

William Faulkner's Ibero-American Novel Project: The Politics of Translation and the Cold War*

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Faulkner's presence in Spanish American literature has been felt both directly and indirectly over the years. Much has been written about his impact on the work of authors such as Jorge Luis Borges, Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel García Márquez, and Mario Vargas Llosa, among others, since he was first read by Spanish American authors in the 1930s.¹ Much less has been written about Faulkner's efforts to influence the course of Latin American literature, or about the geopolitical context in which these interventions took place. This essay will begin by presenting an overview of the Ibero-American Novel Project that he set up in 1961 at the University of Virginia, and its origins. It will examine the Project's goals and mechanisms, as well as assessing the extent to which these were influenced by contemporary Cold War politics. Finally, I will look to the contemporary literary context—the early years of the so-called “Boom,” when Spanish American literature hit the international mainstream—for possible explanations of the Project's failure to accomplish its goals.

In 1950, when Faulkner was awarded the Nobel Prize, he initially refused to travel to Stockholm to pick up the award. The U.S. ambassador to Sweden sent an urgent cable to John Foster Dulles expressing his concern at the situation; ultimately, Muna Lee, southern poet and State Department official, was recruited to convince Faulkner to go to Stockholm and thus avoid international embarrassment for the U.S. (Blotner 1347-1348). The result was, of course, a great success, and from this moment until his death, Faulkner was persuaded numerous times by

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¹ See Cohn, *History and Memory* (chapter 1) and “Of the same blood” for discussions of this topic.

Lee and the State Department to serve as a goodwill ambassador for the U.S.: over the years, he went on missions to Japan, the Philippines, Greece, Iceland, Latin America, and elsewhere. On these trips, he taught, spoke about his work, and commented on race relations in the U.S. On a number of occasions, he promoted the achievements of the U.S.—cultural and otherwise (Lee once called him an eloquent “interpreter of democracy”²)—in nations where there was significant anti-Americanism, and often helped to ease political relations with the U.S.

In 1954, Faulkner traveled to an international writer’s conference in Brazil, and stopped in Peru and Venezuela on the way; he visited Venezuela again in 1961 as part of an effort to improve U.S.-Venezuelan relations (see Blotner 1503-1507 and 1777-1787). In both cases (as with all his other travels) he was initially reluctant to go—due to his insecurities, his dislike of travel, not wanting to forego the fox-hunting season, etc. Eventually, though, he was convinced by Lee’s appeals to his patriotism and her belief that the trips would be “an important contribution to inter-American cultural relations” (MSS 7258 a). And so they were. As Lee wrote after Faulkner’s first trip: “Here at Washington we are still a little dazed and dazzled by the extraordinary achievement of the Embassy at Lima in making a complete Public-Relations success of the brief visit of one of the world’s most illustrious, most withdrawn, and least loquacious novelists, William Faulkner” (MSS 7258a). She further gloated that, while the most recent issue of *Newsweek* (30 August 1954) had just called Faulkner “the most reticent author in the world,” Lima officials had had a “signal triumph ... not only in leading William Faulkner to a press interview but making him speak” (MSS 7258a).

Even before the Cuban Revolution of 1959, Latin America had begun to experience a surge in leftist activism, which brought it into conflict repeatedly with the U.S., which was, of course, firmly under the sway of Cold War politics at this point. The U.S. had long supported repressive regimes and neocolonial enterprises such as the United Fruit Company in Latin America, as well as toppling those regimes whose politics leaned too far to the left (as was the case in the Guatemalan coup of 1954). The McCarran Walter Act, which was used to restrict visas on ideological grounds, and which prevented authors with socialist sympathies (including Fuentes, García Márquez, and others) from entering the U.S., and, later, the Alliance for Progress, generated much

² Cited from an office memo dated 2 May 1961, held by the University of Virginia Library’s Special Collections Department, box number MSS 7258a. Subsequent references to materials in this collection will be identified by the prefix MSS followed by the box number.

