forces to the famous Bay of Pigs invasion; criminal rehabilitation programs; geo-engineering projects conducted by Cuban "brigades"t for development; the Cuban intelligence apparatus; and sugar cane harvesting.

In a word, it is a comprehensive picture of the progress of the Revolution, discussed in obvious patriotic form using a journalistic façade.

[76] Hernández-Morelli, Rolando. *Los héroes juzgados: la visión crítico-paródica del héroe en tres obras escritas en Cuba entre 1966 y 1970.* Philadelphia: Temple UP (1987), 79.

2. “War Drums and Drummers”

The second chapter will be more expansive because it will include a historical framing of the military action Fuentes describes in *El último santuario*. For this I will utilize Gleijeses’ previously mentioned works.

Continuing our study of the journalist, this section will also look at the mythification of war that takes place. In particular, I will examine how Fuentes compares to other war writers from the Spanish Civil War, World War I, and Vietnam. Hume and Heuser will be indispensable accompaniments.

Chapter two will document Fuentes’ increasing reliance upon technical details for his descriptions of military equipment. Horn addresses this technologization in her discussion of the “agent,” as does the major Tom Clancy critic, Helen Garson (*Tom Clancy: A Critical Companion*, 1996).

El último santuario is Fuentes’ true campaign novel, written as an embedded journalist during the Cuban intervention in the Angolan Civil War. Here one sees a return by Fuentes to the codified stories told in *Condenados*, except with a much stronger (and longer) narrative cohesion. Instead of jumping from scene to scene, *Santuario* presents a version of the Angolan conflict as experienced by the author.

Nevertheless, the story in *Santuario* is by no means free of the embellishment, reflection, and imagination that are unbecoming of a journalist. As such, it can be considered Fuentes’ first proper novel, with a mounting concern for the technical aspects of war equipment that is not too distant from Tom Clancy.

Santuario is entirely devoted to the exploration of armed conflict and the effects it has on humans. Its description of war casualties—military and civilian—harken to the days of the "body count" style of American literature after Vietnam. In fact, Robert Capa and Ernie Pyle—noted journalists from the Spanish Civil War and World War II—are explicitly referenced in the narrative.

Discussions of the risks of aircraft landings; the logistics of moving men and materiel; what to do with a starving population; the incessant travel of commanders. These are but a few of the scenes articulated into a long-form story about the generals, officers, and enlisted men of the Cuban revolutionary armed forces (FAR). This old guard of the martial class becomes the subject of Fuentes' next work, *Dulces guerreros cubanos*.

3. "Spy Hunter, Hunter-Spy"

In chapter three, the focus will be on *Dulces guerreros cubanos*, where the primary concern is the nature of treason. *Guerreros* is rich in exchanges of information between Fuentes (the protagonist) and other players in the intrigue. As such, it is essential to consider how Fuentes navigates these exchanges as an "agent." West, Thérive, Enzensberger, and Boveri will be the benchmarks here.

Beginning with a theoretical idea of the traitor, I will explore the types of evidence necessary to prove treason, as well as the social spaces in which such evidence is collected. For instance, *Guerreros* presents many scenes where the configuration of spaces—parking garages, sidewalks, car interiors, offices—have an important effect on what kind of information can be

solicited. Some of it is reliable and some of it is not, for which I will consider practical manuals such as Robert Clark's *Intelligence Analysis: A Target-Centered Approach* (2013).

Guerreros is also the object of commentary on the nature of counter-intelligence (CI). Frequent mentions of dates, times, durations, and movements all characterize the use of this information. What this amounts to is a "map" of the possibilities for divulgement—to whom, when, and where something should be communicated, if at all. Horn's treatment of the *secretum* will be central to this section, since CI involves tracking so as not to be tracked, or following so that you are not followed.

Guerreros is the beginning of Fuentes' contact with espionage fiction. Like much of the fiction in this genre, it occurs in a post-war setting where the enemy is not abroad, but at home. The novel even begins with a characteristic telephone call, late in the night, from an insider friend who happens to be the Chief of Staff for General Raúl Castro. Fuentes lies in bed with a mistress; there is mention of $200,000 in cash. It is 11:20 p.m., and time is running out. This exciting beginning will come to characterize the rest of his 449-page novel.

At times cumbersome, at times refreshing, Fuentes offers the details of a real conspiracy against the war heroes of Angola. General Arnaldo Ochoa, executed. Two outstanding officers—Antonio and Patricio de la Guardia—executed and jailed, respectively. The "necessary" nature of the Cuban Revolution begins to show its aftertaste, and caught in the middle is the journalist-informant, Norberto Fuentes.

Fuentes' escape from this situation ultimately depends on how he handles the information he receives from others. Consequently, the espionage formulas used in *Guerreros* demonstrate a

turn in Fuentes' fiction toward an allegorical conception of right and wrong, given via testimony, yet anchored in technology, codes, and the imagery of a Cold War chase.

4. "On Interrogation"

The fourth and final chapter of textual analysis takes on *The Autobiography of Fidel Castro*, a monologue with both *interrogative* and *interrogatory* features. Translated into English by Anna Kushner, the *Autobiography* reconstructs Fidel Castro's entire life, from his beginnings on the family estate in Birán, to his days of university activism, his failed attack on the Moncada barracks, and eventually, his return to and victory in Cuba.

The interrogative elements ask questions: what did "Castro" learn from his assault on the Moncada barracks? What did his guerrilla training teach him about leadership? How should artists and intellectuals be handled in a revolutionary government? And others.

In contrast, the interrogatory elements provide disclosures to the reader similar to those heard by an interrogator. For this "Castro" makes use of frequent asides to redeem himself in certain circumstances. For instance, to explain why certain members of his entourage become disposable or how individuals are tracked to ensure loyalty. He also adds advice and recommendations on leadership to the reader in an almost Machiavellian tone. And finally, he reveals the *impotence* of the interrogated—how one is helpless—upon insisting on the vigor of his member, his sexual appetite, and the fornications of others he surveils.

As factual as these accounts may be (the voice of Fidel cites several other biographies written by American scholars such as Herbert Matthews or Anne Geyer), Fuentes' narrative is cast

into a first-person reflection whose psychological judgments constitute its fiction. Throughout the work, Castro discusses abstract ideological tenants such as "mobilization" or "security." These are, in effect, Fuentes' understandings of Castro's perceptions, or perhaps the understandings he would wish his audience to believe. I will be deconstructing these tenants in this chapter.

One particular slogan stands out among Castro's ruminations: "There's no flag that waves over information."[77] The statement appears during a combat alert issued during the 1962 Missile Crisis when, in conjunction with his Soviet partners, Castro encourages the sharing of intelligence. This facet of Castro's *grand strategy* is at the heart of Fuentes' approach to the novel-reportage. That is, the persistent gathering of information by the Cuban state.

If one is to believe Fuentes' descriptions of reams upon reams of classified files on individuals who have dealings with the State (or their wives, partners, or neighbors), one might conclude that the narrative is itself a sample of the way Cuban intelligence is prepared: a biographical sketch followed by the individual's perception of certain revolutionary ideals.

Similarly, if "no flag waves over information" as Castro's voice insists, then Fuentes' descriptions of the *Comandante*'s most intimate spaces—the presidential palace, his personal automobile, even the secret apartments reserved for impromptu mistresses—become part of his own *turning* as a spy. The voyeuristic portraits Fuentes offers of processes such as the movement of Castro's motorcade (and the preparations it entails) emulate the very same sort of tracking he experiences in *Guerreros*.

[77] Fuentes, Norberto. *The Autobiography of Fidel Castro*. Trans. Anna Kushner. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010, 513. Translation mine.

Fidel Castro, then, essentially engages in a confession of his own tactics, a "file" that he himself submits to the reader as a means of proving his motives. At the same time, though, this confession undermines the profiling typical of intelligence narratives.

5. "The War Report"

Synthesizing the content of the previous chapters, our conclusion will trace the macro-level tendencies of Fuentes' war / espionage reporting. How does it compare to other war narratives? Is it closer to these or to spy fiction?

The cycle of moving from general populations to individual actors; the shift in the landscapes and social objectives of his narrative; the deliberation on what constitutes evidence; and the State decisions taken by Castro. On the whole, this can be likened to the intelligence cycle, which posits: planning, collection, processing, analysis, and dissemination. This final chapter will be devoted to such a reflection, to whether the whole of Fuentes' fiction resembles an intelligence product.

Cuba has a long history of practicing deception against the United States through its information policy. The "Radio Martí" case is perhaps one of the most famous in this history, where Fidel Castro demonstrated how 500-kilowatt transmitters on the island could disrupt American radio stations all the way up to the Midwest.[78] This situation occurred in the early 1980s

[78] Beebe, Sarah Miller, and Randolph Pherson. *Cases in Intelligence Analysis: Structured Analytic Techniques in Action*. Thousand Oaks, California: CQ Press, 2015, 83 – 95.

under the Reagan administration, and is possibly disguised in Fuentes' *Guerreros* when he discusses a Cuban weather control device in the early part of the novel.

It is useful to consider these real events in an evaluation of Fuentes' fiction. As documented in Frances Stonor Saunders' *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (1999), the United States too is accused of manipulating the world of high culture. Saunders includes an especially relevant chapter titled, "Literary Bay of Pigs," which I will explore in this chapter.

The intent here is not to brand Fuentes as a possible agent (far from it), but rather to understand how an author like himself, of any nationality, could play a larger role in a campaign of disinformation. I refer the reader back to my explanation of constructivism in international relations, which concerns how states' perceptions of each other influence their predictions about future actions.

As part of my concluding chapter, I will attempt to construct a model for dissecting works like those of Fuentes *as if they were* sources designed to exert influence. There is as yet no formal model for this in the intelligence community despite its obsession with "analysis." But with the rise of soft power, developing such a model is becoming increasingly important. Sarah Miller Beebe and Randolph Pherson, for instance, outline some of the existing methods in their *Cases in Intelligence Analysis: Structured Analytic Techniques in Action* (2015). Among the questions they ask are several that are similar to those used in literary analysis, namely: "What are the goals and motives of the potential deceiver?" and "What means are available to the potential deceiver to feed information to us?"[79]

[79] Ibid., 95.

Understanding any work of fiction requires one to confront these critical questions. But what if a novel is ingeniously designed to generate scholarly activity? What if its intent is to be taught and dispensed to young students who are malleable and receptive to new ideologies? Then, a novel suddenly becomes an intelligence asset, and the university, a battleground for the ideas that future generations—the future public opinion—will hold. It is an area explored by such scholars as Azar Nafisi in her *The Republic of Imagination* (2014), where she discusses why fiction is crucial to the sustainability of a democracy and, as I would argue, to that of a non-democracy, too.

The popular press has furnished several examples of the scholar (or student) spy. In 1984, Ana Montes was recruited at the Johns Hopkins' School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS) by Cuban intelligence. She was later arrested after a career at the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency.[80] In January 2006, psychology professor Carlos Álvarez, of Florida International University, was arrested with his wife and confessed to collecting information on right-wing Cuban exile groups in South Florida.[81] By 2009, Kendall Myers, a PhD recipient from Johns Hopkins University, had also been arrested and sentenced to life in prison for espionage on behalf of the Cuban government. He was an expert in European history who taught at SAIS.[82]

More recently, the Federal Bureau of Investigation began an inquiry into the cultural programs given through China's "Confucius Institutes" located on American university campuses.

[80] Popkin, Jim. "Ana Montes did much harm spying for Cuba. Chances are, you haven't heard of her." *The Washington Post*, 18 April 2013. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/feature/wp/2013/04/18/ana-montes-did-much-harm-spying-for-cuba-chances-are-you-havent-heard-of-her/>
[81] Weaver, Jay. "FIU couple heading to jail in Cuban spy case." *The Miami Herald*, 28 February 2007. <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/espionage/alvarez-jail.htm>
[82] Thompson, Ginger. "Couple's Capital Ties Said to Veil Spying for Cuba." *The New York Times*, 18 June 2009. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/19/world/19spies.html>

Reports indicate that the institutes may be serving as a front for intelligence agents.[83] In fact, Edward Tenner has argued in *The Atlantic* (2010) that aspiring intelligence agents should study classics or other humanities disciplines because of their capacity for "inferring conclusions from fragmentary evidence." Tenner adds that "this is a skill endangered in a search-engine-oriented society of information abundance."[84]

Real-life events such as these will constitute the framework for the analytical model I develop based on Fuentes' fiction. Other relevant titles such as John B. Hench's *Books as Weapons* (2010)—which documents the use of popular, scholarly, and fictional works in the service of information agencies—will be important in this chapter.

The study I am proposing here is as much as about developing a literary understanding of Fuentes as it is about legitimizing the humanities in the professional sphere. My final formulation of a model for predicting Fuentes' influence is indicative of this fact. Aside from general sales figures and the timely topic that has been Cuba of late, fiction about any state has the potential to drive public sentiment. It is therefore essential that as scholars interested in a more public-facing product, we pause to consider how the procedural aspects of our analyses are utilized across professions. Yes, this is a project about Norberto Fuentes, the author. But it is also about the evolution of a country's nation brand, its place in the public imagination. About Fidel, Che, and cigars.

[83] Bishop, Anthony. "International Espionage on Campus." *The Cipher Brief*, 6 November 2016. <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/column_article/international-espionage-on-campus>
[84] Tenner, Edward. "Why Aspiring Spies Should Study Classics." *The Atlantic*, 24 October 2010. <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2010/10/why-aspiring-spies-should-study-classics/65025/>

Hometown Heroes

What is a revolutionary army? Is it the enforcer of a radical change in government? A force with popular support? An army with compelling, innovative tactics?

From the very first scene in *Condenados*, Fuentes appears to be searching for these answers. Bunder Pacheco, the iconic collective character I qualified earlier as representative of the Cuban military class, jumps out of a jeep for a friendly inquiry with a rural farmer. He asks him about his family, his economic situation, the harvest, and finally, about the fugitive Pacheco and his unit are pursuing. The heart of his questioning is simple: who does a revolutionary army fight?

In this first scene, Pacheco has his work cut out for him. His "enemy," a term to be refined, has already been killed (or murdered?) by the cooperative farmer, Captain Barefoot. The two characters sit as comfortably as possible amid the rustic amenities afforded by Barefoot's quarters. A quick coffee, an exchange of pleasantries, and the relief of Bunder Pacheco as he discovers that his fugitive, a certain Magua Tondike, is lying brutally struck by a machete to the back of the neck.

A strike given by a name-brand machete, no less. A "Collins," one of the strongest sheets of steel money can buy, according to the farmer. A tool that has survived over ten years of hard labor in the Cuban countryside, and which now helps fell an enemy of the people.[85]

Thus, Fuentes provides us with the first definition of the "enemy" in a revolutionary struggle: the individual.

[85] Fuentes, *Condenados de Condado*, 10–11.

Notice that Bunder Pacheco and Captain Barefoot both sport generic, indistinctive names. "Captain Barefoot" is an almost risible appellation resembling the catch-all title of *poilu* ("hairy beast") given to French soldiers during World War I. In one literary treatment from *Somewhere in France* (John Rolfe Gardiner, 1999), an American doctor dispatched to medical facilities at the front of this conflict, writes tellingly, "The *poilu* is a marvelous, filthy, courageous, ignorant fighting man."[86]

In a word, the *poilu* is an animal. As the conversation between Pacheco and Barefoot unfolds, one realizes that the latter prefers the rude life at the base of the Escambray mountains. Barefoot explains that he cannot imagine himself strapping on a pair of boots for the general mobilization happening in Cuba at the time. Pacheco recommends moving to Havana to improve his lot and that of his six children, but Barefoot resists, stating that he can only rely on his two calloused feet to sow and reap the harvest.[87] He is and prefers to be an animal—and animals protect their offspring.

Barefoot offers the fugitive Tondike some water when he arrives at his farm. He tells him to move on to avoid quarrels with his family. Then he changes his mind and decides that the best defense is an offense. He slices Tondike's forearm.[88]

Is Barefoot motivated by an urge for self-preservation, or does he fear retaliatory acts by the revolutionary army? Barefoot appears to collaborate as one more member of the popular base presupposed by such an army, but what are his real motives?

[86] Gardiner, *Somewhere in France*, 6.
[87] Fuentes, *Condenados de Condado*, 12.
[88] *Ibid.* 11.

"Pacheco" is a similarly generic name often used as a term of endearment or familiarity in Cuban Spanish. It carries little in the way of particularity, so that Pacheco dismounting from his jeep could be conceived as an encounter between two peoples: animals on the one hand, the herd on the other. Caught in between is Magua Tondike, with a file sufficiently developed to distinguish him as an individual. Pacheco asks Barefoot, "What do you have to tell me, Captain?" in an exchange that resembles more an intelligence drop than a casual greeting between soldiers and civilians.

Pacheco also has a rank, like Barefoot. He is a generic *comandante* obviously superior to a captain, so that their talk becomes one between two military bodies—the soldiers and citizen-soldiers. Perhaps that is the defining trait of a revolutionary army: a state of general mobilization where the enemy is anyone not participating, in one way or another, in the socialist process.

Yet non-participation is not the only criterion for positively identifying the enemy. The second vignette in *Condenados* introduces a second victim, again an individual, who speaks to a non-descript interrogator in charge of his fate. "Señor" is the only title one reads in this story, while the accused is given a specific name: Claudio Garate Guzmán. He too has a file described in the interrogator's notes: "Claudio Garate Guzmán. Distinguished in the March offensive at Llanadita de Perea. DOES NOT COOPERATE."[89]

Their interaction is similar to that of Captain Barefoot and Bunder Pacheco. They smoke cigarettes together, the interrogator calls for coffee. And then, curiously, there is a discussion of weapons, the same sort of discussion that occurs in chapter one. There, it was a Collins machete and Luger pistol. Here, the catalog includes a Springfield rifle, a Garand (both belonging to

[89] *Ibid.* 16.

Guzmán) and a .45-caliber Colt Commando pistol belonging to the interrogator.[90] The appearance of name brands in the narrative announces the action. Guzmán is on his way to the firing squad by story's end.

The enemy-as-individual possesses another characteristic in the form of femininity. In chapter two, Guzmán is undressed in front of the interrogator, to whom he confesses, "I feel just like a woman."[91] In chapter four, an odd topographer in Captain Bayamo's unit grabs Bayamo's member while sleeping in the dark. The accused homosexual is then executed in a staged suicide.[92]

Throughout *Condenados*, the discussion focuses on these types of questions. Who the enemy is, how he is defined, and how he should be handled. In the beginning, it is quite clear that the "enemy" is he who exhibits an individuality of behavior or appearance. Behavior in the sense of killing a fellow revolutionary or acting outside social norms. Appearance in the sense of, for instance, the decorations improvised by soldiers in Abuelo Bueno's "love platoon" (deliberately named) in chapter three. Even when said decorations show the most revolutionary of figures such as Lenin, the soldiers are chastised by Bunder Pacheco. "It all began when they came down with that fever for artistic things," the narrator admits.[93] And again, Pacheco serves as the strict administrator of discipline.

Art is a feature that in the beginning of Fuentes' trajectory is synonymous with treason. The same art that will later characterize the establishment or fabrication of treason, as in *Guerreros*. The art of the intelligence profile.

[90] *Ibid.* 17.
[91] *Ibid.* 19.
[92] *Ibid.* 27 – 28.
[93] *Ibid.* 23.

As *Condenados* progresses, it moves away from its discussion of the enemy and towards the interface between civilians and the revolutionary army. More precisely, towards the consequences of arming a civilian population that is professionally unprepared for the responsibilities of security. This is perhaps where Fuentes falls from grace with the Communist regime due to his less than exemplary portrayal of Cuban soldiers.

In "Kongo Kid," for instance, Cuban soldiers on leave visit a rural circus, where they become embroiled in a lion's act gone wrong. They end up killing the animal, and in typical Fuentes fashion, there are details about the circus owner's 1948 Cadillac and Bunder Pacheco's Steichin pistol, as well as Czech hand grenades. Though the incident is an accident, the reputation of the army is damaged by this affair. A lack of army discipline is implied at the end of the story, which the narrator satirizes as "the greatest show on earth," from the famous slogan of Barnam and Bailey.[94]

Army practices also have an effect on the stability of the countryside. Yes, its recruits are lifted out of poverty when they join its ranks, but the sudden power they are granted in the form of weaponry leads to spillovers of violence.

Such is the case in "Belisario el aura," where a young man with a stutter is made fun of until he joins the local militia. Emboldened by his new T-25 submachine gun, the boy later finds his young detractors and mows them down with gunfire. During the murder, Belisario is dressed in stylish civilian clothes which are another symbol of the Cuban military elite.[95] If one recalls the episode about the homosexual ("La yegua," mentioned earlier), one can appreciate that Captain Bayamo, the offended man, exclaims that his rank has brought him a big-body Buick, a house in

[94] *Ibid.* 57 – 58, 63.
[95] *Ibid.* 74.

Nuevo Vedado, and a blonde wife who always smells attractive.[96] These materialistic signs are characteristic of Fuentes' prose and can extend from weaponry, to timepieces (Rolexes are his favorite), to radios, and even to air conditioning units.

Fear and suffering permeate the later stages of *Condenados* in various ways. "Como buenos hermanos" shows how the line between civilian mourners and *bandido* casualties can be quite thin. In effect, both lose their identities as a result of the conflict. The two civilian mothers searching for their boys' remains are handed the bones of anonymous dead soldiers from a mass grave, while an indifferent army administrator shrugs his shoulders, unsure of the real remedy.[97]

The irony, however, is that only in death do the non-participants of socialism acquire the collective character of their living counterparts. It seems that despite the progress brought by the revolutionary army, anyone caught up in its current pays for it in one way or another. Civilians become as invisible as the *bandido* dead, as the onlookers do in "La Chanzoneta." Faithful soldiers lose their legs or fiancées ("Bebesón" and "El honor limpiado"), and honorable commanders must scold the very population that supports them ("Guantanamera," where a pedestrian crossing the road delays a military convoy). In all of these cases, the only solution seems to be fearlessness and resolve, coupled with an indefatigable taste for cigars to dull the pain. These are characteristics of a people who are *bragados* or battle-tested, people with the resilience to confront horror eye-to-eye.

The defection of their children or the man at the firing squad pole. Those who overcome these situations are practically heroic in nature, which is why this initial part of Fuentes' fiction approximates the social-realist style. His characters are either superhuman to the point of ordering

[96] *Ibid.* 28.
[97] *Ibid.* 31 – 33.

their executioners to fire, or so pathetic that a reader might just wish to put them out of their misery. This is why the revolutionary archetype of Bunder Pacheco is so convenient. He applies a strict, quick, and no-nonsense analysis of infractions committed by either side, and proceeds with his summary justice. As one police officer tells a captured *bandido*, "What you're about to tell me, you can save for the police station."[98] In other words, his final judge will have a quicker estimation of his case.

The episode titled "La ley" develops this topic further. One of its most revealing attributes is the omnipresence of Bunder Pacheco, who appears as both a prison warden and state prosecutor for the accused collaborator, Margarito Abejón. Thus far, we have witnessed Pacheco as a convoy commander, a leader of field infantry, and now in these two additional roles. In fact, it is presumable that Pacheco even fills the shoes of the interrogator in the scene previously described. How could he be everywhere and serve in all of these capacities?

Pacheco is, as I have said, a collective character representing Cuban martial society. In "La ley," he sits in his courtroom recliner puffing on a cigar while awaiting the inevitable sentence: 100 years for harboring *bandidos*. Despite a moment of hope implied in the judge's empathetic lecture, this is the final ruling. Abejón is not so much convicted due to his benevolence toward fugitives, but rather because he is an outlier in the revolutionary process, a "bourgeois estate owner and old swindler," the judge concludes.[99]

Revolutionary justice is dispensed by the revolutionary army. There is no division of power between the two, just as there is little difference between ordinary citizen, citizen-soldier, and professional combatant. Uniformity is the rule which governs the "revolutionary" aspect of this

[98] *Ibid.* 30.
[99] *Ibid.* 55 – 56.

army. It homogenizes, indoctrinates, and imposes principles of honor revolving around *machismo* such as the faithfulness of wives and prohibition of homosexuality.

Violating any of these codes results in exclusion, as in the episode "Melo," where a young man commits suicide due to an undisclosed yet embarrassing act from his past. The narrator never specifies why people no longer wish to speak to him, but in the end, on his deathbed, everyone says goodbye. He may have been a deserter: "It's a shame you didn't die in combat," an army desk worker tells him.[100]

This confluence of the entire population into a single pool of citizens is something that only emerges toward the end of *Condenados*. One of the final chapters, "La vanguardia," truly borders on sacrilege toward the State. Fuentes steps onto difficult terrain when he depicts a celebrated soldier, Lieutenant Bombillo, in collusion with a *bandido* by the name of Tomasa. While leading his reconnaissance squad in pursuit of Tomasa, Bombillo moves ahead of his unit to meet him, offering him cigarettes and staging a firefight for his escape.[101] The conclusion is that the concepts of "friend" and "foe" are hazy distinctions in the Cuban revolutionary army.

Being a "friend" is a matter of adhering to certain principles and knowing how to confront tragic situations with resolve and austerity. Coffee and cigars and the order to fire; a looming Bunder Pacheco in all aspects of campaign life; and civilians who can become just as decorated or maimed as the soldiers themselves. Fuentes gets away with these descriptions only because his contacts in the army defend his position. There is realism in his accounts of atrocities, but idealism in the behavior of individuals. This turns the latter into molds, into products of the symbols they

[100] *Ibid.* 84.
[101] *Ibid.* 89.

possess—weapons, watches, appliances—which characterize their place in the nascent revolutionary society.

Posición uno, written for the 20th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, relies on many of the same premises as *Condenados*. The question of endurance—resisting penury, shortages, injuries—defines everyday people in the text. The opening chapter, eponymously titled, explores life on a Cuban sugar plantation after the Revolution.

The plantation is manned by a formal military unit called the 1st Anti-Aircraft Brigade, nicknamed "The Sugar Cane Cutters" to reflect the dual-purpose role expected of every Cuban citizen. Always vigilant, the brigade is on watch in the mornings and evenings, with harvesting duty in between.

Fuentes' writing here struggles to retain its journalistic voice. Despite realistic conversations between members of the brigade, his personification of the sugar cane betrays his objectivity. "When the cane is cut," Fuentes explains, "it resembles a lady: she is spread open, cut, cracked from the blow."[102] Then he goes on to discuss the hardness of the cane fields, which benefits from the softness of women's visits to the younger cane cutters, who treat the cane as they would a prostitute. All of these observations are undeniably creative expressions.

Fuentes calls the harvesting process a "war" with its own supply chain: "cane cutter, transporter, processing plant, economy."[103] It is a "battle with casualties," Fuentes points out, "with heroes, with victorious brigades."[104] Proving oneself in the cane fields is synonymous with being

[102] Fuentes, *Posición Uno*, 18.
[103] *Ibid.* 21.
[104] *Ibid.* 18.

fit for service. When one enlisted man is dismissed in the narrative, his colleague simply replies, "We were left without his smiles, but in war, that's what you have to do."[105] Onward.

In his article, "Hemingway and the Cuban Revolution," Jeff Morgan discusses the existentialism of war which Fuentes seems to abide in his stories. Like Hemingway's character Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, work seems to be the only antidote to challenging, sometimes impossible tasks.[106] That is exactly the tone Fuentes assumes in this chapter, where the harvest seems to be never-ending. "One cane falls, then another," he says, "but there is always one more, standing, waiting, and you must crouch down before her to cut it."[107]

Morgan excels at communicating this position, stating that the existentialist is averse to abstractions. In response to grim realities, the existentialist reacts like Jordan does to his suicidal orders: "it is only in the performing of them that they can prove to be impossible."[108] Work is therefore the structuring principle of revolutionary culture. Without it, without constant mobilization, the ambitious goals of socialism would never come to fruition. "Code heroes" is the term Morgan uses to qualify Hemingway's stoic soldiers, the "code" being an idealistic sense of duty, the belief in a cause for the love of it, with the expectation that one will suffer.[109] In Fuentes' early fiction, the Cuban people are definitely portrayed in such a manner. They are almost naïfs.

I should now turn to a peculiar chapter in *Posición* titled, "Soldados del silencio." The article supposedly appeared on September 25, 1966, in the state-owned newspaper, *Granma*. The piece is intriguing because it sketches the evolution of the Cuban intelligence community since its pre-Batista days. That a writer should emphasize the topic of intelligence to the general public is

[105] *Ibid. 19*.
[106] Morgan, "Hemingway and the Cuban Revolution," 5.
[107] Fuentes, *Posición Uno*, 18.
[108] Qtd. in Morgan, "Hemingway and the Cuban Revolution," 5.
[109] Morgan, 4,8.

not only suspect, but indicative of his role as an opinion multiplier. In reality, Fuentes is describing the undercarriage of revolutionary culture—its information policy.

As a supplement to the main discussion, Fuentes intercalates the story of Pity Hernández, a demobilized *bandido* who obtains a hideout on the outskirts of Havana while he prepares his flight out of the country.[110] Pity's story is inserted and removed from the narrative periodically, with longer discussions of the organization of Cuban intelligence in between.

According to Fuentes, Cuban intelligence has one primordial source: repression. In contrast with its American counterparts, the founding of the Cuban intelligence services begins from within, with the goal of developing internal applications for their methods. He explains that the first informal organization to appear was the *Porra* under Gerardo Machado, an entity that quickly devolved into several American-inspired firms. By the 1940s, the *Porra* had been converted, under the guidance of FBI agents such as Clark Anderson, into the following branches: the Bureau of Investigations (BI); the Military Intelligence Service (SIM); the Regional Intelligence Service (SIR); the Naval Intelligence Service (SIN); and the most important of them all, the Bureau of Communist Repression (BRAC).[111]

Using the BRAC as his focal point, Fuentes relates how American advisors developed a database of communist activists within the country. The Department of the Exterior expanded this list to include international communists of note, as well as citizens who were traveling to and from socialist bloc countries. Fuentes explains how FBI agents would spend "long hours every morning" at BRAC to spearhead the development of its programs.[112]

[110] Fuentes, *Posición Uno*, 38–40.
[111] *Ibid.* 45.
[112] *Ibid.*

However, the BRAC also had two other divisions to surveil citizen activity. The first was the anti-gangster section; the second, the telephone surveillance group. By the time of the Revolution, it is safe to say that the Cubans had gained sufficient expertise from America to go it alone. And so they did.

One of the problems Fuentes identifies in these Batista agencies is the competition for government "pork," as political scientists would say. That is, government recognition and pay-outs to the highest performing agencies in the form of increased budgets and personal bonuses. When an agency falls behind in its productivity, it is more prone to corruption. This is what occurred in the anti-gangster section, which began a series of collaborations with criminal networks for personal gain.

Fuentes narrates the Batista years as a period in which Cuba was divided into a series of criminal fiefdoms headed by different chiefs. At first, it was a means of exchanging enforcement for information, of penetrating the mafias through its contractors on the street. Common criminals such as burglars or hijackers were allowed to continue their activities if they submitted regular reports to the section. However, it was not long before this system gave way to personal loyalties between officers and criminals. A percentage of the value of thefts and other lucrative crimes was imposed by the anti-gangster section, such that profits were split among all its districts. A Cuban intelligence service was therefore becoming a mafia of its own, so much so that citizens coined the phrase, "The first thieves in this country wear uniforms."[113]

[113] *Ibid.* 47.

The anti-communist division of the BRAC employed other methods. It formed alliances with political organizations on the Right such as the *Organización Auténtica* or the *Triple-A*.[114] For instance, the assassination of communist dissident Pelayo Cuervo on March 13, 1957, was the product of a leak from the Right to BRAC.

The anti-communist division also recruited lumpen elements as informants. Fuentes identifies Manolo Relojero as one of the bar owners and prostitution leaders with whom it worked.[115] This was helpful for spotting young revolutionary talent that could pose problems in the future.

Apart from his discussion of the methods of Cuban intelligence, Fuentes provides a theoretical framework for how intelligence functions. Among its goals are the ideological, administrative, industrial, and military sabotage of state organs. This is primarily done through the collection of a wide range of information to design a plan of influence or "PI," as he will specify later in the *Autobiography*.

How is this accomplished? First, through the kinds of recruitment described during the Batista years; agents who are located within targeted government organs. Second, by organizing the collected information—economic, military, political, cultural—in such a way that it facilitates the maintenance of peace with Cuba. Fuentes underscores this goal of peace when he mentions the case of Richard Sorge, a Soviet spy during World War II who revealed that Japan had no intention

[114] The brainchild of former Cuban President Prío Socarrás (1948 – 52), the *Organización Auténtica* was an armed political group that attacked the army barracks at Goicuría in April 1956, during intense student riots at the University of Havana. The group had an anti-Batista orientation and was from the Right, like the *Triple-A*. The latter, though initially associated with Fidel Castro's attack on the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953, actually had no involvement in the attack. In fact, it provided no reaction at all to this critical event, probably to protect itself (it was one of the few groups in Cuba known to possess a secret arsenal). See José Moreno, Francisco. *Before Fidel: The Cuba I Remember*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 139 – 40.
[115] Fuentes, *Posición Uno*, 46.

of attacking the USSR. Sorge was dispatched well before the outbreak of the war, in 1935, by a General Semyon Uritski. When he was eventually captured, Sorge explained to the Japanese that his purpose was not to disrupt the military-industrial capacity of the country, but to determine its affinity for peace.[116] This peace-seeking approach is something characteristic of Fuentes' initial understanding of intelligence. Among the books he cites for this is Allen Dulles' espionage classic, *The Craft of Intelligence* (1959).

There are also glimpses of Fuentes' exposure to intelligence files in the form of catalogs. In "Soldados del silencio," he details the armaments possessed by the Luis Vargas contras, including the specific individuals who used each weapon. This is a small capability estimate to which he will later add diagrams of buildings, photographs, and other media.

The Cuban intelligence community known by Fuentes consisted of the Department of State Security (DSE, colloquially known as the "G-2") and Military Counterintelligence (CIM). In his accounts, he specifies the names of a few agents who lived the repression of Batista's BRAC and SIM agencies. Jesús Padrón, captured by SIM on February 24, 1955, for his infiltration of the BI; Mario Enrique Laverde, an agent of the Popular Socialist Party (PSP) who worked inside the BRAC.[117] Both men are noted as current employees of the DSE. Padrón, notably, is a First Lieutenant.

