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**The Clash of the Foreign and the Local in Martí and Carpentier:
From “Misplaced Ideas” to “Trasculturation”**

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Hipertexto

José Martí (1853-1895) and Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980) share several things in common: both are well-known and much-celebrated Cuban authors, yet both are of foreign heritage and have lived extensively abroad as political exiles. Martí was born in Havana to a Spanish father and to a mother who was a native of the Canary Islands. He was twice deported from Cuba to Spain as a result of his views against both slavery and Spanish colonial rule in Cuba, and later spent fifteen years in exile in the United States, primarily in New York City. Carpentier was born in Switzerland to a French father and a Russian mother, despite the life-long, self-perpetuated lie that he was born in La Habana.¹ He received his education in Paris and later escaped to Paris as a political exile for a period of eleven years. He also lived in Venezuela for nearly fourteen years from 1945 until his return to Cuba directly following the revolution of 1959. Carpentier settled again in Paris in 1966, where he served as Cuban ambassador to France, and remained there until his death in 1980. In spite of their extensive time abroad, both Martí and Carpentier speak of the dangers of foreign influence and call for a revival of the local and the autochthonous in terms of literary and cultural production for not just Cuba or the Spanish Caribbean, but for the entire Latin American sub-continent.

It is in his well-known essay “Nuestra América” that Martí warns against foreign imitation and calls for local creation. Concerned with “la importación excesiva de las ideas y fórmulas ajenas,” Martí desires that the Latin American Republics learn “los elementos verdaderos del país,” since “se imita demasiado,” when “la salvación está en

¹ In “La nacionalidad de Alejo Carpentier: historia y ficción,” Roberto González Echevarría explains that “[l]a noticia más perturbadora en los estudios carpentierianos de los últimos años ha sido la publicación de una partida de nacimiento indicando que el escritor había nacido en Lausana, Suiza, el 26 de noviembre de 1904, no en La Habana, Cuba, como había dicho a lo largo de toda su vida, y que su nombre de pila era Alexis no Alejo. De ser legítimo el documento suizo lo interesante no es tanto que Carpentier haya nacido en Suiza, sino que haya dicho siempre que había nacido en Cuba: lo significativo es la mentira, no el dato en bruto de su lugar de nacimiento” (69).

crear” (14, 11, 15). Martí criticizes his Latin American contemporaries for imitating and borrowing from Europe and the United States, for being “una máscara, con los calzones de Inglaterra, el chaleco parisiense, el chaquetón de Norteamérica y la montera de España” (14). According to Martí, it is only once “el pensamiento empieza a ser de América” and the leaders of “nuestra América mestiza” replace “leyes heredadas de cuatro siglos de práctica libre en los Estados Unidos, de diecinueve siglos de monarquía en Francia” with “métodos e instituciones nacidas del país mismo” that the “unión tácita y urgente del alma continental” will become posible (15, 13, 11, 17). Alejo Carpentier shares similar opinions and admits his indebtedness to Martí:

tuve una temprana visión de América y del porvenir de América (me refiero, desde luego, a aquella América que José Martí llamara ‘Nuestra América’, de allí que se sintiera sobre todo, ciudadano de la Patria Grande). Y ese quehacer estaba profundamente enraizado en la historia de Cuba, en su pasado, en el pensamiento ecuanímicamente latinoamericano de José Martí, para quien nada que fuese latinoamericano hubiese sido nunca ajeno. (*La novela latinoamericana* 84)

Carpentier’s “visión [martiana] de América” stems from his similar critique of Eurocentric attitudes in Latin America. Carpentier explains that “[l]as actitudes del intelectual de América no pueden aparcarse con las del intelectual de Europa,” namely because “los problemas ideológicos que se plantean a sí misma [en América] son peculiares y difieren totalmente de los que pueden inquietar a los escritores del Viejo Mundo” (*Obras completas* 362). Carpentier believes that the Latin American sub-continent has a distinct history, “puesto que este suelo americano fue teatro del más sensacional encuentro del indio, del negro, y del europeo de tez más o menos clara, destinados, en lo adelante, a mezclarse, entremezclarse, establecer simbiosis de culturas, de creencias de artes populares, en el más tremendo mestizaje que haya podido contemplarse nunca” (*La novela latinoamericana* 81). For him, this admixture or mestizaje constitutes the unique essence of “América”—an originality lacking in the old world.