additional hostility in Latin America towards the U.S. Both of Faulkner's trips to the region were, in fact, couched—and urged—by State Department officials as public relations moves designed to offset criticism of the U.S. in the local press and to improve the U.S.'s relationship with the Latin American nations, as well as its image in general. One official urged the Department to support Faulkner's trip to the 1954 International Writer's Congress in São Paulo, Brazil, marking the occasion of the quadricentennial of the city's founding,

as a means of counterbalancing the flood of adverse publicity which the Department received because of alleged indifference and non-support of the U.S. exhibits in the International Exhibition of Modern Art which was a pre-Quadricentennial event inaugurating the series of festivities. We are still receiving and answering letters of protest on that score. A further reason for officially sponsoring our Nobel Prize winner is the bitter criticism made of us in the Brazilian press when the Brazilian writer, Joao Lins de Rago [sic], was temporarily denied a U.S. visa because of alleged connections with political fellow travelers [due to the McCarran-Walter Act] and favorable reviews of his work in some leftist papers. Although he was [sic] later given his visa, the incident coulded [sic] our cultural relations with Brazil to some extent.³ (MSS 7258a)

³ The same official also wrote that “the Public Affairs staff and the Brazil desk ... are in complete agreement that it would definitely further the interests of the U.S. for William Faulkner to participate in the International Writers' Congress” (MSS 7258a). Faulkner's 1961 trip to Caracas, Venezuela, was awaited with the same high expectations. Muna Lee wrote to the Embassy's Public Affairs Officer that, although Faulkner's visit was not official, “I know you will do what you can to help make his visit a success and to have it redound to the greater glory of the United States of America (So will he.). Hence this budget” (MSS 7258f). Afterwards, this visit was hailed as “one of the greatest boons to US-Venezuelan relations that has happened for a long time” (MSS 7258a). And, according to the U.S. Cultural Affairs Officer, “I don't think any other living North American could have affected the minds and hearts of Venezuelans as he did during his two weeks here ... The most hardened press elements, the politically unsympathetic, all fell before his charm and his unwavering integrity. Even if nothing else of cultural note happens to us, we will be able to feed upon the effects of his visit for a long time to come” (MSS 7258a). Hugh Jencks of the North American Association of Venezuela, which had invited Faulkner to visit the country, similarly claimed that “The cultural leaders of Venezuela, many of whom are pre-disposed to take an anti-U.S. attitude on all international issues, include writers, artists, newspaper commentators ... educators and people in government ... [as well as] many on-the-fencers. Its members tend to agree with the Communist tenet that the U.S. is grossly materialistic, with no

Faulkner's visits helped to ease tension in international relations by bringing tremendous positive publicity to the U.S. and its accomplishments. He was warmly welcomed by intellectuals who, though often anti-American, were receptive to his work and had themselves been influenced by him; their stamp of approval may not have won over the hostile journalists who several times sought to ambush the writer, but it did neutralize their effects, while Faulkner's charm won the public over. Characterized, respectively, as "one of the great events in inter-American cultural relations" (MSS 7258a) and "one of the most successful of all cultural approaches by the United States to Venezuela" (MSS 7258a), Faulkner's visits fulfilled the wildest dreams—and, of course, the hidden agenda—of the government that sponsored his travels by "further[ing] understanding and good will" between the U.S. and Latin America (MSS 7258a).

On a more personal front, Faulkner was extremely impressed with what he had seen in Latin America: he returned from his travels vowing to learn Spanish, and planning to return, in order "'to learn more about what is American'" (Blotner 1507). He also sought to build upon the foundations laid during his trips: upon his return from his second trip, his sympathy engaged by stories about the difficulties in publishing in Latin

cultural achievements. To bring a literary figure of the stature of Faulkner was an effective refutation of this view. ... The leftist extremists, who certainly would have exploited the visit for anti-U.S. attacks if they felt they could have made hay, remained silent. Mr. Faulkner's evident popularity was too great for them to make the pitch" (MSS 7258a). Even events marking Faulkner's death were turned into a platform for promoting the U.S.'s interests and reputation. In late September of 1962, William Faulkner Week was held by the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, and described by one official as follows: "It was the Embassy's express purpose to demonstrate by this 'homage' official U.S. government interest in the accomplishments of a great American who, in the process of becoming a world-famous literary figure, never lost his identification with his country and his people. By thus identifying itself publicly and proudly with Faulkner, the Embassy sought to avoid what often appears through lack of official attention to be a surrender of its cultural and intellectual assets to the Marxist opposition. The Embassy feels that, in light of recent developments in Mississippi [presumably the riots surrounding the enrolment of the first black student, James Meredith, at the University of Mississippi, which resulted in two deaths and the dispatching of National Guard and federal troops to the area on 30 September], a specific effort to 'capture' this particular asset – to turn Faulkner and his work into a leftist or anti-American symbol – might well have been made by this opposition, which has not been reluctant in the past to attempt such distortion of the work of U.S. literary figures. Though the Mississippi situation could not have been foreseen [sic], it is felt that such an attempt has in this case been fortuitously avoided, and that the principal objective sought has been successfully accomplished" (MSS 7258f).