Then there is the agent known only as "José C.," who is featured in a piece titled "Ojos de gato." Fuentes presumably interviewed this man, who explains that "security is built using the same persecuted individuals as always, the same clandestines, the warriors of all time."[118]

[116] *Ibid.* 42 – 43.
[117] *Ibid.* 48 – 49.
[118] *Ibid.*

From this moment on, it is risky to assume that the names Fuentes uses in his narrative—even in the presumed journalistic features—are true. This chapter in *Posición* marks the beginning of Fuentes' code-name practice of using multiple aliases to denote the same character over and over. For instance, why would Fuentes reveal the name of the agent who in the end captures Pity Hernández? Is this Pity Hernández even a real case? Is the piece from *Granma* reliable? Is it fabricated?

The two agents previously mentioned (Padrón and Laverde) could have been retired and therefore removed from their covers. But if the story of Pity Hernández is true, why portray Felipe García rallying his men for the capture raid?[119] Why describe how they determined Pity's whereabouts? If this is an article intended to inform the general public (it does admittedly have a simple informative style), it is understandable to include some general sketches of the history of the clandestine services. Perhaps the case of Pity Hernández had already been declassified. Perhaps the methods used in it were outdated. Or perhaps it is a story intended to mythicize Cuban intelligence. Pity is captured, in the end, without even realizing he is on his way to the detention center.

Here is the process Fuentes describes which leads to Pity's capture: a report from the local DSE section in Las Villas regarding a "new individual" in town who does not leave his home; a recommendation to quietly follow the subject so as not to alert other contra groups; a positive identification of the suspect using photographic equipment; identification of related assets such as Pity's brother, Héctor; a plan for the discreet capture of Héctor; his drive-by capture and finally, his forced cooperation in the plot to abduct Pity without his knowledge.

[119] *Ibid.* 53.

Throughout this procedure, Fuentes disperses hints about his possible contact with intelligence records. This is where one notices his diversion toward spy fiction. "In the reports and statements by the DSE," he writes, it is customary to use abbreviations such as *c/p* for "conocido por," or to list weapons, or document, day by day, the movements of a target. Felipe García himself is known as "C.P. Casualidad" due to his many accidental arrests of contra members.[120] His briefing to the other agents involved in Pity's abduction is recorded. Jorge González, the agent accompanying García on the raid, is mentioned in both name and physical description: "wears glasses, thin, and slightly older than 25."[121] And there is an account at the end of Héctor Hernández's interrogation, including his physical reactions and responses.

The use of aliases, nicknames, codenames, cover names, and alternate names is what gives Fuentes away in this respect. In all likelihood, his tale of the Pity Hernández case is an entertainment bolt-on to his *éloge* of the Cuban spies written in more journalistic form. Indeed, this chapter is perhaps one of the most representative of Fuentes' negotiations of fact and fiction, an experiment in creating the *apparent reality* cited by Wesley Wark in our first chapter.[122] Later, Fuentes will add precise dates, times, durations, historical references, and procedures used in operations to reinforce this Cold War imaginary of communists versus anti-communists.

The characteristics of this "reality" extend to Fuentes observations of combat. In "Entrevista a un asesino," which begins with Fuentes questioning a captured revolutionary, the combat scenes are palpable, easily imagined and reproduced in one's mind. However, one wonders if it is at all possible for a journalist to witness as many engagements as he describes in the narrative. Embedded with several units, Fuentes moves from the battalion headed by a Commander

[120] *Ibid.* 53.
[121] *Ibid.* 52.
[122] Wark, "Introduction: Fictions of History," 6–8.

Víctor Dreke, to that of Lieutenant Pedro Nodal, to another lead by a Lizardo Proenza. All three leaders pursue different cells of a rebel group commanded by a Juan Alberto, who is ultimately felled in a firefight with Proenza's soldiers.

Fuentes describes the scene graphically: "A bullet from an M-52 'checo' pierced the barrel of Juan Alberto's Thompson, his 'baby,' which jumped from the hands of the bandit, torn from him by the impact."[123]

In order for Fuentes to give an account as detailed as this, he must have been a part of the frontline action, a fact which is highly unlikely. A second possibility, more probable, is that he obtained this story from the soldiers who were there and then elaborated on it. Finally, he could have contrived the scene from some official military report. But whichever of these is true, it is certain that the apparent realism typical of spy fiction remains operative.

"Blood gurgled out and ran between his fingers," Fuentes says in the scene, "He said no more and buried his face in the dirt."[124] Notice the drama that surfaces here. It is the slow-motion replay of a rebel's death which is very similar to Robert Capa's photograph, "Death of a Soldier." Caught in the moment, Fuentes provides the reader with an insiders' view of combat, albeit with dramatizing intentions: "the bandit Manuel Martínez, who ran beside him, saw him die and later saw Labrada, the other bandit, as he fell and spit a thick red."[125]

Returning to the question of the enemy, it is interesting to see that he is defined by the spaces he occupies—Fuentes mentions "zones" M, Z, and C—and the weapons he employs. "Thompson machine-pistols, M3s, M-1 carbines, Garand rifles," Fuentes notes.[126] The enemy is

[123] Fuentes, *Posición Uno*, 76.
[124] *Ibid.*
[125] *Ibid.*
[126] Fuentes, *Posición Uno*, 73, 76–77.

also identified by his motives, which usually involve buckling under coercion from a competing band. During his questioning, for instance, prisoner Clemente Aragón (from the beginning of the chapter) admits he was fearful of being put to the firing squad by anti-Castro contras.[127] His treason under pressure is what reveals him as an enemy, compared to the heroic efforts of the counterinsurgency troops.

An example of this heroism is when Pedro Nodal decides to cross an open field in pursuit of some rebels. Fuentes paints the decision as an act of bravery: "He left his FAL [rifle] and loaded himself with grenades" in preparation for one final assault.[128] What ensues is a textbook bout of suppressive fire followed by grenades into the trench where the rebels had been cornered.

The weapons used by government forces are no less heroic. The Belgian FAL (*fusil automatique léger*), ironically considered "the right arm of the free world" during the Cold War, is a favorite among the troops. The Czech M-52 rifle is another.

The tactics of the Revolutionary Army also distinguish it from rebel bands. In his scenes, Fuentes notes the "siege" formations laid to an area, followed by the "sweep" to root out the rebels. He expounds on the challenges of certain terrains (such as undulating fields) and ridicules how most of the rebels hold ranks despite numbering, on average, five or six individuals. "Also a captain?" asks one Lieutenant after capturing a bandit.[129]

The chapter closes with a return to the interrogation of Clemente Aragón. An unspecified soldier, "R," supervises the session. Fuentes inquires about the death of a young communist named

[127] *Ibid.* 74.
[128] *Ibid.* 73.
[129] *Ibid.* 79.

Roberto Gutiérrez, assassinated by Aragón and his partner on September 7, 1963. What he discovers is another feature of the "enemy"—irregularity.

Of course, irregular or asymmetrical warfare (as it is termed today) has always been the strategy of insurgent groups. But even when Fuentes depicts his own enemies later (i.e. – in *Guerreros*), he will reference low-blow methods such as hiding, lying in wait, extorsion, and subterfuge. Clemente Aragón kills the communist Roberto Gutiérrez by strangling him to death using a specific method. He and his partner each take the ends of a rope tied to Gutiérrez's neck and walk in opposite directions.[130] Once they are sure of his death, they let the body fall into a pre-dug grave.

All of the enemies Fuentes describes in *Posición* utilize brutal methods like that of Aragón. In another case, the bandit Juan Alberto prefers to wait until a sweeping battalion walks past before making his escape. What he provokes, in fact, is a stupid close quarters combat. "He could not get up because the soldiers' bullets nailed him to the ground," Fuentes mocks.[131] One by one, the insurgents in *Posición* are captured, then jailed or executed. It is a trait I have mentioned before—that of individuality—which runs throughout the narrative. There is always a name, date, and precise description of the place and way an enemy has perished. Revolutionary soldiers, on the other hand, act anonymously with the exception of their leaders. "They don't have soldiers," one infantryman remarks about the *bandidos*, "they are all officers."[132]

[130] *Ibid.* 82.
[131] *Ibid.* 78.
[132] *Ibid.* 79.

That said, there is another type of soldier that Fuentes explores in *Posición*: the Cuban worker. When it comes to discussing national productivity, Fuentes constructs unique stories around those who have served in the *unarmed* Revolution.

The mountainous region of Oriente province is one of the backdrops to these stories. "All of the forces of nature were born in Cayoguán," Fuentes says.[133] Out of it emerge a simple people brought out of poverty by some of the most ambitious engineering projects of the 1960s. Projects that would astonish their American neighbors who, on October 25, 1960, lost possession of their mining plants in Moa and Nicaro. The story that Fuentes recounts in chapters like "La ruta de la jungla hacia las estrellas" is one of defiance. It is a story about survival on terrain where Che Guevara once said, "Man cannot live here."[134] And yet, the Cuban workers are there.

Combat never really disappears from the narrative. It simply changes shape. In his summary of the history of nickel mining in Cuba, Fuentes is not shy in mentioning that 40 percent of world nickel production is destined for the defense industry: aircraft, armaments, and armored vehicles. A further 36 percent is used in "unknown" applications of the highest secrecy, probably for the manufacture of satellites and ballistic missiles. And pure nickel, Fuentes explains, is used for radioactive applications.

This kind of "combat" is another part of what I would call Fuentes' "socialist superhero." That is, a man who defeats impossible odds—defeats nature itself—to engage in productive enterprise. These are the personalities he documents in most of his interviews; people like

[133] *Ibid.* 85.
[134] *Ibid.* 86.

Demetrio Presilla, the engineer who manages to revive the Moa nickel plant after the Americans leave. "The one who knows a world about nickel," one of the workers says.[135]

Curiously, in this chapter Fuentes prefers to utilize the individual as his point of departure. He names them: José Braña, 70 years old; José Pineda, 42; Ernesto Ramírez, 33; Luis Gálvez, 29. All of them are given a brief questionnaire of their life histories. They are the faces of the victorious collective. Victorious and orthodox, as some of his questions imply: "The Bible? Do you believe in God?" asks Fuentes.[136] Or on another occasion, "Has the enemy tried to do anything to the factory?"[137] These are brief probes into the influence of foreign ideas in the Cuban back-country. Fuentes never really abandons the notion of conflict, emphasizing that it was World War I, World War II, and the Korean War that got these industries off the ground. But now they belong to the people, who have been repurposed and repersonalized.

Who composes the Revolutionary Army? It is a question Fuentes addresses through his many portraits of the Cuban people. In contrast with the mostly repetitive profiles of the *bandidos*, Fuentes depicts the Revolutionary Army as a diverse force of men and women whose strength lies in the variety of their ethnic and educational backgrounds. He likens them to "cowboys" in his chapter, "La isla más joven del mundo," men and women standing on the horizon of a great social experiment. "There are pale faces," Fuentes states, "But also *mulatto* and black and very black and even olive-toned faces."[138] One could consider these descriptions a quality of the "friend" in the friend-versus-enemy paradigm. People who, regardless of their race, national origin, or social

[135] *Ibid.* 87.
[136] *Ibid.* 92.
[137] *Ibid.* 93.
[138] *Ibid.* 126.

background, are participating in the cause. Humble work for all, so as to avoid what Fuentes calls a *blandito* or weakling.

Throughout these characterizations, the analogy of combat reigns. "Battalions of soldiers without arms," Fuentes calls them, "their shirts striped with sweat, working to plant or harvest citrus fruits."[139] There are cow herders; dam builders; a German field cook; British bee farmers; carbon producers; and kids learning infantry tactics from a teacher who reads their manual like the Bible. The picture is an amalgam of individuals, their workdays recounted as if the very narrative were trying to emulate their length and difficulty. There is even a "lunch break" where Fuentes discusses the workers' canteen and examines the manners of those eating.

The prevailing theme is clear: arduous, dangerous work in an inhospitable climate, with primitive living arrangements. This is the expectation of every Cuban revolutionary, a culture of persistence and furthermore, of improvisation. Some of Fuentes' characters, for instance, don women's pantyhose on their heads to keep out dust and dirt. Others wear sandbags as aprons against the grime. Two of them use a cut-out barrel as their kitchen and live alone, as two men.[140]

The British family, originally coconut farmers, endure a blight and must reinvent themselves as bee harvesters. Then a hurricane wipes out all of their bee equipment, to which the father simply responds, "We will start again."[141] Life in the revolutionary army is rude, harsh, and unpleasant, but the quality that distinguishes friend from foe is evident in this part of Fuentes' fiction. The enemy buckles under pressure, the friend musters endurance—like General Arnaldo Ochoa, who, at the moment of his execution, gives the order to fire himself.

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[139] *Ibid.* 127.
[140] *Ibid.* 130 -131, 134.
[141] *Ibid.* 133.

Fuentes has no hesitations about underscoring how marginalized people are granted opportunities through the armed forces, and these opportunities are not limited to the ground. In "Más rápido y más alto," Fuentes interviews a series of air force pilots at the helm of the then-innovative MiG-21 fighter. Bouzac, who diverted two enemy B-26 bombers away from their targets during the Bay of Pigs invasion. Portuondo, the black gardener for a well-off family turned pilot through distance learning. Pretus, a white pilot and former janitor. Diego, a trained saboteur from the Batista resistance who was granted a scholarship after Fidel's triumph in Havana.

Fuentes catalogs these individuals as "silent heroes" because of their separation from more glamorous events on the ground. His tone resembles that of American journalists in the Vietnam War who were accepting of the official U.S. line: that they were winning. Phillip Knightley calls these correspondents people who "got on the team" and sensationalized events in the early part of the war (1963 – 68).[142] For instance, during the first Marine landing at Da Nang, which posed no resistance. Headlines would claim that the landing was "the biggest since Inchon" and that Marines were "storming ashore" when in reality, it was more like a supply ferry.[143] Fuentes' headlines mirror this practice: "On the 17th, a Legend Was Born;" "In the Next War, I'll Be a Pilot;" "Thoughts at 2,000 Kilometers an Hour." All of these titles exaggerate the modest accomplishments of Cuban air force pilots who—with the exception of Bouzac—have yet to engage American aircraft.

Jim G. Lucas, a journalist deployed in Vietnam by the Scripps-Howard group, agrees with this sort of portrayal, and even calls the phenomenon "quiet heroism" himself. "Young men court danger as they court women," he says, "and for much the same reasons . . . secretly, each wants to

[142] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 376.
[143] *Ibid.* 385.

be a hero."[144] War correspondent Frank Harvey of *Flying Magazine* adds to this by confessing that the technical aspects of the war were what brought him to Vietnam. Harvey went on to publish an article on the men of the Air Force and their perception of air operations, which later turned into a book. He concluded that most pilots preferred to fight communism abroad rather than at home.[145]

In an almost mirror image of Harvey's observations in Vietnam, Fuentes finds a certain pride among his airmen. "When the Yankees come close," says a young captain Varona, "everyone wants to be the first in the air to prove them guilty of using up so much effort and human energy in war." He also displays the same fascination with equipment as Harvey: "compressed air hoses to prevent the rupture of the lungs under pressure, facemasks with pure oxygen to inhibit the boiling of the blood," and other devices that make supersonic flight possible.[146]

It is evident, then, that Fuentes' exaggeration of martial virtue is not without its equivalents in the United States. Knightley relates it to the coverage of action during the Second World War, where distinctions between friend and foe were clear. For Fuentes, this distinction holds for his enemy abroad—the United States—though from within (as I have explained), the matter is much more complex.

There are other parallels between war correspondence in Vietnam and Fuentes' propaganda at home. Not all of it consisted of an idealized coverage.

Some of Fuentes' stories such as "Guardafronteras" document his concrete participation in coast guard patrols. In fact, he even relates the practices used for intercepting contras attempting to withdraw from Cuba clandestinely. This can be likened to the opinion of British correspondent

[144] *Ibid.*
[145] *Ibid.*
[146] Fuentes, *Posición Uno*, 124.

John Pilger, who was assigned to Vietnam by the *Mirror*. According to Pilger, Vietnam was "impossible to cover without becoming part of it yourself, and when you become part of it you have to decide where you stand."[147]

There is no question about Fuentes' loyalties in this chapter since he depicts the men of the Cuban coast guard in a favorable light. However, there is an aspect of realism characteristic of another war reporter from Vietnam, Murray Sayle. Writing for the *Sunday Times*, Sayle preferred to get out and experience the typical day of a soldier on the ground. "I begin the day at sea approaching the mouth of the Perfume River," Sayle recounts, "I am trying to get to Camp Evans, north of Hue, where it is unofficially reported that a big battle is developing."[148] This intention of finding the action is repeated in Fuentes' narrative as he explains, "We're navigating the 325 to the ambush point at La Cruz. There, for one month now, four coast guard vessels await the insertion of a [CIA] infiltration team."[149]

The expectant tone in both of these statements, the uncertainty of whether action will develop or not, is something which Sayle uses in wartime but Fuentes uses in peace. Searching for the action is one of the functions of this type of journalism, which extends to the genre of war literature, too. Remember that the end product is called the *novel-reportage*, after all. Fuentes reminds us of this when he finally arrives at his destination aboard the patrol boat. "The place is called 'La Cruz,'" he explains, "though in a novel it would be more properly named the 'mangrove from hell.'"[150]

[147] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 383.
[148] *Ibid.* 404.
[149] Fuentes, *Posición Uno*, 100.
[150] *Ibid.* 101.

Periodic reminders of this kind surface in Fuentes' journalism to inform the reader of its ultimately modified perspective. Like the photographers of Vietnam, torn between capturing the grotesque combat wounds of soldiers and making these images digestible for an American public, Fuentes inserts passages reminiscent of a camera:

> "The clouds, black and muscular, come down from the mountain toward the coast. They come roaring like a herd of zebus . . . our boat nods against the dock. Another patrol boat comes from afar to seek refuge under our roof. Now we all look quite small and sad."[151]

This description could be reproduced in a panoramic photo and would read like a summary of it. Indeed, this is a trope within war reporting that Fuentes could have borrowed from Hemingway or the Vietnam journalists. Though he is writing in peacetime here and there is no trace of violence, later this process will transfer to his novel on the war in Angola. Gavin Young, another British correspondent in Vietnam, expresses it well when he states, "Correspondents are bound to be haunted by the feeling that there is probably only one way to work the various elusive aspects of the war into one wholly satisfactory picture."[152] For now, Fuentes is satisfied with giving his impressions of what soldiers must cope with in their day-to-day routines. He does this through both conversations and traditional prose. "Osvaldo López, age 20," he notes, "'This is unnerving! One month of killing mosquitoes. Nobody can really know what that's like,'" the recruit complains.[153] Later, in a description of bedtime, Fuentes recalls: "On my backlit watch, I follow every one of the sixty minutes of ten o'clock the night of the ambush. I see, sticking my head out from under the nylon covering my hammock, just how grotesque nature is."[154]

[151] *Ibid.* 97 – 98.
[152] Knightley, *The First Casualty,* 423.
[153] Fuentes, *Posición Uno*, 101.
[154] *Ibid.*

In these examples, Fuentes strays away from the idealism and exaggeration of his previous story. There is less ideology and more footwork, a greater sense of what the reader might feel in his shoes. Sensations and thoughts are related instead of class origins and bravery. Thus, the hero typical of Fuentes' early work can and does exhibit more human features. There are moments in *Posición* and *Condenados* where Fuentes undoubtedly twists the narrative into a moral question. However, he recognizes—like Hemingway, Malraux, and the Vietnam correspondents—that military operations are perhaps best represented in the relationships they cultivate. These relationships are the basis for realism in Fuentes' fiction, allowing him to reconstruct the "brother-in-arms" emotions so critical to the military experience.

One difference between *Condenados* and *Posición* which must be noted is the bravado and more kid-like machismo present in the latter. Whereas *Condenados* leverages machismo to illustrate the unforgiving discipline of the Revolutionary Army (i.e. – its misogyny and homophobia), *Posición* represents it as the inevitable character of "man's last corner." Nora Ephron summarizes this in her discussion of the "fun" nature of war in *New York* magazine: "working as a war correspondent is almost the only classic male endeavor left that provides physical danger and personal risk without public disapproval."[155]

The type of manly pride evident in *Posición* can be likened more to a form of solidarity, perhaps of the kind male dog owners today feel for their dogs when they engage in beastly acts (defecating, urinating on trees, etc.). It is less offensive in tone and not directed at women, but rather at the other men accompanying them on their missions. In fact, dogs appear in this chapter and are given the same attributes as the men in the group. "There's nothing that disturbs a pirate

[155] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 408.

[contra] more than to feel the persecution of a dog," Fuentes explains.[156] Or in the words of another soldier: "The dog I love most is Spark. This dog is good and big. The bastard knows me and when he hears me arrive, he gets happy. What a dog!"[157]

The telling of jokes with racist undertones is another example of this, even though between them, the soldiers take it as a sign of affection. The measuring of abilities is another, as when guardsman Raúl Rodiles says during target practice, "My shots are always straight," and then hits his mark.[158]

Elizabeth Burgos has covered this topic in detail in her article, "Señores de la guerra." She notes that the military experience in Fuentes' fiction is tied to male versus female proofs of identity. For males, military operations (especially combat) are the ultimate show of their feminine sides because they lead to an adoration of the self, the exaltation of one's character, and the negation of any "vaginal" 'existence that would constitute an enemy.

In contrast, females experience their "baptism by fire" in the form of childbirth, a test that proves they can handle the pain and suffering of males. Greek tombs, Burgos indicates, used to include the names of women who survived childbirth as a sort of monument to the victorious, to their triumph over death.[159] Burgos' work is enriching because she connects this notion of proving one's worth to the materialistic practices already documented in this study. The knowledge of weapons and their capabilities and the preference for name brand items could be interpreted as symbols of men's mastery over their female selves.

[156] Fuentes, *Posición Uno*, 103.
[157] *Ibid.* 103.
[158] *Ibid.* 99.
[159] Elizabeth Burgos, "Señores de La Guerra," *Encuentro: Miradas Polémicas*, 2018, 207.

Though certain parts of Burgos' piece border on derision (she calls Fuentes the "butler" of Cuba's military caste), much of what she observes is true. Her description of Fuentes' scenes as sites of access for the *voyeur*, for instance, is valid.[160] At times, it is as though Fuentes were given certain "keys" to the operations he witnesses, and these keys drive the action of the narrative.

A case in point is found at the end of "Guardafronteras," where Fuentes recounts the very operation he set out to experience. It is the infiltration of an enemy group attempting to escape the island by boat. As part of the coast guard plan, an informant (a fisherman by the name of "Saturno") is to liaise with the contras and offer them his vessel for the voyage out. Saturno is recruited by the contras' leader, Cancio Berol, in a scene described as if Fuentes were present as a *voyeur*: "¿Me permite un fósforo? Para el cigarro. Esto es. Gracias. ¿Cómo anda la pesca? Algo mal. Me imagino," Berol says.[161]

Given the covert nature of the operation, it is impossible for Fuentes to truly have known what was said in the exchange. The conversation is a drama where a confidant "yo," as Burgos puts it, is given access to the situation. Saturno is only the nickname of the informant in question, as Fuentes states at the end. Therefore, Fuentes' sources for the story are either the coast guardsmen he accompanies—and the tale is told over the campfire—or the informant himself. Either way, there is an alarming amount of detail given about the operation. The rendez-vous point, kilometer 83 on the main highway near Isabel de Sagua, is specified. The amount of the smuggling payment to Saturno ($4,500) is declared. The name of the targeted vessel, "La Haydelina," is recorded.[162]

[160] *Ibid.* 209.
[161] Fuentes, *Posición Uno,* 105.
[162] *Ibid.* 106 – 107.

In short, there is an organic reconstruction of the facts—as in Dashiell Hammett—through verbal exchanges. Saturno speaking to Berol, Berol speaking to his contra colleagues, Saturno recounting everything to his handlers, while Fuentes listens. The result is an effective dramatization from this *voyeur de guerre*.

The main points of this chapter began with the question of the Revolutionary Army: what it is, who composes it, what functions it serves, and what effects it has on its members and the surrounding civilians. According to Fuentes, this army had its roots in the original insurrection led by Castro during the 1950s, but evolved to fit its role in the construction of a socialist state.

As a result, the army becomes a generalized entity involving many civilian detachments. At first, civilians are negatively affected and divided by the *lucha contra bandidos*. Although described in a very measured manner, Fuentes highlights the pitfalls of mobilizing so many untrained men, which creates violent disturbances among the population. To remedy this, Fuentes builds an imaginary hero, Bunder Pacheco, to fill multiple roles in society, the principal one being that of chief justice.

Discipline is the number one rule in the Revolutionary Army, despite the abuses it may bring. In a certain way, this is the same discipline underscored by Hemingway in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, when he explains that Robert Jordan "was under communist discipline for the duration of the war . . . they were the only party whose program and whose discipline he could respect."[163] The authoritarian methods of Bunder Pacheco are as brutal as some of the tactics used by Comintern leaders during the Spanish Civil War, and in this Fuentes is loyal to Hemingway. Firing squads are ubiquitous and dispensed unrelentingly against contras of all shades: combatants,

[163] Qtd. in Milton A. Cohen, "Robert Jordan's (and Ernest Hemingway's) 'True Book': Myths and Moral Quandaries in For Whom the Bell Tolls," *The Hemingway Review* 36, no. 2: 178.

collaborators, those who harbor them, those who supply them food, etc. The way Fuentes sees it, an army is made "revolutionary" through this swift application of force. The most telling case being, perhaps, when prisoner Claudio Guzmán is told, "No, Claudio, things are over quickly at the firing wall."[164]

Yet casualties and damaged civilians are only part of the equation for being "revolutionary." Another aspect of it is the uplifting nature of mobilization. Throughout *Condenados* and *Posición,* emphasis is placed on the social mobility and educational development of those participating in various army programs. Being "revolutionary" is, in this sense, not about brandishing arms but about building infrastructure and community. This is one of the unique features of Cuba's Revolutionary Army at the time.

Whereas democracies tend to facilitate community work through non-profits, in Cuba during the '60s, this was a role filled by the military. To a certain extent, it is attractive. Imagine civilian volunteers in the U.S. being able to collaborate in Army projects such as public affairs, human intelligence, and infrastructure development. Saturno, from my previous example in "Guardafronteras," is a civilian collector of human intelligence.

The massive overhaul of Cuban society realized at this time resembles the wartime economies of World War II. Every citizen with his hands on the deck, involved in some way in their nation's defense and growth—a true source of social cohesion.

But that cohesion comes with certain consequences. For one, Fuentes observes that the downside to being a revolutionary is the effacement of one's individual identity. The characters Fuentes names throughout his narrative are therefore poorly developed (they are "paper," as I

[164] Fuentes, *Condenados de Condado*, 21.

would argue) and fashioned almost as mannequins giving the right answers to all of the questions posed. And there are many questions asked in these first two works, a trait indicative of Fuentes' journalistic training. In many cases, characters are attempting to "find something out" (the location of the enemy, one's personal history, one's feelings about the job assigned to them, etc.) so that they can make sense of their role in the overall scheme of society. This may be a side effect of suppressing individuality through communist discipline, at least in the early stages of the process.

Another question asked by the characters is: who is their enemy? Reading *Condenados* and *Posición* as manuals leads to the conclusion that the enemy is: a) corruptible under pressure; b) effeminate in behavior or appearance; c) contained to certain terrains ("zone M," "zone Z," etc.); d) poor in numbers, though at times strong in training, as in the seaborne CIA infiltration teams; e) top-heavy, meaning that everyone wants to take leadership roles.

Friends, in contrast, display a machismo-inspired pride which also leads to the overestimation of their abilities. The difference between them and their top-heavy adversaries is that friends of the revolution are practically whitewashed by adversity, able to improvise under shortages and with limited equipment. This makes them superior to their foes, whether or not they are supplied by the United States.

Revolutionary soldiers shoot revolutionary weapons, which translate into AKMs, Vz light machine guns, T-25 submachine guns, FAL rifles, M-52 rifles, and Steichin pistols, among others. These form a consistent revolutionary iconography in Fuentes' work. As previously mentioned through Burgos, such weapons are not only famous for their applications during the Cold War, but are status symbols within the Cuban martial class. Certain weapons such as the FAL rifle are carried by leaders. Others, like the T-25 issued to Belisario in "Belisario el aura," are used by soldiers, so that in the end, the weapons stock of the Revolutionary Army informs its hierarchy.

In comparison, enemies shoot mostly vintage World War II weapons, which in itself is a statement by Fuentes. The Thompson submachine guns, M-1 carbines, M-3 grease guns, and M-1 Garands that garnish the contra arsenal mark them as Yankee-inspired. This makes them easily identifiable among the Cuban population supportive of the revolutionary cause. Unlike America's war in Vietnam—where the enemy was virtually indistinguishable from civilians—Cuba's domestic counterinsurgency proved easier due to popular support. If Fuentes insinuates anything through *Condenados* and *Posición*, it is that your presumed friends are really revolutionaries hunting you down.

Fuentes' descriptive strategy is, as I have stated, a mix of war literature and journalism. Despite his accounts of certain covert operations and interrogations (and even the history of Cuba's clandestine services), the espionage part of his narrative does not come through yet in these first two works. I would more closely position Fuentes here as a propagandist rather than a spy fiction writer.

Expanded dialogues, dramatized action, poignant moments of brotherhood, and the voyeuristic privilege of the embedded reporter all qualify as parts of this propaganda. They are early artifacts of what will become a more mature spy fiction in *Guerreros*. But at this point, what can be said is that Fuentes' style tends toward, on the one hand, that of the "socialist hero" approach; and on the other, that of the "muddy journalist." The former assigns military virtues to its characters—their belief in the cause—like Robert Jordan in Hemingway. The latter deals with *seeking the action* which, in moments of peace, may just be a routine mission. In wartime, it could be the interception of bombers or reconnaissance aircraft, as are described in certain chapters.

The point is that a give-and-take is created between these two approaches as a means of achieving the socialist ideal—that of the long-suffering soldier. It is not necessary to score hits on

the enemy to arrive at this ideal. Bouzac the air force pilot never does, and none of the engineering brigades ever fire a shot, either. Yet both are characterized as “silent heroes,” as a type of martyr to the cause.

War Drums and Drummers

Operation Olive is the name assigned to the Cuban counterinsurgency mission in Angola in the opening chapter of *El último santuario*. Like the proxy war it recounts, the narrative seems caught between the styles of both American war fiction on Vietnam and its Soviet counterpart on Afghanistan. The deployed journalist, Norberto Fuentes, flies aboard an Mi-8 helicopter transporting a captain Higinio and his two Angolan staff, who are scheduled to replace a FAPLA[165] brigade commander. That is the mission: a 30-minute flight from Bié, located 1,780 meters above sea level, to Camacupa in the center of Angola.

The tone is reminiscent of the previously mentioned war correspondent Murray Sayle of the *Sunday Times* of London. Fuentes mentions the points of departure and arrival, the task at hand, the machine aboard which he flies—with its characteristic 12.7-millimeter nose-mounted machine gun—and finishes the second paragraph with the satisfying admission that "you couldn't deny this is a notable way to spend the afternoon."[166]

He describes his surroundings as Sayle does at the Phu Bai firebase in Vietnam: how you learn to put out your cigarettes on the cover of the reserve fuel tank; how you prop up your AKM in the fuselage gun ports; how you acquire the same jargon as the veterans. These scenes recall those of Sayle when he watches a Vietnamese man engrave G.I. cigarette lighters with "Make war, not work," or "I pass through the valley of death unafraid, for I am the meanest bastard in the valley."[167] Or, when Sayle stands in the officers' chow line and eats what the soldiers eat. "You

[165] Popular Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola, the official military wing of the political party, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).
[166] Fuentes, *El Último Santuario: Una Novela de Campaña*, 12.
[167] Knightley, *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam, The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker*, 404.

know you've reached their level," Fuentes tells us, "when they've stopped telling you stories about lions or vipers, and when you use the same language as the rest of the troops and 'hear the same sparrows,' which is their way of saying nostalgia."[168]

This perspective of being immersed in the typical soldier's experience was advocated for by journalists such as Sayle, but also by official entities like the Soviet Literary Association of the Army and Navy (LOKAF). From its beginnings in the 1930s, LOKAF was responsible for the oversight of all of the literature produced on the Red Army, and complained about the lack of journalists' familiarity with military operations. Fuentes dispels this notion of inexperience through his elaborate descriptions of flight conditions, the combat history of the troops (many of the reinforcements, he says, are veterans of the Escambray), or the way one suppresses hostile areas with small arms fire during a fly-over.

As one Soviet officer, General Major Tkachev of the anti-aircraft defense wing, said in 1964: "To write about the modern military, you have to know about it."[169] Fuentes strives to demonstrate this knowledge by explaining local terminology (the enemies are known as the *kwachas*) or comparing the Mi-8's machine gun to the "Yankee .50-caliber." He even discusses the retirement of the Mi-8's predecessor, the Mi-4, from Cuban service in the late 1970s. "So noble, those machines; they led the entire campaign against the *bandidos* of the Escambray and could carry a dozen combatants," reflects Fuentes.[170]

In reality, these are thoughts on the changing nature of warfare as he knew it, a trait shared with Soviet war fiction of that time. Nikolaj Gorbachev, for instance, author of a trilogy

[168] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 13.
[169] Hooker, *The Military Uses of Literature: Fiction and the Armed Forces in the Soviet Union*, 19.
[170] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 11–12.

documenting the addition of deadlier weapons to the Soviet arsenal, concluded that the interface between man and machine, more intimate now than that between men themselves, made it so that the soldier's psychology on the modern battlefield was one of "mental dynamism." In other words, an interior concentration without which it was impossible to "develop the entire complex of moral, psychological, and ethical characteristics of the hero."[171]

When Fuentes explains how the helicopter pilot "shifts his view from his flight instruments on the dashboard to the side window, in order to observe a cumulonimbus cloud," he is alluding to this sort of mental processing.[172] The thoughts and feelings of soldiers are manifested as relationships with the machines they handle. The expected rapport between humans is channeled, in a way, through these machines, as in much of the Soviet fiction on their war in Afghanistan.