Given the commonalities in the lives and thought of Martí and Carpentier—despite the half century which separates their births and the corresponding changes that mark Cuba’s transition from colonialism to independence—I wish to examine the treatment of the foreign versus the local in two fictional works by these authors: José Martí’s “La muñeca negra” (a short story published in 1889 as part of the collection *La edad de oro*) and Alejo Carpentier’s *El reino de este mundo* (his second novel, written in 1949). In doing so, I shed light on how the condition of exile coupled with a prolonged distance or absence from Cuba affected these two writers and the themes of their literary works. Upon juxtaposing Fernando Ortiz’s notion of “transculturación” and Roberto Schwarz’s concept of the “misplaced idea,” I go on to locate the coexistence of transculturation and misplaced ideas in these chosen literary works, which leads me to theorize about both writers’ complex portrayal of the foreign as a source of attraction and repulsion at the dual levels of form and content.

I. Fernando Ortiz’s Concept of “Transculturación”

In *Contrapunto cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940), Fernando Ortiz introduces the concept of transculturation, a term he uses to express “las complejísimas transmutaciones de culturas” that have originated in Cuba and that define the island’s

unique character (254). In his introduction to Ortiz's book, Bronislaw Malinowski explains that the term transculturation "no contiene la implicación de una cierta cultura hacia la cual tiene que tender la otra, sino una transición entre dos culturas, ambas activas, ambas contribuyentes [. . .], y ambas cooperantes al advenimiento de una nueva realidad de civilización" (126). In other words, transculturation "[e]s un proceso en el cual ambas partes de la ecuación resultan modificadas. Un proceso en el cual emerge una nueva realidad, compuesta y compleja; [. . .] un fenómeno nuevo, original e independiente" (Malinowski 125). Ortiz attributes this process of transculturation to an "inmenso amestizamiento de razas y culturas" that is the synthesized product of a previous process of "*desculturación o exculturación*" (255). The product of admixture between African slaves, European colonizers, and the natives of the island ensures that the concept of transculturation is "indispensable para comprender la historia de Cuba y, por análogas razones, la de toda la América en general" (260).²

II. Roberto Schwarz's Concept of "Misplaced Ideas"

Whereas Ortiz insists that the process of transculturation pervades the region of the Americas, Roberto Schwarz argues, in "Misplaced Ideas: Literature and Society in Late-Nineteenth-Century Brazil," that "misplaced ideas" are ubiquitous not just in his native Brazil, but in the entire Latin American region. By evoking the image of "European wallpaper [. . .] pasted or hung on slave-built walls of earth," Schwarz clearly points out the meaning behind his useful concept of the "misplaced idea," which reflects how European ideologies have continually been grafted on to the neocolonial setting of Latin America (26). With these transatlantic borrowings one must recognize, Schwarz insists, that different rules apply in the new setting distinct from those operating in the hegemonic countries where such ideologies originated. Since these misplaced ideas "do not describe reality, not even falsely," Schwarz further designates them "ideologies of the second degree" (23). With regard to Latin American literary production in particular, Schwarz does not argue against transatlantic borrowings per se, although he does insist that authors should go beyond merely highlighting the "obvious falsehood" of this misplaced ideology in its new sphere by observing the dynamics of the "ideological comedy" that has been established and to note the ways in which it is "*different from the European*"—that is, the original—comedy (20). As he explains in another essay, "The Importing of the Novel to Brazil and its Contradictions in the Work of Alencar," the writer "would have to repeat this dislocation on a formal level" and/or take in "at the level of content, the unsuitability of the European form" so as "[t]o achieve harmony with reality" (Schwarz 41, 68, 41). Following Schwarz's lead, I am concerned here with the ways in which Martí and Carpentier—both on a formal level and at the level of content—explore the consequences of importation and borrowing as leading to transculturation, on the one hand, or misplacement, on the other hand.

² It is Ángel Rama who first takes Ortiz's concept and applies it to the literary sphere in *Transculturación narrativa en América latina*. When analyzing the process of transculturation in Latin American literature, Rama examines language and literary structure at the formal level and what he terms "cosmovisión"—a combination of "valores" and "ideologías"—at the thematic level (55). My analysis here borrows from Rama's application insofar as it examines both thematic and formal treatments of transculturation in both works.