America, he set up the Ibero-American Novel Project, a competition administered by the Faulkner Foundation at the University of Virginia. The Project was intended to serve as a means of promoting and translating Latin American literature in the U.S.; like Faulkner's overseas missions, it, too, was meant to "contribute to a better cultural exchange between the two Americas and [to] foment ameliorations in human relations and understanding" (MSS 10677, box 3). There was no cash prize involved. Rather, Project officials would use the prestige associated with Faulkner's name to convince publishers to take the risk of translating and publishing the award-winning novels from a region whose literature was only beginning to gain recognition in the U.S. in the early 1960s.

When the Project was announced in May of 1961, the story was picked up immediately by the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, among other papers, generating much publicity for the competition. Flyers explaining the competition were sent throughout the U.S. and Latin America, in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. The plan was to choose the best novel written in each Latin American country since 1945 and not yet translated to English.⁴ Each of these would receive the Foundation's Certificate of Merit; the novel elected best of all would receive a plaque from the Foundation. For each nation, Arnold del Greco, an associate professor of Romance Languages at the University of Virginia who was chosen by Faulkner to direct the Project, tried to put together a panel of three judges (preferably, but not always, from the country whose novels were being judged), each of whom was supposed to be less than 25 years old, for Faulkner felt that his own success had come from this demographic group, and that it was the best qualified to judge the new literature. The judges were chosen by networking: del Greco consulted with colleagues at the University of Virginia, as well as professors and critics throughout the U.S. and Latin America, several of whom had been graduate students with him at Columbia; he asked them for names of critics from each country, or for the name of a contact who could put him in touch with such critics. Del Greco then contacted the people suggested to him, asking them to judge the competition for the best novel from their nation (if they were under 25)⁵ or to suggest people

⁴ 1945 was chosen as the cutoff date because, according to Linton Massey, "Mr. Faulkner is convinced that there has been a literary renaissance in Latin America since the end of World War II" (MSS 10677, box 2).

⁵ The age criterion often complicated del Greco's task; although he waived it several times, at least one country, Colombia, ended up with no panel because one of his contacts felt that the country in question had no established critics in that age group

whom they thought would be appropriate. Each panel was to read all the possible novels from their nation and agree upon the best by the end of 1961;⁶ copies of the prizewinning novels were to be sent to del Greco for the next stage of the competition. (When the competition was over, judges were thanked for their participation with copies of Faulkner's *The Hamlet*—in Spanish.)

While, remarkably for these times, correspondence traveled quite quickly within the U.S. and to and from Latin America, lost and delayed missives, as well as the difficulty of acquiring books—the very problem that the Project sought to redress—slowed the process down significantly, and eliminated some countries from the competition altogether. It was not until February of 1963 that prizewinning novels from fourteen different nations—of the twenty originally included in the competition⁷—were announced. The best-known of these today, in both Latin America and the U.S., are: *Vidas Secas* (*Barren Lives*), by Graciliano Ramos (Brazil); *Coronación* (*Coronation*), by José Donoso (Chile); *El señor presidente* (translated with the same title), by Miguel Ángel Asturias (Guatemala); *Hijo de hombre* (*Son of Man*), by Augusto Roa Bastos (Paraguay); *Los ríos profundos* (*Deep Rivers*), by José María Arguedas (Peru); and *El astillero* (*The Shipyard*), by Juan Carlos Onetti (Uruguay). The other works chosen were: *Los enemigos del alma* [*The Enemies of the Soul*], by Eduardo Mallea (Argentina); *Los deshabitados* [*The Uninhabited Ones*], by Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz (Bolivia); *Marcos Ramírez*, by Carlos Luis Fallas Sibaja (Costa Rica); *El buen ladrón* [*The Good Thief*], by Marcio Veloz Maggiolo (Dominican Republic); *Érase un hombre pentafácico* [*There Was a Man with Five Faces*], by Emma Godoy (Mexico); *Los forzados de Gamboa* [*The Gamboa Road Gang*], by Joaquín Beleño (Panama); *La víspera del hombre* [*The Eve of Man*], by René Marqués (Puerto Rico); and *Cumboto* (translated with the same title), by Ramón Díaz Sánchez

(MSS 10677, box 2), and the others whom he invited to participate either declined or did not respond.