Mark Hooker writes, for instance, about the tendency of Soviet authors to critique their vehicles, as in this passage from Sergej Sokolov's *The Tiger's Claw* (1989):

> "Inside the vehicle . . . you are protected from sharpshooters and shrapnel . . . but up top you can see better. There's more chance you can see the bad guys. As far as mines are concerned, it's clear: if one goes off under the vehicle, you get thrown off the skin and in the worst case, you break something. Inside—you've had it."[173]

The passage explains Senior Lieutenant Egorov's reasoning for riding atop his BMP armored personal carrier as opposed to inside. Though this practice is a departure from standard operating procedure, it is the result of this soldier's familiarity with his equipment. He knows best how to treat it and how to outfit it, as in Leonid Bogachuk's *Krez and Cleopatra* (1987), where the driver of another BMP uses mattresses to buffer the blasts from mines. In Bogachuk's story, this remedy

[171] Hooker, *The Military Uses of Literature*, 25.
[172] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 12.
[173] Hooker, *The Military Uses of Literature*, 196.

conditions the driver's relationship with a major he must transport to a dangerous area, whom he warns about the risks.[174]

In a similar fashion, Fuentes' experience with military vehicles causes him concern. Just short of personifying them, he reflects that due to the position of the reserve fuel tank in the helicopter, "You immediately comprehend that you're flying in what in your mind most closely resembles a box of dynamite."[175] His reaction to this unavoidable danger manifests, as in Gorbachev, from within. "The truth," he admits, "is that you're overwhelmed by anguish and an indecipherable sadness" on the way to the mission.[176] Bottled up inside, the emotions split between man and machine—and the mediation the latter provides vis-à-vis other humans—are patent evidence of Gorbachev's "mental dynamism."

In fact, this is the reason for evolving as a human, says Fuentes. The helicopter is the cause of one's aging and the source of one's wisdom. "The first time you get a glance of the old man you will become," Fuentes explains, "it's due to the helicopters."[177] This is a crucial element for understanding the changing dynamics of the war in Angola. The mechanization involved in modern warfare, instead of turning men into catatonic beings, elicits a psychology of shared destiny with their equipment. They go where the helicopters go, they fire at where they are being fired from. "So you smoke your cigarette like someone sentenced to death," Fuentes says, "and you curse the existence of the [reserve] tank and get ready to let loose all of the lead you can."[178]

The first pages of *Santuario* are, in my opinion, some of the most brilliant lines written by Fuentes during his literary career. His attention to the details of the military adventure proves that

[174] *Ibid*.
[175] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 12.
[176] *Ibid.*, 14.
[177] *Ibid.*, 11.
[178] *Ibid.*, 13.

he "knows" the army, to repeat the words of General Major Tkachev. The landscaping of his ride, doubled by the fact that it is an insertion (and therefore a beginning) into the theater of operations, blesses it with literary intensity. A true microcosm of the experience to come.

Appreciating *Santuario* for what it is as a work of literature requires a discussion of its photography. For every picturesque scene of combat, every field reflection, there seems to be a photograph to inform it. The photographs in *Santuario* serve as the script for its elaborations. Like the war correspondents of Vietnam, Fuentes faces pressure to submit photographs that are neither too graphic nor too staged. In the prints following his introduction, I believe he achieves this kind of balance.

There are a few scenes of combat such as the soldier under fire heading for cover, or the helicopter pilot who spots a flanking enemy force. But the priority in these first photos are the faces of the men, especially the face of General Raúl Menéndez Tomassevich.[179]

Reverence for military superiors like Tomassevich became a theme in Soviet war fiction from 1964 onward. At the Main Political Directorate (MPD) meeting with writers and artists that year, Soviet Minister of Defense Rodion Malinovskij underscored the "special importance of a soldier's unquestioning subordination to his commander."[180] This statement may sound authoritarian, but in reality, it is due to the fact that Soviet writers approached the question of obedience through that of experience, of veterans that could be trusted.

As in Fuentes' introduction to the novel, his initial photographs capture the seriousness of war in hardened faces. There are no smiles and the soldiers stare directly into the camera. General Tomassevich appears three times—once in 1963, as the young commander of the LCB, and twice

[179] *Ibid.*, 17–31.
[180] Hooker, *The Military Uses of Literature*, 14.

in 1981 and 1982, respectively. The idea here is to communicate the experience of those in charge of the Cuban intervention, which, unlike the Soviet war in Afghanistan, replaced its commanders with much less frequency. For one, because the number of qualified Cuban personnel had its limits. But secondly, because Fidel, in an effort to confuse the enemy as much as possible, personally directed certain aspects of the war by telephone from Havana. Having a stable high command was therefore crucial for the consistent interpretation of orders.

In these photos, one can observe the seniority of Tomassevich, who has now become a seasoned general in an unknown land. Fuentes too appears in the background of all three photographs. He is unbashful in highlighting his loyalty to the military elite.

In the chapter that follows, he expands this loyalty to include other compatriots from the Escambray. After landing in Angola's capital city, Luanda, Fuentes is given his official tour of the Cuban military installation there. The question of experience does not fade away. A Lieutenant Colonel Monzón, veteran political officer of the Escambray, drives him around the premises, provoking a reflection in Fuentes: "How could you not remember him when he was the one who roused suspicions over everything you ever wrote about the Escambray."[181] Monzón is one of the many faces of Cuban military expertise, as is Tomassevich—the "cat"—whose nickname I explained earlier. Together, they form an old band of *broders* whose history in the Revolution confirms their loyalty.

The experience gained by Cuban soldiers during the Escambray is what initially distinguishes them from the Angolans. "The sight of those Cubans" disembarking from the plane, Fuentes writes, "makes you reclaim a feeling—the one of old experience." An old bush war in

[181] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 21.

Cuba's own countryside, whose veterans are unmistakable in this new conflict. "Powerful farm hands" and an "uneasiness in their tense white dress shirts" give them away in what is supposed to be a clandestine operation of support. Had their transport aircraft been forced to land somewhere other than Luanda, "the authorities of that place would have understood they were a target for invasion."[182]

Nevertheless, this "bush war" is different, as Fuentes finds out. Monzón warns him, "Get ready, this isn't the Escambray. The mines are wreaking havoc."[183] Then there is the first description of Cuban casualties arriving: one killed, butchered up to the abdomen, and four wounded. "What was left of him," Fuentes laments about the dead man.[184] The image of this war slowly becomes unreal to Fuentes. On the television at his station, Fuentes watches a heavily edited propaganda reel in which footage from Vietnam is intercalated with images from Angola. A C-130 Hercules, the prominent NATO transport plane of the time, is shot down in the film by a quad .50-caliber anti-aircraft gun (also used by NATO).[185] This is an anachronism which foreshadows the changing nature of this conflict in which experience will not prove to be enough. It is a way of highlighting the fact that there is no equivalence with the Escambray, just as there is none between Angola and Vietnam.

One of the interesting relationships that forms in *Santuario* is that of the media men—Fuentes and his film attaché, René David. Appearing from the very beginning of the work, René returns a few episodes later in a poignant display of camaraderie. The scene transpires aboard the same Mi-8 helicopter as before, and shows David and Fuentes commiserating through a make-

[182] *Ibid.*, 18.
[183] *Ibid.*, 19.
[184] *Ibid.*
[185] *Ibid.*, 20–21.

believe radio chat. Each of them assumes a call-sign ("Muppet 1" for René and "Muppet 2" for Fuentes), and each demonstrates the soldierly love they have for one another as they crack jokes and ruminate on the purpose of their media.

They share the same nostalgia about being so far away from home (13,000 kilometers). But unlike the journalists of Vietnam, Fuentes and David appear less concerned with uncovering the "truth" of their experience, and more with memorializing their adventure. "The movie that no one will ever see," Fuentes calls it, "Secret material."[186] In this, he echoes the opinions of some of Vietnam's so-called "mercenary journalists." People like Tim Page, who, after trekking across Asia with his buddies (Eddie Adams, Sean Flynn, Steve Nerthup and others), finds excitement in the dangerous parts of Vietnam. "No one wants to admit it," Page confesses, "but there is a lot of sex appeal and a lot of fun in weapons."[187] Such a statement would help explain Fuentes' choice of call signs based on the popular TV show, *The Muppet Babies*. He is implying the entertainment aspect of the conflict and how, to a certain extent, his account of it must be exciting for the Cuban public back home.

Accordingly, Fuentes exhibits a fascination with life in the field, romanticizing scenes such as the landing of his Mi-8 in front of the Angolan brigade staff. Despite the sound of church bells ringing in the distance (a local priest has been abducted by *kwacha* guerrillas), he feels compelled to paint the layout of the guard: a BTR-152 on the runway, to cover the vulnerable helicopter, and two staff jeeps. "Our machine slid 100 meters on its four landing wheels before hitting the airstrip softened by the rain, and stopped in front of the two jeeps . . . while the church bells rang . . . and they kept ringing the entire time of the meeting with the brigade Chief of Staff."[188] The scene is a

[186] *Ibid.*, 37.
[187] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 419.
[188] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 40.

ceremony between Fuentes and the unreachable characters who are really running the war. Descriptions like these are therefore intended to highlight the monumentality of Cuba's presence in this faraway country.

The dramatism that comes forth in this scene is often repeated in *Santuario*. For instance, in the preceding chapter, when Fuentes describes his landing in Luanda with a similar flair. "Red is the earth," he begins, "and wild and dusty and with sparse and thin bushes" when the "reverberating terrain, despite the possible mitigating effect of the *casimbo* [low-level clouds], is whirled up."[189] He idealizes the environment so that, in reality, he is not too far from the film reel he watches upon arriving. When he finally meets with General Tomassevich en tête à tête, we discover that part of his writing strategy is based on idealization and the omission of critical facts.

"How should we portray Savimbi?" Tomassevich asks. "On the run, sir, on the run," replies Fuentes. Though Tomassevich agrees, he adds the confession that "what we really need to omit is another thing. That the bastard's a prodigy and that he's slipped through my hands three times. Three times."[190]

Fuentes decides to remove this detail, citing socialist realism along the way. Tomassevich tells him: "You be careful, I'm telling you. Because what I'm asking *you* is, 'What if afterwards I get pissed off due to that socialist realism of yours?'"[191] Here we see the answer to why Fuentes would choose to idealize the nature of military maneuvers. True, there are mentions of casualties and even strong depictions of them, but at the moment of stepping onto the battlefield, Fuentes' landscapes acquire a heroic tone. Thus, although *Santuario* can be considered a proper novel,

[189] *Ibid.*, 17.
[190] *Ibid.*, 77.
[191] *Ibid.*, 78.

Fuentes is still bound by some of the social-realist conventions of *Posición.* Mandated by his superior, and in full observance of the command seen in Soviet war fiction, he must abide by these rules to maintain his writing privileges.

However, in contrast with the Soviet style of realism, which called for an emphasis on the role of the party in achieving victory, Tomassevich asks for something different. When he criticizes Fuentes for "that socialist realism of his," he is referring to the truths told in Fuentes' previous work, *Condenados*. The work that got him in trouble in 1968.

Recall that in *Condenados*, Fuentes creates his socialist hero (Bunder Pacheco) amid the painful consequences of the counterinsurgency in the Escambray. Civilian killings, homophobia, and summary executions are some examples. In this case, Tomassevich wants a more sanitized account, as if he were ordering the commission of a sculpture in his image. "And that part about him [Jonas Savimbi] being intelligent, forget that too," he instructs Fuentes, "Put him in there as a gruffly faggot, because that's what the bastard is."[192]

To sum up his position, Fuentes must stay within the frames of camaraderie, technology, and, as in previous works, the notion of soldierly endurance. Capturing what the soldiers must withstand during their internationalist missions is a crucial facet of Fuentes' war writing. Reminding the reader of the discipline expected of Cuban soldiers is his didactic aim. This is the case, for example, when he observes the life of the enlisted men at the Luanda barracks. "I will not accept any disrespect," a Lieutenant Colonel Barrera tells his men, "I won't allow it as a man nor as an official of the Armed Forces."[193]

[192] *Ibid.*, 77.
[193] *Ibid.*, 47.

Another lieutenant colonel, in a show of callousness, has "a severe look which corresponds to the type that administers an arsenal."[194] When Fuentes receives his weapon from this armorer, Figueira, he notes his indifference to what Fuentes considers a ceremonious procedure. "His [only] concern was that you sign the receipt of issuance and, when the mission was over, that the serial number line up with the weapon he put at your disposal."[195]

The armorer's countenance is robotic and shows no signs of symbolic attachment to the weapons, unlike Fuentes. For Fuentes, each weapon is a marvel, a fetish, as mentioned by Tim Page previously. "With this AKM and its magazines," he says, "you possess all the dignity in the world." He then comments on its "pleasurable scent of mineral oil" and its "appropriate volume of fire."[196]

The technology associated with Angola becomes, as mentioned, part of Fuentes' internal disposition. It is an aspect of his writing that demonstrates his interest in war and its tools, while simultaneously offering another avenue of approach to his fiction given the limitations imposed by General Tomassevich.

In chapter five, Fuentes appends photographs to a blend of several experiences. He combines scenes from the Escambray (can he ever forget?), his visit to a Luanda medical center, and a night spent with the officers of a Cuban logistics unit.

Fatigue is the topic he begins with. When you are fatigued, he explains, you are certain of your worthiness in war. When your camouflage cannot physically hold any more mud, when you

[194] *Ibid.*
[195] *Ibid.*, 48.
[196] *Ibid.*

begin to curse the machines carrying you to and from embattled areas—that is when you know you have been anodized by combat.

The way Fuentes characterizes fatigue in this chapter is through the breaking in of his uniform. The issue of one's uniform is the beginning, an almost ceremonial affair which ends with the already mentioned receipt of one's rifle. For Fuentes, the feeling of experience, transmuted here into fatigue, starts with this allusion. *Acartonado* (starched) is the adjective he uses in this case. When your uniform crumples, he explains, you know you have been "cured with the salt of combat."[197]

Another way in which fatigue manifests itself is through injuries. On only his second day in Angola, Fuentes visits the army hospital to interview some of the aforementioned Cuban wounded. One of the men, still under the effects of anesthesia, is unaware that his left leg has been amputated. "Miss, why don't you do what you did to my right foot on my left?" the man asks, "my left hurts a lot, Miss."[198]

Another man, jollier in mood, expels his angst through jokes. He calls himself a "mummy" because of all of the bandages he is wrapped in, but is also unaware of how badly he has been burned in the vehicle fire produced by an anti-tank mine.[199]

Fuentes responds to this with a desire for vengeance. There is nothing he can do for these men except "take it [his rifle] up, above all, for the dead Cuban."[200] He also would like "a special encounter" with Augusto Jacinto, the UNITA saboteur who planted the device on the road.[201]

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[197] *Ibid.*, 43.
[198] *Ibid.*, 50.
[199] *Ibid.*, 51.
[200] *Ibid.*, 48.
[201] *Ibid.*, 49.

Yet all of this is mental. In reality, Fuentes' search for vengeance turns to frustration. "What you do now," he explains, "is you start to take it out on the 'melons,'" the nickname given to the Mi-8s due to their rounded fuselage. You "enjoy whatever shit is possible to enjoy in this place" until the right language for the occasion strikes you to write.[202] In his view, finding the correct words for reproducing this fatigue is like fighting a black hole, which, "if they really existed, you'd want for them to suck up and dissolve one or two of these braves, or all of them together."[203] The "braves" here refer to the soldiers he is surrounded by, whose trust he struggles to acquire during his visits.

The only relatable experience Fuentes brings to Angola are the high times of the Escambray. When he hazards some anecdotes in front of his comrades, he notices that they "remain with their eyes pinned on you, which you can do nothing to divert."[204] It is difficult for Fuentes to imagine his narrative on fatigue, much less translate it for the soldiers. But with time, he begins to acclimate himself and share his memories.

There is a brief discussion of this process as he realizes how to accommodate his words to the new reality he is witnessing, where "nothing can nor should be polished," but should "flow like a rockslide, if you can call that flowing."[205] A concern for the capacity of words is expressed, for whether or not they can form a coherent account of his thoughts. The answer he finds to this is again, frustration: spending "an entire night on the impossible task of threading a needle to sow this god-damned plastic button on the sleeve of my uniform."[206] The simple task of telling a story,

[202] *Ibid.*, 42–43.
[203] *Ibid.*, 41.
[204] *Ibid.*
[205] *Ibid.*, 42.
[206] *Ibid.*

which he as a writer should be gifted in, is met with a routine task turned impossible. Fuentes' frustration is therefore summed up in that thought—sowing a button back onto a uniform.

Perhaps this is a way of approaching the disorderly character of the chapter. Not because it doesn't read well (there is enough poetic flow to string his reflections together), but because it is a form of repair. The repair of his past euphoria in the Escambray campaign after its shattering by the more challenging realities here. Angola presents many more enemies and truly disabling combat wounds, unlike the Escambray. The soldiers of old—that feeling of "old experience"—have now aged and are not the same men. The new recruits are from a different generation. The enemy is a uniformed army. There is child hunger in the streets, for which the logistics crew can do nothing due to the fear of intelligence leaks about their supply lines. Civilians have been recruited in a way opposite that of the Escambray: not for the cause, but as agents against it. One child, for instance, levels a ten-story building in the city of Huambo after receiving free rations from Cuban troops. Their response is a withholding of civilian food aid. Angola is an altogether different conflict than the Escambray, requiring a different mode of narration. As Fuentes calls it, a "rockslide."

That said, there are certain comforts afforded to a writer of the Revolution abroad. Throughout his travels around the country, Fuentes never lacks a generous supply of fruit cocktail rations (a luxury hard to come by), Bond brand paper, and Mirado pencils for his notes.[207] He is well-equipped by the boys of the supply unit he visits, who have a respect for creative work. Thus, however difficult it may be for him to reconcile with his Angolan adventure, it is clear that in Cuba, a writer of the internationalist movement is considered privileged.

[207] *Ibid.*, 55.

So privileged that in this chapter, Fuentes sustains a conversation about poetry with the supply crew. In a way reminiscent of the Red Army, who were conditioned to be engaged readers, the soldiers bring up authors such as César Vallejo and Walt Whitman. Fuentes takes this narrative turn not only out of adherence to a conversation he may have had, but out of an appreciation for war as an aesthetic phenomenon. If Hemingway called war "one of the great subjects," then Fuentes' gesture here reemphasizes this fact. While getting dressed at the supply depot, for instance, Fuentes' boots, fatigues, rifle, and sidearm become "an intellectualized mix of Che Guevara's campaign with Norberto Fuentes."[208] That is to say, he feels self-actualized in war, like many of the men in Hemingway or Malraux.

One need only watch modern war documentaries such as *Restrepo* (2010) to understand how the exposure to combat—even amid the death of one's friends—can become an addictive desire. When asked what he will do upon his return to civilian life, one of the soldiers in *Restrepo* does not know how to reply. Similarly, in accounts such as that of the British mercenary Anthony Loyd, war becomes a solution to life's problems. "I had come to Bosnia partially as an adventure," he admits in *My War Gone By* (1999), but after a while I got into the infinite death trip . . . I was delighted with most of what the war had brought me: chicks, kicks, cash, and chaos."[209]

Despite some of the more melancholy moments in *Santuario*, Fuentes adheres to this view in earnest. He is not only concerned with the sublimation of combat experiences, but with the psychological reinforcement it lends to one's ego. Imagining himself as a derivative of Che Guevara is one such example, but so are the many other instances of the Cubans' resilience under pressure. War gives men a kick in the emotional sense, a feeling of euphoria thanks to the

[208] *Ibid.*, 52.
[209] Loyd, *My War Gone By, I Miss It So*, 207.

ubiquitous possibility of one's end. And nowhere is this more evident than in the historical record of the Cuban combat in Angola.

In order to judge the proximity of Fuentes' fiction to the actual historical experience of Angola, a word must be said about this conflict's major landmarks. First, the Angolan Civil War was a poorly documented event in journalistic terms. Very few war correspondents managed to make it onto the scene, and those who did were usually from South African dailies such as the *Rand Daily Mail* and *Cape Times*. On November 6, 1975, at the start of the South African intervention in the country, the *London Times* writes that "one of the more bizarre aspects of the war in Angola is that hardly anyone has seen it."[210] For this reason, Fuentes enjoys special access to the conflict that few others had.

According to the dates provided in *Santuario*, Fuentes was in Angola in 1981, between the two peaks of Cuban activity. This would explain his concerns regarding asymmetrical warfare. At this particular point in the conflict, Cuban forces were experiencing a lull in conventional combat and were instead focused on rooting out pockets of UNITA and FNLA forces which were still being supplied by South Africa. Hence, most of the fighting at this time was low-intensity and initiated by search and destroy tactics via helicopter. Fuentes' constant preoccupation with crash or emergency landings is therefore legitimate.

The most important moments of Cuban military action in Angola occurred at the very beginning, from 1975 – 1976, and at the end, from 1987 – 1988. Fuentes ostensibly misses these events, which gives him a certain literary freedom in recounting his in-between part of the war.

[210] Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa: 1959-1976*, 300.

Unbound from the strict historical documentation which exists about this period, he is able to let his imagination fly.

Piero Gleijeses offers a comprehensive summary of the Cuban mission in Angola. The first decisive moments come when the South African Defense Force (SADF) invades the country in October 1975 with its primary attack column, dubbed "Zulu." Initially, Zulu is composed mostly of black Angolans (about 1,000) from the FNLA. Led by SADF specialists, these blacks serve as both the spearhead and the cover for South Africa's penetration into the country.[211] Historian Sophia du Preez, one of the most reliable voices on the conflict apart from Gleijeses, estimates that the number of South African advisors in Zulu may have been around 150.[212] However, South African military archives have yet to be opened to the public.

A second column named "Foxbat," armed with Eland-90 armored cars and other heavy weapons, was composed exclusively of South Africans. Its responsibility was to penetrate the central part of Angola to cover Zulu's coastal advance.

Zulu and Foxbat both entered Angola in a northward push through neighboring Namibia, their goal being to arrive in Luanda before the official Independence Day on November 11th. On that day, the Portuguese would leave the country and transfer power to "the people of Angola," a vague group with no specific party. This would cause a power vacuum that the various factions in the country would then scramble to fill.

Urged on by the French and American governments (who both maintained agents there), the SADF's role was to facilitate victory for the right-leaning Angolan factions, UNITA and the

[211] *Ibid.*, 300–302.
[212] Qtd. in *Ibid.*, 301.

FNLA. Cuban resistance to these two groups proved pivotal in the rise to power of the competing political party, the MPLA.[213]

The Cuban mission, like that of South Africa, was initially conceived as an advisorship to the FAPLA forces. This is one reason why Fuentes chooses to heroicize his compatriots: they truly were and would continue to be outnumbered until near the end of the struggle. In addition, mastering a foreign group of soldiers like FAPLA demonstrated considerable cultural dexterity on the part of the Cubans, which appears in Fuentes' adoption of certain Angolan expressions in the text.

The first notable opposition to Zulu took place on November 2 – 3, 1975, at a town called Catengue. After speeding through most of Southern Angola along its coastal road, Zulu had captured the town of Roçadas and a major port at Moçamedes. At the crossroads of Catengue, 35 Cuban instructors and several hundred FAPLA inflicted significant casualties on the column, causing them to delay their advance on another town, further north, called Benguela. It was here that four Cubans died, with another seven wounded and 13 missing in action. SADF Commander Jan Breytenbach would later write that at this engagement, "we were facing the best organized and heaviest FAPLA opposition to date."[214]

Despite this setback, Zulu's advance continued. On November 5th, they marched into the town of Benguela, which was a major stop before reaching the Angolan port of Lobito. By the 7th, Lobito was under SADF control, leaving only a small village known as Quifangondo between them and the Angolan capital, Luanda.

[213] *Ibid.*, 304–10.
[214] *Ibid.*, 303.

Fidel Castro has foreseen this eventuality and dispatched a battalion of Cuban special forces (652 men in total) on November 4th. They left Cuba on November 7th and arrived at the outskirts of Luanda on the 9th. Simultaneously, Castro ordered a contingent of 100 heavy weapons specialists to Brazzaville in the Congo. These forces were in place by November 6th and had begun training in the use of their new Soviet anti-aircraft system, the Flecha C-2M.[215] Fuentes refers to this weapon at several points in *Santuario*.

Quifangondo, for its part, was "a village in the middle of a broad marshy plain" which would prove fatal to the FNLA goal of capturing Luanda by November 11th. Holden Roberto, leader of the FNLA, opted for a very risky approach to the town along its main road instead of flanking through the swamps. The result was a complete route of FNLA forces. On "Death Road," as it was later known, "artillery fire rained upon the attackers as they approached the Bengo River," explains South African military analyst Willem Steenkamp. "One by one, the armored cars were knocked out," he adds, and "soon soldiers began trickling away, including all those detailed to help the South African artillerymen."[216] This damage was caused by BM-21 multiple rocket launchers manned by the aforementioned Cuban specialists. Their participation was therefore crucial to preventing any party other than the MPLA from inheriting power on Independence Day.

Even though he was not there, Fuentes does not omit this critical moment in his account. "On November 10, 1975," he explains, "a barrage of reactive artillery from BM-21s launched by Cuban internationalist combatants . . . projected itself over the poultry farm" at Quifangondo.[217] The date and weapon coincide with those given by Steenkamp in his record. However, Fuentes takes additional poetic license to relate that the survivors of this attack had a supposed "testimony"

[215] *Ibid.*, 303–10.
[216] Qtd. in *Ibid.*, 309–11.
[217] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 127.

and "considered it necessary to take it to the United Nations: the Cubans were using nuclear weapons."[218]

This, of course, is an exaggeration of the effects of these lethal rocket launchers. Gleijeses makes no comment on any United Nations complaint of this sort. As a result, the reference to nuclear weapons serves only to accentuate the kind of disinformation being practiced elsewhere in Angola. Even though Fuentes' intention here is to exalt the surprising victory of the Cubans, it doubles as a counter to the extravagant stories being disseminated by the CIA.

John Stockwell, then-chief of the CIA Angola Task Force, admits that "the propaganda output from [the] Lusaka [CIA station] was voluminous and imaginative, if occasionally beyond credibility."[219] Among the products Gleijeses cites are a false UNITA communiqué stating that 35 Cuban mercenaries had been captured after a successful raid on the town of Malange, 240 miles east of Luanda. The "capture" yielded a document supposedly prepared by MPLA leader Agostinho Neto, who promised to grant land to the Cubans in Malange upon its successful defense. The truth is that Malange was never occupied, but, as in Fuentes, one must accept such liberty of design.[220]

A reflection of said design appears just following Fuentes' remark about the BM-21s. He paints a colorful party scene at CIA headquarters, Langley, "which had been decorated with crepe paper . . . and where they were serving very chill champagne in plastic cups." The CIA team is supposedly celebrating the victory of the FNLA, but is then interrupted with the news of these deadly rockets impacting at Quifangondo. It ruins the CIA toast.[221]

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[218] *Ibid*.
[219] Qtd. in Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 325.
[220] *Ibid.*, 326.
[221] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 127.

The intercalation of fact and fiction here is intended to instill the pride of payback to the United States in its readers. For instance, a second CIA concoction cited by Stockwell is a fictitious report of Cuban soldiers raping Ovimbundu girls. After their arrest, the soldiers are then ironically "tried" before a jury of Ovimbundu women. This may be the reason why Fuentes invents the nuclear complaint filed by FNLA soldiers—to signal the cowardice of other stories being disseminated.[222]

In a similar manner, Fuentes fashions a tale about "an FNLA hierarch, a genuine man of letters with a European degree and published dissertation whose name does not come easily because he is an anthropophage." In the scene Fuentes constructs around this man is a feast of human body parts such as livers, arms, and thighs, "with their reddish fibers already peeled."[223] This is another stab at the FNLA leadership at Quifangondo, made more apparent by Fuentes' moral judgment that "Cuba was going all-in with the MPLA, the only organization which, in its eyes, was clear of straw and dirt."[224]

These somewhat amusing insights into the information war of Angola demonstrate how far fallacies could fly. Descriptions in the formal press are no different. For instance, Gleijeses reveals that Andrew Jaffe, Nairobi bureau chief for *Newsweek*, had to wait one month for his story about South Africa's involvement to go live. Jaffe had discovered this fact on November 15th, as indicated in a cable to the American ambassador to Zambia, Jean Wilkowski. However, *Newsweek* only partially published the details on December 1st ("some reports indicated that South African troops *may* have entered the war"), waiting until December 29th before releasing the full admission.

[222] Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 326.
[223] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 128.
[224] *Ibid.*, 129.

"Even the MPLA," Gleijeses states, "failed to realize for several days that the whites in the invading column were not mercenaries."[225]

The timing and gradual release of this truth—that South Africa had committed a conventional force to the war, that they were supporting FNLA and UNITA troops—allows room for elaborations in the fictional sphere. When in doubt, Fuentes fills these lacunae with imaginative scenes like the CIA party, which are not far from the ambiguous terms used by South African leadership to conscript more young men. The areas in Angola were merely referred to as "operational areas," though no one knew where these were.

Questions about the reliability of reports push Fuentes to make certain ripostes to the enemy's fabulations. The example of the "FNLA cannibal" is a case in point. Another example is Fuentes' treatment of the photograph's fidelity in comparison to writing the experience of war. This is a topic Fuentes takes up in chapter seven, when he writes a letter to his fellow photojournalist, Ernesto ("Fernan") Fernández.

In his letter, Fuentes points out the limited competition there is in Angola for covering the conflict. Since there are very few correspondents deployed, he is one of the only writers able to "recount photographs," as he puts it, in a way that renders combat more palpable. The arrival of Fernan in Luanda triggers jealousy in Fuentes' other photojournalist, René David. "Look, René, don't be worried," he tells him, "this is what the airlines would call competition. It's a guarantee of better service."[226] Though benign in tone, this comment presents the reader with the challenge of determining which is more effective in documenting war: psychological streams of prose, or still representations of life-threatening moments.

[225] Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 326–27.
[226] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 56.

The competition between David and Fernan makes Fuentes stand out as a unique witness, as he makes clear when he tells them, "Envy me!" in a quote from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.[227] This envy is the feeling of privilege of being a "total ranger," Fuentes says, for being able to lean against "the mudflaps of a Soviet jeep, three inches away from my folding-stock AKM, with my chest rig to one side and my camoflauge outfit."[228] That is to say, Fuentes dares the photographers to try and surpass his embodiment of the war correspondent. "An atrocious envy you must feel," Fuentes writes to Fernan, "don't pretend you don't."[229]

In addition, Fuentes undermines the skill of the photographer by telling Fernan that ultimately, he will have to craft a story, not show it. "And I'll watch you arrive," Fuentes writes, "balder and clumsier each day, incapable of taking any photograph worth a dime. And if you do take a few, they'll be tainted by improper handling or the habitual state of deterioration in which your obsolete cameras find themselves."[230]

There is some humor in these statements in the way one would banter with a colleague. Fuentes does admit that "this is a letter between pals, with its overdose of bullshit."[231] However, his references to the unreliability of a photographer's equipment insinuates the advantages of the written word. This is confirmed when in later descriptions of their helicopter taking fire, Fuentes portrays himself at the mercy of the pilots, who order him to plug the leak from a hit on the main rotor's hydraulics. "Put your finger here on these pipes in the roof," the navigator tells him, "be careful because the oil is scathing hot. If a lot starts to come out, let us know."[232]

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[227] *Ibid*.
[228] *Ibid*.
[229] *Ibid.*
[230] *Ibid.*, 58.
[231] *Ibid.*, 57.
[232] *Ibid.*, 63.

Such scenes would be impossible to document with a camera in one's hands, Fuentes implies. The only recourse is to remember one's stream of thoughts in that instant, when the writer becomes participant and his main concern is whether or not he will be able to land. With no time to properly focus an image, the photographer becomes impotent and unable to frame it. As an anecdote, Fuentes adds that Robert Capa, suppressed on the beaches of Normandy by German artillery, attempted to get his shots by raising his camera above his head, to which the regimental chaplain quipped, "If you don't like this, why the hell don't you go back?"[233]

Chapter seven is full of interruptions of photography—mostly banks from the helicopters evading anti-aircraft fire—which increase the value of the narrated account. For instance, certain events are irrecuperable in time, like the story of the Angolan helicopter crew who bailed prematurely after receiving only a few shots. The crew leaves the 18 soldiers they were transporting to their fates, at an altitude of 400 feet. Another example is the conversation Fuentes has with Tomassevich, who confesses that his primary concern during operations is the lives of his men. The enveloping nature of Tomassevich's stories is something a camera might miss, since he tells them as if Fuentes were there: "Weren't you there? Don't you remember?" Tomassevich asks.[234]

Furthermore, the camera lacks historical perspective according to Fuentes. Despite praising the "dramatic authenticity that an out-of-focus war photograph can achieve," the necessities of battle—when one "sees the fan of tracers come from below"—cause a certain loss of realism in photography. In the heat of the action, Fuentes explains, "you jump head-first onto your AKM mounted in the gun port, and your first riposte with gunfire is done blindly."[235] The blindness in

[233] *Ibid.*, 61.
[234] *Ibid.*, 69.
[235] *Ibid.*, 61.

this scene remits the reader to the instantaneous nature of combat, to the camera's ability to see only one point in a historical matrix. For instance, thanks to his narrative's ability to look backwards and forwards in time, one realizes that the scenes Fuentes describes are indeed accurate descriptions of the combat going on.

In 1981, when Fuentes is ostensibly taking his notes, the Cuban air force did not yet have control of the skies over Angola. This means that helicopters traveling between towns ran the risk of interception from both South African fighters and man-portable anti-aircraft systems such as the Flecha-2 rocket. There is constant reference to these threats throughout *Santuario*. Aircraft are at the heart of Fuentes' fears—from air bumps, to emergency landings, to onboard fires, to crashes due to hits.

The so-called "melons" or Mi-8 helicopters are repeatedly qualified as thinly armored in his story. So much so that in chapter seven, Fuentes cites a Cuban casualty hit through a helicopter floor who is now suffering a several rectal prolapse. "And you tighten your sphincter," Fuentes tells Fernan, implying yet another deficiency of the camera: that of portraying the hidden bodily reactions to combat.[236]

Cuban air superiority was not achieved until December 1987, near the end of the Angolan conflict. By that time, Cuba had committed 55,000 regular troops to the war, including its latest Soviet tanks (T-62s), fighter-bombers (MiG-21s and 23s), and anti-aircraft systems. The latter two, once concentrated, managed to deny the South Africans airspace formerly used to bomb supply routes.[237]

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[236] *Ibid.*, 61.
[237] Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa: 1976-1991,* 423.

As a gesture to the superiority of narrative, Fuentes recounts critical engagements that happen after his departure. Writing allows for retrospection, while images less so. The effect of images is to create a puzzle piece with no puzzle to be embedded in. In Fuentes' case, however, he is able to consult the historical record, adding to his temporary experiences aboard the persecuted helicopters.