III. Transculturation versus Misplaced Ideas in Martí's "La muñeca negra"

In "La muñeca negra," the connection between the eight-year-old protagonist, Piedad, and the titular black doll, Leonor, serves as an allegory for the author's views on the necessity of overcoming racial and class division as well as the importance of promoting the local over the foreign in Cuba. Piedad reveals the unique bond she shares with her beloved "muñeca negra" when she tells Leonor: "yo te quiero [. . .] tus ojos son los que quiero yo, porque con los ojos me dices que me quieres: te quiero mucho, porque no te quieren" (224). Those who do not love Leonor are—first and foremost—Piedad's parents, who will not let their daughter bring Leonor out in public on account of the doll's less than desirable appearance. Piedad complains of her mother to Leonor: "¡Mamá mala, que no te dejó ir conmigo, porque dice que te he puesto muy fea con tantos besos, y que no tienes pelos, porque te he peinado mucho! La verdad, Leonor; tú no tienes mucho pelo; pero yo te quiero así, sin pelo, Leonor" (224). Yet it is not only the doll's lack of beauty that worries Piedad's parents. They are also concerned with the fact that she represents the black race (a race only recently freed from the bonds of slavery in 1886) and the lower classes, at the same time as the attachment Leonor and their white, bourgeois daughter share symbolizes a process of mestizaje or an act of transculturation on the island. In stark contrast to the laudable, transculturated image of Piedad and Leonor's friendship, the parents represent the continuance of racist, classist, and foreign ideologies in Cuba.

Martí clearly communicates this act of transculturation in which an "inmenso amestizamiento de razas y culturas" takes place by juxtaposing Piedad's distinctive connection with her worn out, old, black doll with the utter lack of any significant bond between the protagonist and her new doll "de seda y porcelana," which she receives as a gift from her parents on her eighth birthday (Ortiz 255, Martí 226). The new doll is an obvious and intentional reflection of Piedad with the same blonde hair, blue eyes, and lace stockings. Piedad herself notes the similarities between them, as her initial reaction reveals: "¡Es como el sol el pelo, mamá, lo mismo que el sol! ¡Ya la vi, ya la vi, tiene el vestido rosado! [. . .] si es de peto verde, de peto de terciopelo ¡Como las mías son las medias, de encaje como las mías!" (226 emphasis added). Nonetheless, the young girl quickly becomes disillusioned with her new doll, despite her original enthusiasm, since she soon realizes that "la muñeca de seda no le hablaba" and that her blue eyes communicate nothing, despite Piedad's repeated plea: "[¡]muñeca, habláme, habláme!" Piedad abandons the new doll from this moment on and begins to refer to her formally with the "Usted" form (rather than the "tú" form) and distantly with the phrase "señora muñeca" (227). Piedad's parents note their daughter's waning interest in the doll and try to revive her enthusiasm by pointing out the physical resemblance between them, e.g. "los ojos azules," "sus medias de encaje," "su pelo fino" (227). Yet, as Martí's story plainly makes known, Piedad seeks neither her mirror image nor anything exterior or superficial, but instead longs to return to her room and reunite with Leonor. Alone and safe in her bed at the end of the tale, she takes the black doll and "[l]a besó, la abrazó, se la apretó contra el corazón" (228). Piedad reassures Leonor of her unwavering love for the loyal playmate: "Ven, pobrecita, ven, que esos malos te dejaron aquí sola; tú no estás fea, no, aunque no tengas más que una trenza; la fea es ésa, la que han traído hoy, la de los ojos que no hablan [. . .]"

¡Esta es mi muñeca linda! [. . .] ¡Te quiero, porque no te quieren!” (228). In this way, Martí contrasts the positive, transcultural bond Piedad and her black doll share with the negative, misplaced ideas represented by the parents’ promotion of a foreign, imported ideal as the appropriate companion for their white, privileged daughter.