⁶ In the event that the judges could not come to an agreement, the panel was allowed to submit two nominations; when this happened, though, del Greco either went for the choice of the majority or for the novel listed first as the prizewinner.

⁷ There was, significantly, no nomination from Colombia, where García Márquez had only recently begun to publish (by 1960, when the competition began, he had only published *La hojarasca* [*Leaf Storm*]; *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* [*No One Writes the Colonel*] and *Los funerales de la mamá grande* [*Big Mama's Funerals*] came out in 1961 and 1962, respectively). Ultimately, according to del Greco, the Colombian judges “failed to make a report of their findings” (MSS 10677, box 2).

(Venezuela). Except for the latter novel, none of these works were ever translated into English. The results of the competition were broadcast throughout the U.S. and Latin America on the Voice of America, in coordination with the State Department. The Project then entered its next phase: the selection of the best novel overall from amongst those already chosen. The committee in charge of this stage was based at the University of Virginia: the judges included six doctoral students and two assistant professors from the university (as part of the desire to respect the age limit as much as possible);⁸ del Greco was an ex-officio member; and several other Spanish and Spanish American critics were consulted.⁹ In August of 1964, *Cumboto* was chosen to be the most outstanding novel.

I will return presently to *Cumboto*'s odyssey towards translation and publication in the U.S. In the meantime, I would like to discuss how the Cold War cultural politics that Lawrence Schwartz identifies behind the promotion of Faulkner and his work in the U.S. in the postwar years¹⁰ also played a role in this competition, as it did in Latin American studies (cultural, political, etc.) throughout the U.S. following the Cuban Revolution. As Schwartz details, in the late 1940s and 1950s, Faulkner's reputation was completely retooled: from a Southern regionalist with limited appeal in the establishment, he became "a writer with universal appeal," and was praised for his "technical virtuosity and his concern for the 'eternal' human issues" (141, 200). This transformation formed part of a Cold War cultural project wherein formalist aesthetics and the avant-garde displaced the realism of the prewar years, and critics condemned the representation of politics in literature (201-2). Modernism thus "became an instrument of anti-Communism and an ideological weapon with which to battle the 'totalitarianism' of the Soviet Union" (201).

Modernism was not antithetical to Communism in Latin American literature, though, as is particularly evident in the narrative of the 1960s and 1970s—the period known as the "Boom"—and the novels chosen by the Project included both avant-garde and traditional styles and politics. However, the competition took place against the backdrop of the Cold

⁸ The Ph.D. candidates were Doris Baum (also a Wilson Scholar), Renée Corty Donelson, Jerry Johnson, Silvia Novo Blankenship, Ahrrel Thomas, and Esther Camacho Burch, an Ed.D. candidate and teaching assistant in Spanish (MSS 10677, box 3).

⁹ These included professor Ernesto DaCal from Spain, then Chair of Spanish at New York University; Dr. Raúl Horacio Bottaro, Gerente de la Cámara Argentina del Libro; Roberto Giusti of Argentina; and Dr. Idel Becker of Brazil. (MSS 10677, box 3)

¹⁰ See *Creating Faulkner's Reputation*.

War, for U.S. interest in Latin America was heightened during this period by Fidel Castro's rapprochement with the Soviet Union, and by the spread of socialist activism throughout Latin America. The Project was conceived during the Kennedy years, and it would be wise not to overlook Charlottesville's proximity to D.C.—nor Edward and Robert Kennedy's ties to the University of Virginia (the former was also a neighbor and friend of del Greco): del Greco coordinated different stages of the project with State Department and government officials from HEW and USIA, along with other agencies, and met with Edward Kennedy at least once in the early stages of the Project; after the competition, several of the prizewinning novelists visited the States through the State Department's Foreign Leaders Program.¹¹ Del Greco also proposed to Muna Lee that the State Department coordinate (and fund) a symposium that would bring the authors together in the U.S.: "The benefits derived from our project would thus be made more tangible and direct for both the visiting authors and our country. The authors honored with a visit to our University and possibly other places in our land would pay dividends in long lasting good-will [sic]. Those writers could wield a lot of influence among their readers in favor of closer co-operation among all the Americas" (MSS 10677, box 2). Finally, del Greco was involved with a State Department-funded program in Bolivia, where the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario, a radical reformist movement, was in power from 1952 to 1964: he traveled to Bolivia several times, where he recruited students to spend six weeks at the University of Virginia Law School in order to get them away from being indoctrinated and—in his words—to "convert" them from Communism (interview).