In comparison with the war photographer, then, the war writer facilitates context. He can add internal sensations, thoughts, feelings to the photographic vessel. He can embellish or simplify it according to the requirements of his work (or his government). In a word, he can render it more real. This is why, in his depiction of Fernan aboard the Mi-8, Fernan is left exposed at the side door while Fuentes remains busy at his gun post. The writer, able to act retrospectively, participates in the fight. The photographer is left shooting back with his Minolta.

The effects of South African air superiority are faithfully communicated in Fuentes' accounts. In his description of the pivotal battle of Cuito Cuanavale (1987), which once and for all halted the SADF advance into Angola, he explains that General Tomassevich could not send a resupply to the Cuban unit stationed in town. "I can't send you anything now," Tomassevich tells his subordinate, "neither men nor weapons. But I recommend you establish two rings of defense."[238]

Most of Fuentes' comments on this battle are accurate. Cuito had indeed been cut off from Menongue due to South African airstrikes along the 180-kilometer road connecting the two towns. Gleijeses notes that "the FAPLA brigades that had retreated there lacked supplies," which Fuentes corroborates.[239] However, there are two discrepancies that surface in Fuentes' version. The first is

[238] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 68.
[239] Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 422.

the number of Cuban advisors present at the Battle of Cuito. The second is the estimate he quotes from Savimbi that Cuito was defended by "an entire Cuban battalion."[240] In my opinion, Fuentes may have confused two battles here, or taken the heroicness of the encounter from several other skirmishes that took place around the same time.

On the one hand, at the start of the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, there were roughly 1,500 Cubans (two battalions) present, not the five or six advisors in Fuentes' story.[241] While it is true that they were outnumbered by about five to one, and that this correlation of forces was common throughout the war, Fuentes trips over his figures.

On the other hand, there is a skirmish which Fuentes may have had in mind while writing this. It is the fight near Ebo, just north of the Queve River near Quibala, where a contingent of only 70 Cubans led by General Raúl Díaz Argüelles halted the inland advance of the Foxbat column. The statements following this engagement more accurately reflect the scale Fuentes ascribes to Cuito in this chapter. Its heroicness is repeated by SADF Commander Jan Breytenbach, who explains that the Cubans were "well-dug and camouflaged" and offered "accurate and effective fire."[242] Conceiçao Neto, a young member of the MPLA party retreating from the area, remembers that the Cubans "were alone, they had gotten out of the trucks, and they were there in the underbrush at the ready. It was a very sad moment, it filled us with shame: they were going to fight and we were fleeing, once again."[243]

FAPLA incompetence is a frequent part of Fuentes' commentary on combat. Previously, I mentioned the FAPLA abandonment of the Mi-8 helicopter after only light anti-aircraft fire, and

[240] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 68.
[241] Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 423.
[242] Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 313.
[243] *Ibid.*, 314.

in Neto's account, one sees historical proof of said incompetence. Yet at Cuito, FAPLA forces redeemed themselves. In an interview with Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoly Adamishin in March 1988, Fidel Castro explained that the FAPLA forces at Cuito had "really behaved very well and have been very brave. They have endured the bombardments and the hunger; they have resisted with great courage."[244]

In contrast, Fuentes attributes all of the fame to the Cubans. The two rings of defense he cites never appear in Gleijeses' account, though it can be said that Fuentes' reduction of the 1,500 Cubans to five or six advisors could be a symbolic device. Lieutenant Colonel Les Hutchinson, from the Directorate of Operations at Army Headquarters, Pretoria, specifies that "the entire force arrayed against Cuito Cuanavale was about 5,000 to 6,000 men, not including UNITA."[245] This means that five or six Cuban advisors could be placeholders for the roughly five to one ratio of troops.

That said, the objective here is not to create a ledger of minutiae that can establish the facticity or fictitiousness of Fuentes' story. It is rather to evaluate how Fuentes modifies history and how prospection and retrospection situate the emotion in his work. Upon comparison with Gleijeses, it is clear that there is enough motive for a heroic treatment of Cuban forces. The Cubans were involved in many outnumbered engagements up until the end of the war, when they gained numerical superiority.[246] But these facts, implies Fuentes, are more easily relatable through prose than through photography. This is why the arrival of a second photographer, Fernan, causes so much tension. There is a push-and-pull in Fuentes between word and image. And it affects his

[244] Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom,* 424.
[245] *Ibid*.
[246] *Ibid*., 427–30.

recollections of the war, creating opportunities for symbolic summaries of the history before his arrival in and after his departure from Angola.

But why exactly do the Cubans fight? In an entry dated March 19, 1982, Huambo, Fuentes explains the "dialectic" behind the Cubans' motives.[247] Despite having proven their aptitude for managing a transitional government, in 1975, the MPLA was at risk of losing the oil-rich province of Cabinda to the north of Luanda. An enclave situated between the Congo and Zaire, Cabinda was home to the American Gulf Oil Company, which pumped around 150,000 barrels of oil per day and netted $450 million per year in revenues. Gulf Oil notably owed the newly established Angolan government (whichever that might be) $125 million in taxes and royalties, which were placed in escrow pending resolution of the conflict. A French oil firm named Elf also operated in the region, making Cabinda a prime area for factional warfare between both Zairean and Congo-backed elements of the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC).[248]

In Fuentes' words, "the essence of the problem is not to fight a guerrilla war, but to . . . maximize the development of the productive forces of capitalism so that these same forces can be developed when they finally belong to socialism."[249] Accordingly, the Cubans decided to fight in the northern sectors of Angola where the oil money was.

One of the stories he tells is that of Major Freddy del Toro Moreira, an information officer who participated in the early reconnaissance missions near Cabinda. Though Moreira has "the look of a petit bourgeois who needs to get out of the way," it is a look acquired thanks to his earned military rank.[250] At the time of his operations in November / December 1975, Moreira was a mere

[247] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 152.
[248] Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions,* 261–62.
[249] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 152.
[250] *Ibid.*, 161.

recruit. Now a major, his urbane countenance cedes when "you discover that he is a man of work, the most noble term used by Cubans to refer to laborers."[251] Given the oil-rich nature of Cabinda, it follows that Moreira would be rewarded for his incursions there. He has profited from his service to the Revolution in both symbolic and materials terms. In a way, he epitomizes the ideal trajectory of the Cuban worker.

Nevertheless, it is the history of Moreira's mission that concerns me. According to Fuentes, Moreira is sent to link up with an Angolan guerrilla captain named "Sangre de Pueblo" in "a unique and spellbinding location in northern Angola close to . . . the Mayombe jungle."[252] Geographically, this coincides with Gleijeses' account of Cuban activity in the area, composed of four Centers for Revolutionary Instruction (CIRs), the most important of which was located in Cabinda and staffed with 191 Cuban advisors.[253]

In terms of content, the mission also seems plausible. At this time in 1975, the MMCA was only beginning its foothold in Angola, which means that scouting and reconnaissance (Moreira mentions some 800 Angolan volunteers training with "Sangre") would have been important. Fuentes says that Moreira is one of the soldiers who arrived in December 1975 aboard the famous Britannia aircraft which Cuba had been using to shuttle its troops between Havana and Luanda. As a result, Moreira would belong to some of the later waves of Cuban reinforcements, since the first advisors—according to Gleijeses—arrived in October 1975.[254]

A detailed log of Moreira's mission is provided in this chapter. These are not activities mentioned in Gleijeses' history, yet they are sufficiently coincidental with it as to offer a degree

[251] *Ibid*.
[252] *Ibid.*, 164.
[253] Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 265.
[254] *Ibid*.

of verisimilitude. Reminding us of the attention placed on verbal accounts, Fuentes quotes Moreira in his summary of the mission, including a brief exchange with him on how to decipher coded Cuban messages. Apparently, the codes used revolve around forms of Cuban argot whose meaning only islanders would distinguish: baseball terms such as "pitcher" or "all-stars" were popular.[255]

On December 20th, Fuentes explains, Moreira's reconnaissance squad dislodges a joint FNLA-Zairean force from the town of Luinga. On the 28th, they raid the Mercedes-Benz of a high-ranking Portuguese official on a road near Camabatela. By January 3rd, they reach Negage, where they take part in a larger battle in which a C-130 transport plane (loaded with Zairean mercenaries) is almost downed by a rocket. January 4th marks the liberation of Carmona, known as Malange in Gleijeses' history—the town in which Cubans would allegedly be granted land according to CIA propaganda.[256]

Fuentes obtains this mission log while traveling aboard an An-26 transport plane with Moreira. It is Moreira's second tour of duty, six years later, and the plane is experiencing difficulty landing due to fog. True to Fuentes' style of storytelling aboard aircraft, the mission is a flashback to combat, a reconstruction mounted during a moment of travel thanks to Moreira's memory. All of the dates and figures are from Moreira's recollections. But the reason for fighting in the north remains clear: to save the Cabinda enclave.

Improvisation is a characteristic of Cuban operations during this period. As Tomassevich reveals in a previous chapter, "I never wait for a complete assembly before commencing an action. I launch it with whatever is at hand. I figure it out as I go along."[257]

[255] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 167.
[256] *Ibid.*, 165.
[257] *Ibid.*, 70.

A certain randomness is also apparent in Moreira's story. For one, he carries a hodgepodge of outdated maps. "In del Toro's folder," Fuentes recounts, "there were maps he obtained from a ransacked gas station in Luanda, mixed in with others of relative military confidence printed for NATO by some North American cartography institute."[258] Skirmishes seem to develop out of nowhere as del Toro's team moves through the jungle. It is never really clear where they should expect an engagement. Indeed, even as they approach Sangre de Pueblo's camp, the team feels they are about to be ambushed.

This may be due to the historical realities of 1975. General Díaz Argüelles writes, for instance, that "with little time to plan and virtually no knowledge of or experience in the country . . . we have had to improvise as we go."[259] Then there was the question of covering up the provenance of the soldiers, which, as I have highlighted, was ultra-sensitive in the Angolan conflict. "They had to be discreet," Gleijeses observes, "trying to maintain their cover and avoid provoking the Portuguese."[260]

The number of adversaries faced by the Cubans—FNLA, Zairean troops, leftover Portuguese mercenaries—made it difficult to determine when and where engagements might occur. The South Africans were relatively easy to track in their column formations in the south. In the north, however, combat became a darker affair.

There is a chapter that echoes the theme of rewards for revolution at the same time as the question of race. When Fuentes describes Lázaro de la Caridad Baró, a reservist artilleryman, he repeatedly references terms used to qualify different skin tones. Of a Captain Gárciga, he notes:

[258] *Ibid.*, 168.
[259] Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 265.
[260] *Ibid.*, 261.

"thin and of low stature, he has the type of face Cubans call 'indianized.' He is copper-toned with protruding cheekbones." [261] Next, he refers to Baró proper, calling him "a grey-haired negro."[262] Then he acknowledges that "if whites were involved in any operation, it was under some extravagant diplomatic cover."[263] Finally, he concludes that "tallying from the top down, the only thing missing from our personnel would be Eskimos."[264]

In a word: diversity. Despite any pragmatic concerns for maintaining a hidden hand in Angola, being black or colored is not an issue when it comes to rewards in the Revolutionary Army. Riches can come to anyone equally, Fuentes implies.

For example, after volunteering for the Angolan mission, Lieutenant Baró asks administrators for a house for his family as a final request. To his surprise, the house is built by the time his tour of duty ends. Indeed, so allusive is this story that Fuentes describes the colorizing of a family photo of Baró by a local studio. Baró is thus literally transformed from black to colored—made recognizable—when he physically returns to his family in the new house.

When Baró steps through the doors, his family believes it is his ghost. He has to "explain the phenomenon" to them "from a material point of view."[265]

This materiality does not exclusively serve the purpose of rounding out the story. It rather doubles the *materialism* present in the text: the house requested by Baró; the weapon chosen for the infantry (the notorious FAL); the Kellogg telephone, whose color Baró compares himself to; his gold watch, covered by black tape; the Oldsmobiles of Fidel Castro's motorcade. All of these

[261] Fuentes, *Santuario*, 146.
[262] *Ibid.*, 147.
[263] *Ibid.*, 149.
[264] *Ibid.*, 151.
[265] *Ibid.*, 160.

items suggest that material progress was not only the overarching strategic goal of the Cuban army, but that it was provided to internationalists regardless of race or social class. When Fuentes looks at Baró, what he sees is "the most secret pleasure . . . what we know as 'starting from the bottom,' which is the birthmark and reason and necessity for victory."[266] By emphasizing the ascent of this little-known Lieutenant, Fuentes achieves his goal of justifying the military mission in Angola. Material values become just as important as the salvation of Cabinda.

The preoccupation with race is well threaded in this chapter. If Baró experiences surprise at the sight of his family's new house, so do the soldiers in his battalion, who initially believe they have been gathered to be executed (they are all black). Instead, they discover that their "black mission" will be one to aid the masses, the *vulgo*, which in Cuba is the going term for whites.

To add to this dynamic, Fuentes provides a stylized version of Castro's speech to the men: "You are going to complete a mission abroad," Castro says, "You are going to help a fellow people. You will fight in other lands, and what I ask is that none of you let me down."[267] Compare this with the actual speech, recorded by Gleijeses, and the materialism of the mission rings true: "He stressed that if Cabinda fell into the hands of Angola's enemies, Angola would lose almost all of its riches."[268]

Cuba's reason for fighting is black. It is for black gold, for black people, and black in the sense of covertness. It is to prove that an army raised from lower and lower-middle class workers can compete with the white bourgeois soldiers of South Africa. The material benefits of such a

[266] *Ibid.*, 151.
[267] *Ibid.*, 156.
[268] Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 319.

mission—promotion, housing, luxuries—are Fuentes' way of promoting internationalism to his audience.

Spy Hunter, Hunter-Spy

Relationships between novelists and actual spies are not lacking in the historical record. If until now Fuentes has focused on questions regarding the fact or fiction of wartime accounts, *Dulces Guerreros Cubanos* turns his perspective definitively toward the spy genre.

The problem is no longer whether his story aligns with history, nor whether it is a function of propaganda or censorship. Instead, *Guerreros* posits a search for allegiance: what it is, how it is constructed, and how it can be gained or lost.

Guerreros is special among Fuentes' works because it merits some introductory remarks on its antecedents. First, there is the analogous relationship between spy fiction novelist Graham Greene and the notorious double agent Kim Philby, leader of the so-called "Cambridge Spy Ring." Working inside British intelligence, Philby reported to Moscow for over 20 years before being forced to defect in 1963. Greene wrote the introduction to Philby's memoir titled, *My Silent War* (1968). In fact, Greene even served with Philby in Sierra Leone during the 1940s as part of an outfit of the Secret Intelligence Services (SIS). Finally, Greene was kin to a spy family: his uncle, Sir William Graham Greene, was one of the founders of Britain's Naval Intelligence Department; his sister, who was the one responsible for recruiting him into the service, was a member of MI6; and his brother had spied for the Imperial Japanese Navy before the outbreak of World War II.[269]

Referring to Philby and Greene, author Wesley Britton acknowledges that "the relationship between these two men remains one of the most unusual cross-pollinations between fact and fiction in modern espionage."[270] For my purposes, this relationship serves as a benchmark for those that

[269] Britton, *Beyond Bond: Spies in Fiction and Film*, 29–30.
[270] *Ibid.*, 30.

Fuentes maintains with his military friends. I insist on the term—"friends"—because that is what Fuentes calls them on several occasions, including an interview with *El País*.

Insights into the role of fiction in espionage can also be gleaned from the actions of a given state. For instance, Somerset Maugham's novel *Ashenden: Or the British Agent* (1938) earned him a following with Soviet intelligence officers, who monitored this and others of his works as a means of examining their propagandistic potential.[271] German propaganda minister Hans Elsreich even criticized *Ashenden* as "an outrage of the Western cause, proof of its depravity and undermining character."[272] Clearly, then, fiction has had a patent impact on the intelligence analysts assigned to it.

Viewed as "open source intelligence" (the term used today), the Soviets hoped to draw fragments of information from Maugham on the methods of British spycraft, however suspect his material might have been. This is because Maugham had also served in British intelligence during the First World War, where he was stationed in Russia with the task of inhibiting the Bolshevik Revolution and keeping Russia in said conflict. Though he failed, his experiences there conditioned his fictional treatment of secret agents. Notably, Maugham considered the work of intelligence agents to be "on the whole, extremely monotonous. The material if offers," he adds, "is scrappy and pointless. The author has himself to make it coherent, dramatic, and prevalent."[273]

The boredom evident in Maugham's appreciation is characteristic of *Guerreros*, too, beginning with its length (480 pages) and its meticulousness. Graham Greene also corroborates Maugham's opinion of intelligence work, calling it "a silly useless job." While deployed in West

[271] *Ibid.*, 24.
[272] *Ibid.*, 21–23.
[273] *Ibid.*, 22.

Africa with Philby, for instance, Greene recalls the mission "more for the plague of flies than any government service."[274] Nevertheless, Maugham's statement on the need for coherence remains relevant to Fuentes since he is forced to reconstruct the treason (or loyalty) of his friends through what is known as "elicitation." In intelligence circles, this refers to "the practice of obtaining information from conversations, preferably with the source not knowing what is happening."[275] In other words, the procedure used by Dashiell Hammett's "Op," which Fuentes will emulate through his elaborate documentation.

Little has been written on the topic of spies in Latin American fiction as we know them in the U.S.—as professional agents working for a government entity. Sebastián Edwards has tried his hand at the genre with his *El misterio de las Tanias* (2007), yet failed to garner any critical attention. Although there is a plethora of material on the Latin American detective genre, any commonalities shared with espionage fiction are offset by the detective's differing accountability to the State.

Ignacio López Calvo points out that the literary treatment of secret agents in Cuba is unique during the Cold War. Calvo situates these works as direct responses to British hits such as Ian Fleming's James Bond series. Whereas this sort of British spy novel emerges during the U.K's relegation to a secondary world power, Cuba's spy fiction is centered on the victories of state intelligence over the CIA. Works such as Manuel Cofiño López's *La última mujer y el próximo combate* (1971), Justo E. Vasco's *Completo Camagüey* (1983), or Juan Carlos Reloba's *Confrontación* (1985) all highlight "the invincibility of the revolutionary process by inexorably outsmarting depraved CIA infiltrators and their collaborators."[276] One novel in particular—

[274] Qtd. in Britton, 30.
[275] Clark, *Intelligence Analysis: A Target-Centric Approach*, 99.
[276] López-Calvo, "Glob. Cold War Lit.," 31.

Carmen González Hernández's *Viento Norte* (1980)—explores the methods utilized by local Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) to create reports on people of interest.

As I will show in *Guerreros*, James Bond is mentioned from the very first chapter as a comparison to one of Fuentes' military protégés, Coronel Antonio de la Guardia. As the novel develops, Fuentes will, like the authors above, delve into the tactics of the Cuban intelligence community.

Calvo explains that this Cuban approach to spy fiction was conditioned in part by a Soviet style known as "factography," or "the inscription and creation of facts in cultural production for the working class." In Soviet terms, this was best expressed in the genre of the *ocherk*, "a prose genre that was part scientific inquiry, part literary composition."[277] Calvo's view is confirmed by that of critic Mary Catherine French, who believes that the *ocherks* were about living people's inner struggles, depicted in a documentary manner, with the substitution of names and events.[278] This leads Fuentes to write a novel like *Guerreros*, which abounds in citations and references to real people explored through his own psychological reflections.

For Calvo, the most representative piece of Cuban factography is Juan Ángel Cardi (*El American Way of Death,* 1980), who admits that his characters are taken "from newspapers published in Havana in 1977."[279] Cardi then repositions these characters according to his own narrative choices, which may or may not correspond to their historical timing. This is quite similar to what Fuentes proposes in his introduction to *Guerreros:*

> "The names of two people have been changed for the purpose of protecting their identities . . . The rest of the people who appear in this story are mentioned by their names and, with the logical exception of the names of those who died, were alive as of November 1997. There are neither

[277] López-Calvo, 33.
[278] French, "Reporting Socialism: Soviet Journalists and the Journalists' Union, 1955-1966," 21–22.
[279] López-Calvo, "Glob. Cold War Lit.," 33.

> characters nor situations that have been recreated. About 80 percent of the book's content is attributed to classified information or information never before written. The rest is from news."[280]

In this initial disclaimer, Fuentes establishes the basis for *Guerreros*. There is a claim of accuracy except for the two substitutions made in defense of certain individuals. At the same time, there is the admission of relying on classified information (i.e. – intelligence reports) to create the narrative. Information which may itself prove unreliable precisely *because* it is classified. The assertion that his story is true is the first sign of suspicion for the reader, and can be regarded as analogous to Cardi's footnote on historical reorientation.

Furthermore, the mention of news is circumscribed by the dating he provides: news up until 1997, which may or may not have evolved as new information was released or declassified. Let us not forget that part of the reason why certain reports remain classified is not because they are sensitive (though they may be), but rather because they have not yet been verified as being reliable.

If Fuentes is recounting a conspiracy, it is crucial for the reader to take heed of this disclaimer as he establishes the *bona fides* of Fuentes' sources. In fact, the term "news" (*noticia*) in itself can refer to either official press outlets or updates from Fuentes' contacts on the island. Many questions arise: how did Fuentes obtain this classified information? Did he do so legally? Which news sources did he consult? And what happened in 1997 which cut him off from additional updates? The novel was, after all, published in 1999.

All of these questions shed light on the inherent contradictions in Fuentes' statement. For instance, intelligence reports are by nature reconstructions of fragmentary evidence. The most objective intelligence, says practitioner Robert Clark, is photographic or in video format (and even

[280] Fuentes, *Dulces Guerreros Cubanos*, 12.

these must be vetted). And several principles are utilized to establish the credibility of evidence, the first of which is the question of *competence*: is the informant qualified to speak on his / her subject?[281]

A scientist providing information about a weapon's specifications (provided he is a specialist in weapons) demonstrates competence. So does Fuentes' first informant, by the name of Alcibíades Hidalgo, who is chief secretary to the Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), Raúl Castro, and who tells Fuentes that Raúl has said "he needs to be saved."[282] According to this first principle, the reader can trust the statements made by Hidalgo. However, if an informant moves beyond the volunteering of information to the drawing of conclusions based on it, he / she loses credibility.

The second criteria is that of *access*: is the informant in the position to obtain said evidence?[283] Again, a weapons scientist working for the manufacturer of its components has access; an academic researcher does not. Therefore, although useful, information provided by an academic source ranks second on the credibility scale. On the other hand, Hidalgo from Fuentes' narrative is well-placed in his job and has access.

Third, there is the problem of *vested interest*: when an informant offers information to Fuentes in the narrative, the reader should pay attention to how that release might benefit the informant himself.[284] Many times, information is passed along to reduce culpability. If it can be demonstrated that another person knows about a leak, for instance, the probability of being blamed

[281] Clark, *Intelligence Analysis: A Target-Centric Approach*, 128–29.
[282] Fuentes, *Dulces Guerreros Cubanos*, 25.
[283] Clark, *Intelligence Analysis: A Target-Centric Approach*, 129.
[284] *Ibid.*, 129–30.

for it may be halved. Similarly, if an organization to which the character belongs stands to gain from said release, the information should be read with caution.

Next, there is the channel of communication. Like the popular game of "telephone," the more intermediaries are involved in the transmission of a message, the more distortion there will be in the final product. In U.S. intelligence, this is classified into "direct information," "indirect information," and "simple information."[285]

The direct format is considered factual due to one's proximity to an event. Imagery, intercepts, or observations are considered direct information. The indirect format is more suspect because of the imperfect nature of a source's credentials (competence, access, interest) or due to the composite structure of the information itself. Syntheses of various government reports, hearsay among agents, or local media are all forms of indirect information. Thus, in his disclaimer, Fuentes admits to using at least 20 percent indirect information (news) for his narrative.

Finally, there is simple information, which takes the form of research or reports that help reduce the uncertainty of an item. Simple information is typically corroborative even if it contains divergent details.[286] For instance, the fact that Iraq had been purchasing aluminum tubing during the investigation into its biological weapons (BW) program was simple information. Provided by a source known as "Curveball," (Alcibíades Hidalgo is known as "The Rabbit") such tubing could have been used in either the development of Iraq's Medusa rockets (non-BWs) or in the centrifuges

[285] *Ibid.* 134.
[286] Clark explains divergent evidence using the illustration of a fictional Chinese freighter, the *Kiang Kwan*. In one report from a human source, the *Kwan* has left Shanghai bound for the Indian Ocean. In a communications intercept, it is reported that the *Kwan*'s destination is Colombia. The two pieces of evidence are divergent because they support different conclusions, though both may be true. The *Kwan* could, for instance, stop at an intermediate location in the Indian Ocean before proceeding eastward toward Colombia (ships sailing from Shangai rarely cross the Indian Ocean en route to Latin America).

necessary to produce the ingredients for BWs.[287] As we know, the conclusion reached by U.S. intelligence was incorrect.

Guerreros begins with a strong penchant for the themes of espionage fiction. The first chapter is titled, "Day One: Early Warnings," which already points to an impending deadline of the sort one might find in a John Buchan novel.[288] The first paragraph mentions the parable of "the lion and the gazelle," alluding to the hunter / hunted structure of many spy novels. From the beginning, Fuentes claims to be writing "a patriotic book," one that demonstrates—as I have just mentioned—how one can "spark the alarms of the Pentagon."[289]

The characters who appear are all nicknamed or coded. Alcibíades Hidalgo or "Alc" is also known as "The Rabbit" thanks to his sexual tendencies.[290] Antonio de la Guardia has the call sign "X-2" over the radio. General José Abrantes, Minister of the Interior (notice the overlap of military and civilian posts), is called "Z-27."[291] In terms of plot, the sum of $200,000 has gone missing and is currently being traced. Fuentes' mistress, Eva María Mariam, can be found in her *campamento de arriba* (shorthand for a lover's apartment). Even James Bond is invoked as "a pale British reflection of Tony." And Tony himself, in addition to being "X-2," holds the aliases, "The Sicilian," "Twin," or "Legend."[292] To speak of *Guerreros* as anything other than a spy-inspired conspiracy would be to ignore all of these classic formulas of the genre.

For instance, Fuentes provides an alarming amount of detail in his descriptions of movement. From the offices of the Communist Central Committee to Eva María's apartment in

[287] Clark, *Intelligence Analysis: A Target-Centric Approach*, 143.
[288] Britton, *Beyond Bond: Spies in Fiction and Film*, 13.
[289] Fuentes, *Dulces Guerreros Cubanos*, 19.
[290] *Ibid.* 24.
[291] *Ibid.* 31.
[292] *Ibid.* 26.

the suburbs of Havana, it takes 20 minutes in a Soviet Lada.[293] From Hidalgo's apartment to that of Fuentes, there are 30 paces from door to door. Fuentes' own apartment is symbolically located on the 13th floor, a prime number and suggestion of the ciphers protecting "the crème de la crème of the Cuban military caste."[294]

One passage that is representative of such situational awareness surfaces while Tony and Fuentes are driving together:

> "Behind and to the right, on the northern sidewalk, the embassies of Mexico and the Vatican, with their typical police checkpoints outside, which are only missing the barbed wire; then the department store for foreigners, *La Maison*, behind us and to the left, as we approach the embassies of Canada and Nicaragua—again on the right, north-facing sidewalk. With these last five facilities, we approach the end of the optimally maintained constructions along this 40-block stretch."[295]

Keeping track of the various routes of ingress and egress is a common feature of espionage fiction, from Jason Bourne to Eric Ambler. Finding one's way out of a predicament, improvising, and being resourceful are all characteristics of the "ideal spy." This is one of the reasons Fuentes' writing comes under suspicion. The environmental observations he makes are disposable as regards the plot of *Guerreros*, except to demonstrate his familiarity with real-life locations. In consequence, the precision of Fuentes' movement in *Guerreros* serves as a device for verisimilitude.

The same is true of the technical specifications he offers. Fuentes is explicit to an extravagant degree when describing vehicles, equipment, and other material possessions. Resembling the work of an analyst, it is as though Fuentes were attempting to gauge the scope or possibilities of the situation at hand. This partly explains his subscription to contingency plans and

[293] *Ibid.* 23.
[294] *Ibid.* 24–25.
[295] Fuentes, 32.

having a back-up copy of everything. His "philosophy," as he calls it, is that of "having two of each thing . . . two automobiles, two women, two pistols, two passports. Two at the very least."[296]

This requirement of having copies, replicas, or substitutes exposes the duplicity of traitors. Boveri writes that "by definition, traitors are externally two-faced and internally divided." She refers to this condition as a sort of "controlled schizophrenia," the same expression used by *Abwehr* agent Klaus Fuchs at his Nuremberg trial.[297] Furthermore, Boveri adds that many traitors come from a category called "the border peoples, who are not exactly homeless nor displaced in the ordinary sense but are torn between the two cultures which pull at them."[298] Fuentes notes in the narrative that he is a specialist in three areas: the works of Ernest Hemingway, American rock of the 1950s, and Rolex timepieces. These specialties imply that though he is a faithful revolutionary, he understands war (thanks to Hemingway) and subscribes to the consumerism of America. In other words, Fuentes is a border dweller.

James Bond was also a figure for the sort of "brand management" Fuentes undertakes in his work. Britton observes that "Bond became a spokesperson for Western commerce, with product placement and promotional tie-ins for everything from BMW cars to Omega watches."[299] In Fuentes, this is unavoidable. He classifies individuals according to the brand of their watches (a Soviet Poljot is for second-rate bureaucrats, while Rolexes are for the elite), their cars (Packards, Cadillacs, and Lincolns are upper-class), and their pistols (the bar-none Steichin). All of them very phallic symbols that imply the measuring of status, among other things.

[296] *Ibid.* 23.
[297] Boveri, *Treason in the Twentieth Century*, 57.
[298] *Ibid.* 62.
[299] Britton, *Beyond Bond: Spies in Fiction and Film*, 101.

Playboy appears as an instructional medium for Alcibíades Hidalgo, whom Fuentes educates while posted abroad. "An expert on *Playboy* center-folds," Fuentes calls him. When they return from their mission in Lebanon, Hidalgo is raised to the status of *señor* with his "polarized Ray-Bans and Rolex Explorer II, with sapphire lens, and $13,000 in spending money."[300]

It is ironic that the very consumerism Cuba seeks to dismantle is the mark of the military-intelligence elite of the island. Duplicity seems inherent in these individuals through their access to other countries and cultures—precisely the type of access that can land them in trouble.

But there are other codes in the chapter. Fuentes and Alc share their own intimate language: "Are you there? Do we have a bit of coffee?" means "I am coming over so we can talk."[301] When Fuentes first telephones Tony to inform him of the plot against them, he says he is calling "about those books on painting you asked me to order."[302] Even silence has its meaning in this case. Aldana, present at the meeting where Fuentes is brought up as a threat, doesn't say a word. "Like he was absent," Hidalgo tells Fuentes, "that's how he was. In another galaxy."[303] From this Fuentes immediately concludes that there is a conspiracy.

Scrutiny of the various channels of communication is also pervasive in *Guerreros* and not limited to concerns of being intercepted. For example, after considering Alc's message, Fuentes discerns that "the information about the $200,000, though not for my own consumption, was leaked to me by Alcibíades because he had so decided—not out of indiscretion, I must clarify, but because of the enormous trust he deposited in me."[304] Fuentes is analyzing the motive behind one

[300] Fuentes, *Dulces Guerreros Cubanos*, 24.
[301] *Ibid*.
[302] *Ibid.* 30.
[303] *Ibid.* 28.
[304] *Ibid*.

specific detail afforded to him by Alc in their conversation. In effect, he is judging its veracity by considering Clark's three criteria for message purity.

Alc's example is a convenient starting point for this kind of message analysis. As previously stated, Alc demonstrates both competence and access. Fuentes explains that because he helped Alc make a name for himself in Cuban martial society, he holds higher credibility. Alc is also Fuentes' superior and—had he wanted to incriminate Fuentes—would not have warned him about his future persecution. There is a low probability, then, that Alc is acting on vested interests. If he were seeking to increase the standing of the Revolutionary Armed Forces he represents, Alc would not have passed the alert on to Fuentes.

In addition, Alc tells Fuentes that he is a valuable asset to the regime and that he must be spared "because of how useful you can be to the Revolution."[305] On the whole, Alc's message seems credible, its only negative aspect being that of "authority bias," or when a source of high esteem (an expert or agent that costs a lot of money to maintain in the field) is favored over less prominent sources which may, in fact, be more truthful.[306] Yet Fuentes dispels this authority bias thanks to his relationship with Raúl Castro, who visits him at his house for drinks once a week. Alc, reasons Fuentes, is not that big of an authority when you spend time with the country's second-in-command.

It may seem conventional to begin my formal analysis with chapter one of *Guerreros*, but as is evident, there are many nuances to appreciate in terms of spy fiction.

A chapter titled "Acostumbrarse al K-J" illustrates this fact. In it, Fuentes holds a conversation with General Arnaldo Ochoa that begins in his personal writing studio before moving

[305] *Ibid.* 25.
[306] Clark, *Intelligence Analysis: A Target-Centric Approach*, 137–38.

out onto the streets. It is the last close interaction Fuentes will have with Ochoa before their persecution begins, and in it, we discover Fuentes' familiarity with surveillance practices.

The chapter begins with the delivery of $3,000 in cash to Fuentes. Ochoa is under the impression that Fuentes has solicited the funds because he is in need of money, when in fact it is Fuentes who, through the coded language he employs, leads Ochoa to understand that it is he who is in need.