Whereas most readers of this tale focus on the obvious racial commentary, few notice Martí’s simultaneous critique of the foreign, the exotic, and the imported. And it is precisely these elements that Martí critiques in “Nuestra América.” In that essay, Martí speaks of “el lujo venenoso, enemigo de la libertad, [que] pudre al hombre liviano y abre la puerta al extranjero” (16). Moreover, Martí predicts that “[l]os hombres naturales han vencido a los letrados artificiales. El mestizo autóctono ha vencido al criollo exótico. No hay batalla entre la civilización y la barbarie, sino entre la falsa erudición y la naturaleza” (11). Piedad and Leonor represent the natural, the “mestizo,” and the autochthonous, which are all positive terms for Martí, while the parents and the new doll symbolize the artificial, the “criollo,” and the exotic. Even though the black presence in Cuba resulted from the importation of slaves from Africa, in this story, the black doll is presented as local or native, in contrast to Piedad’s parents, who are portrayed as foreign. Piedad’s choice of Leonor over the new doll serves to align her with the autochthonous elements of the island and to distinguish and distance her from the foreign and exotic world promoted by her mother and father. Repeated references to the father’s “barba rubia” and the daughter’s “cabecita rubia” and “cabello dorado” suggest that Piedad’s family is presumably of European descent, although no direct mention of the family’s national heritage is made in the story (220, 222). Not only are Piedad’s parents presented as foreign in a general sense, but they are also portrayed as “foreigners” when they cross the threshold of their daughter’s room. The opening line of the story depicts the parents’ entrance into Piedad’s bedroom: “De puntillas, de puntillas, para no despertar a Piedad, entran en el cuarto de dormir el padre y la madre” (219). The father in particular is out of place in this domestic, juvenile setting: “El padre viene detrás, como si fuera a tropezar con todo” (219). The narrator reiterates this notion of the “padre ciego, que tropieza con todo” (222). If we interpret the space of Piedad’s room as a sort of island that is separated or isolated from the adult world, that is, as a native island and a microcosm of an idyllic Cuba free of racial and class prejudice, then we must view the story’s antagonists—both parents, but especially the blind, stumbling father—as foreign intruders whose ideas or ideologies are misplaced in Piedad’s transculturated world.

This is particularly evident when we consider the narrative style Martí employs when he describes the parents’ intrusion into the child’s domain. Martí’s stylistic mode is markedly *modernista* throughout most of the story, and this marks a second instance of misplaced ideas at the formal level. Whereas we initially encountered misplaced ideas at the level of content (in terms of the parents’ promotion of the foreign, aesthetically-pleasing new doll over the local, unaesthetic black doll), we now locate misplacement in the story’s chosen form. Martí uses such *modernista* techniques as overt attention to detail and surfaces and sustained emphasis on aesthetic beauty, and thereby participates consciously in what Schwarz would term a “second-degree” form, given that Latin American *modernismo* adopted elements of European aestheticism, French symbolism, and the Parnassian school of poets. So while the content of Martí’s tale clearly embraces the ideals of romanticism (a waning literary form, which was of

course also an imported genre) with its emphasis on emotions, feelings, and the overarching theme of love, the chosen form and the position espoused by Piedad's parents portray the elitist, escapist, apolitical, and undemocratic views that were the hallmark of Latin American *modernismo*, but which, Martí subtly suggests, were out of place in the Latin American context.

In an effort to demonstrate how Martí critiques his chosen form through his own content, let us begin by examining the narrator's lengthy description of "todos los juguetes, en mesas y sillas" that adorn Piedad's room:

las muñequitas de loza, con su cama de la madre, de colcha de flores, y al lado una muñeca de traje rosado, en una silla roja; [. . .] La sala está delante del velador, y tiene en medio una mesa, con el pie hecho de un carretel de hilo, y lo de arriba de una concha de nácar, con una jarra mejicana en el medio, de las que traen los muñecos aguadores de Méjico; y alrededor unos papelitos doblados, que son los libros. El piano es de madera, con las teclas pintadas; y no tiene banquetta de tornillo, que eso es poco lujo, sino una de espaldar, hecha de la caja de una sortija, con lo de abajo forrado de azul. (222-223).