This is not to say that Cold War politics held sway over the outcome of the competition; Asturias', Donoso's, Fallas Sibaja's, and Ramos' leftist sympathies were well-known at the time, and clearly did not prevent their novels from being chosen. However, politics did play a key role in the selection process for the Cuban novel. In March of 1962, one of the judges, Roberto Esquenazi Mayo, wrote del Greco that "the Cuban case might be somewhat difficult, not because of the quality of the novels [available], for there are very good ones, but, rather, because some of the authors are in Cuba and collaborate with the government. This definitely bothers me" (MSS 10677, box 1).¹² Del Greco agreed that

¹¹ Quiroga Santa Cruz and Maggiolo both visited in 1964.

¹² "En realidad, en el caso de Cuba, tal vez sea algo difícil, no por la calidad de las novelas, que las hay muy buenas, sino porque algunos de los autores se encuentran

the case was touchy, but that “the rules of the competition don’t exclude ideological novels. I agree that it would be better if the novel chosen were by an author who was not working closely with the government. The members of the panel are completely free to establish whatever criterion seems fair to them even when it’s a question of avoiding embarrassing results” (MSS 10677, box 1).¹³ In June, Esquenazi Mayo informed del Greco that another panelist, Eugenio Florit, had chosen Alejo Carpentier’s *The Lost Steps*, but that they had not had any word from the third member of the committee, Fernando Alegría, a Chilean. Esquenazi Mayo further stated that “in this situation, I think that it would be better, for now, to declare the contest void. I do believe that Carpentier’s novel has literary merits, but he is closely related to [Cuban] politics these days”—he was an ardent supporter of the Revolution and director of the national publishing house at that point—“I’d suggest that, in order to avoid frustrating situations and depending on what Alegría might advise, the competition go ahead with the other countries” (MSS 10677, box 1).¹⁴ Del Greco agreed to suspend the search “because Fernando Alegría has not voted on the choice of the best Cuban novel” (!),¹⁵ but asked to be notified if the committee heard from Alegría; as they never did, no Cuban novel ever received the award (MSS 10677, box 1). Ultimately, this exchange was as ironic as it was interesting, for it need never have happened: Knopf had actually published *The Lost Steps* in 1956, to positive reviews and disappointingly poor sales. Had del Greco known this, he could have easily disqualified the novel on these grounds and avoided the debate altogether. While perhaps this outcome was not preordained, it did not go unnoticed by Linton Massey, then president of the Faulkner Foundation. After the first stage of the

en Cuba y colaboran con el Gobierno. A mi [sic], personalmente, eso me desagrada, sin duda.” All translations in this essay are mine.

¹³ “El caso actual de Cuba presenta ciertas dificultades pero como Usted habrá observado, las reglas del concurso no excluyen novelas ideológicas. Yo estoy de acuerdo con Usted que sería mejor si la novela seleccionada perteneciera a un autor que no estuviera en estrecha colaboración con el gobierno actual. Los miembros del jurado se encuentran en plena libertad de establecer cualquier criterio que les parezca justo aún cuando se tratara de evitar resultados embarazosos.”

¹⁴ “En esta situación yo he pensado que tal vez sería mejor, por ahora, declararlo desierto. Para mi [sic] la de Carpentier tiene méritos literarios, sin duda, pero él está íntimamente relacionado con la política en estos momentos. Yo te sugeriría que para evitar situaciones enojosas y pendiente de lo que pueda aconsejar Alegría, que se continuara el concurso con los otros países.”

¹⁵ “Debido a que Fernando Alegría no ha dado su voto con respecto a la selección de la mejor novela cubana, es mejor declarar desierto este país, por ahora.”

competition was completed, Massey wrote to Edgar Shannon, then president of the University of Virginia, commending del Greco for his work. He noted in particular that the director “succeeded in setting up committees in the various countries of critics and scholars, being careful to avoid any slight tinge of communism on their part. He wisely omitted any attempt to include Cuba” (MSS 10677, box 2).