The provenance of the money is unknown, as is typical in espionage narratives. Not even Fuentes is sure where it came from. He cites a certain Luben Petkoff, a Vezuelan from Cuba's guerrilla infiltration of that country in 1967. Though one of Cuba's failed operations abroad, it served to galvanize the careers of both Ochoa and Tomassevich. These two were among the few survivors left over from the confrontation with CIA-prepared forces at their dismount point in Venezuela. They were met with fierce resistance, and according to Fuentes, Petkoff was one of the other survivors from the Cuban side. The money, however, could also be the proceeds from "some ivory sold in the Congo" during the Angolan war.[307]

The interesting part of this situation is that it differs slightly from the observations of Calvo on Cuban espionage fiction. In the "factography" he discusses in his article, monetary gain is usually attributed to the corrupt Western agents of the CIA. Viewed as mercenaries, these agents stand in contrast to the honorable, ideologically motivated agents of Cuban State Security.[308] The same is true of Soviet fiction from the Afghanistan War of the 1980s, where soldiers would rather

[307] Fuentes, *Dulces Guerreros Cubanos*, 47.
[308] López-Calvo, "Glob. Cold War Lit.," 31–32.

die for their motherland before selling out to the enemy. Many Soviet soldiers commit suicide in futile acts, bringing down as many enemies with them as possible.[309]

In contrast, the two characters here are attempting to hide the money amongst themselves. Instead of being wholehearted believers in the communist cause, they use the same methods as the CIA agents in Cuban factographic works. They don't need the money, as Fuentes makes clear through all of his status symbols (watches, cars, etc.), but they stash it because of the excitement it offers. Something similar is observed in early British spy fiction (such authors as Dornford Yates), in which "none of the characters ever needed money or work, but rather desired interesting things to do to demonstrate accomplishment between the wars."[310] Both Fuentes and Ochoa have returned from theirs wars in Africa, so what can they do to keep up their adventures?

It appears that after the great Angolan expedition, respected figures like Ochoa and Fuentes suffer at least some degree of boredom. Sure, they are laundering dirty money, but Fuentes implies no financial need, his only obligation being to finish his novel on the Angolan conflict (presumably, *Santuario*). Proper "work" in the form of a job is never mentioned in *Guerreros*, making this exchange of money between Ochoa and Fuentes more a matter of intrigue than necessity.

However, there is more of it. Soon after their initial exchange, Fuentes relaxes, "knowing that the money was in my pocket, insured there. $300,000 remaining of the half a million in my closet, another $18,000 in the filing cabinet . . . and these $3,000 that just entered, fresh and crisp, into my jean's pockets."[311] As he corroborates, the $300,000 is part of the lump sum he cites in

[309] Hooker, *The Military Uses of Literature: Fiction and the Armed Forces in the Soviet Union*, 186.
[310] Britton, *Beyond Bond: Spies in Fiction and Film*, 17.
[311] Fuentes, *Dulces Guerreros Cubanos*, 47.

the first chapter of the novel. To top this off, there is mention of a further three million dollars "owed by some of his [Tony's] agents based in Miami."[312] The triangle between Ochoa, Tony, and Fuentes is therefore reinforced with these facts, especially since Fuentes—before meeting with Ochoa—had already released $100,000 to Tony, who had stopped by his apartment a few days earlier.[313] This means that in total, Fuentes was holding at least $400,000 in cash, and that the reader is left to evaluate the confusion of all of these money transfers as in a real investigation.

The detail about Tony's network of agents in Florida also suggests some form of interagency competition between "MC," which he directs, and other entities such as Military Counterintelligence (CIM) or the "K-J" surveillance division. As for the rest of the information, Fuentes ensures that his readers can intuit his dexterity within channels of communication. The text in this chapter displays a certain "sensitivity" inasmuch as any modification of its sequence would distort its reliability. A conscious effort is made by Fuentes to try and organize the events in linear fashion. Relevant pieces of the personal histories of Ochoa, Tony, and their subordinates are inserted to increase readers' confidence in the narrative. But perhaps one of its most suggestive aspects is the body language Fuentes describes in his interactions.

Sign language is the first of these elements. When communicating with Ochoa, Fuentes uses hand signals and facial expressions. Other codes are used to disguise literal statements, and movement is encouraged so as to maximize the difficulty of being intercepted.

One of Fuentes' first messages to Ochoa, who sits in his Italian leather swivel chair, is created with his hands. "I pointed upwards," Fuentes recalls, "and, giving my fingers three turns, as if imitating

[312] *Ibid.* 54.
[313] *Ibid.*

a tape recorder . . . I told Arnaldo Ochoa: 'I have plants in the garden.'"[314] The gesture is significant because Ochoa later offers his own version of it to point out a potential surveillance agent: He "pressed his lips . . . forwards, as if pointing toward a void, and then arched the corners of his lips downwards."[315]

Signs of suspicion, of being watched. Signs that demonstrate that Fuentes understands surveillance techniques and their limitations. These signs can be inscribed onto objects, too, such as the worn briefcase carried by the young intelligence technician (the "cableman") that Fuentes catches on the roof of his building. "It was a black leather briefcase," Fuentes says, yet one which "did not offer the required shine to be taken abroad, so it was easy for me to infer . . . that it was filled with an electrician's tools."[316] Though dressed as a cable technician, Fuentes is able to spot the agent and deduce that his apartment has been sown with audio recording devices.

Similarly, there is Ochoa's assigned chauffeur, a polished soldier who despite waiting inside his vehicle in the sweltering Havana heat, does not seem to sweat. "I couldn't find an explanation for his vigor," Fuentes explains, "and the cold, transparent manner with which he returned my gaze . . . I didn't like it—didn't like it at all."[317] Notice how such uncanny signs (a man incapable of sweating) alert Fuentes to things being out of place, to the picture being distorted. In a tropical environment, people aren't normally cool and composed. A cable repairman doesn't usually show "a surprise on his face." Chauffeurs don't normally look "intelligent," as Fuentes states. "That boy is very intelligent," he tells Ochoa, slyly referring to his cover.[318]

[314] *Ibid.* 48.
[315] *Ibid.* 51.
[316] *Ibid.* 50.
[317] *Ibid.* 51.
[318] *Ibid.*

Ochoa, for his part, corroborates Fuentes' reading of the situation. "They've really got you in a full court press," Ochoa admits, "a really tough one." The basketball expression is code for his being followed, to which Ochoa adds that "all of this is pretty typical, writer."[319] In fact, Brian Latell confirms in his *Castro's Secrets: The CIA and Cuba's Intelligence Machine* (2012) that one of the reasons behind the effectiveness of the Cuban spies of this period is that fact that they were quite young—seventeen or eighteen—much younger than any of their British or American counterparts.[320] Hence the young driver and "repairman."

Among the other codes and signs is the pose in which Ochoa speaks to Fuentes on the staircase. After walking and finding a suitable place to chat, Fuentes specifies that Ochoa listens to his opening remarks "in that lowercase 'h' posture," which is then substituted by Ochoa moving one step higher than Fuentes on the staircase.[321] This positional gymnastics foreshadows the change in standing that will take place after Ochoa's execution. The general, Fuentes implies, is for the moment being interrogated by a man who wants to volunteer him something: "I wanted to tell him: don't screw around, Arnaldo; I'm the one who called you here in the first place."[322]

While searching for a convenient place to speak, Fuentes lets out this thought. Once on the stairs, however, the reader can observe a certain familiarity with interrogation techniques. Fuentes is clear when he refers to the interrogations "of the old school," where "the interrogator seeks to show his superiority and complete mastery of the situation . . . from a height that is also physical in form."[323] These are obviously inklings of Fuentes' knowledge of intelligence.

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[319] *Ibid.* 49, 51.
[320] Latell, *Castro's Secrets: The CIA and Cuba's Intelligence Machine*, 63.
[321] Fuentes, *Dulces Guerreros Cubanos*, 52.
[322] *Ibid.* 53.
[323] *Ibid.* 52.

In the chapter where Antonio de la Guardia is removed from his directorship at "MC" (one of the Cuban intelligence divisions), Fuentes goes into further detail. Intelligence files are housed in one of two locations near the city of Havana. First, is the so-called "Villa Marista," a former Catholic private school attended by members of the bourgeoisie prior to the Revolution. As is characteristic of *Guerreros*, Fuentes provides its physical layout in what amounts to the textual transcription of a photograph. "Image intelligence" (IMINT) would be the term in security parlance.

Fuentes describes Villa Marista as if he had stolen an image of it. He recounts this image as he does in *Santuario*, except in much more precise terms. The school has a wrought-iron fence around it, guard towers with spotlights, and millions of intelligence files stored underground. "Over time, new basements have been dug out," Fuentes explains, "underground vessels, secret passages, and they have been equipped with air conditioning."[324]

The formats of said intelligence include audio-visual recordings and traditional reports. When these expire, Fuentes says, they are moved to a secondary storage center in the Ministry of the Interior, the famous building with the portrait of Che Guevara along its exterior. Counterintelligence also possesses two vaults, where they store videos and photographs of important cases that could be "reactivated."[325]

Once he finishes detailing the location of all of these files, Fuentes summarizes some of the methods used by Cuban intelligence. For instance, most information is reproduced in textual format, the preferred format of Castro himself. "When he receives reports," Fuentes reveals, Castro "regularly puts the photographs aside and demands that one recount the scene, to which he listens

[324] *Ibid.* 134.
[325] *Ibid.* 135.

with delight."[326] Here, Fuentes appears to have observed Castro reacting to new intelligence. He attempts to reconstruct the information preferences of the Comandante as a pretext for profiling the leader.

Two particular topics he discusses are Castro's relationship to violence and the administrative procedure involved in executions. The procedure is as follows: the Department of State Security (SDE), with its headquarters at Villa Marista, detains and processes the individual; Castro signs the death order, then awaits others to arrive at his desk; once three or four have been signed, this forms a "packet" which is then transmitted to the Ministry of the Interior. The Office of the Public Prosecutor then summons the leader of the firing squad, Colonel José Rodríguez, and a date is set for the event.[327]

The purpose of describing these inner areas of Cuban state security is multifold. First, it is a means for Fuentes to claim that it is direct information. On two occasions in this chapter, he specifies—referring to his interactions with Fidel—that "this is what he told me himself." The first instance relates to Castro's opinion of death by firing squad. Apparently, the Comandante has only a mechanical relationship with this violent act. "He barely watches the executions by firing squad," Fuentes relates. If he does happen to participate, Castro always "shoots to kill" and "looks at the body sideways on, his only interest being to confirm that it has fallen."[328] Fuentes then concludes with a list of the names, aliases, and physical descriptions of each member of the firing squad.

In addition to claiming direct observation, Fuentes uses the graphic description of these executions to introduce a latent sense of morality in the Comandante. This morality has to do with

[326] *Ibid.* 137.
[327] *Ibid.* 140.
[328] *Ibid.* 136.

his rejection of the printed image as a form of "pornography" or view into the intimateness of a human being's last moments. In a certain sense, Fuentes imbues the Comandante with feminine characteristics, claiming that he is not a fan of bloodshed because he is too prudish to watch. In fact, Fuentes cites one case in which Fidel outlawed an advertisement for a play by Senel Paz that featured a nude woman.[329]

There is an impotence in this version of Fidel that lies somewhere between morality and cowardice. The unseen events so routinely ordered by him exist only as a text, as a judgment requiring no further observation beyond the letter. Fuentes puts it succinctly: "The fact that Fidel tends to reject an image obtained by mechanical or electronic means is not an excuse for considering him a man of abstract ideas, but all to the contrary . . . He is there [only] for the tactics, for the immediate battle."[330] Viewed from this perspective, it would seem that Fidel derives more immediacy from the left-to-right, beginning-to-end consumption of a written report than from the lasting impression made by a photograph.

However, this does not prevent Fuentes from painting a picture within a picture in this chapter. The executions he discusses are presented through those doing the executing. They are discussions of how executions are carried out, just as Fuentes' "report" is given through his own means of reporting. At the end of the chapter, for instance, one finds, tellingly, an exact reproduction of one of Fuentes' war passages from *El último santuario*. This suggests that intelligence is actually an endless loop of form transfers: from image to text, text to image, procedure to proceedings. The recycling of material, Fuentes implies, is what makes much of this "grist mill" unreliable.

[329] *Ibid.* 137.
[330] *Ibid.* 139.

The rejection of images by Fidel can be equated to his rejection of women. Failing to see or to want to see "is the only feminine trait one could recognize in the personality of Fidel Castro."[331] These descriptions of Cuba's inner security structures therefore serve the purpose of not only leaking locations and practices, not only claiming direct information, but of undermining the Comandante's sexuality. Fuentes is able to *penetrate* him.

Two of the accounts Fuentes provides to this effect discuss Castro's relationship with a certain Vilma Espín, a female agent from the Santiago detachment of the Sierra Maestra campaign; and Celia Sánchez, his right-hand woman and lover during the same campaign. In both cases, Fuentes presents Castro as an inhibited lover, a *coitus interruptus* due to the exigencies of war. With Vilma, there is a threat of aerial bombardment that literally distills Castro's sexual act into a simple question: "This is a matter of taking it out and putting it in," he tells his subordinate.[332] In other words, a "quickie."

Castro has no time to watch and enjoy his sexual acts because of his incessant concern for "what comes next," for what action might serve best as a contingency—the "tactics" Fuentes referred to earlier. With Celia, his rejection backfires. Refusing to consummate a marriage with her despite all of the combat struggles they face together, Castro adheres to the party line and decides it is inconvenient. In consequence, Celia turns into a zealous anti-communist.[333]

This connection between Fidel's not wanting to see intelligence in image form and his refusal to watch even his own pornographic moments serves to undermine his masculinity. In one of the footnotes, Fuentes explains how Fidel, on another occasion, ignores a rare set of photos

[331] *Ibid.* 136.
[332] *Ibid.* 138.
[333] *Ibid.* 139.

obtained from Hemingway's personal collection to ask Fuentes what kind of shrimp Hemingway used to eat aboard the *Pilar*.[334] One would expect a figure so important to Cuba's image as Hemingway to be an object of concern for Castro, but it is not. Like the women he encounters, he refuses to see the soul, the emotion of these "pictures" of Cuban society.

Fidel is blind—to the blood, the passion, and the methods of his own Revolution. Fuentes uses his insider status to communicate this to the reader. By detailing the various access points and locations of Cuba's secret archives, Fuentes interprets the picture of his own persecution while describing the aberration it represents.

Proof of Fuentes' dexterity in managing sensitive information can be found in the section discussing Castro's motorcade, aptly named "The Two-Man Band: Red Alert." Aside from the obvious undertones of espionage present in the title (the two men are the duplicity of the traitor, the "red" a reference to the socialist process), there is a description of the various communication channels Fuentes exploits to reach his conclusions. The first, he explains, is an informant belonging to the special forces who has frequently been assigned to Fidel's personal security squad. "In his escort, there are personnel from Special Forces, friends of ours," Fuentes claims, "That's how the detail reaches us. *It is our conduit*."[335]

Recalling the criteria for evaluating source credibility, it is evident that this source—who overhears the comment about Fuentes' impending persecution—has both competence and access. Present inside the motorcade escort, these "friends" are in a privileged position to make observations and listen to rumors. In this case, the individual is a certain Colonel José Delgado ("Joseíto"), Fidel's personal bodyguard. Delgado catches a glimpse of the morning reports Fidel

[334] *Ibid.* 137.
[335] *Ibid.* 230.

reads, dated 29 May 1989, and casually remarks, “Those guys are hanging over the fire.” This is the alert Fuentes alludes to in the title. The “guys” are the three officers noted many times before: Ochoa, the two de la Guardia brothers, and Fuentes himself.

That said, Fuentes makes other appreciations from the information he receives. Only two official reports, he explains, are needed to establish suspicion in the Cuban intelligence pipeline. Once two reports of similar quality and content reach the Comandante, one can be sure to have captured his attention. Apparently, this is the corroborative load required to begin a case against someone, whether it is through the Central Committee Office (Alcibíades Hidalgo), Military Counterintelligence (CIM), or the network of Cuban spies in Western Europe based in their Paris office. From his testimony, Fuentes appears to have contacts inside all of these organizations—hence his worries about being next to the firing squad.

As evidence of his privileged access to information on Fidel, Fuentes details the Comandante’s morning routine on a day of relative leisure.[336] How Fuentes might be able to construct this picture is questionable, but given the characters present, it is assumed that there are two primary informants. The first is Colonel Delgado, just mentioned; the second is Fidel’s chauffeur, a man named Castellanos who is known for his nickname, “The Galician.”

Castellanos is “silent, of few friends, effective. Just how the Comandante likes them. And agile, with very quick responses at the wheel.”[337] He is presumably the man with both competence and access to the motorcade plans that Fuentes exposes. From a tactical point of view, these plans would prove valuable to any agent preparing, for instance, an assassination attempt.

[336] *Ibid.* 222–23.
[337] *Ibid.* 226.

Fuentes reveals the composition (one bullet-proof Mercedes 560 SEL, two 500 SELs), disposition (the Comandante's vehicle in between the escorts, with headlights off at night), and capabilities (two carloads of escort troops armed with AK-74Us) of the motorcade. He explains some of the modifications made to the Comandante's vehicle (air suspension, dark tints followed by curtains), as well as the manner in which his automobile trips are drawn up. Again, one notices the direct point of view Fuentes assumes in his narrative.[338] It is as if he were looking over the Comandante's shoulder when describing how his wife, Dalia Soto del Valle, asks Fidel if he wants any honey in his yogurt.[339]

I believe this is where Fuentes' imagination cuts loose. In an attempt to perhaps avenge himself for the injustices suffered at the hands of the Revolution, Fuentes typifies Fidel as if he himself had planted devices in his home. Short of being an agent, it is doubtful that Fuentes could be reliable in this sense. The mentions of Fidel's daydreaming, of Dalia's conversation and subservience, and even of his consternation that morning at the breakfast table all seem too detailed to be true. Surely, this is Fuentes' way of creating, as he says, a consistent report where all of the pieces fit together: the time Castro leaves for his office synchronized with the meetings between Ochoa and Raúl Castro to discuss the ways out of the former's predicament.

Fuentes will take up the theme of intimacy again in *The Autobiography of Fidel Castro*, but for now he relies on details about the Comandante's dress and manners around women. Distant and cold, he responds to Dalia as he might a mere servant, with subtle gestures so as not to be disturbed. Suffering from an inferiority complex, he wears a purple robe "with which he has always managed to hide his thin calves." Fidel wears "bulky cotton underwear . . . though he prefers, for

[338] *Ibid.* 225–26.
[339] *Ibid.* 221.

sure, the liberty of avoiding underwear altogether, even when he has to dress for an important occasion."[340]

Fidel's lack of masculinity is, as I have explained, a determining factor of his pudicity. The dismissive attitude he exhibits toward women is one consequence of this defect. Always in pursuit of the enemy's next move, Fidel brushes women aside: "Dalia comprehends that for her, breakfast is over. With submissive discretion . . . she begins her sad retreat, that of each day. *Another urgent matter*. Poor woman." Fidel has no time for love or emotion, so he mutates from "a husband having breakfast with his wife" to "the man who still holds the reigns of the international communist movement."[341]

The deference Fuentes shows here by conceding the fact that Fidel is, after all, a man of responsibility, is suggestive of his allegiance to the cause. Whatever his criticism of the regime may be in these pages, there are hints of nostalgia for it. "Viejo," the term commonly used by Cuban women to affectionately refer to their husbands, is defined at length. But it is also a metonymy for Fuentes' own position in the revolutionary apparatus—a *viejo* or *bragao*, battle-tested—as well as an indication of Fidel's fading relevance within it. Increasingly lacking compassion and concerned only with the tactical machinations (and machines) of his regime, Fidel seems, through Fuentes, to have lost the empathy that first characterized the Revolution as a movement of *campesinos*.

Fidel's intimate space in the household therefore becomes a site of psychological inquiry. Fuentes' description of this environment is expanded since he originally receives it from his informant, the purpose being to highlight some of the deficiencies of the leader. Not of Fidel the

[340] *Ibid.* 218.
[341] *Ibid.* 223.

tactician, but of what is left of a Fidel who has been taxed by the enormous responsibility of an imagined (and super-powerful) enemy. Fuentes aims to discover what is in store for those close to the Ochoa and de la Guardia brothers, and through his inclusion of women, he suggests that Fidel is walking away from the hearth. That his warmth has been tempered by the cold, calculating, and "hairy" (as opposed to smooth-skinned women, constantly present) men required for his protection.[342]

But as stated, these women stand for something other than just sex. They stand for the nostalgia and solidarity of an "inspired dream-palace of national thoughts" (to recall T.E. Lawrence), which Fuentes sums up in an interview about coming-of-age with Fidel: "They were the best years of my life."

Indeed, contrary to Elizabeth Burgos' opinion of women being mere symbols of the Bond-like machismo in Fuentes, the author utilizes them to illustrate how the morality of the Revolution is in decline. In recollections of certain political prisoners, for instance, Fuentes underscores how misbehavior with women often leads to punishment. One officer, a certain Colonel Pedro Rodríguez Peralta, discovers this when his festive orgies with Cuban women lead to his removal from the Central Committee of the Communist Party.[343]

Here, Fuentes corroborates the metonymic nature of women in his work. Peralta's orgies are arranged "with such pleasing babes that if they weren't considered the people, they were at least a noisy representation of them."[344] And so Peralta, due to his abuse of women in this way, is demoted ad infinitum until he reaches the level of a basic intelligence agent. At a stoplight in

[342] *Ibid.* 224.
[343] *Ibid.* 277.
[344] *Ibid.*

downtown Havana, Fuentes encounters Peralta staring at him. He says that "with my long veterancy as an object of persecution, I knew beforehand that 1) when you feel you're being watched attentively, it's because they're watching you attentively . . . and that 2) you should never react amid warning signs or premonitions with such rapid gestures that you can't recover from."[345] Peralta is back from the dead in a way, reduced from a glorified prisoner of war of the Guinea-Bissau conflict to a mere snitch—all due to his mistreatment of women.

Some useful insights on Fuentes' conception of "evidence" can be gleaned from his chapter titled, "Code vs. Strategy." The very first line may strike the reader: "This is about the fact that information cannot be reproduced," while memories "are able to reproduce or regenerate themselves."[346] The statement has to do with the Ochoa case, the *causa número uno*, as it is known, often misrepresented by the Cuban exile community in Florida.

Like Clark's criteria for intelligence, Fuentes stresses the importance of access. Despite the numerous newspaper articles and analyses of the Ochoa case made by the exile community, Fuentes reminds us that the datedness of this material invalidates its conclusions. The exile community lacks timely access to the details of the case, relying instead on "information that is increasingly useless though treasured with greater intensity." Presenting himself as the sole witness of the case, Fuentes insists that the final memories of Cuba held by the exiles corrupt their view of the country. "None of you out there," he states, "will understand what has happened, and you will offer up to the world as many interpretations as you can come up with, except one, which is the only true version."[347]

[345] *Ibid.* 279.
[346] *Ibid.* 281.
[347] *Ibid.* 283.

With this, Fuentes goes on to explain that in fact, Ochoa is an exemplary case of loyalty to the Revolution. Ochoa *chooses* to die out of respect for an outdated code. Like the German officer Borschadt mentioned earlier, he has sworn an oath to Fidel the person—the man—who, as I have stated, is now fading. In his stead stands a political machinery that does not wish to be stained by Ochoa's unauthorized activities. Yet Ochoa, in his stubbornness, says nothing and not only condemns himself but also his two friends. He is a stalwart loyalist in the expired sense explained by Boveri. If he has done something wrong, Ochoa reasons, then he deserves to die for breaking his oath. "He knew he had been caught," Fuentes says, but "men don't go and tell."[348]

Though evidence is required to formally prosecute him, Ochoa is not the object of a conspiracy as the exiles reckon. He is rather the example of an unwavering morality that cannot be claimed by the exiles due to their having abandoned the island. Fuentes therefore positions himself as the most privileged source of information, alleging that there was never any conspiracy at all.

Moreover, he insists that despite exile reports of Ochoa now "belonging" to their side, the exiles "discover, to their horror, that they [Ochoa and the de la Guardia brothers] continue to be revolutionaries in the fulfillment of their duties and are still their enemies." The information about Ochoa's death is inaccessible to the exiles, turning any compilation of facts into a conjecture. Ochoa is a man who "prides himself in dedicating his last thought to Fidel," explains Fuentes, "*That* is the Cuban Revolution. *That* is Fidel Castro."[349]

These last two statements are powerful in demonstrating Fuentes' attachment to the regime despite his new home in Miami. In a way, the true Fidel Castro is reflected in Ochoa's behavior,

[348] *Ibid*.
[349] *Ibid.* 287–88.

which is why *The Autobiography* is so relevant. In it, Fidel attempts to give the confession that Ochoa refuses to give before the investigative board. The Revolution gives him one last chance, but he opts out. Ochoa is faithful to the end.

In this chapter, Fuentes intersperses public statements made by Fidel to emphasize Ochoa's role as a martyr. The reinforcement of three principles (the ones Ochoa has violated: sexual honesty, obedience, and physical [read: drug] purity) serves as an emblem for the State. Though unjust, Ochoa is sacrificed to demonstrate precisely what a revolutionary is and how one should behave. He becomes a memory thanks to his loyalty, something beyond the exiles' reach. Yet he has a presence as a piece of information, a fact. Unlike the exiles who turn his death into conjectures, Fuentes claims Ochoa's death as his own direct information.

The tendency to cross-reference intelligence data is something that Fuentes adheres to dearly in his narrative. In addition to the details about Cuban files provided earlier, Fuentes draws up the schematics of Castro's personal quarters in the *Palacio de la Revolución*. Like his corroboration of facts on Ochoa through Alcibíades Hidalgo and others, here he relies on the information provided by a First Lieutenant Guillermo Julio Cowley of the Special Forces Parachute Regiment. Cowley is frequently assigned to Castro's personal security squad and allows Fuentes to speak through him. The latter reconstructs their verbal interactions into a picture of Fidel's palace office.[350]

Among the items discussed is the disposition of Castro's entrance to the palace. As if plotting an assassination attempt, Fuentes meticulously describes where the Comandante enters the compound, how many guards are present and where they are stationed, as well as the doors

[350] *Ibid.* 319.

and elevators through which one must pass to gain access to Castro's office. If these are not indications of Fuentes' familiarity with security practices, they are certainly strong representations of some of the qualities of spy fiction.

Castro enters his compound, one learns, through an illusory "door number seven" that is camouflaged amid a series of raised mounds of earth planted with shrubs. While moving through the access lane, a bodyguard vehicle follows along the right side of Castro's Mercedes to protect its flank. "It wouldn't be difficult to move through [the lanes] at high speed to attempt an interception of the Comandante's vehicle," Fuentes admits.[351]

To secure the perimeter around the access door, Fuentes notes how for 300 meters in every direction, shrubbery has been removed to offer clear fields of fire for the security garrison. Anyone attempting to infiltrate the compound could be easily neutralized, the garrison being held at maximum combat readiness for the duration of Castro's stay.[352]

Once inside, the reader learns more about the tactics utilized by these forces. For instance, in preparation for the motorcade's passing through an area, it is first "saturated" with personnel to intimidate bystanders. "The main purpose is to have the surrounding audience convinced that any misstep is paid for with one's life," Fuentes says.[353] This same preventiveness is practiced inside the palace, where an agricultural worker was once riddled with bullets after tripping on his way past the guard station (he was innocent, but unluckily carried a revolver that slipped away from its holster). Or outside the palace, where State Security drives around in a replica of Castro's Mercedes with a mannequin of the leader in the back. "Don't be hurried to search for or identify

[351] *Ibid.* 316.
[352] *Ibid.* 316-317.
[353] *Ibid.* 318.

Fidel's famous double," Fuentes taunts, "it could be any of the boys from his escort with a stature similar to his own 6'2."[354]

In all circumstances, both Castro's personal security detail and the palace garrison are authorized to use "preventive" fire to disperse threats. This means that the slightest suspicion of harm leads to the soldiers opening fire. Fuentes notes the case of a Yugoslav diplomat who died in this way. In 1965, when his vehicle crossed a residential checkpoint (he expected it to open thanks to his diplomatic plates), soldiers opened fire and killed both he and his driver. Another case involved a boy whose brakes failed near the Comandante's motorcade: "He was throwing the wheel so as not to overturn the vehicle when a squad from the Comandante's escort, knees on the ground, opened fire at short range with the six barrels of their Belgian UZIs."[355]

One recognizes methods of defense, denial, deception, and dissuasion in the operations of Castro's personal soldiers—but there is more. In solidifying the idea of Castro's invulnerability, Fuentes refers to the palace itself as a sort of "Gruyère cheese."[356] This denotes its constant reconfiguration to confuse anyone who has entered and may be susceptible of passing along its layout. Typical of the spy genre, Fuentes observes "so many hallways that lead to nowhere or return to the same point;" or "the dozens of doors behind which there are only walls;" or better still, the "elevators that take you to floors through buttons on a panel that don't have any numbers on them."[357] This labyrinthine nature of the palace, in addition to being a hallmark of spy fiction, is a way of subverting the reliability of his own report. In such a misleading environment, it becomes impossible to judge veracity, and much less, verisimilitude.

[354] *Ibid.* 319–21.
[355] *Ibid.* 320.
[356] *Ibid.* 326.
[357] *Ibid.* 327–28.

But what is the Comandante like? How does he behave? After penetrating the outer security shell, Fuentes recounts a meeting with Fidel in which he deduces some of the leader's personality traits. Again, the question of his femininity surfaces. "He has long and thin fingers," Fuentes says, "with carefully manicured nails . . . fingers that are no doubt delicate, feminine, one could say."[358]

This allusion to femininity is one of the ways Fuentes qualifies Castro's insecurity. While speaking to him, Fuentes feels a certain solitude in the man, an absence of female nurturing and therefore a compensatory immersion into his work. "Saturday night and I'm here working," Castro laments. Though Fuentes consoles him with the fact that he is tasked with combating a superpower, inside he thinks, "Damn, what solitude this man must feel."[359]

Fidel's solitude is expanded upon by a subsequent discussion of gay artists. Questioning Castro's own trust in heterosexuality, Fuentes relates the story of René Portocarrero, a prized painter of the Revolution. With his own apartment on the Havana waterfront and special permission to live with his partner, Milián, Portocarrero is an example of the kind of token sponsorship undertaken by the Revolution.

Fuentes explains that for every other homosexual in Cuba, there were concentration camps. The famous Military Units to Aid Production (UMAPs) appear here. Able to accept only one manifestation of homosexuality in his life, Castro establishes labor camps that "are only missing the crematories and swapping of the Cuban flag with that of the Swastika."[360] The persecution of homosexuals reaches such a high, in fact, that the international community begins clamoring for their dissolution.

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[358] *Ibid.* 330.
[359] *Ibid.* 331.
[360] *Ibid.* 335.

Graham Greene, the notable British spy author and intelligence agent, appears in Fuentes' story circa 1966 as the bearer of international petitions. By then, of course, Castro has closed all of the camps, but not before Fuentes exposes some of the tortures used: playing "drumsticks," or poking the victim with bayonets; "the pool," which involves treading water in a mud pool until you faint, under threat of gunfire; or, being buried up to your neck for over-exposure to the intense Cuban sun.[361] The sources Fuentes might have used for these details are certainly supervisors from the military detachments assigned to the UMAPs, though exactly who these might be is not mentioned.

Fuentes concludes this scene with a turn toward the question of art inside the Revolution. While Fidel is viewed as a man incapable of abstract thought, he tolerates and even encourages abstract art. In part, he does so to distinguish himself from the policies of Nikita Kruschev; but aside from that, he believes that as part of his "plan of influence" (PI), it is beneficial to confine intellectuals to a sphere where art "says" nothing. "The more abstract, the better," says Castro through Fuentes, "Isn't there also a school of abstract literature? That doesn't say anything? That would be outstanding."[362]

If art does manage to communicate anything inside the Revolution, it is the idea of resistance to a common enemy. When Fuentes is tasked by Fidel himself with writing a book about the criminal refugee Robert Vesco, who fled to Cuba in 1982, he confirms this fact. "It was the eternal debate of the Revolution," Fuentes reflects, "that of the balance between ethics and certain irregularities of political action."[363] Seeing through the mirage of having another publication to his name and knowing full well that the book is more political than any kind of art, Fuentes turns the

[361] *Ibid*.
[362] *Ibid.* 338.
[363] *Ibid.* 352.

project down. He recognizes it as a sort of artistic extortion intended to stir up enemies abroad (among them, the United States, where Vesco was accused of securities fraud). His decision has precedent, too. Not least among them is Leonardo Padura Fuentes, who once said that "whether you write for it or against, the literature that enters the field of politics is devoured by it."[364]

For every violation of privacy, of public or personal space, there seems to exist a moral reason in Fuentes. The weight assigned to the surveillance techniques Fuentes describes in *Guerreros* is less than that assigned to the preservation of integrity. This refers, of course, to the integrity of the Revolution, so that the tailing of characters becomes a mere barometer for establishing their respective positions in the what Fuentes calls the "revolutionary cycle."

To conclude my analysis of *Guerreros*, I will focus on the real reasons why General Arnaldo Ochoa and his counterparts are executed. These have to do, in large part, with the question of the revolutionary cycle. They also intersect well with Boveri's idea of depersonalized loyalty.

The integrity of women similarly comes into play, forming the basis of the accusations against the traitors. Though General Ochoa and the de la Guardia twins choose their ultimate fates in this process, they do so almost with the knowledge that it is their duty. They choose treason because, as Boveri reminds us, it is inevitable in an abstract state of politics.

When defining this "revolutionary cycle," Fuentes explains the following: "He [Ochoa] completed the full cycle of revolutions, from killing traitors to becoming one himself and preparing to die."[365] Fuentes stresses the importance of Ochoa's hands and fingers—like those of Fidel—to qualify his revolutionary nature. Why? Because a revolutionary's first obligation is to kill, to clean

[364] Qtd. In López-Calvo, "Glob. Cold War Lit.," 31.
[365] Fuentes, *Dulces Guerreros Cubanos*, 418.

up a terrain and rid it of bourgeois immorality. As Fuentes tellingly relates, "Nobody passes into history for smuggling television signal decoders, but they do for killing."[366]

The perhaps excessive financial gains afforded to Ochoa and the de la Guardia brothers lead them to an abandonment of the moral principles upheld by Fidel, the most important being the chastity of women. In this sense, their loyalty possesses aspects of the personal oath defined by Boveri. But in Cuba, such oaths do not supersede the Revolution's infrastructure—its abstract side in the form of the party and its varied and often hypocritical leaders.

Distance is another factor. The historical position of the traitors is one in which their distance from the motherland has a patent effect on their loyalty. For instance, Fuentes explains how the exportation of Cuba's revolution abroad served not only to empower the working classes, but to enlarge Fidel's army, to "rid ourselves of the most aggravating among our men," and to convince the world that the United States had a hidden hand in the proxy wars of Africa.[367]

These alternate agendas, perceived by the men in the field, remove them from the personal loyalty owed to Fidel. Instead, the strategic picture begins to take precedence. The original roles of Cuban institutions like the intelligence agency "MC," headed by Tony de la Guardia, are degraded. "So I told Tony," Fuentes says, "to forget all of his commercial passions and devote himself to the specific role of the *killers* for which MC had been originally created: I told him to start killing enemies of the Revolution abroad."[368]

The mention of this crucial word—abroad—highlights how distance comes into play in the sphere of loyalty. The difficulty of maintaining that inertia for revolutionary blood is hindered by

[366] *Ibid.* 411.
[367] *Ibid.* 414.
[368] *Ibid.* 411.

the men's estrangement from the motherland. It is almost as if loyalty were inhibited without the physical presence of the Cuban landscape. Cuba itself becomes an ingredient for its survival.