As the excessive detail and this extensive list suggest, it is the aesthetic and exotic quality that interests the narrator, who depicts the child's world from the perspective of the parents as they tip toe in to see their sleeping daughter. Yet the parents ignore the connotative value that each object has for Piedad, since there is a marked difference between the objective and purely aesthetic representation of this world and the subjective significance that it holds for the eight-year-old protagonist. Additionally, there is a sustained focus on the aesthetic adornments surrounding Piedad's birthday celebration: from the "ramo de flores blancas y azules" which contains "ni una flor colorada en el ramo, ni una flor amarilla"³ to the "gorro [. . .] sin mancha" of the chef; from the cake decorated with flowers made from turnips and carrots to the father's blonde beard, which is "muy peinada [. . .] como si se la hubieran peinado muy despacio, y redondeándole las puntas, y poniendo cada hebra en su lugar" (225, 220). Even Piedad is decked out in her "vestidito nuevo, el vestidito color de perla, y la cinta lila que compraron ayer, y las medias de encaje" (224). Moreover, the narrator notes how the presence of Piedad caused her father to feel "como que en el pecho se le abría una flor, y como que se le encendía en la cabeza un palacio, con colgaduras azules de flecos de oro, y mucha gente con alas" (225-226). Such references to flight, wings, flowers, a saber, a palace, the sun, and the colors blue and gold recall the dominant *modernista* tropes already made famous by Darío throughout the poems and stories of *Azul*.

Interestingly enough, Piedad becomes overwhelmed by aesthetic detail within the tale and uses this as part of her excuse for leaving her parents and the new doll so as to return to Leonor. She first complains that she is tired, but then reveals her visual displeasure as the previously mentioned adornments take on life and begin to oppress her: "me parece que es un monte la barba de papá; y el pastel de la mesa me da vueltas, vueltas alrededor, y se están riendo de mí las banderitas; y me parece que

³ It is interesting to note that the colors of the Spanish flag—red and yellow—are purposefully avoided here. I would argue that the foreign in this story is not so much Spanish (although in this instance we see that Spanish colonial rule is also rejected) as it is European or possibly North American (on account of the continual references to blonde hair and blue eyes).

están bailando en el aire las flores de la zanahoria” (227). The carefully groomed beard and meticulously decorated cake do not have a positive effect on Piedad, who appreciates inner beauty and searches for meaning beneath (un)aesthetic surfaces. For the same reason, the new doll does not have value in her estimation. It represents “lo suntuoso, lo aparente, la belleza exterior y artificial”—all words positively considered within the literary movement of *modernismo*, but negatively portrayed by Martí throughout this story (Pozo Campos 129). Thus we see that the content of the story consciously and intentionally critiques the ideology behind the form and takes in “at the level of content, the unsuitability of the European form” (Schwarz 68).⁴

IV. Transculturation versus Misplaced Ideas in Carpentier’s *El reino de este mundo*

Carpentier’s novel also comments on the distinction between imported ideas and their local reality and between the extremes of misplacement and transculturation both at the level of content and the level of form. *El reino de este mundo* explores the problem of implanting European abstract systems on the hybrid and multicultural societies of the New World and portrays how external, transatlantic ideas lead to a series of “ideological comedies” (or, perhaps more appropriately termed, “ideological tragedies”) through their displacement in the Caribbean setting. The novel recounts the history of Haiti from colonial times to independence and establishes a series of dichotomies—European/African, white/black, cerebral/corporeal, dead/alive; here/there, this/that—that preclude the possibility of transculturation on the island, since opposing categories remain separate.

In the opening chapter, the novel’s dominant themes are laid out through the juxtaposition of several significant images. In a morning marked by what he sees as an abundance of heads, the protagonist, Ti Noel, notes an amusing similarity between the calves’ head hanging in the butcher shop and the wax heads on display in the barber shop (11, 10). This initial comparison points not only to the decadence of the bewigged and heavily powdered European colonizers, but also to the deathly and stagnant view that Ti Noel has of his French slave owner, Monsieur Lenormand de Mezy, since it amused Ti Noel to think how much the calf’s head probably resembled the bald head of his master hidden beneath the wig. Once Ti Noel becomes aware of a third series of heads, those on display in the copper engravings at the book shop, the disembodied and cerebral heads of the European colonizers are further contrasted with the virility and corporeality of the Africans. Ti Noel glimpses the latest prints received from Paris and first notices “el rostro del rey de Francia, en marco de sales, espadas y laureles” (11). The last engraving of the series, however, is the one that really catches his attention, because “se diferenciaba de los demás por el asunto y la ejecución” (11). It depicted “un almirante o embajador francés, recibido por un negro rodeado de abanicos de plumas y sentado sobre un trono adornado de figuras de monos y de legartos,” which the shopkeeper reveals to Ti Noel as “un rey de tu país” (11). Whereas Ti Noel had little esteem for the King of England, France, or Spain, he admires the Kings of Africa, “reyes de verdad, y no esos soberanos cubiertos en pelos ajenos, que [. . .]