Perhaps the ramifications of these cultural politics are small for, in many respects, despite the prestige associated with Faulkner’s name, the award ultimately failed in its main objective: only seven of the award-winning novels were ever published in the U.S.—two not until many years later, and without the assistance of the Foundation¹⁶—and *Coronación* and *El señor presidente* were already under contract by the time the awards were announced. Also, while other works by the authors who were published in English were translated, as well as several by Mallea and Marqués (not including their prizewinning novels), and one on indigenous art and economy by Veloz Maggiolo, and despite initial interest by publishers in Godoy’s and Fallas Sibaja’s novels, no work by any of the other prizewinning authors whose novels were not published, as far as I can tell, has ever been translated into English.¹⁷ Less than half of the prizewinning novels are still in print—let alone read or studied—in either English or Spanish. The inability of the Project to accomplish its goals was not due to any lack of effort or goodwill on the part of participants: del Greco worked tirelessly coordinating the competition, publicity, and trying to match the award winning novels with publishers; the judges saw themselves as promoting the work of their compatriots, both in general and in the U.S. in particular; and judges, critics, and authors repeatedly indicated their belief that the competition would be instrumental in bringing their work to the North, which they felt was ignorant of their culture, and that it had the potential to improve the strained relations between Latin America and the U.S.

¹⁶ Arguedas’ *Deep Rivers* was not translated until 1977, while Roa Bastos’ *Son of Man* was published by Victor Gollancz (London) in 1965, but was not released in English in the U.S. until 1988.

¹⁷ Díaz Sánchez’s *Mene: A Venezuelan Novel* was translated by Jesse Noel, a Trinidadian writer, and was published by the University of West Indies Press in the 1980s. Its distribution has been extremely minimal. I have searched for information on these books in the U.S. Library of Congress, which lists all of the originals, but only those translations already mentioned here. I have also checked the catalogs of several major research universities with strong collections of Latin American literature as well as online booksellers specializing in out-of-print works, with the same results.

I believe that the explanations for the Project's shortcomings lay elsewhere. Interest in Latin American literature in the U.S. was on the upswing in the early 1960s, for authors such as Julio Cortázar, Donoso, Fuentes, García Márquez, and Vargas Llosa were at this time gaining acclaim for their experimental works throughout Latin America and the West as part of the movement known as the Boom. In this respect, the Project was extremely timely, and should have been well positioned to capitalize on the resulting surge in translation of Latin American works in the United States.¹⁸ Several publishers, in fact, contacted del Greco, saying that they would like to consider the award-winning novels for their lists; they often asked for descriptions of the works and whether they had already been published in English. The director, however, did not have this information on hand:¹⁹ for plot summaries, he referred publishers to the novels' book jackets (which were, of course, in Spanish and which the publishers would presumably have to acquire on their own); for translation and publication status, he referred inquiries to the original Latin American publishers (even nowadays, and even knowing the language, it can be difficult to track this kind of information down). Additionally, publishers were expected to contact prizewinning authors and their publishers directly in order to arrange publication of works in English.

¹⁸ In 1964, Harper & Row created an International Division which was to focus on Latin American and other international works. The same year, Seymour Lawrence, the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, wrote del Greco that: "We are embarked on a long-range program of publishing individual works of distinguished contemporary foreign authors in translation and we are particularly interested in introducing the notable novelists of Latin America to readers in the English-speaking world" (MSS 10677, box 1). Also, in 1963, the Inter-American Committee (the precursor of the Americas Society), began developing a literature program. One of the goals of the program was subsidizing translations of Latin American works and interesting agents and publishers—and, of course, the U.S. reading public—in them (MSS 10677, box 2). Both the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations were also offering grants at this point to cover translation subsidies for Latin American works; the latter set up a program, in fact, with several academic publishers and editors through grants made to the Association of American University Presses.

¹⁹ These were, eventually, prepared, but as there is no date on the papers, it is impossible to tell when this was done (as del Greco was referring interested publishers to the original publishers and book jackets through early 1964, it was presumably some time after this; these papers are entitled "Brief Information Concerning the Novels Designated as Notable in the Faulkner Foundation Ibero-American Project" [MSS 10677, box 2]). These were, additionally, written up in Spanish and Portuguese, which would be of relatively little use to publishers.