Ochoa and his compatriots are executed for several reasons, but all of their transgressions occur in Angola. In one of his final chapters, Fuentes details the orgies hosted by the Cuban Chiefs of Staff in Luanda. Women are passed around between the leadership, even with the knowledge and consent of some of their husbands. The term used to denote such intercourse is evocative itself: "to put them on the [sacrificial] stone" as martyrs (or casualties) of Cuban internationalism.[369]

This high-profile debauchery comes back to haunt the men upon their return from Angola. With the distance now closed between them and Fidel, the reigns of their oath to him are tightened. There is almost nothing they can do to save themselves.

The daughter of Che Guevara is one of the adulterous women mentioned in Luanda. Her name is Aliusha, and she sleeps with both Patricio de la Guardia and his wife, as well as with First Lieutenant William Cowley and his.[370] Another woman is Patricia de la Cruz, daughter of a minor Cuban television star. "She is among those responsible for the execution by firing squad of four revolutionary combatants," Fuentes asserts.[371] This is due to her mother, Sandra Leonard, who wrote to the government on repeated occasions to denounce her daughter's abduction.

Even the wife of Patricio de la Guardia takes part in these activities. In a graphic description, Fuentes relates how María Isabel turns into "a girl with an almost absent gaze and empty mind, pushed on her side on the pillow while the men jump on her."[372] These and other

[369] *Ibid.* 416.
[370] *Ibid.* 414–15.
[371] *Ibid.* 416.
[372] *Ibid.* 417.

instances of sexual misconduct are enough to convict all of the officers. Combined with the drug trafficking ring they establish outside of Cuba, their jury will have no doubts about the verdict.

The drug trade, Fuentes explains, "was a political affair, not an economic one." MC had been sponsoring the movement of certain drugs through Angola and other countries for some time until April 1989. It is then that we learn where the $500,000 from the beginning of the novel originates. It is a royalty taken by the officers in charge of the financing of MC. Fuentes cites, somewhat hypocritically, the Ideological Secretary of the party, Carlos Aldana, as saying that the drug trade was Latin America's "escape route" from Yankee imperialism. Tony concurs, telling Fuentes that "if you don't do it, you can't enter Latin American politics."[373]

This means that there was inside knowledge of MC's commercial activities among Cuba's high leadership. Permitted at first, it will only become a problem for Tony when he disobeys the order to dismantle the operation. "I'm not leaving any of the business," he tells Fuentes, who later swears that "If Tony de la Guardia had listened to me, he would not be where he is now."[374]

The toleration of illicit activities by the Cuban military demonstrates the specificity of the loyalty expected of its members. That is to say that loyalty is defined on an order-by-order basis, and that crossing any of these amounts to immediate treason. But again, the treason is voluntarily accepted by all of the parties involved, and by Tony the most.

Ultimately, it is the fornication of these Cuban leaders that leads them to the firing pole. Yet on their way there, Fuentes insists that his so-called "revolutionary cycle" is grounded in a kind of sexual respect. Its violation, Fuentes implies, is only a matter of time among such *killers* (the term they use among themselves). They are the secrets carried among them, indeed the secrets

[373] *Ibid.* 412.
[374] *Ibid.* 411.

to be penetrated by the Revolution. One of the purposes of the Revolution, then, is to orchestrate such intrusions, as in Tony de la Guardia's missions, where the excitement comes from the feeling "that one was violating that intimacy."[375]

This unspoken privilege (and tragic flaw) of having control over the intimacy of others condemns the leaders from the outset. Their presumed glory is siphoned out of them through their behavior. "Malraux said that possessing a beautiful woman was like penetrating a landscape," Fuentes states on one occasion.[376] Angola is that landscape. And the possessions these men acquire there—material, symbolic, sexual—become too much for the Revolution. They constitute a sort of rape, as when Fuentes details his own liaison with the wife of a young Cuban officer in Luanda.

It was "the result of a situation that could almost be described as rape," Fuentes explains, "but which in reality was self-inflicted and gave her the liberty of not being responsible."[377] This phrase is suggestive of the position assumed by the traitors, the position of a surrender or *entrega*. Their symbolic rape of revolutionary morality is backed up by their own consent to death, just as Fuentes' sexual encounter (proving that he too was guilty of the same crimes as the accused) is tolerated through the wife's silence.

The wife will go on to bear children for the Revolution, but her encounter will never be disclosed. "The truth," Ochoa would say at his last supper in Luanda, "was made to be unspoken."[378] All of them except Fuentes would follow this precept to the grave.

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[375] *Ibid.* 442.
[376] *Ibid.* 421.
[377] *Ibid.*
[378] *Ibid.* 442.

On Interrogation

Fidel: did you or did you not order the assassination of John F. Kennedy? If Castro were being interrogated, this would be a convenient starting point for one of the most controversial moments in the Comandante's Cold War career.

The chapter where "Fidel" discusses the Kennedy assassination appears relatively late in *The Autobiography*, yet it is a crucial example of how interrogative techniques are incorporated into this particular landmark in Fuentes' trajectory.

In effect, Fidel is presented as a "non-resistant source"—the term employed in intelligence parlance—who divulges information willingly in an agreement with the reader and for the purpose of reducing the pressure exerted upon him by history. To explain this, it is necessary to understand that in the intelligence world, the primary role of the interrogator is to obtain as much actionable information as possible given the operational demands of the situation. The other role of the interrogator is to apply *pressure* that can be coercive or non-coercive in form.[379] This secures the compliance of the source. That is to say, it facilitates a trusting relationship between the source and his interrogator for the release of sensitive information.

In this chapter on Kennedy, the voice of Fidel discloses several operational precepts behind Cuba's clandestine services. For instance, the limited provision of strategic information to agents, who are told how to execute their mission, but never why. Fidel says this increases their chances of resistance to the enemy's interrogations, since "there is no better situation for an agent to be in"

[379] Kleinman, "KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation Review: Observations of an Interrogator--Lessons Learned and Avenues for Further Research," 114–17.

if captured "than that of not having substantial to confess."[380] In this way, Fidel implies that Cuban agents are able to receive less resistance training with the same or nearly the same outcomes as their highly drilled American counterparts.

Another secret revealed by Fidel is the philosophy behind Cuban intelligence analysis, including a sample report turned into him by a First Lieutenant Jaime Santana. According to his statements, Fidel explains that intelligence analysis should never be tailored to political directives; that is, it should never seek to justify the future actions of a government. He sums this up in the emblematic phrase claiming "there's no flag that waves over information, *caballeros*."[381]

This phrase is a keen instrument utilized by Fuentes to demonstrate his knowledge of the Cuban intelligence community. Far more than a confession (for which interrogation is also used), Fidel's voice in this chapter constitutes a divulgement, an achievement on the part of those doing the interrogating—Fuentes' readers. Put differently, this means that in response to the artificially generated prompt, "Did you kill Kennedy?" Fidel says he did not, though he adduces a substantial amount of information unsolicited by his readers.

This volunteering of information becomes evident in the chapter's title, "The Key is in Dallas," which suggests that it is about the Kennedy ordeal *and then some*. This extra sum is, in fact, the product of Fidel being non-resistant. His posture here is that of the detainee who has decided to cooperate with his authority in order to reduce the pressure exerted upon him. In this case, that pressure is non-coercive and psychological. It is the knowledge that despite his previous

[380] Fuentes, *The Autobiography of Fidel Castro*, 514.
[381] *Ibid.*, 513.

success in obscuring the truth, now it is time "to soften at least a part of the void that his death will produce."[382]

The threat or pressure faced by Fidel in this interrogation is therefore natural. It is not imposed upon him by the readers, who must critically distance themselves from the narrative. It is the consequence of age or (one could argue) of the natural entrapment created by the lies of political life. Fidel wants to give his account as a function of his survival, which he stresses on several occasions. "An unimpeachable plan," he relates, "one of the many that have allowed me to survive to this day."[383]

The critical distance required for readers to understand this kernel in *The Autobiography* is similar to that of actual clandestine interrogators. Steven Kleinman explains in his analysis of the infamous KUBARK interrogation manual that an effective interrogator should always have a team of analysts behind him. The reason for this is to provide retrospective insight into the source's personality, strengths, and weaknesses. While in action, the interrogator must laser-focus on the source's words, body language, and intonations. He must assess dead ends which may require too much pressure to crack (coercive methods, Kleinman notes, are scientifically unproven in terms of effectiveness and may—according to the KUBARK's own language—impair sources from providing accurate and reliable information). And perhaps the most difficult part: he must emotionally connect with the source so as to generate empathy, while still maintaining the distance to continue to prod for more leads.[384]

[382] *Ibid.*, 521.
[383] *Ibid.*, 523.
[384] Kleinman, 102, 104.

The analyst—in which the reader assumes a part—also helps formulate a systematic list of questions for the interrogator to follow in subsequent sessions. Interrogation, Kleinman reminds us, citing the KUBARK, "is not a game played between two people, one to become the winner and the other the loser."[385] Rather, it is an interview in which answers to specific questions are sought under a limited amount of time. What *is* a game are the various ruses used to nudge a source into compliance, though only insofar as they lead to better and more detailed facts.

Fidel is, in this case, duped by two others at the level of international politics. He admits it himself when he states, "I'm done with superpowers blaming me for their sins" (referring to Kennedy and then Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev).[386] Fidel wants to set the record straight, provide updated information on his real position within the Kennedy scheme, and clarify to readers that the "cell" built around him by history has brought him to compliance with his interrogators. "But I wasn't going to stand for seeing the game repeated with Kennedy that Khrushchev played with me during the October Missile Crisis," he insists.[387]

His divulgement of information is therefore *not* a confession (though it has undertones of being one), but a disclosure. A disclosure to an interrogator who has succeeded in establishing the necessary rapport to get him to talk. All without lifting a finger toward any coercive method.

The beauty of this chapter I have chosen to begin with is in the nuanced personality profile written by Fuentes. Referring to Kleinman, we can learn certain details about Fidel that could be leveraged in an interrogation: he likes strawberry ice cream, the company of Frenchmen, Partagás

[385] *Ibid*.
[386] Fuentes, 516.
[387] *Ibid.*, 515-516.

cigars; he doesn't like to be interrupted during meetings; he responds to oral reports more than to written ones; he prefers marble paperweights, fountain pens, and other fine accessories.[388]

All of these characteristics could be used, in theory, to build the "interrogative world" Kleinman defines in his study. This is a world in which the prisoner—due to his increasingly distant interactions with the logical outside world—begins to respond differently to the new, distorted reality of detention.[389] With the proper manipulation of personal traits such as those described above, Fidel could be led into a regime of positive reinforcement where each stimulus might lead him to release greater and more detailed information. "To anyone who knows me or has merely studied my behavior as a conspirator," he admits, "the following reasoning should be enough to write off any participation of mine in the assassination of a North American president."[390] Such an admission deftly shows Fuentes' understanding of personality analysis.

To conduct any sort of assessment of acquired information, one must understand the man before him. Fidel is that man, the source. The readers are his interrogator-analysts. And Fuentes can be considered the "note-taker," today replaced by audio-visual recording in the interrogative sphere.

Given these roles, Fidel makes it easy to identify the extra information put forth. There are continual references to the "interests" at hand—to the informational objectives of any interrogation. From the chapter, readers wish to glean insight on the Comandante's role in the Kennedy assassinations. However, Fidel often responds with tangents. "Now I'll tell you

[388] Fuentes, 11, 516-517. See also: Fuentes, *Dulces guerreros cubanos*, 139, on Fidel's rejection of photographic intelligence in favor of written reports, both surpassed by oral communication in person.
[389] Kleinman, 119.
[390] Fuentes, *The Autobiography of Fidel Castro*, 516.

something that could be of interest to you," he says on one occasion.[391] On another, he accedes to the reader: "I'll tell you what I can."[392]

Both of these acquiescences signal a release of information that is not solicited, probably due to the non-coercive nature of Fuentes' interrogative strategy. Kleinman is explicit on this point, stating that such a "pull" strategy (that of eliciting compliance from a source by treating him as an individual) "is likely to obtain information that can often exceed the interrogator's expressed scope of interest."[393] Responses produced through coercion, in contrast, "will, in the best of circumstances, only obtain information responding to questions directly asked."[394]

Fuentes' humane approach to interrogating Castro, dependent upon the inherent pressures of history, leads to other discoveries about Cuban intelligence. For instance, a CIA agent named Luis David Rodríguez facilitates the capture of a counterrevolutionary, Tomás San Gil Díaz. Agent Rodríguez willingly helps Castro's army exterminate the last CIA-funded bands on the island because "given the situation of absolute degradation of the guerrillas . . . what was proposed to Tomás San Gil was a suicide mission."[395]

Thanks to this collusion by one of the CIA's own, Castro is able to pacify his island while at the same time linking this strange partnership to his blame for the Kennedy assassination. He concludes: "The definitive annihilation of the guerrillas in the Escambray combined with the Bay of Pigs disaster, was going to provide the mass of Cuban exiles with the necessary cannon fodder and a thirst for revenge so that the CIA could use them in their Dallas conspiracy."[396] As a result,

[391] *Ibid.*, 518.
[392] *Ibid.*, 512.
[393] Kleinman, 103.
[394] *Ibid.*
[395] Fuentes, 519.
[396] *Ibid.*, 520.

readers learn that no, Castro did not participate in the Kennedy assassination. What he *did* do was cover up the alleged CIA plot against Kennedy in exchange for his life, which had been threatened so many times up until that point. He even adds how some of his intelligence operatives in Western press agencies maintain "useful links" that allow him to periodically republish conspiracy articles on his involvement in the Kennedy affair—a way to bolster the myth.[397]

Thus, according to this version of Fidel, it is all part of a collaboration with the CIA. "Because I know everything," he affirms, in egomaniacal fashion.[398]

Another unsolicited piece of information reveals to what extent Castro will exploit the intentions of others to secure his own goals. This is part of his personality, Fuentes suggests. "There's nothing like the enemy's weapons to clean up your own backyard!" Castro exclaims.[399] In this admission, he cites a document that supposedly exists in the Lyndon Johnson presidential papers, one which offered Johnson a free airstrike on Cuban soil as "proof" of his commitment to fighting communism.

"If I was directing myself to Johnson," Castro explains, "it was because I harbored serious doubts about his innocence in Kennedy's assassination." As a means of protection, then, Castro would allow him to retaliate against Cuba provided he specify "the time and place of the attack beforehand."[400]

But it is a trap. In closing this chapter, Fuentes documents some of Castro's ulterior motives: obtaining more resources from the Soviets ("What I could have milked them for, had a *yanqui* attack taken place against our country!"), or cleaning out further internal dissidence to his

[397] *Ibid.*, 521.
[398] *Ibid.*
[399] *Ibid.*, 523.
[400] *Ibid.*, 522–23.

regime. Castro's proposition to Johnson "allowed me the luxury," he says, "of sacrificing up an entire town."[401]

The bloodlust and diabolical mind of the Fidel so critically acclaimed in Fuentes' work shines in all of its splendor here. But not without first highlighting some of the key interrogative instruments that fill the preceding chapters of *The Autobiography*.

A certain theatricality distinguishes the interrogative act, and for this there is no better illustration than the work of Bertolt Brecht before World War II. Centered around the scene of the courtroom, an environment staged similarly to that of the interrogation room, Brecht leverages the recreation of events on trial to foster critical appraisals from his audience.[402] What this means for Fuentes' Fidel is that his descriptions of the attack on the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953 (hereafter: the "crime") will be subject to a judgment of their realism.

In the same way that Brecht suggests his audiences consider the alternative outcome of events on stage, Fidel encourages the reader to distance himself and learn from his biography. This version of Fidel attempts to impart knowledge to the reader by immersing him directly in it, perhaps in a manner more akin to Brecht's contemporary, Erwin Piscator.[403] Both of these playwrights are useful for an analysis of Fidel's voice.

The chapter in question is titled "The Power Yet to Be" and starts off with Fidel's vision of history. Two characters—the Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser and Fidel himself—explain their positions. For Nasser, history is opportunistic and written for those who circumstantially enter it through luck or enigma. When Nasser discusses the importance of the creation of Israel in his

[401] *Ibid.*
[402] Arjomand, *Staged: Show Trials, Political Theater, and the Aesthetics of Judgment*, 58.
[403] Erwin Piscator is known for his "town hall approach" to theatre, whereby the audience becomes a participant in the action, similar to what I propose here in the reader-as-interrogator. See: Arjomand, 97–99.

rise to prominence, he concludes that without it, "he would have been nothing more than an obscure colonel of the Egyptian army, distinguished perhaps in the Gaza zone."[404]

Fidel's perspective contains more agency. Indeed, an ultimate form of agency concentrated in the individual. This compares to Brecht's debates about and subsequent departure from the social realist model for culture of the 1930s Soviet Union. Rather than subscribe to an art emulating the rules and regulations of a petrified bureaucracy, Brecht believed that theater, especially epic theater, was the "presentation of a story that already happened and is being offered up for judgment."[405] Fidel's position in this text is analogous. So much so, that he even mentions the critical distance expected by Brecht in any theatrical representation of a trial. "If the origins of the Cuban Revolution had anything to do with the international communist movement," Fidel observes, "it was absolutely tangential and something that I directed from a distance, lots of distance."[406] He goes on to reemphasize his agency: "The origins came only from my gut . . . It was all personal."[407]

Such individual agency in interpreting the Revolution resembles Brecht's approach. Fidel makes a break here with the communist movement to establish his own way, his own stage (and staging, as in the literal staging of the attack on the Moncada barracks) for considering who he truly is as a revolutionary leader.

For example, the chapter contains several "lessons" that encourage readers to draw their own conclusions about Fidel's education. What other options did the man have, given his circumstances? "Everything I could say right now about that time is going to sound like mere

[404] Fuentes, 161.
[405] Arjomand, 61.
[406] Fuentes, 164.
[407] *Ibid.*

whining," Fidel concedes, "and not like the description of the final training period of a nascent revolutionary leader."[408] This warning puts the reader on guard for the truth, which, as Fidel has stated, is personal. The personal critique is therefore something that Fidel wants his readers to retain, as if he were telling them not to take his words at face value.

A second lesson appears when Fidel discusses his legal training. Working for the lower classes ("the owners of the small municipal market auctions, peasants from the interior . . . stripped of their land," et al), he begins to perceive the injustices of Cuba's judicial system. The poor are legally bound to inescapable debts that only serve to enrich those with the means to exercise the law in the first place. Again, he reminds the reader that his presentation of the facts should be the object of subjectivity: "When you have that experience, on the day that this should happen to you, then and only then will you understand how the education of a revolutionary leader is completed."[409] The dose of inaccessibility injected into this sentence smacks of Brecht, who believed that any trial that appeared too realistic had to be the object of suspicion.

In comparison with the first chapter I discussed through the lens of interrogation—where there is no crime—here Fidel puts himself on trial before a jury consisting of his readers. They know he already holds a guilty verdict, but are urged, as in Brecht, to "think about the disjuncture between the defendant and the role he plays in a trial, evaluate the evidence, and make their own decision."[410]

Fidel himself critiques his defense of the Moncada attack by referencing the fallibility of his memory. He calls his memory "the archive" and insists on its selective extraction of material.

[408] *Ibid.*, 165.
[409] *Ibid.*, 168.
[410] Arjomand, 58.

Memory tends to summon only pleasing events for individuals, he says, "but it's the fucked-up material, or the insignificant, that refuses to flourish, to be recalled from the archive."[411]

Consequently, memory is bound by the same masks (or filters) found in works such as *The Measures Taken* (1930) by Brecht. In this play, four communist agents working in propaganda kill a young comrade in China when the latter's personal sympathies begin to obstruct the party's objectives. A large chorus of workers participates in the play and learns how to judge the four individuals on trial. Commenting on the work, Brecht explains that "the actors may . . . claim to be 'absolutely natural' and yet the whole thing can be a swindle; and they can wear masks of a grotesque kind and present the truth."[412] This is an ideal perspective for analyzing Fidel.

Though he appears sincere, and though on many occasions he queries the reader directly, what Fidel implies through "the archive" is that information can be misleading. "Now let's discuss, *entre nous*," he says in one instance, "and let's look each other in the eye."[413] At another moment, he tells the reader, "Don't get angry. I'm merely stating a fact."[414] And on a third occasion, he challenges the reader: "Don't forget it, and now spit all the insults you want at me and tell me as many times as you want that I'm a son of a bitch."[415]

These engagements with the reader remind us of the reliability dilemma when it comes to sources. Fidel is on trial for a crime that has now expired, so he offers an alternative explanation of the event. Feeling no pressure of conviction—no coercive pressure—he attempts to establish a rapport with the reader. It becomes difficult to discern whether the situation is a trial or an interrogation. The role-playing posture Fidel assumes places him in the same predicament as

[411] Fuentes, 165.
[412] Qtd. in Arjomand, 63.
[413] Fuentes, 168.
[414] *Ibid.*, 163.
[415] *Ibid.*, 168.

Brecht. It may be that he is offering a posthumous defense, or it may be what Brecht calls *List*, a German word "that connotes both cunning and artifice when writing for readers living under dictatorship."[416]

Returning to the intelligence model, Fidel is demonstrating resistance. On the one hand, it is the resistance typical of a defendant. On the other, it is a resistance that questions itself. Is his rapport with the jury / interrogators genuine? Is it with the jury or the interrogators, or both? How should we act on the information he provides?

Brecht employs *List* to communicate ideas that can confront oppression in camouflaged form, while Fidel seems to recast it as a means of bringing us into acquaintance with him. Like Kleinman's insistence on emotional connections in interrogation, Fidel volunteers his personality. It is his way of gaining the trust of the readers in order to change their perception of his revolutionary persona. It is also the vehicle for an education on the trials (not just criminal) that a man must face to become such an iconic source of social and political resistance.

Fidel's resistance is therefore Machiavellian, dual, masked, and difficult to unravel. He acknowledges it himself when he states that "the more impossible the turns of rhetoric, the more drawn I am to its implicit challenge."[417] Fidel subscribes to a belief in the convolutedness of information. In reality, his position is not that different from that of Soviet theoretician Mikhail Bukharin, tried in the Moscow proceedings of 1938.

A victim of the Stalinist purges, Bukharin made an appeal similar to that developed here by Fidel, except in reverse. Fidel acknowledges his concrete crimes of killing the soldiers at Moncada, while Bukharin rejected his own (trying to arrest Lenin and kill Sergei Kirov and Maxim

[416] Arjomand, 62.
[417] Fuentes, 181.

Gorky). In contrast, Bukharin admitted to his "subjective crimes" of loyalty, to his "defeatism, pessimism, [and] doubt," whereas in Fidel there is no sign of ideological weakness.[418] Fidel's account is crafted precisely so that the reader can understand the revolutionary psyche.

But this psyche is a complex affair—very *controvertido*—and indispensable to the process of determining a source's loyalty first, then his guilt or innocence. The theatricality of this process, of how to re-present a scenario, how to remain *fidèle* to Fidel, is part of Fuentes' skillfulness in blurring the lines between an interrogation and a trial. As a result, he lands in the territory of Brecht, always searching for what may lie behind the resistance, symbols, and turns of phrase of the man being questioned.

That theater has a place in the gradient between trial and interrogation is made patent by Fidel's description of the attack on Moncada. The event mobilizes a staging of its own in terms of men and materiel. In this domain, the narrative doesn't differ from typical Fuentes: details about car movements, the number of men and their weapons, and their tactical plans are all something the reader should be accustomed to.

However, in comparison with past moments where Fuentes creates an ambiance of combat or espionage, his move here has nothing to do with either. Rather, it is intended to underline the pedagogical aim of the theater of Castro's rise to power. In an aside to the reader, for instance, Castro acknowledges the corporality of his role in the Revolution. "My hunger and my frustration and my bitterness," he says, "and everything you can think of, my tongue, my eyes, my viscera, they are the Revolution."[419]

[418] Again, see Arjomand, 64, where the author offers a complete account of the Bukharin trial in relation to Brecht's approach to theatre.
[419] Fuentes, 172.

Ascribing one's body to such a historical event can be equated with an actor employing his body to recreate a scene. That is what occurs here. The staging of the Moncada attack not only specifies the roles of various police officers who could interfere with the plan (Rafael Morales Sánchez and others)—it also takes place during Carnival.

One theatrical piece within another. Carnival, as the backdrop for the Moncada attack, provides the ideal diversion for Fidel's men, but for his readers, it signifies a deeper representation of the facts. One of the moments which best exemplifies this implies seeing the truthfulness behind the attack. It is when Fidel and his right-hand man, Abel, remove their glasses before its launch.

"Abel and I were the only two in the attack who needed glasses," Fidel says. Contrary to logic, they end up removing them not "out of vanity but because no one in his right mind . . . was going to show up wearing glasses for a battle."[420] Furthermore, "it would have been like yelling out a thousand yards away that if there was intellectual author . . . it had to be—of course—the only one wearing glasses."[421]

The desire to shed his authorship in this way serves to protect Fidel's operation, but it also suggests, in the same way that Brecht relegated the authorship of some of his plays to previous pieces, that readers see and judge the facts themselves. When Brecht went before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947, he utilized this approach. "As the hearing proceeded," writes Minou Arjomand, "Brecht went even further than insisting that his works be read historically; he suggested that they not be read as *his* at all."[422] This applies to his work *The Measures Taken* (1930), which was based on a religious Japanese play. That was the argument

[420] Fuentes, 176.
[421] *Ibid.*
[422] Arjomand, *Staged: Show Trials, Political Theater, and the Aesthetics of Judgment*, 66.

that got Brecht past the committee. For Fidel, it is the logic behind the inevitability of his Revolution.

Recall Fidel's debate on history with Nasser. In it, he makes reference to the photographs of Batista's initial coup on March 10, 1952, stating that "the pictures taken that morning in Colombia of Batista . . . symbolized, to my eyes, the frailty of a whole nation."[423] Fidel reminds his readers that the coup was the third one in Cuba "in less than a century" and that it belonged to "something that seems to be the norm among Latin American military men: the occupation of their own country."[424]

When taken into consideration with the absence of reproach from the soldiers he attacks, it becomes obvious that by removing his glasses before battle, Fidel is in essence withdrawing his authorship from the play that is Moncada. He is attributing it to history itself. Indeed, the soldiers act as though they expected such an attack and are not surprised that it occurred. "That was the only thing they made sure to point out to me," Fidel remarks about his poor choice of weapons, "But it was also like a warning, like saying to me, 'Listen, kid, next time get yourself a better arsenal.'"[425] The Moncada soldiers seem to understand Fidel's attack as some sort of historical *fait accompli*.

Yet the military critiques only his strategy for the attack, not its legitimacy. Fidel's participation in the attack is accepted by all, but its repetition—its *reprise*, to use a theatrical term—is decoupled from him.

[423] Fuentes, 169.
[424] *Ibid.*, 170.
[425] *Ibid.*, 180.

Pedro Sarría Tartabull, the soldier who takes Fidel prisoner in the following chapter, summarizes this decoupling best: "Don't shoot, ideas can't be killed."[426] The perennity of this statement develops into a proper theory of propaganda for Fidel, which constitutes the majority of this chapter. Among the tenants discussed are the island's prison network as well as worker participation in the revolutionary struggle. Both maintain ties with the legal system with which Fidel is concerned, making them important factors for analysis.

In a shift toward the views of Lion Feuchtwanger (Brecht's contemporary), Fidel begins by emphasizing the need to suspend legal opposition once his revolution has triumphed. After the Batista coup, he explains how he deposits an appeal against it in Havana's Emergency Court. However, he is "still unaware, of course, that the precepts of legal opposition would have to be annulled forever in the country if I wanted my efforts to succeed."[427]

Fidel is describing a certain anti-theatricality here that challenges his previous concern for distancing oneself from the facts. If, indeed, the Moncada attack was a staging as much as it was an act, the final triumph of the Revolution will have to seem as "realistic" as possible.

Feuchtwanger subscribed to the same view: that "the less like a show a trial was, the better and more authentic it was."[428] This stands in direct opposition to Brecht, who argued that "all trials were shows, but that did not mean they were unjust."[429] In other words, the various levels of trial Fidel will experience—his criminal trial, the trials held for his enemies, and his trials of love during prison—will become integral to his propaganda efforts. The justness of said trials, as in Feuchtwanger's view, would have to appear as plainly as possible to be considered realistic. They

[426] *Ibid.*, 186.
[427] *Ibid.*, 171.
[428] Arjomand, 58.
[429] *Ibid.*

would have to be digestible for the common man and unspectacular in form. As Feuchtwanger writes of the 1937 Moscow Trials: the "judges, public prosecution, and accused all spoke calmly and without emotion."[430] To some extent, this echoes the simplicity and frankness of Fidel's later military tribunals.

There are other obstacles to mounting an effective propaganda regimen, though. One is how to transform your enemies into allies. Fidel initiates this discussion in "The Power Yet to Be" and expounds upon it in the following chapter. The army he would fight upon his return to the island in 1959, he explains, was composed of blacks, mulattos, and peasants—the very people he was there to support. Thus, he would have to rebrand the army as "an imperialist and upper-class instrument of repression."[431]

Part of that rebranding would consist of emphasizing human rights, or what he calls the "fallen gladiator" tactic. This is the argument that—thanks to the comprehensive defeat of his own anti-government movement—the Cuban state had little to gain from the execution of the movement's leaders. To protect its human rights record, Batista's Cuba would have to settle for their mere imprisonment. Pedro Sarría brings this fact to light in his negotiations with the authorities.

"So," reasons Fidel, "if the invincible army had won the battle against the hapless attackers, and in addition to that had the enemy's leader among their prisoners . . . what could they possibly gain by sending another dozen corpses to the Santiago morgue?"[432]

[430] *Ibid.*
[431] Fuentes, 179.
[432] *Ibid.*, 187.

The "fallen gladiator" tactic is supported by documentary evidence—another ingredient of good propaganda—that was common to Piscator's plays. Fidel highlights that in order to appear as anti-theatrical as possible and create convincing stories, one has to rely on hard evidence. The collective conscience acquired by audiences who are able to "see for themselves" (instead of stepping back to see à la Brecht) is critical to this end. Arjomand writes that "for Piscator, unlike Brecht, epic theater is necessarily documentary theater . . . Piscator's onstage documents included print documents and posters, films taken from newsreels, projections of photographs of historical figures, and even a parade of actual mutilated war veterans."[433] The participatory consumption of Piscator's audiences extends to Fidel's vision of the information war. Accordingly, Fuentes sprinkles documentary artifacts such as the official radiogram of Fidel's capture, his correctional mugshot, and even his letters from prison to his beloved wife, Mirta Díaz-Balart, throughout the narrative.

The loss of this particular woman, Fidel confesses, was perhaps one of the most inflaming acts of sabotage against his heart: "And so it happened that between men and Mirta, I chose men, because from that moment on they would know the price of my choice because they would pay, they would know without any room for pity or truce."[434] Mirta was publicly granted severance pay for leaving a ministry for which she never worked, and Fidel couldn't accept this shame from prison. The manipulation of his wife by the state was impermissible.

From the standpoint of interrogation, the extortion of Díaz-Balart amounts to an attempt to deconstruct the resistance Fidel demonstrates in prison. This resistance, he says, is comprised of three elements: his legal defense (the famous "History Will Absolve Me"), his political

[433] Arjomand, 98.
[434] Fuentes, 192.

correspondence to a journalist named Luis Conte Agüero, and his love letters. These are three ways through which he blocks access to any further information about his cause. They are also his way of maintaining his sanity.

In effect, Fidel executes his resistance strategy by preparing propaganda, which is how the reader learns his methods. From the prior chapter, it is understood that such propaganda must be accessible to the masses as in Piscator's plays. Piscator's production of *The Cripple* is one such example where, after forgetting the backdrop for one of its productions, he submitted its hanging to a vote among the audience. Another play titled *Trotz Alledem!* (*In Spite of It All*, 1925) follows the same approach, dissolving the barrier between actors and audience. "Piscator imagines that there is no difference in the way that the directors, actors, or audience experience the event," explains Arjomand, "They all experience the event as a collective forged by the performance itself."[435]

Similarly, Fidel believes that propaganda should lead to popular cohesion. In his description of how to rebrand the Batista army as his ally, he emphasizes the working class origins of its soldiers. Turning this army in his favor and provoking the "realization" that it is betraying itself is critical to Fidel's policy. When captured, for instance, he tells the soldiers that their army is not a liberating force, but "the successors of the Spanish army."[436] Notice how he calls into question the position of the "audience" (the soldiers) witnessing the action.

A second indication of this participatory propaganda surfaces during the combat scene at Moncada. "Participate or die" is Fidel's slogan, and when the attack fails, he tellingly underlines

[435] Arjomand, 99.
[436] Fuentes, 186.

how "in battle, broken into small partial actions, only the fate of each individual man counts."[437] Success in propaganda is therefore predicated upon this collective feeling. Without it, the audience feels alienated from the stage, and Fidel's soldiers lose their battle. Piscator's inclusion of hard documentary materials, plus his "town meeting" approach to theater, closely align with Fidel's strategy.

For instance, in "Havana for the Last Time," Fuentes provides samples of some of Fidel's propaganda. One involves a daily radio announcement of the number of days Fidel has spent in prison, which directly emulates Piscator's method of bringing specific events from the past into the present. Fidel instructs Agüero, his radio spokesperson, to repeat the message regularly. Repetition is therefore another factor.

In a different example, Fidel underscores the importance of body language. "Lots of hand waiving and smiling," he writes Agüero. And in the end, he sums up his position entirely by stating that propaganda cannot be forgotten "for a single minute because it's the heart and soul of our entire battle."[438]

That Fidel would use his time in prison to develop a propaganda scheme is indicative of a certain understanding of intelligence. Perhaps fearing the queries of information officers, he decided to exfiltrate the messages he might otherwise have revealed under duress. Let us not forget that these are the Batista years of the BRAC (Bureau for the Repression of Communist Activities), cited earlier by Fuentes.