⁴ This idea is echoed by Serna Arnaiz, who argues that the story “se desvela el modernismo exótico en su forma pero no en su contenido” (203). According to Serna Arnaiz, “La muñeca negra” “[e]s el cuento de un moralista cuyos recursos y técnicas son de fiel estirpe modernista” (203).

sólo sabían hacer de dioses en los escenarios de sus teatros de corte” (12). The narrator goes on to recount Ti Noel’s thoughts on the differences between the true kings of Africa and the white monarchs who control the colony:

En el África, el rey era guerrero, cazador, juez y sacerdote [. . .]. En Francia, en España, en cambio, el rey enviaba sus generales a combatir; era incompetente para dirimir litigios, se hacía regañar por cualquier fraile confesor, y, en cuanto a riñones, no pasaba de engendrar un príncipe debilucho, incapaz de acabar con un venado sin ayuda de sus monteros [. . .]. Allá, en cambio --en *Gran Allá*--, había príncipes duros como el yunque, y príncipes que eran el leopardo, y príncipes que conocían el lenguaje de los árboles. (13)

The narrator uses the phrases “Allá” and “*Gran Allá*” to refer positively to Africa (the space with which Ti Noel identifies) and contrasts that continent with the European nations of France and Spain. Interestingly enough, neither the notion of “here” nor the concept of “there” refer to the island of Haiti: both the Africans and the Europeans consider “home” to be on the other side of the Atlantic, and it is this distancing that prevents any transculturation between the two exogenous groups.

In addition to establishing these unresolved dichotomies that preclude synthesis, Carpentier addresses the comedic or simply ridiculous results of the importation of European ideologies, namely the promotion of the ideals of the French Revolution, the faith in the bourgeois notion of progress, and the dissemination of the Catholic religion. *El reino de este mundo* juxtaposes “los idiotas utopistas” whose hearts bled for the black slaves ever since they had read *The Declaration of Human Rights* with the oppressive control of the First Crowned Monarch of the New World, Henri Christophe, who had always held himself “al margen de la mística africanista” and hoped to adopt “las pompas de un estilo napoleónico” and to give his court a European flair (113, 55, 112, 88, 112). Furthermore, the narrator comments on “la divisa aún insegura de *Libertad, Igualdad*” upon characterizing the reign of Henri Christophe, who rejects his own cultural heritage and stands as a ridiculous parody of the formerly colonized’s attempt to ape the colonizer (94). The nineteenth-century notion of progress is also applied to the Haitian setting as the narrator notes the prosperity and luxuriousness that accompany the region, which “había progresado asombrosamente” and “estaba más floreciente” (94, 45, 47). Another instance of misplacement stems from the widespread adoption of Catholicism by Africans on the island as Henri Christophe tried to ignore the forces of voodoo and to ensure that the black priests were just as learned in Latin as the French priests (114, 80). As these examples show, influence was unidirectional; European ideas and customs were imposed on the Haitian setting and internalized by the islands’ black inhabitants.

In the peripheral tale of the relationship between Paulina Bonaparte and her African masseuse Solimán, however, Carpentier depicts a positive and desired union between the European and the African, that is, between the two exogenous groups that had come—one willingly, one forcibly—to make the Caribbean their home. According to my analysis, a sort of cross-pollination occurs as Paulina, the European immigrant, assimilates the African element embodied by Solimán. The initial description of Solimán kneeling before Paulina and kissing her feet in an apparent gesture of gratitude seems to suggest another instance of the master/servant dynamic, but this becomes inverted in a later scene that depicts Paulina kneeling on the floor while Solimán dances around