Organization, however, accounts for only part of the outcome. There is also, I believe, a lesson to be learned in the heartbreaking odyssey of *Cumboto*, the novel voted best overall, towards translation. Díaz Sánchez's work is about a rural black community and the problems of race relations and *mestizaje* in Venezuela. Soon after it received the second honor, the University of Virginia Press and Knopf considered it for publication; eventually, both rejected it. Over the next few years, del Greco offered the manuscript to more than twenty publishers (MSS 10677, box 3). Some rejected it based on their readers' active dislike of the novel (MSS 10677, box 1). In November 1965, for example, Frank Wardlaw, Director of the University of Texas Press, rejected del Greco's request for him to consider the novel because it had already been reviewed and the "principal advisors on our Latin American translation program ... are emphatic in their recommendation that we do not publish it. Quite frankly, they do not have a very high opinion of the novel" (MSS 10677, box 1). Others simply declined claiming that it would be difficult to find a market for it in the States.²⁰

Díaz Sánchez anxiously followed his novel's peripatetic trajectory over the years. In 1965, he wrote to José Antonio Cordido-Freytes, the Venezuelan member of the Faulkner Foundation, to express his

²⁰ Eric Swenson, Vice President and Executive Editor of W.W. Norton, wrote del Greco that his readers had seen the novel "and I am sorry to say we are not going to make an offer of publication. It is most certainly a worthy book, but I am afraid it would elicit very little response from a broadly-based North American audience, which I suppose is another way of saying it does not seem to us important enough to be worth the time and effort of translation and publication" (MSS 10677, box 1). Robert Giroux of Farrar, Straus, and Co., similarly wrote that "Despite its many admirable qualities, we do not feel we could successfully launch it in the U.S." (MSS 10677, box 1), as did H.I. Rainey of Simon and Schuster: "it is not a novel we could publish successfully" (MSS 10677, box 1). *Cumboto* was not the only prizewinning novel to generate this response. In 1964, William Koshland at Knopf, which at that time had *Coronation* under contract and was keeping open the possibility of publishing Ramos' *Barren Lives*, wrote del Greco that they were still deciding whether or not to publish Mallea's *Los enemigos*: "we have had several readings on it and have not yet come to a firm decision. There, too, our readers in the light of what may or may not be palatable to the American public, have ranged in their opinions from very active dislike to the keenest sort of enthusiasm and several in-between opinions. We are just not at all sure what we will do about this at the present moment" (MSS 10677, box 2). He later wrote that "With very few exceptions, we have examined the greater part of the books you have listed and have in most cases decided not to undertake their translation into English in this country. Many of them, we felt, did not measure up to the particular standards we require for presenting books in translation in English; others we felt would not make their way with the American public" (MSS 10677, box 2).

frustration with the outcome of the competition. He stated that he was well acquainted with

the resistance of North American publishers to publish literary works from Spanish America, which is due primarily to the contempt with which Northerners view our countries in the South, our institutions, history, and language. I thought that the creation of the Faulkner Foundation Novel Prize sought to break down the formidable barrier that the North Americans' disdain and implacable utilitarianism have created between the New World's two racial zones, and grant some ethical and esthetic dignity to the relations between the greatest power in modern history and our small and underdeveloped nations. ... The only satisfaction and efficacy that a contest of this type could give us, the writers of Spanish America, would be the publication in the U.S. of the books produced in our countries, which would constitute a message of good faith, because, aside from this, a metallic plaque otherwise has few merits ...²¹ (MSS 10677, box 1)

It is ironic that he should mention the plaque here for, due to a series of frustrated plans (for Díaz Sánchez to visit the States and be given the award there, for Cordido-Freytes to give him the award in Caracas, etc.), Díaz Sánchez never received his plaque, either, and it is still in the files at the University of Virginia.²²

²¹ “Bien conocida me es la resistencia de los editores norteamericanos a publicar obras literarias de Hispanoamérica, lo que se explica sobradamente por el menosprecio con que las gentes del Norte miran a nuestros pueblos del Sur, a sus instituciones, historia e idioma. Yo creí que la creación del Premio de novela por la Fundación William Faulkner tenía por objeto, precisamente, contribuir a romper la formidable barrera que el desdén y el implacable utilitarismo de los norteamericanos han creado entre las dos zonas raciales del Nuevo Mundo, y a comunicar un poco de dignidad ética y estética a las relaciones de la más grande potencia de la historia moderna con nuestras pequeñas y subdesarrolladas naciones ... La única satisfacción y la sola eficacia que un torneo de esta índole podría proyectar en nosotros, escritores de Hispanoamérica, sería la de la publicación en Estados Unidos de los libros producidos en nuestros países y que constituyen un mensaje de buena fe, pues poco atractivo tiene, fuera de esto, la concesión de una placa metálica ...”