By dispossessing himself of his own propaganda messages, Fidel is able to genuinely surrender to the influence of memory on information (recall his faulty "archive"). This is

[437] *Ibid.*, 174, 178.
[438] *Ibid.*, 190.

demonstrated by his own concern for the "literature of immediacy" which he must compose while in confinement. Such flash writings make it impossible for him to revise or remember their specifics, effectively discharging him of any useful intelligence information. "It's a real problem to write under those circumstances," Fidel admits, "when you're not able to review the preceding pages . . . The writing exists only in your memory."[439] Fidel's opinions on memory, however, have already been mentioned. Memory does not necessarily generate the most reliable thoughts.

It is interesting to dissect Fidel's personal strategy of resistance through the channel of propaganda. Fuentes and the voice he constructs are certainly cognizant of the interrogative process once someone is captured. This becomes obvious in Fidel's discussion of negotiation, a critical tool for any interrogator. "The real asset in negotiating under almost desperate conditions," Fidel says, "is to throw a card of equal value on the table that can be cashed in immediately."[440] This approach can be likened to that of the "all-seeing eye" explained by Kleinman.

According to Kleinman, a prisoner is told in this method that the authorities are already in possession of the information he may be withholding. In fact, the interrogator may tell him that they know even more, and that any resistance is futile since there will be no coercion on their part.[441] What occurs, then, is a voluntary release of data, which is what Fidel implies here. "When you call in a suspect to your office or meet him out in the street . . . never offer him a seat," says Fidel.[442] The act of sitting down is a sign that the source is willing to negotiate, which is when the "all-seeing eye" is brought out.

[439] *Ibid.*, 189.
[440] *Ibid.*, 188.
[441] Kleinman, 126.
[442] Fuentes, 188.

"Not a single man who has sat down with us in over forty years of Revolution, was later able to get away without compromising himself," Fidel reveals.[443] The quick-draw solution is an escape route, a source of expediency that reduces pressure to secure the compliance of the source. With seemingly little at stake, little to hide because "we already know why you are coming," a source is likely to concede.

Fidel also explains—in true interrogator form—that abstraction can be useful. Through the lens of propaganda, this is accomplished through symbols. Che Guevara is his example. Resisting, Fidel implies, is about preserving one's symbolism, remaining at the level of abstraction because the goal of any interrogation is to acquire specific details to aid in a given operation. By remaining at the symbolic level, both propaganda and interrogation are enhanced, albeit in different ways.

On the propaganda side, Fidel warns: "Don't allow yourself to surrender to the enemy and become fodder for his malicious propaganda."[444] Such a surrender involves letting an interrogator into one's symbolic world and allowing him to deconstruct one's resistance strategy. For Fidel, this is mostly ideological. Kleinman stresses the difficulty of penetrating such ideological bases because it is seldom known *how* the source learns these concepts in the first place. Is it through religious schooling? Secular philosophy? Economic necessity?

For readers, it has already been proven that Fidel's revolutionary inspiration comes from personal convictions, as well as from psychological factors such as jealousy and the death-drive instigated by the manipulation of his wife. However, in his public-facing strategy, Fidel believes it is better to die and continue living on in the symbolic plane than to unveil this nexus. "In Che's

[443] *Ibid.*
[444] *Ibid.*, 186.

case," he explains, "he had to be killed so he wouldn't become a public and notorious traitor."[445] The mystery of propaganda takes precedence over any individual, similar to the position taken previously by Soviet authors of their country's war in Afghanistan. Such mystery is what enables public participation in the messaging.

On the side of interrogation, Kleinman makes note of how asking abstract questions to sources can actually unsettle them due to the inherent human need to communicate. These unanswerable questions generate anxiety within the source, who feels that a release of pressure will be impossible without an affirming response. This was the experience of some Vietnam prisoners of war, who expressed the "tremendous feeling of relief you get when [the interrogator] finally asks you something you can answer."[446] The human need to communicate is therefore susceptible to abstraction. It can bend a source into compliance, as happens to Fidel in his apology to Mirta.

The abstract concept of love is a great source of anxiety for Fidel: "That she did it all for—that one little word is so difficult for me, even just to write it—love."[447] It leads to him dissertating on a great deal of his psychological weaknesses. "My spirit died that night," Fidel confesses, "I know that I died that night."[448] The subsequent scenes of passionate love-making and the emotional security derived from Mirta, from love, would have been potent avenues for an interrogator to follow.

Fidel calls this love "the only private ideal in my life," which he "served blindly and without hesitation."[449] Imagine the kind of information that could have been extracted from Fidel

[445] *Ibid.*
[446] Kleinman, 127.
[447] Fuentes, 194.
[448] *Ibid.*, 192.
[449] *Ibid.*, 191.

if the authorities had so desired. His susceptibility to abstraction would have been a gross blunder, indeed.

The intersection between propaganda and the resistance to interrogation is not only a unique line of inquiry through which to pursue Fidel, but a way to deconstruct Fuentes' narrative strategy for representing him. In effect, the outline of Fidel drawn by Fuentes could be perceived as its own form of resistance to a reader's questioning.

For instance, while discussing his release from prison by the Cuban authorities, Fidel provides further insight into his propaganda (and Fuentes' resistance) methods. He explains that after his meeting with Senators Gastón Godoy and Marino López-Blanco, who visit him in prison, he omits certain details of their exchange. Namely, their handshake—a significant part of an interrogator's toolbox as a form of body language. "That's how I left it in the text," indicates Fidel, "just his gesture, while in the reader's imagination I stood up like a great dignified gentleman."[450]

Filling in the gap of what is not said, what Eva Horn calls the *effet de secret*, is characteristic of good propaganda. It is also part of the wholistic intelligence process, as Kleinman has underscored. Piecing together the various facets of a detainee—personality, disposition, character strengths and weaknesses—leads to asking the right questions. In propaganda, however, the goal is for the audience to believe in their own questions whether a real secret exists or not. The mere fact that something is left unsaid can lead to intense anticipation on the part of a detainee, or to intense questioning on the part of a skeptical public. Either way, the goal is to coax the participants into believing that the information at hand is important. When a prisoner (or reader) comes to this conclusion, half of the interrogative/propagandistic process is complete.

[450] *Ibid.*, 197.

A note on propaganda with respect to Fuentes: though I have documented many of the stylistic devices he employs throughout his narrative, *The Autobiography* tends to reveal more about Fuentes' skill in selecting propagandistic elements. *Condenados, Posición*, and *Guerreros* all contain features of propaganda (heroicization, exaggeration, recontextualization), but *The Autobiography* shows how Fuentes chooses the pieces for his stories.

For example, there is a doubling in the life history of Fidel that serves to increase his moral standing. Fidel is thrown into prison, but that keeps him from abandoning his quest for revolution in favor of a settled life with Mirta. His prison sentence allows him to reflect on his own formula for the correctional services of his future government, which will ironically be designed to be "morally defeating."[451]

Yet prison also facilitates the scandal around Fidel's love life. A man robbed of matrimonial sanctity, his letters to Mirta will become prime material for the construction of his myth. Thus, by using Fidel's personal experience in prison, Fuentes is able to improve his moral image. Among other things, Fidel discovers in prison: a) the blueprint for his own prison system; b) the crime that is stolen love; c) the importance of literature (he sends copies of Alejo Carpentier's *Explosion in a Cathedral* to certain revolutionaries in confinement, and he himself reads all of Victor Hugo while confined); and d) how one's release should be pitched to the press. This constitutes the doubling principle of Fuentes' propaganda: taking one man's life in prison and duplicating it in mythical form, a form of resistance to the pressure put on him by the interrogations of history.

[451] *Ibid.*, 194.

Blamelessness is another characteristic of Fuentes' propaganda. From the beginning of *The Autobiography*, and despite all of his insistence on personal agency, Fidel is a man whose moral quality gives him an almost saintly regard. He is destined to rule, as his *santeros* predict: "I learned that I was a son of the god Aggayú . . . a top-tier warrior."[452] Later, he is almost rescued by an opportunistic priest, Enrique Pérez Serante, when officer Pedro Sarría intervenes to save him. Finally, Fidel preserves his chastity while in prison, remaining loyal to his new lover, Naty Revuelta. "I abstained from asking for [prostitutes]," he says, "to not give the enemy any fodder." Clearly, he means fodder for counter-propaganda. He knows that the sacrifice of Mirta, the love of his life, is "so I could meet my destiny absolutely free of any fault."[453]

In propaganda, Fuentes implies, it is necessary to bury blame. This is what he attempts in his fiction—to remove the blame from the Fidel he intimately knew and respected. We must not forget, after all, that Fidel was not involved in the Kennedy assassination and that his compliance as a source is (at least in a literary sense) genuine.

I began this chapter with Kennedy on the pretext of interrogative practices, but here, thanks to the proximity between propaganda and resistance, it is convenient to discuss him as a symbol.

Kennedy becomes an abstraction for Fidel in the chapter titled, "The Empire in Spring." If abstraction is capable of heightening both resistance and propaganda (as explained earlier), then it is equally important in nation-branding. This becomes evident in Fidel's relation of the facts leading up to the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. He explains that "we [Cubans] were more attractive and original than even Kennedy with his out-for-a-good-time-on-Saturday-night-air."[454] In other

[452] *Ibid.*, 22.
[453] *Ibid.*, 201–202.
[454] *Ibid.*, 431.

words, Cuba possessed a better nation brand than the United States at that particular time. "Therein lies the root of it all," says Fidel, "in losing their image."[455]

To build such an image requires a certain degree of duplicity. First, Fidel reveals, the Revolution needed to court the CIA as a means of obtaining information. In the early stages of the Revolution, the CIA was not hostile to Castro's regime. On the contrary, it had a strategy of dialog and control, of tolerance, one might say, for the inevitabilities of a sudden regime change. CIA Director Allen Dulles would state before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "now there probably will be a lot of justice. It will probably go much too far, but they have to go through this."[456]

The nation-branding Fidel has in mind (elucidated by Fuentes) revolves around this kind of CIA tolerance. On several occasions, Fidel affirms that his strategy for propaganda is defensive in nature. "It wasn't a matter of my not being aware that my true enemies would be the *yanquis* in the long run," Fidel acknowledges, "it was that I couldn't designate them as such so early on."[457]

Letting the enemy make the first move is the implication here, much like when Fidel waits for the press to accuse him of the Kennedy assassination in the chapter discussed earlier. Ultimately, he turns the press against the United States by reifying his myth. In the struggle between this superpower and its small Caribbean "Trojan horse," the defiance of an alleged assassination plot suits Fidel's propaganda. It allows him time to uncover the dirt behind CIA operations—he mentions the triple agents Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo and William Morgan—to be used as blackmail. Menoyo and Morgan both work between the CIA, the Dominican dictator

[455] *Ibid.*
[456] *Ibid.*, 410.
[457] *Ibid.*, 412.

Rafael Trujillo, and Cuban intelligence, and help dismantle a plot by Trujillo to overthrow Castro's regime. "They acted to Trujillo's benefit," Fidel remarks, "while passing along information about his escapades to the Americans."[458]

Recognizing the strength of his nation brand, Castro is able to undermine Kennedy at an abstract level. Whereas Kennedy represents a clean-cut image of American decency, Fidel prefers to be the repository for all the instances of corruption committed by the U.S. In comparison with Kennedy, Fidel is stinky, unkempt, and virile; yet he beats the U.S. nation brand by presenting himself as "an unrivaled exhibit of masculinity."[459] He is more real, palpable, and admits that "my beauty conquered them."[460] This is the essence of Cuba's gritty nation brand—survival. As in his earlier concern for blamelessness, Fidel stresses the importance of remaining reactionary in posture (not delivering the blows in international politics, but responding to them). He also insists that in order for his propaganda to be successful, the enemy must be exaggerated as being far superior.

Yet Kennedy is only the surface of the U.S. nation brand. The actors underneath can be found in the CIA. Notice, then, how the construction of the Kennedy symbol is multi-layered. Allen Dulles, John L. Topping (CIA Station Chief, Havana), agents Max Lesnik and Jack Steward (the former a Cuban infiltrator), and others are the signifiers behind the Kennedy-Fidel dyad. Dulles in particular represents the limitations of democratic oversight.

Fidel explains that Dulles, well-intentioned, tried to advocate for a plan of empathy towards the regime (its allegiances not yet being defined) but was pressured into stronger actions by Dwight D. Eisenhower. "But Eisenhower called Allen Dulles and scolded him," Fidel explains, "He said

[458] *Ibid.*, 419–21.
[459] *Ibid.*, 432.
[460] *Ibid.*, 431.

he wanted to see an 'extensive' Cuba campaign."[461] The Kennedy symbol becomes knotted. Nixon pressures Eisenhower, Eisenhower pressures Dulles. The CIA is placed at the mercy of their supervisors and on a limited budget. Fidel argues that this is one of the reasons their image fails in the public eye—autonomy. Unable to fulfill its own designs, the CIA (and Kennedy, by corollary) comes across as incompetent. "Nixon's Achilles' heel was the CIA's dependence on the shortsightedness of North American democracy," concludes Fidel.[462]

Thus, there is Kennedy and his inferior sex appeal. There is the dispute between Dulles and Eisenhower. And finally, there is the failure of CIA strategy toward Cuba. All of these are tied together under the propaganda symbol, "Kennedy."

The other side of this coin, "Fidel," can be said to consist of: a) a blameless, moral standing; b) a manly, defiant appearance before the world; c) the cunning use of spies; and d) a skilled analysis of tactics.

Having discussed the other points in this list, I will close with the last.

Fidel is an expert tactician, if nowhere else than in the campaigns of Angola. Here, however, a decade before that conflict, he appears as a natural leader with surprising battle vision. Not only does he practice area denial by fortifying the Isle of Pines (Cuba's backwater, whose relative isolation would be perfect for an American beach head), he allows covert operations to develop until the proper moment for intervention.

Trujillo's clandestine mission is disrupted only after the disembarkation of several of his troops. The Bay of Pigs assault is similarly anticipated, but allowed to unfold. "There comes a time

[461] *Ibid.*, 415.
[462] *Ibid.*, 417.

when all conspiracies acquire a sort of critical mass," Fidel says, "when it becomes impossible not to draw your guns."[463] In this sense, Fidel is instructing his readers in the arts of war, a sort of primer for leaders confronting superior powers. This is consistent with some of his remarks early on in *The Authobiography*, where he underlines the Machiavellian intention of his work.

Another facet of Fidel's tactics involves cooperation with the enemy. If indeed the CIA's shortcomings lead to a weakening of the Kennedy brand, its strengths benefit Fidel. He is blunt about this from the very first sentence: "An inescapable figure in the Cuban Revolution's history, *as well as my own*, is the CIA"[464] (emphasis mine). Without the CIA, there would be no "Fidel" as we know him through Fuentes. There would be nothing to fill the vessel, nothing to provoke the action of the narrative. Fidel functions out of antagonism, so much so that he admits "a considerable part of power in countries like ours, where instability is a common factor . . . is held in relations with the CIA."[465]

Among the benefits of such relations is predictability. The experience of confronting an enemy like the CIA in clandestine operations is what enables greater strategic vision, Fidel learns. At the end of the chapter, for instance, he has an epiphany regarding his foreign policy. He feels that instead of building a "fortress Cuba" for the enemy to whittle down, he should lead the enemy abroad. As Fidel tells Celia, his partner: "Don't you realize? Don't you see? We have to take our combat fronts out of the island."[466] This is the birth of internationalism in his own words, yet thanks to the lessons learned from the CIA's predictability.

[463] *Ibid.*, 422.
[464] *Ibid.*, 409.
[465] *Ibid.*, 413.
[466] *Ibid.*, 435.

Citing Clausewitz, Fidel admonishes the agency for repeating the same model used for other coups such as that of Guatemala in 1954. "That little war in Guatemala . . . had been too easy, too quick and too cheap for them," he says. Fidel knows what to expect: "the strategy always rotated on a two-point axis. Disembarkation and assassination."[467] So, he does everything in his power to render the attack more expensive, protracted, and politically risky. Fidel is a calculator, suggests Fuentes, a master tactician who does not attack but reacts. He leverages his ties to both the CIA and the Soviets in order to extract resources from them.

In sum, Fuentes offers readers an outline of Fidel to be filled in via questioning. Beginning with the "interview" regarding Kennedy's death, through his propagandistic doctrine, and into the nation brand and counterpoints required for it, Fidel acts out the concept of resistance. In his stories, one can perceive Fuentes' knowledge of intelligence practices since they come so close to the format of an interrogation. One wonders if Fuentes himself ever interrogated prisoners (there is one instance in *Santuario* where an officer instructs him to do so because a prisoner won't talk).

At the same time, there is a literary dance that takes place and has roots in early social realist theater (Brecht and Piscator), which places Fuentes at an advanced stage of Soviet-inspired art. Whereas much of his previous work subscribes to the hard tenants of this style, *The Autobiography* liberates that pent-up energy in an authentic manner. Brecht would be proud of *The Autobiography* but hold suspicions toward the other works. Like the trials he himself interrogated, Brecht would consider *Condenados* or *Posición* to be staged artifacts. For starters, because of their average, hum-drum activities and limited combat scenes.

[467] *Ibid.*, 429.

The individuality Fuentes demonstrates in this work suggests nothing of the sort. *The Autobiography* is, with good reason, Fuentes' first translated novel. And though some of his others (*Santuario*, *Guerreros*) also deserve to be translated, it is obvious why this was the first.

The explorations of a strong man's personality—his ideological leanings, life history, sexual exploits, interpersonal relationships—are, when cast through the lens of interrogation, a screening of the subject that may communicate even more truth than if Fidel had written the piece himself. Fuentes may have been a courtesan of the regime, but his personal relationships with so many of the Revolution's actors *aside* from Fidel grant him the perspective to see his object of study with diachronic clarity.

There is perhaps more of Fidel present in those who lived and lost around him than in Fidel himself, at least in literary terms. "My name is your blood," states the heraldry of chapter one. The Revolution—Fidel—needs blood and an enemy to survive. Without an enemy, the social conditions for mobilization dissipate.

All throughout Fuentes' fiction, readers witness these mobilizations: the LCB, Angola, the Havana spy chases of Ochoa. *The Autobiography* is Fuentes' first entry into one stationary figure and not a collection of journalistic points. It is a screening of the individual—or as I call it, the "source."

Even when Fuentes begins fictionalizing his memoirs of Angola in *Santuario*, his aims are not interrogative in this manner. This work is the first in which his prose—not his descriptions—becomes an interrogation itself. In *The Autobiography*, it is not about documenting actual interrogation methods, but about interrogating the myth, this icon, as a function of both propaganda

and reality. The result is an adept re-presentation of Fidel, a question posed to the readers: Could all of this have occurred differently?

The War Report

Weighing the fiction of Norberto Fuentes as a resource for cultural influence requires a consideration of how other intellectuals have historically been embedded in state-run schemes. If the use of intellectuals in information policy has any sort of baseline, it can perhaps be found in the CIA-funded "Congress for Cultural Freedom" established during the Cold War.

Since its inaugural ceremony in June 1950, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) began financing a series of highbrow cultural reviews in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The most important of these was *Encounter* magazine, published in London through a CIA-MI6 collaboration, under the imprint of the Congress. It was in this periodical that authors such as Isaiah Berlin, Vladimir Nabokov, Jorge Luis Borges, Bertrand Russel, and others made their mark on the concept of a liberal democracy.[468]

Fuentes, of course, has less to say about democracy than the contributors to *Encounter*. But his position as an engaged thinker and fashioner of Cuba's nation brand spans the same length of time as these CIA campaigns for influence. *Encounter* was published from 1953 to its folding in 1990. Fuentes begins his career in 1968 and continues it beyond the Cold War into 2010. These coinciding periods mean that Fuentes, whether a journalist or an intelligence agent (or both), is likely to be aware of the basic strategies used in the struggle for ideological dominance.

It will be necessary to translate the uniquely American background of the CCF's cultural reviews into the image of Cuba projected by Fuentes. "Nation brand" has been the term I have employed throughout this study, but as researcher Wally Olins remarks, "There is in reality nothing

[468] Stonor Sanders, Frances. *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, 165.

new about national branding, except the word 'brand' and the techniques that are now used, which derive from mainstream marketing."[469] These techniques are derived from the SMART paradigm, an acronym standing for *specific, measurable, achievable, relevant,* and *time-bound.* How "SMART" Fuentes' narrative could be is a speculative affair. As I will show below, the SMART paradigm has its problems and has been called into question in the field of cultural diplomacy. This has caused practitioners to employ qualitative analysis instead to decide on the image they wish to present.

That said, CIA funding for cultural magazines was not lacking during the Cold War, and a firm belief existed in the potential of books as weapons. The first cut from the Farfield Foundation (a CIA financing front) to *Encounter* was on the order of $40,000. *Censorship,* another London publication, harvested $35,000 a year for its operations, and ran from 1964 to 1967. Sol Levitas' *New Leader* raised $50,000 from both covert and overt sources to stay in business. "At the same time," says Frances Stonor Saunders, "the Congress extended similar help to the other high-level cultural magazines with which it had long been affiliated: *Kenyon Review* (1,500 copies), *Hudson Review* (1,500), *Sewanee Review* (1,000), *Poetry* (750), *Daedelus* (the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 500 copies), and *The Journal of the History of Ideas* (500). Purchase of these copies cost $20,000 per annum." Adjusted for inflation, this last annual sum alone is equivalent to $158,000 today.[470]

Even before the Cold War, the Office of War Information (OWI) recognized that "books do not have their impact upon the mass mind but upon the minds of those who would mold the

[469] Olins, Wally. "Making a National Brand" in *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 170.
[470] Stonor Sanders, 177, 338–40.

mass mind."[471] But measuring this was problematic, if not through the figure of sales or print copies. What is known is that from 1942 to 1963, the U.S. printed more than 15 million books abroad through the 174 libraries maintained by the United States Information Service (USIS).[472] The Soviets, for their part, had achieved an impressive 40 million in circulation by that same year.[473]

In Fuentes' design of Cuba, the intent seems to be one of constructing a national imaginary (initially centered around the army) which is later remodeled into a more "honest" account of the island's power structures. This is similar to certain corrections made by the CIA during its first forays into high culture. For instance, the original target audience of the CCF and its world subsidiaries were the "undecided" intellectuals of the Cold War—people who believed that capitalism and communism were two faces of the same evil.

The CIA considered these non-aligned parties to be just as threatening as any prominent Communist thinker. The opinion of James Burnham, a New York University professor of philosophy and participant in the CCF inauguration, serves as evidence: "The progressive man of the 'non-Communist Left,'" he said at the ceremony, "is in a perpetual tremor of guilt before the true Communist. The Communist," he continued, "manipulating the same rhetoric . . . appears to the man of the non-Communist Left as himself with guts."[474]

The polarization in Burnham's statement—having to choose either the Left or the Right—comes back to haunt the CIA in Latin America. Its early magazine *Cuadernos*, for instance, was uncovered as a ploy in 1966. Its successor *Mundo Nuevo*, in which many Latin American

[471] Barnhisel, Greg. *Cold War Modernists: Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy*, 96.
[472] Arndt, Richard T. *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*, 196.
[473] Barnhisel, 100–101.
[474] Stonor Sanders, 78.

luminaries made their careers, corrected this black-and-white view to include thoughtful, varied, and even critical pieces on the United States.[475] Instead of advocating that one join the Right or Left, magazines such as *Mundo Nuevo* promoted a more open worldview that encouraged moderate political thought (specifically, social democracy). This is how Fuentes' narrative adjusts, too. After the obviously partisan discourse of *Condenados*, *Posición*, and *Santuario*, Fuentes takes a turn toward a more transparent view of the Cuban regime, which, though critical, develops an image that is specific to the island.

This is a contemporary problem in nation branding: that of finding a unique voice amid the plethora of generic national features such as tolerance, friendliness, receptiveness to technology, and others. Whereas the Cold War offered two competing sets of values that were internally homogenous, today's unipolar world, with its emphasis on globalization, is susceptible to what Robert Govers plainly calls "boredom." As he explains in *Imaginative Communities* (2018), the consequences of this "neoliberal, management-driven world," in which "we are supposed to measure our achievements against goals and those goals have to be SMART," come in the form of "standardized policies, copy-paste behavior and a rat race for the latest, tallest, and 'smartest' icon that will generate fifteen minutes of fame."[476]

Govers' work is one of the first in nation branding to distance itself from the well tread marketing techniques of most others. He posits the notion of a "gross national imagination" for each country that seeks a singular, distinct identity in this world governed by uniform market principles. My analysis of Fuentes' fiction has revealed part of Cuba's identity in this manner.

[475] Whitney, Joel. *Finks: How the CIA Tricked the World's Best Writers*, 197–98.
[476] Govers, Robert. *Imaginative Communities: Admired Cities, Regions, and Countries*, 16.

Centered around the figure of the underdog, Cuba's defining trait—according to early Fuentes—has been its humble devotion to social and humanitarian causes despite its status in the third world.

Curiously, Cuba is missing from the Good Country Index (GCI) calculated from United Nations data. This index ranks countries according to their contributions to global science and technology, culture, peace and security, prosperity and equality, and health. Fuentes fills this gap, arguing that whatever its legal shortcomings, whatever its record of human rights, Cuba has repeatedly confronted overwhelming circumstances in the pursuit of social justice.

The first three works in Fuentes' repertoire exemplify this facet of the Cuban nation brand. There is a certain degree of defiance in it, yes, but also perseverance. The perseverance of the Cuban worker in spite of his material paucity is a quality affixed to Cuba's brand. Just as Govers outlines the precepts behind Kazakhstan's brand strength,[477] Fuentes proposes a set of personalities, icons, landscapes, and mentalities that characterize the Cuban people during the early years of the Revolution.

However, after his persecution on the island, Fuentes shuffles these components around. The brand he proposes post-Ochoa is of an altogether different nature, which I will present below. Instead of perseverance and the worker's attachment to the land, Fuentes directs his readers toward Cuba's darker elements. The subversive methods of financing; the competition for government pork;[478]the state of surveillance; and most importantly, the political elites—all appear after Fuentes' post-Ochoa turn. The latter are particularly important due to their absence in all of his previous narratives.

[477] *Ibid.*, 34.
[478] A term used by political scientists to refer to benefits, pay bonuses, or increased funding allocated to a government agency or its members in recognition of exceptional performance. Here I use the term as a reference to corruption, which is another way in which pork is acquired in many countries.

Fidel, Raúl, Carlos Aldana, and the other ministers of government are not featured in Fuentes' early work. His collective hero of *Bunder Pacheco* is therefore replaced by these more specific personas later on. The channels of communication are diverted from the personal exchanges of journalistic interviews to the whispers, sketches, or voyeurisms of Cuba's underbelly.

This change in tone is interesting from the nation branding point of view, yet suspect through the lens of cultural propaganda. During the CIA's literary activities, the problem of political converts (like Fuentes) surfaced on several occasions. Arthur Koestler, the notable Hungarian-British author, was one such convert. At the CCF inaugural conference, Koestler offered his opinion to the audience: "Yet the convert, too, is a renegade from his former beliefs or disbeliefs," though "he is nevertheless forgiven, for he has *embraced* a faith, whereas the ex-Communist or the unfrocked priest has *lost* a faith—and has thereby become a menace to illusion and a reminder of the abhorrent, threatening void."[479]

Koestler's comment is a complex yet splendid place to link the issue of nation branding to propagandistic strategy. The "void" he mentions is an acknowledgment of the ultimate superficiality of most nation brands. For instance, Germany today—according to Olins—is equivalent to automobiles. "The extent to which Germany and automobiles are currently perceived as a single entity" is so great, Olin says, that the executives of many companies "barely mention any other types of German products."[480] The advanced pharmaceutical, chemical, and banking industries of the country are virtually erased from its imaginary, forcing many German companies to divest themselves entirely of any national character.

[479] Stonor Sanders, 80.
[480] Olins, 173.

The narrower the sphere of activity linked to a nation brand, Olins explains, the more stereotypical the image becomes. If "Germany" means "cars" in this case, then Fuentes' reorientation away from the broader ideals of self-sacrifice and internationalism brings him closer to the idea of "Cuba" as "Fidel." Indeed, that is what Fuentes states through his character in *The Autobiography*: "I am the Revolution."[481] And that is what I have previously noted in the Latin American *Country Brand Index* (CBI). Cuba today is perceived as Fidel, Che, and cigars.

Moving toward a more precise description of the Cuban regime exposes how its internal architecture of control is related ever more to Fidel. Rather than presenting Cuba through binoculars, Fuentes does it through a magnifying glass. In this sense, he is one of Koestler's "converts." Fuentes is a "menace to illusion" because he dismantles the imaginary he helps orchestrate. And he has several contemporaries from the intelligence world.

Malcom Muggeridge is one. Raised as a communist in Britain's Labour Party, Muggeridge becomes an MI6 agent responsible for the financing of *Encounter*. Saunders explains that "his book *Winter in Moscow* (1933), which presented the shattering of his Russian utopia, was one of the first exposures of the Soviet myth written from the Left."[482] Fuentes' turn is an analogue to that of Muggeridge. Though it is impossible (and beyond the scope of this study) to ascertain Fuentes' ties to the CIA, MI6, or KGB, what is certain is that between *Guerreros* and *The Autobiography*, Fuentes debunks the Cuban myth.

In so doing, one learns that Fuentes shares much of the strategy employed by the CIA culturalists of *Encounter*. Namely, his beginning with a controversial trial that ends in execution.

[481] Fuentes, Norberto. *The Autobiography of Fidel Castro*, 172.
[482] Stonor Sanders, 174.

The Ochoa case is Fuentes' point of departure for criticizing the regime, the moment at which he decides that intelligence should no longer be glorified but exposed for what it is inside Cuba.

Similarly, *Encounter* launches its first issue with an article by Leslie Fiedler on the controversial trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. This couple was convicted in March 1951 for leaking atomic secrets to the Soviets. Their execution on June 19, 1953 was a sensational affair, and earned *Encounter* a place in British intellectual circles, selling out its first 10,000 copies. "Now its name was on everybody's lips," Saunders relates, "and no dinner party passed without a heated discussion of its contents."[483] Critics who wrote to the editors about this first issue described Fiedler's piece as an "exciting and unstuffy debut" or "exceptionally good."[484]

Though Fuentes' *Guerreros* has nowhere near the impact of *Encounter*, it does take a cue from its approach. The framing of a human rights case in propaganda can have a profound influence on reach. Therefore, in terms of its potential in a cultural campaign, Fuentes' novel on the Ochoa affair could be leveraged effectively. The key behind *Encounter*'s successful launch is the same principle undergirding *Guerreros*: that of the proportionality between crime and punishment. Does the punishment fit the crime?

Using this question alone, *Encounter* is able to get off the ground. But in Cuba, it is Fidel's "Operation Truth"—in which writers are invited to witness the trials of certain Batista partisans—that gains the attention of the literary class. Gabriel García Márquez, Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, Ernest Hemingway, John Lee Anderson (a biographer of Che Guevara), and George Plimpton (editor of *The Paris Review*) all witness these events, and each goes on to write about them through

[483] *Ibid.*, 186.
[484] *Ibid.*

their own political persuasions.[485] They add fuel to the polemic which later increases *Mundo Nuevo*'s circulation.

Structural Static Elements	
History, Geography	The *Sierra de Escambray* is the reference point around which orbit discussions of the Cuban littoral regions, Cuban airspace, and eventually, *Playa Girón*.
Semi-static Elements	
Greatness	▪ *Bunder Pacheco* (the people)
Physical Appearance	▪ Undeveloped rural areas, forests
Mentality	▪ Self-sacrifice ▪ Perseverance through adversity ▪ Martial discipline
Coloring Elements	
Symbols	▪ Machete ▪ AKM / FAL rifles
Behavior	▪ Revolutionary justice ▪ Massive mobilization for infrastructure
Communication	▪ "Fortress Cuba" ▪ Accessible education / job training

Fig. 1 – Cuba's early nation brand in Fuentes. Credit: Robert Govers, values model.

When Fiedler writes about the Rosenbergs, he does so in a style that Fuentes emulates in *Guerreros*. Recall, for instance, how General Ochoa fulfills a "revolutionary cycle" in which his ultimate destiny is to die for the cause as a martyr. Faithful to the end, the Rosenbergs display a similar resolve. Fiedler's piece for *Encounter* was controversial because it depicted the Rosenbergs as dehumanized symbols lacking affection. "Fiedler seemed affronted," observes Saunders, "as much by Ethel Rosenberg's literary style (or lack of) as by Julius' failure to be sufficiently intimate with his wife and accomplice."[486] Even in the face of imminent death, the Rosenbergs show the enemy no signs of breaking.

[485] Whitney, 175–76.
[486] Stonor Sanders, 185.

In Fuentes' evaluation of Ochoa, a similar phenomenon occurs as the general becomes increasingly hardened before his fate. "Hmmm" is the only response Fuentes receives from Ochoa as his appointment with the firing squad nears. When it is finally time for the end, Fuentes recalls Ochoa's famous phrase that "men don't go and tell."[487] Their friendship becomes irrelevant because it is frozen by the higher imperatives of the Revolution.

If the discussion of a trial is a convenient way to spark a debate and acquire readers, another lesson in cultural influence is that of articulating a mission. At the end of the CCF inauguration on June 29, 1950, a "Freedom Manifesto" was issued in fourteen points. Some of the most salient points include the linkage between peace and intellectual freedom (they are mutually inseparable), the damage caused by ideological indifference, and the need to create new forms of freedom as well as the means to manifest them.[488]

But this is easier said than done. In Latin America, magazines such as *Combate* experienced difficulty aligning their covert objectives with their overt mission. Designed between former Costa Rican president José Figueres Ferrer and CIA operative Norman Thomas, *Combate* sought—unlike its European counterparts—to amplify the voice of the non-Communist Left.

After Figueres won his civil war in Costa Rica in 1949, he set an example for other governments by disbanding the army and abolishing the communist party. "The United States watched closely as [Figueres'] eighteen-month junta then gave women the vote, took measures to ban racism against black Costa Ricans, nationalized certain industries, and kept foreign investments intact," explains Joel Whitney.[489] Figueres' policies afforded Costa Rica the status of

[487] Fuentes, Norberto. *Dulces Guerreros Cubanos*, 256.
[488] Stonor Sanders, 82–83.
[489] Whitney, 163.

"Switzerland of the Americas" and prevented the CIA from intervening there. Who could the CIA incite to revolt (and against whom) if there were no armed forces?