her in a voodoo ritual. Ultimately, the two emerge as equals, as kindred spirits, who mutually influence one another. Paulina is driven “hacia el mundo de poderes que Solimán invocaba con sus conjuros, en verdadero *amo de la isla*, único defensor posible contra el azote de *la otra orilla*” (76, emphasis added). Solimán’s figurative or symbolic “reign” in La Tortuga—the Caribbean island off the northern coast of Haiti opposite the town of Port-de-Paix—is wholly distinct from the rule of either the white slave owners or the black monarch. Seen from the point of view of La Tortuga, the “other shore” becomes the coast of Haiti and not, as it was previously noted, the African or European coast, which marks an important connotative change in the employment of the terms “here and there,” “this and that,” at this significant moment in the novel. The implied synthesis of Paulina and Solimán negates the rhetorical question “¿Qué sabían los blancos de cosas de negros?” and transplants “los Altos Poderes de la Otra Orilla” to the Caribbean region, to the kingdom of *this* world (40, 41).⁵ La Tortuga represents an ideal space different from the island of Haiti, and it serves as a microcosm of transculturation, a space that Paulina considers an “ensueño tropical” and likens to her “isla natal” (74, 76). As her skin, “bronceada por el sol, se había vuelto la de una espléndida mulata,” Paulina was “gozando despreocupadamente de aquel lujo, de aquella abundancia que nunca había conocido en su niñez” (75, 73). The change from “una francesa” to “una espléndida mulata” in Carpentier’s novel clearly marks the transculturation of Paulina that occurs as a result of her contact with both Solimán and the Caribbean region. As Angela Willis rightly argues: “A pesar de su pequeño papel en la novela, Paulina resulta un personaje sumamente importante e inolvidable, y esto en parte se debe al hecho de ser ‘transculturada’, como resultado del intercambio entre las culturas africana y europea” (1). The union of Paulina and Solimán marks a process of reverse colonization and desired syncretism insofar as the African and the authentic, primal forces of nature influence—in a positive way—the European colonizer. Thus, in contrast to the main narrative, in which the various external influences are merely pasted on top of one another to demonstrate a continual series of “misplaced ideas,” in the embedded story the disparate elements are united and integrated as Solimán now never left Paulina’s side (78).

Carpentier lends validity to this interpretation of Paulina and Solimán’s brief but significant moment of transcultural unity when he explains: “Mi encuentro con Paulina Bonaparte, ahí, tan lejos de Córcega, fue, para mí, como una revelación. Vi la posibilidad de establecer ciertos sincronismos posibles, americanos, recurrentes, por encima del tiempo, relacionando esto con aquello, el ayer con el presente” (“De lo real maravilloso americano” 75-76). The “revelation” of Paulina as a means of establishing certain American synchronisms suggests that she, more than any other figure, symbolizes Carpentier’s laudatory vision of Latin America as a place which, “por la virginidad del paisaje, por la formación, por la ontología, por la presencia fantástica del indio y del negro, por la Revelación que constituyó su reciente descubrimiento, por los fecundos mestizajes [. . .] está muy lejos de haber agotado su caudal de mitologías”

⁵ Carpentier establishes Paulina and Solimán as an autochthonous pair that represents the ideal of transculturation, an ideal Carpentier understood from his direct reading of Ortiz. According to Sussanna Regazzoni, “Carpentier pone de manifiesto en varias ocasiones su deuda con el antropólogo cubano Fernando Ortiz, escritor que comparte con él el mismo afán en conservar y difundir las culturas afrocaribeñas” (48-9).

(Prólogo 18-19). Consequently, we can make sense of the otherwise puzzling statement in the novel that Paulina's departure "señaló el ocaso de toda sensatez en la colonia" (78).

To further underscore the positive and powerful process of transculturation that occurs between Paulina and Solimán in the unique and marvelous Caribbean setting, Carpentier has Solimán travel to Europe toward the end of the novel. What Alejo says in the prologue to the novel—"todo resulta maravilloso en una historia imposible de situar en Europa"—proves true in this instance, since instead of finding Paulina's once living and pulsating body among the Roman ruins, Solimán encounters the Venus of Canova, a statue that resembles her and that symbolizes the decadence of the Western world (Prólogo 19). Once Paulina is removed from the tropical setting and sent to Rome, an anti-pygmalion motif is employed so as to turn her from a vibrant, transculturated mulata into a white, cold, inanimate statue, which Solimán mistakes for her recently hardened cadaver (130). And thus we recall the earlier comment which likened the statue that was Paulina's body to Galatea of the Greeks (72). Galatea, which means she who is milk-white, is the name given to the wife of Pygmalion, who was transformed by Aphrodite from an ivory statue to a human being. This association recalls the historical Paulina's obsession with maintaining the whiteness of her skin even while living in the Caribbean setting. In Rome, Solimán discovers "un mundo blanco, frío, inmóvil, pero cuyas sombras se animaban y crecían" (128). The juxtaposition of the white world with its shadows serves to reestablish the white/black, dead/living dichotomies that mark the novel's beginning, dichotomies only temporarily undone by descriptions of Paulina's tanned skin engaged in voodoo rituals with Solimán on the island of La Tortuga. Furthermore, Solimán becomes a visual spectacle in Europe: his unexpected appearance and primitive look produced a veritable shock to those who had not for a long time seen the profile of a "negro verdadero" (126). Carpentier presents Solimán as the embodiment (or parody) of the European Surrealist Other—exotic, primitive, entranced, phallic. The vital and magical quality present in the tropical setting of the Caribbean cannot be found in the Old World just as the transculturated bond between Paulina and Solimán cannot survive outside the sphere of their symbolic "isla natal" (76).