²² This episode later threatened to set the Faulkner family at odds with the Foundation. When William Fielden, who was married to Faulkner's stepdaughter, Victoria, was invited by Massey to join the Foundation in 1967, he was extremely hesitant to accept the position, as he had lived in Venezuela for several years and was acquainted with the saga. As he wrote, “Several years ago, when a Venezuelan was awarded the prize of recognition, there was nothing tangible given and I know the winner was distressed over this ... Mrs. Faulkner met the winner and his wife in

In late 1965, the Foundation authorized a \$2000 subvention to subsidize the English publication of *Cumboto*, but this did not, at first, help to place the novel. In August of the following year, however, Wardlaw inexplicably consented to review the novel again—perhaps convinced by the subsidy—and in early 1967, he authorized its translation and publication. Díaz Sánchez was extremely pleased to hear that his novel was going to be released in the U.S., but he died in late 1968, several months before it was published. *Cumboto* was one of five finalists for the National Book Award for translation that year, but is out of print today.

None of the editors whom del Greco contacted about *Cumboto* indicated why they felt the novel would not be of interest to readers in the U.S. I would suggest that the novel's fate, as well as that of several of the works that were not lucky enough to be translated, was, in many respects, a question of style. The novels chosen by the Project's judges were evenly split: almost half were avant-garde in style and/or theme, while the rest were regionalist in scope and realist (or social realist) in style.²³ The latter were what Donoso once characterized as “writing for [one's] parish,” “cataloging the flora and fauna, the races and sayings that were unmistakably ours ... that *differentiated* us—separated us—from other regions and countries in the continent” (20, 25).²⁴ In this way, they “reinforced the boundaries between region and region, between country and country” (25). If this emphasis on “local color” was unlikely to appeal to Latin American readers outside of the author's homeland, it was even less likely to be of interest to a U.S. audience; the use of an outmoded style rendered the works even less marketable.

our home in Caracas, and I told her that there had to be some tangible recognition otherwise the award was meaningless. Things very nearly reached the point where the winner was going to renounce recognition and advise various publications. Dr. Cordido[-Freytes] was able to handle things so there was no adverse publicity created at the time” (MSS 10677, box 1). He acknowledged that he did want to join the Foundation, but “before doing so want to satisfy ourselves that we are supporting something that is substantial and offers reward to authors that provides incentive and recognition” (ibid.).

²³ Style does not, curiously, seem to have been correlated with age: winning novelists were born between 1892 (Ramos) and 1936 (Veloz Maggiolo; in comparison, Fuentes and García Márquez were born in 1928, and Vargas Llosa in 1936), and those whose works incorporated the avant-garde were born throughout this period.

²⁴ “Escrib[ir] para su parroquia,” “cataloga[r] la flora y la fauna, las razas y los dichos inconfundiblemente nuestros ... aquello que específicamente nos *diferenciaba*—nos separaba—de otras regiones y otros países del continente.”

The novels that were published were, in contrast, at least marked—if not defined—by a more experimental style and world view; while these, too, addressed local issues, settings, and history, I would speculate that their questioning of reality, use of modern and urban settings, and treatment of themes such as dictatorship were seen by publishers as more appealing to the sensibilities of a broader audience. These qualities and themes, additionally, dovetailed with those exhibited in the work of the young Boom authors who, ironically, did not—other than Donoso—even compete in the Project, which began just before they wrote the works that shot them into the international spotlight. The success of the Boom writers in the early 1960s both paved the way for the publication of other Latin American works and, in turn, was facilitated by the publicity surrounding the Faulkner Prize. In this respect, then, the Project's results—however sad, when one considers its unfulfilled potential—offer a cross-section of the transition between literary generations, and were caught between the old and the new.

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