Combate's funding was comparable to that of its European counterparts at $35,000.[490] However, unlike the consistency of the Freedom Manifesto, this magazine had to reconcile the incongruence between American interventionism against social democracy, and its simultaneous desire to expand it.

The 1954 coup against Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala is part of this conundrum. Arbenz had been instituting the same kind of reforms as Figueres, but was subjected to CIA actions. Why? "U.S. foreign policy was incoherent," indicates Whitney, "One minute the CIA was plotting to overthrow Figueres; the next it was funding his magazine. One minute it toppled democratic reformers . . . the next its operatives must emphasize those same reforms in order to avoid pushing the new reformers toward Communism."[491] The result is a confusing conception of cultural freedom, a defect which would plague later iterations of these Latin American reviews.

In contrast, Fuentes displays a remarkably coherent view of the Revolution in his early works. It is easy to define, it seems honest through his direct participation, and it even describes some of its transgressions. George Plimpton of *The Paris Review* (another CCF-sponsored publication) employed similar methods. "Plimpton was a pioneer of a wing of New Journalism that some have taken to calling participatory journalism," Whitney remarks.[492] Fuentes certainly subscribed to this view as his interview formats demonstrate. Even in *Santuario*, where Fuentes

[490] *Ibid.*, 164.
[491] *Ibid.*, 167.
[492] *Ibid.*, 169.

sensationalizes combat, he makes use of the interview with General Tomassevich in the same way that Plimpton approaches Hemingway for *The Paris Review*.[493]

Hemingway is as much Plimpton's idol as Tomassevich is for Fuentes. He is also the key to augmenting the *Review*'s popularity: "Cultural diplomacy was secondary to promoting *The Paris Review*," says Whitney, "And for that, Hemingway's appeal was far-reaching."[494] This anchor method of using a central figure to organize and legitimize content is what Fuentes employs in his work. *Bunder Pacheco* and Tomassevich form one figure; and later, in his dissenting years, Ochoa and the de la Guardia brothers form another.

Thus, aside from adhering to a consistent view of cultural freedom, the skilled propagandist will have an eye for celebrities—Hemingway, Tomassevich, García Márquez—around which he can set his pieces in orbit. Even if such celebrities are opposed to one's interests, they can be leveraged in the name of diversity to give the impression of a democratic orientation. Whitney writes that "the CIA was learning to make its public enemies into private cultural ambassadors . . . and, by doing so, to 'leash' or rein them in when necessary."[495] This was the position assumed by *Mundo Nuevo* from its inception in July 1966 to its closure in 1971.

Among others, Pablo Neruda was invited to publish there despite his communist leanings. Carlos Fuentes, a rising author in the Mexican intellectual circuit, was also instrumental in expanding *Mundo Nuevo*'s readership. Carlos had initially sided with the Cuban Revolution, but became a political convert like Koestler after the publication of his novel, *Cambio de piel* (1967).[496]

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[493] *Ibid.*, 172–73.
[494] *Ibid.*
[495] *Ibid.*, 197.
[496] *Ibid.*, 199.

I believe this is one area of weakness for Norberto Fuentes. Rather than allowing for a wide range of figures to voice their opinions on the Cuban Revolution, his early accounts are one-sided. They seldom include dissident authors for the (understandable) reason of self-protection. Nevertheless, if deployed as part of a cultural campaign, his early work would either have to be amended to include these voices, or combined with his later novels for a wholistic effect.

The failure of early CIA-sponsored magazines in Latin America was due to this kind of unilateral politics. It was not until the CIA realized that the inclusion of a full spectrum of voices was more appealing, that it began to change its approach and advocate for a larger non-Communist Left. This was the premise behind *Mundo Nuevo*, which proffered a "Fidelismo sin Fidel," or social reforms and safety nets without authoritarian rule.[497]

Looking at the nation brand in Fuentes' early work, one can appreciate its subliminal messaging. An analysis of such messaging should always be a part of any structured cultural campaign.

Fuentes' nation brand for Cuba underscores its naturalistic origins insofar as it emerges (literally) from the ground up. The land is an important resource for sugar cane production, nickel mining, and other economic activities. It is also the site of a certain "scarring" that must occur in order for the Revolution to progress. Frequent descriptions of geological blasting, construction, or traversing difficult terrain reinforce the naturalistic character of the Revolution. Even in Fuentes' later *Autobiography*, one of the most memorable scenes is that of Fidel walking along a beach with his partner Celia, contemplating his defense at the Bay of Pigs. The Revolution is a natural sprouting of popular sentiment. Its organic nature gives it an impression of cleanliness, human

[497] *Ibid.*, 198.

optimism, and biological inevitability. These are important deductions to be made from Cuba's nation brand.

The question is not irrelevant to American efforts, either. During the Cold War, U.S. authorities also pondered over the kind of nation brand they wished to transmit to foreign publics. In the 1950s, the list of books was relatively conservative: Washington Irving, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and others. The goal at this point in time was to present a "full and fair" image of the United States that largely omitted its vices. Greg Barnhisel admits that these "books were there to *teach* about America, not to showcase American artistic achievement."[498]

Only in time did U.S. book programs realize that they needed to confront the idea that the United States "represented the unstoppable, vulgarizing forces of mass culture and mass consumption."[499] For this, more contemporary talent was needed, and the State Department found that talent in southern author William Faulkner.

Faulkner was a sort of black sheep to the State Department early on. He was viewed as an author of gothic southern literature, which employed themes of sex, violence, and corruption that were considered liabilities for U.S. diplomacy. Nevertheless, thanks to the participation of universities and private publishers, Faulkner's reputation grew. In fact, this was one of the features touted by CCF magazines throughout its regions: that literary tastes were not merely a function of centralized state mandates, but of private entities, too.

[498] Barnhisel, 98.
[499] *Ibid.*, 99.

"Faulkner was almost certainly the most significant figure in the exportation of American modernism," explains Barnhisel, "and likely had more direct influence on foreign affairs—in particular Latin Americans—than any other American writer since Poe."[500] Among other destinations, Faulkner visited Brazil, Japan, Greece, and Venezuela as part of his literary tours.

One of the ideas common to the fiction of both Faulkner and Fuentes is that of endurance. Like the popular resistance to penury evident in *Posición*, Faulkner argues that fiction should "help man endure by lifting his heart . . . [to] the glory of his past."[501] For Fuentes, such courage is a new phenomenon (however catalyzed it may be by the past) generated by the advent of the Revolution. Instead of an origin in "the human heart in conflict with itself,"[502] as Faulkner believed, Fuentes' courage to endure sprung from a desire to advance the collective. In this, it is clear how their two lines of thought—communism and liberal democracy—interpret the same theme.

Another example of this difference in interpretation occurs in 1967, with the appearance of an homage to the poet Rubén Darío in *Mundo Nuevo*. The Cuban publishing organ *Casa de las Américas*, from which Fuentes received an award in 1968, also published an homage that same year. The perceptions of Darío on each side are revealing. The Cubans write that Darío is an author aware of his "unequal relationship to First World writers." For example, René Depestre explains in his essay, "Rubén Darío: con el cisne y el fusil," that the poet creates a new horizon for Latin American letters at the international level. And true to the naturalistic imagery of Fuentes, Depestre concludes that this horizon lies "in the sea," not Washington.[503]

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[500] *Ibid.*, 125.
[501] *Ibid.*, 126.
[502] *Ibid.*
[503] Cobb, Russell "Promoting Literature in the Most Dangerous Area in the World: The Cold War, the Boom, and Mundo Nuevo" in *Pressing the Fight: Print, Propaganda, and the Cold War*, 232.

For the Cubans, Darío's poetry is revolutionary thanks to its anchor in baroque adornments and extravagance, but this "revolutionary style," they argue, is a product of revolutionary politics. Such art cannot be divorced from revolutionary politics.

In comparison, *Mundo Nuevo* opts for a more moderate interpretation of Darío. According to Severo Sarduy, a Cuban author who collaborated closely with *Mundo*'s editor, Emir Rodríguez Monegal, "Upon returning from Europe, Darío starts to favor a world of proliferating objects . . . In these forms, what is perceived as accessory . . . becomes the most essential element."[504] Darío's ties to European antecedents underscore *Mundo Nuevo*'s attempt to create a more cosmopolitan sphere of debate where British, French, German, and American influences are taken into account. This is similar to how Borges introduced Latin American readers to North American authors through his translations of Walt Whitman, Edgar Allen Poe, or William Faulkner.[505] Monegal was, to boot, an avid reader of *Sur*, one of the magazines in which Borges wrote. *Sur* was later earmarked by CIA agent John Hunt to judge a grant to young Latin American writers through the Council for Literary Magazines.

"Hunt's idea," notes Russell Cobb, "was that four or five magazines would judge the quality of the work: *Sur* . . . and *Cuadernos* would be able to join forces with a few other magazines and establish a new standard for Latin American literature."[506]

Hunt's idea never materialized due to internal politics at the CIA. However, his approach demonstrates why the inclusion of Fuentes' later works in a cultural campaign could help establish a dialogical relationship with the Revolution. The one-sided strategy of Cuban intellectuals,

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[504] *Ibid.*
[505] Ciabattari, Jane. "Is Borges the 20th Century's Most Important Writer? *BBC Culture.* 2 September 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20140902-the-20th-centurys-best-writer>
[506] Cobb, 238.

evident in an open letter issued to Pablo Neruda, upon his visit to the 1966 PEN Club meeting in New York, was not working.[507] Their division of art into that which resided "inside" and "outside" the Revolution intimidated Latin American audiences, who were tired of polarized rhetoric. Younger authors, who were loath to accept the aging democratic views of their seniors, had an equal aversion to gratuitously accepting the Revolution. A more balanced method could have been developed to counter *Mundo Nuevo*.

Structural Static Elements	
History, Geography	The Angolan bush, a backdrop to a war for a legitimate regime; the urban spaces, roads, apartments, and offices of a troubled regime at home.
Semi-static Elements	
Greatness	▪ Arnaldo Ochoa ▪ Antonio / Patricio de la Guardia
Physical Appearance	▪ Official buildings and personal homes of the Cuban military class
Mentality	▪ Self-preservation ▪ Friendship ▪ Political maneuvering
Coloring Elements	
Symbols	▪ Rolex watches ▪ Ray-Ban sunglasses ▪ Radios / recording equipment
Behavior	▪ Criminal ▪ Surveillance ▪ Documentary

Given the success of *Mundo Nuevo*'s moderating perspective, some notes should be made on Fuentes' fiction. Obviously, I am concerned here with Fuentes' potential *now* and not his position within the Cold War. Though it is necessary to consider trends and factors from that period, my analysis examines the features of Fuentes' two nation brands—before and after Ochoa—to determine how they might be deployed in the most effective manner.

According to Julia Sweig and Michael Bustamente, Cuba's cultural diplomacy has long revolved around its position as a "victim" in international affairs.[508] It is the victim

[507] Whitney, 199,204.
[508] Bustamente, Michael J.; Sweig, Julia. "Buenavista Solidarity and the Axis of Aid: Cuban and Venezuelan Public Diplomacy." *The Annals of the Academy of American Political and Social Science*. 616: 225.

Communication	▪ Internal intrigues ▪ Personal motives ▪ Necessary violence

of an embargo that has impoverished its population; of countless assassination attempts; of clandestine counterrevolutionary bands; and even of illegal flyovers by U.S. aircraft.

Fig. 1 – Cuba's late nation brand in Fuentes. Credit: Robert Govers, values model.

To counter this, the Cuban cultural industry has partnered with foreign film and music producers to market its products in a way that can boost its tourism. Sweig identifies certain cultural landmarks such as the films of Cuban director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea (*La muerte de un burócrata*, 1966; *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, 1968) that critique the Revolution's inefficient bureaucracies. Spanish director Benito Zambrano has also made an impression with his 2005 film *Habana Blues*, where two aspiring rock musicians are approached by a foreign record label for business. When the boys find out that they must pose as exiles for marketing purposes, they must make "a choice between global commercialism and patriotism."[509]

In general, Cuban film and music position themselves in a more nuanced, sophisticated light than the legacy of socialist realism might admit. This is a distinguishing trait of the island's cultural output, a kind of intellectual superiority wielded against the rigidity of Soviet style, on the one hand, and the mass consumerism still prevalent in many American creatives, on the other.

Nevertheless, some Cuban works have traced a fine line in the sand. Popular rap groups like Orishas (based in France) "tend to portray Cuba as an exotic land of dance, rum, cigars, and

[509] *Ibid.*, 243–45.

sexuality," says Sweig.[510] Other films such as *La vida es silbar* (1998) infuse themes of Afro-Cuban spirituality into their plots, in an attempt to engender the North American catch-all phrase of "magical realism." Both are examples of how, despite a determination to create truly avant-garde, reflective art, the creative industry must feed off of and adapt to the island's increasing openness to global markets.

Fuentes' position in all of this is intriguing. On the one hand, he could be said to exhibit an officialist, documentarian view of the Revolution, especially in *Posición*. Like George Plimpton of *The Paris Review*, Fuentes adopts a participatory tone in his writing.[511] The mostly conservative make-up of his early nation brand is evidence of this tendency. Though participating in the Revolution was perhaps fitting during the early stages of Castro's rise, the contending, balanced view of *Mundo Nuevo* suggests that a less obvious tone was needed.

Taking into account his later nation brand—that which begins with *Guerreros*—it is possible to insert Fuentes in the ongoing dialog for openness with Cuba. Not as a vociferating opponent of the regime (and certainly, to be avoided, his association with old exile circles), but rather as a collaborator in the now vastly popular genre of spy films and fiction. Fuentes' singularity in the nation brand business is his ability to place Cuba at parity with the United States on the subject of espionage. Few examples of Cuban cultural output ascribe this feature to the island's nation brand. Military strength may not be something Cuba is known for, but its intelligence circles could be. This is especially true given the tendency to portray Cuban agents as charming *Don Juans* engaged in the polyamory of their theaters of war.

[510] Bustamente, Michael J.; Sweig, 245.
[511] Whitney, 169.

I say this, however, on the condition that one understand popular American manifestations of the spy such as Jason Bourne or the even newer Tom Clancy television series, *Jack Ryan* (2018). This is not an endorsement for Fuentes' work as a tourist promotion to visit "Cuba, the land of spies." Rather, it is a suggestion that Fuentes' work, on the macro scale, is an example of patriotic disillusion. The same kind of disillusion felt by rising operative Jack Ryan as he buckles under the U.S. intelligence bureaucracy.

The idea of promoting popular art in this way is not new. When Mexican author Carlos Fuentes recanted his communist sentiments in 1965, he promoted popular art as vehicle for cross-cultural understanding. The participation of the masses in such art, he argued, was the reason for its universality. Abandoning the ideological camps was a better way of grasping Latin American reality. "Look, I think that because of the upheavals throughout our history," Carlos said in an interview, "there's a sort of fear of what lies in the background of the country. There's an expressionist, violent, and baroque background that's also our connection to a world that has become violent, expressionist, and baroque."[512]

This shared frustration between Latin America and the rest of the world is what enables engagement with an author like Norberto Fuentes. The same failures of his intelligence system are applicable to the United States. The portrait of a controversial politician (Fidel) is equally relatable. Even the role of intelligence (and torture, in particular) in pursuing what are now termed "terrorists" has an equivalency in Fuentes. The disillusion, the questions about his country's fossilized role in international affairs, and the position of the writer within this complex form a

[512] Qtd. in Barnhisel, 244.

nucleus to be leveraged for universalization. Deploying Fuentes in the right way can imply that the boycott on both sides of the Florida Strait is over, and that it is time to find a common note.

For instance, compared to Jason Bourne, Fuentes is what Michael Denning calls a "cryptocapitalist," or someone who hides behind his assigned numbers, bank accounts, and the black-market deals enabled by globalization.[513] In *Guerreros*, this comes to fruition in discussions between Fuentes and Ochoa or Fuentes and Tony. Hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars are implicated in his dealings with members of the military, exposing the hypocritical practices of the Cuban state. Fuentes asks the same questions as Bourne: should an agent respect an authority that denies liberties to its own people? When should the agent cross the line and turn his back—as Fuentes does—on his sponsor? Can that state sponsor ever be discharged in the first place?

The specific medium through which Fuentes should be treated in a cultural campaign need not be television, though. More modest efforts such as academic commentary could be a start. Besides his obvious links to the spy genre, Fuentes is, in person, a scholar of Hemingway. Spy literature is rich in these academics, who, thanks to their hermeneutic expertise, are able to discover the patterns behind intelligence.

The most important facet of these scholarly characters is that they can be linked to the spy traditions of Britain and the United States. As I mentioned earlier, this was one of the main objectives of the CCF in Latin America. Michael Josselson, the brainchild of *Encounter* magazine and evaluator of the *Mundo Nuevo* project, once wrote to a colleague that "when it comes to 'the novel,' I just wonder whether the subject could not be narrowed down to either 'Alienation' or to

[513] Qtd. in Hepburn, Allan. *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture*, 6.

'Social Revolt' or to 'Clash of Generations.'"[514] Josselson sought broad themes through which he could weave North American literature into the Latin American novel. In this way, he could underscore the problems shared between the two societies. Notice, for instance, how his suggestion embraces the typical tenants of communism.

As a scholar embedded in the intelligence community, Fuentes possesses many fictional counterparts. Allan Hepburn identifies George Smiley and Roy Bland from John LeCarré's "Karla" trilogy as two examples. Smiley's education is in linguistics, while Bland enjoys "plodding the academic circuit in Eastern Europe."[515] Richard Hannay from John Buchan's *Greenmantle* (1916) "is a geological engineer . . . [who] admits to speaking 'pretty fair German' and fluent Dutch."[516] Jim Prideaux, from *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974), "teaches French and marks student papers through the night."[517] And Magnus Pym from *A Perfect Spy* (1986) is an expert in German studies.[518] To round this out, Richard Arndt highlights the work of several scholar-diplomats involved in real-life cultural affairs in his book, *The First Resort of Kings* (2005). Arndt himself earned a doctorate in 18th century French literature from Colombia University. He went on to work for the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) for 24 years.

The platform for projecting Fuentes can vary: film, television, literature. But more important is the way in which his late nation brand for Cuba is connected to the United States. There is indeed the spy genre. But there are other avenues for dissecting him. For example, the global market for disinformation (any YouTube news or documentary routinely features the

[514] Qtd. in Stonor Sanders, 238.
[515] Qtd. in Hepburn, *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture*, 58.
[516] *Ibid.*
[517] *Ibid.*
[518] *Ibid.*

disclaimer of "This program is funded in whole or in part by the X or Y government") is receiving ever greater publicity in our country. This could be one avenue of approach.

Through his imagery, Fuentes demonstrates how commercial representations of Cuba overlook some of its most innermost struggles. His fiction is a means of breaking the monolithic branding of Cuba's past and embracing the individuality of people: the fact that humans are selfish, corrupt, and egotistical no matter the society. The truth behind figures like Fidel is evaluated in Fuentes' narrative, and so is that of his most respected idols and friends. In the end, he implies that the state is an untrustworthy construct as well as a content engine. How better to associate him with some of the challenges posed by disinformation today?

As one of Koestler's "converts," it is useful to remember the venues in which Fuentes has appeared. Prior to his exile, he wrote for *Casa de las Américas*, *Granma*, *Hoy*, and *Cuba* (according to his mentions in *Posición*). After his departure from the island, Fuentes has received press from *The New York Times*, *El País*, *El Mundo*, the *Huffington Post en español*, but virtually no coverage from Latin American cultural reviews. His call for help (written from prison in 1989) is published in *Letras Libres* with no editorial analysis. Therefore, an augmentation of Fuentes' presence in such reviews should be mandatory in a cultural campaign.[519]

Establishing the angle for discussing Fuentes is another concern. It is a sensitive affair that requires a keen eye for the nuances of his work. The push toward openness of all kinds in Cuba, including cultural openness, makes it easier to present Fuentes as an advocate for this objective. However, care must be taken to avoid the impression of over-dependence on the Cuban exile community. This would signal the hidden hand of the U.S. to readers.

[519] See suggested press outlets in figure 3.

As Sweig points out, Cuba's longtime ally, Venezuela, has developed its own cultural initiatives in an effort to dispel the misrepresentation of Latin Americans in Hollywood. Venezuela maintains a *Centro nacional autónomo de cinematografía* (CNAC) similar to Cuba's ICAIC[520], as well as a $42 million dollar project labeled "Villa del cine." If Fuentes' work were to be considered for any sort of filmic representation, these two outlets in either country would be essential.

I must again underline that due to the binary nature of Fuentes' brand for Cuba, there are ample characters and situations that could be discussed on either side of the Florida Strait. The fact that Fuentes' later works appear to be "dissident" does not bar them from being discussed as valuable assets for a revolutionary government. The bureaucracies Fuentes navigates in *Guerreros*, for instance, demonstrate how party loyalty is still a powerful force in the country. Many government functionaries in the narrative adhere to revolutionary values, and many citizens serve as informants.

The figure of Ochoa is another nexus for the analysis of both the Revolution's perseverance and its judicial corruption. An article structured around Ochoa would certainly lend itself to the concept of "loyalty," which could be discussed between the United States, Cuba, Venezuela, and other countries of the Caribbean basin. Ochoa is a multi-partisan character who could be contemplated as easily in *Granma* as in the *Huffington Post*.

[520] *Instituto cubano de arte e industria cinematográfico*s (ICAIC), founded just 83 days after Castro's arrival to power on the island.

Fig. 3 - Suggested press outlets for the projection of Norberto Fuentes. Courtesy: AmCharts.

With this panorama of engaged intellectuals, it becomes possible to create a *composite* nation brand for Cuba that is an altogether new reference point. As Robert Govers has indicated, the difficulty in nation branding is finding a country's unique "voice"—something that is peculiar, specific, and thought-provoking. When discussing an intellectual like Fuentes in a public forum (print or oral), it is necessary to structure the discourse around a composite nation brand. Too many times do brands come across as mundane or market-engineered. For instance, every country has a tourist sector and particular climes. Every one values multiculturalism. Most promote a general respect for the environment. And a great many accept technology as the gateway to social progress.

The problem with these generic values is that they are tired, uninteresting. They are signs of the standardized marketing campaigns we are all used to and ignore. They are values, it is true; but they are values that are so broad that, for the true opinion multiplier, they simply sound like market jingles.

The advantage of creating a composite nation brand *through* intellectuals—and Fuentes is just one of many in Cuba—is that thanks to their complicity, they can summon truly intricate ideas. Ideas that get a public thinking about a particular nation and its essence. Today, the prevalence of "best practices" and standardization causes readers, viewers, and listeners to filter out this kind of market noise. To them, the market represents the same old schemes of trying to get one to visit the impeccable beaches (Cuba), the pristine highlands (Scotland), or the ruins of forgotten civilizations (Peru).

In contrast, the living intellectual is here and now, offering an independent, non-market view of a country. Technology has enabled tourism to become systematic: from booking a flight, to finding accommodations, to restaurant suggestions. There are even firms using algorithms to minimize the effort required to create tourist experiences.[521] With all of these logistical elements in place, what is left?

The genuine contemplation of a country. The antidote to our "market desensitization," so to speak, can be found in an experience of *deep tourism*. This is a term which extends beyond the mere activities of a trip to a veritable tour of the country's intellectual imaginary. Generally speaking, when one travels to a country, one finds more or less the same activities, no matter the location. It could be fishing, or hiking, or skydiving. The actual "things to do" display little variation. Even the new movements of "farm to fork" or otherwise local consumptions are becoming cliché: everybody does them. The distinguishing features of a country therefore lie in its conception, in the ideas one forms about its place in the world.

[521] The Icelandic company TripCreator is one such example. See: Degeler, Andrii. "Icelandic Travel Planning Startup TripCreator Raises $8 Million." 6 September 2018. *Tech.eu*. <https://tech.eu/brief/icelandic-trip-planning-startup-tripcreator-raises-8-million/>

Of course, not everyone is going to pick up and read an article about Norberto Fuentes. But as education levels rise around the world, and our tourists begin to search for more than the elegant hotel room (consider AirBnB's success, or that of its predecessor, Couchsurfing), outlets will be needed to showcase the singular aspects of each civilization. By "cultural campaign," then, I mean a government-sponsored program (overt or covert, with the ramifications that each entails) to promote the *raison d'être* of its people. In most countries, this is not exemplified by the tourist industry. Much to the contrary, nationals often believe that tourism in itself does not paint an accurate picture of their society.

Structural Static Elements	
History, Geography	▪ The mountains of the *Escambray* are an imprint of Cuba's underground networks and legacy of resistance.
Semi-static Elements	
Greatness	▪ Fidel Castro
Physical Appearance	▪ Tenue of the farm hand ▪ Architectural sophistication
Mentality	▪ Cliquishness / underdog ▪ Moral reflection
Coloring Elements	
Symbols	▪ The interview
Behavior	▪ Defiance
Communication	▪ Duality ("treason") necessary for both survival and openness

Fuentes' composite brand stipulates a few things. First, that the history and geography of Cuba inherits more from the density of its mountains than the smoothness of its beaches. The underground elements Fuentes refers to in his texts—from clandestine archival materials to execution cellars—show how, naturally speaking, these phenomena are "buried" in a hidden essence. Unbeknown to many tourists, the *Sierra de Escambray* is the savage land where much of Cuba's formation as a nation takes place. Cuba has a series of "peaks"—Fidel, Raúl, Kennedy, Kruschev—that few other countries of its size have scaled. It has "caves" in its clandestine networks, as

well as in the racial issues etched onto its mountain flora.

Fig. 4 – Cuba's composite nation brand. Credit: Robert Govers, values model.

Recall how in many of Fuentes' stories, the thickness of the mangroves, or of the Angolan bush, or of the island's bunkers is prevalent. Cuba is impenetrable in this way, a "fortress Cuba" visible in its early nation brand. Where the United States once had its "architecture of democracy,"[522] Cuba has organic mountains. Its rulers emerged from these mountains and its people were sent to similar ones during their missions abroad. This is part of Cuba's internationalist myth.

The second part of Fuentes' composite brand is difficult to replace with anything new. Fidel Castro was and continues to be the island's legacy for greatness, however sanguinary Fuentes may portray him to be. For the category of physical appearance, I must remit the reader to two moments in Fuentes' fiction: the arrival of Cuban countrymen in Angola, with their calloused hands and modest, starched shirts; and the labyrinthine presidential palace, whose configuration is likened to gruyère cheese. Both, I believe, function as anchor points for the physicality of the Cuban people. It is difficult to identify two other moments in which physical appearance makes a more lasting impression. The only other competitor in this category would perhaps be the scene in which Fuentes describes the lower half of Fidel's body parts. But this, of course, has more to do with his constitution as a symbol for greatness.

[522] Arndt, 142-61.

The mentality of the nation is perhaps the most intriguing facet of the composite brand. In Fuentes, the Cuban people are seldom warm without a reason. They share, they revel, and they fornicate, to be sure; but they do so in specific groups or cliques. Given that Fuentes' fiction primarily addresses military and intelligence personnel, this is to be expected. It is an aperture into the world of cronyism, on the one hand, and into the unity of workers, on the other. Both could therefore be exploited in conversations with the author.

Moral values are another asset which never disappears from Fuentes' text. At times linked, at times dissociated from the state, morality permeates the notion of "the revolutionary." Even when certain rules are being blatantly ignored (i.e. – Tony continuing to trade using covert funds, after being told to stop), there is a concern for making the right decision. Fuentes advises all of his friends to confess readily to their crimes as a sort of arbiter. They, for their part, choose death as the proper end. But in either case—and in many of Fidel's sexual reflections—a contemplation of morality is expected of the revolutionary.

In terms of brand symbols, there is one element that overtakes any other possibility. The interview is the symbol which dominates Fuentes' narrative from beginning to end. As a symbol, it possesses various dimensions. For instance, the interview can be interpreted as a direct interaction with "the people," an important character in Fuentes' early work. It can be deployed to obtain objective, journalistic information, as when Fuentes speaks to Cuban development brigades in the field. It can be harnessed to govern informants, who report to Cuban intelligence.

But the interview also appears in the form of an interrogation, like so many of those depicted in Fuentes' novels. Whether the goal is extracting a forced confession or legitimate, actionable information, the interview is the preferred method. It is the method utilized to

reconstruct Castro's persona in the *Autobiography* (which can be considered, at its core, to be one long interview), and it is the way Fuentes situates himself inside the political intrigue of *Guerreros*. The interview is taken to war through *Santuario*, where Fuentes often reflects upon his role in Angola. The figure of him sitting down, propped up against his GAZ jeep, writing with his AKM at his side, is an indelible representation of the self- or of a "mock" interview.

In short, Fuentes' writing establishes a constant, dialectical version of people-to-people diplomacy. The interview—in all of its various forms—serves this purpose and can be considered the primary symbol of his composite brand. In a slogan, this might appear as "Cuba: Come Find Out for Yourself."

Next, there is behavior. Defiance is, without a doubt, the running thread in Fuentes' fiction. Beyond the usual tropes of defiance to U.S. imperialism, there is a personal sort of defiance involving human aspirations, the desire to achieve more and dream ambitiously. There is also an internal defiance to the Cuban system—its economic framework, its military policy, even a defiance by the system to itself. The execution of Ochoa, for instance, is an act of defiance to the revolutionary values of service and collective justice. Ochoa's sentence is very far from representing the estimation of the people. It is, in fact, decided by a handful of internal figures who are themselves defiant on the international scene. Indeed, Cuba's behavioral legacy (if the term can be used in this branding context) is that of resistance, of circumventing the rules and somehow surviving. The slogan? "Cuba Does it Differently."

The behavioral part of this composite therefore stands in opposition to the "mentality" just described. Together, they form the dilemma of being revolutionary in an age of homogenization. This is similar to the duality that is communicated by Fuentes' text. Do morality and resistance

betray each other? What do these stories from Cuba's core teach us about leadership? Must a leader forsake his values in order to preserve his position? These are all questions to be considered under the composite. Working in synchrony, its elements organize an imaginary that is distorted by media bylines of Cuba's "inevitable" opening. In contrast, Fuentes' works imply that the more pressing issue is not the democracy of Cuba, but the democratization of Cuba's essence.

How the Revolution has propagated itself against formidable odds is apparent in Fuentes' fiction. But the question urged by his composite brand addresses the broader dichotomy between individualism and collectivism. As the West grapples with the effects of its own technology, which has caused social isolation, new pathologies, and a stand-behind-the-screen model for human interaction, Cuba offers an alternative ethos. This problem is at the very center of Fuentes' fiction—the problem of individuality. It becomes evident that while the West must address the monsters of its technological creations, Cuba is probing new channels for mass participation.

The universal layer of Fuentes' work is centered around this issue: how to marry massive social participation with the individual. In the West, we are trying to relocate "the social" after losing it to individual customization. In Cuba, the implication is that the individual, even under revolutionary mores, has the capacity to corrupt. Self-interest, then, is the one aspect of Fuentes' fiction that brings it into contact with one of the central tenants of global capitalism.

In conclusion, the duality exemplified by Fuentes' complex relationship with the Revolution remits us to the critical character of Western journalism. Treason and loyalty are not merely characteristics of Fuentes' composite brand. They are new possibilities for positioning Cuba in a way which brings transparency to the front of its information policy.

In other words, the critiques we expect from Western journalists attempting to "uncover" the negative aspects of a society are already givens in Fuentes' work. This is why bringing him into public forums would be so beneficial. Instead of promoting a brand anchored on clear partisan principles, Fuentes professes the view of what David Milne calls a "liberal internationalist." That is to say, an intellectual who believes that his country has a "profound moral obligation . . . to help improve global affairs through well-intentioned overseas activism."[523]

Perhaps this is why Fuentes is so deceived by the results in Cuba. On one occasion, he confessed that "Cuba is dead, dead, dead," referring to how his country was beginning to consume itself through its intelligence practices.[524] For the purpose of nation branding, though, Fuentes' apparent disillusion serves as a vehicle for restorative justice. What this means is that in comparison with the punitive measures taken by either side (Cuba's jailing of liberal dissidents, the United States' embargo), Fuentes paints a realistic picture of Cuba's pivoting on world affairs.

The noted Czechoslovakian playwright Vaclav Havel, who became his country's president in 1989, once said that "utopian intellectuals should be resisted." Havel supported those who are "mindful of the ties that link everything in the world together, who approach the world with humility, but also with an increased sense of responsibility, who wage a struggle for every good thing."[525] Fuentes is this kind of intellectual.

The appeal of Fuentes' composite brand lies in his balanced perspective. Like *Mundo Nuevo* with the communists, he both accepts and rejects the models of Cuban justice, intelligence,

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[523] Milne, David. "America's Intellectual Diplomacy." *International Affairs* 86(1), 2010: 65.
[524] Newman, Maria. "Conversations: Norberto Fuentes; A Former Cheerleader of the Revolution Looks Back in Indignation at Cuba." *The New York Times*. 4 September 1994. <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/09/04/weekinreview/conversations-norberto-fuentes-former-cheerleader-revolution-looks-back.html>
[525] Qtd. in Milne, 65.

and military politics. This duality, or acceptance of the need for a fluid judgment of loyalty, is what rounds out his composite brand. It is the reason why he would be so effective in a cultural campaign: because aside from detailing the interrogations, incarcerations, and executions of traitors, he documents how they were indispensable to the consolidation of the regime. There are no illusions (though certainly embellishments) in Fuentes regarding Cuba. Subtracting the initial euphoria of the Revolution's progress, what emerges is a two-faced, black and white, dramatic staging (remember Brecht) of the movement, where the audience must judge the truth for themselves. This kind of evaluation is what is needed by today's audiences in the current climate of disinformation.

Fuentes shows that the typical figures of the Cuban Revolution are conflicted, human individuals with families and lovers. Initially, he proves his worth as a creator of propagandistic symbols, but he later refines his craft into what I have described here as the composite. In effect, he uncovers aspects of the Revolution that often go dormant, and calls for their reconsideration in a new image of Cuba.

Today's information environment requires a nuanced, distanced approach from the notion of truth. Truth has more than two sides, Fuentes suggests, which means that intellectuals—and the nation brands they project—must consider their countries with a certain ambivalence. Any other, more emphatic adhesion to truth leaves us vulnerable to manipulation.

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Alfredo started his first post-PhD appointment in winter 2019, serving as an administrative policy analyst in the police reform section of the Baltimore Police Department. His research at Hopkins examined the narratives behind the intelligence fiction and nation-branding of Cuba during the Cold War.