Just as Martí's dual consideration of misplaced ideas and the process of transculturation occurred at both the level of content and the level of form, so too does Carpentier tackle these concepts in a multilayered manner. In his famous prologue to *El reino de este mundo*, Carpentier addresses the need to avoid "misplacement" or "borrowing" at the formal level as he posits his concept of "lo real maravilloso," something he differentiates from the project of the French Surrealists. Whereas the Surrealists criticized the hegemonic intellectual and literary canon in their *own* society and looked toward a European "Other" for inspiration in a movement largely inspired by exoticism, Carpentier, who likewise used the marvelous real as a marker of difference, chose to do so as part of a Latin American discourse of identity that rejected European influence. What was considered by Breton's group as a more authentic relationship to reality is in turn criticized by Carpentier as literary artifice, as just another manifestation of the lifeless and cerebral modern European spirit. Carpentier transforms French Surrealism into the "real maravilloso"—a vehicle for recounting the "magical" or "marvelous" realities of the hybrid Caribbean or Latin American setting, and thereby

demonstrates how European models *can* lead to a distinctly Latin American literary form, one that refuses to be a “second-degree” form. “Me pareció una tarea vana mi esfuerzo surrealista,” Carpentier admits, “No iba a añadir nada a este movimiento. Sentí ardientemente el deseo de expresar el mundo americano” (Leante 62-3). Carpentier explains his position further: “Lo real maravilloso [. . .] que yo definiendo, y es lo real maravilloso nuestro, es el que encontramos en estado bruto, latente, omnipresente en todo lo latinoamericano. Aquí lo insólito es cotidiano, siempre fue cotidiano” (*La novela latinoamericana* 130). The Surrealist’s notion of the “bizarre” appears forced and artificial when compared to the Latin American equivalent of “lo insólito,” which is an everyday, real—yet magical and marvelous—occurrence. Upon noting that “esa presencia y vigencia de lo real-maravilloso no era privilegio único de Haití, sino patrimonio de la América entera,” Carpentier famously asks: “¿qué es la historia de América toda sino una crónica de lo real-maravilloso?” (Prólogo 17, 19) An inner trait, something autochthonous to the region, the “marvelous-real” results from transculturation. By contrasting it with surrealism, Carpentier follows Schwarz’s prescription insofar as he takes in “at the level of content, the unsuitability of the European form” (68).

V. Experiencing Exile, Re-Experiencing Cuba from Abroad

The symbolic connection between Piedad and Leonor and between Paulina and Solimán serves to represent the ideal of transculturation that both authors promote as these autochthonous pairs choose the Caribbean as their space or place of local reality. Yet these bonds contrast with other elements of the texts—be they at the level of form or content—that highlight the problems and dangers of misplacement. Hence we see that Martí and Carpentier demonstrate a desire to achieve a positively-depicted transculturation at the same time as they recognize the more common tendency toward misplacement, something they portray negatively as an obstacle to the desired syncretism of cultures, races, and ideologies. Thus, rather than advocating an either/or approach, I have tried instead to reveal the complexity of these literary works, which stems from these authors’ ability to recognize that both processes are at work simultaneously. I attribute this sophisticated dual perspective to Martí’s and Carpentier’s experiences as overseas Cuban exiles whose time abroad led them to identify not with the foreign cosmopolitan centers of New York (for Martí) or Paris (for Carpentier), but instead to embrace the local, the native, and the uniquely original in their nostalgic promotion of a pan-Caribbean or pan-American identity.

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