

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

DEBORAH COHN

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. It will examine the Project's goals and mechanisms, and assess 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 US 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 US (Blotner 1347-48). The result was, of course, a great success, and from this moment until his death, Faulkner was persuaded numerous times by Lee and the State Department to serve as a goodwill ambassador for the US: 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 US. On a number of occasions, he promoted the achievements of the US—cultural and otherwise (Lee once called him an

DEBORAH COHN is assistant professor of Spanish and Portuguese at Indiana University, Bloomington. She has published essays in Comparative Literature Studies, CR: The New Centennial Review, Faulkner and the Twenty-First Century, the Teaching Faulkner Newsletter, and elsewhere. She is the author of History and Memory in the Two Souths: Recent Southern and Spanish American Fiction (1999) and is currently working on a book entitled Creating the Boom's Reputation: The Promotion of Latin America in and by the US.

eloquent “interpreter of democracy”²)—in nations where there was significant anti-Americanism, and often helped to lessen hostility towards the States.

In 1954, Faulkner traveled to an international writer’s conference in Brazil, stopping in Peru and Venezuela on the way; he visited Venezuela again in 1961 as part of efforts to improve US-Venezuelan relations (see Blotner 1503-07 and 1777-87). 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.”³ 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.”⁴ She further gloated that, while the most recent issue of *Newsweek* (30 Aug. 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.”⁵

Even before the Cuban Revolution of 1959, Latin America had begun to experience a surge in leftist activism that brought it into conflict repeatedly with the US, which was, of course, firmly under the sway of Cold War politics at this point. The US had long supported repressive regimes and neocolonial enterprises such as the United Fruit Company in Latin America, and had toppled those regimes whose politics leaned too far to the left (as was the case in the UFC coup in Guatemala in 1954). The McCarran Walter Act of 1952, which was used to restrict visas on ideological grounds, and which prevented authors with socialist sympathies such as Fuentes, García Márquez, Pablo Neruda, and others from entering the US, and, later, the Alliance for Progress generated much additional hostility in Latin America towards the US. 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 US in the local press and to improve the US’s relationship with the Latin American nations, and 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.⁶

Faulkner's visits helped to ease tension in international relations by bringing tremendous positive publicity to the US 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"⁷ and "one of the most successful of all cultural approaches by the United States to Venezuela,"⁸ 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 US and Latin America.⁹

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 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 US; 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."¹⁰ 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 US in the early 1960s.¹¹

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, and generated much publicity for the competition. Flyers explaining the competition were sent throughout the US 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.¹² Each of these would receive the Foundation's Certificate of Merit; the novel elected best overall 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 essentially chosen by networking: del Greco consulted with colleagues at the University of Virginia, as well as professors and critics throughout the US and Latin America, several of whom had been graduate students with him at Columbia University; he asked his contacts 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)¹³ or to suggest people 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 1961.¹⁴ 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 US 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 competition¹⁵—were announced. The best-known of these today, in both Latin America and the US, are: *Los ríos profundos* (*Deep Rivers*), by José María Arguedas (Peru); *El señor presidente* (translated with the same title), by Miguel Ángel Asturias (Guatemala); *Coronación* (*Coronation*), by José Donoso (Chile); *El astillero* (*The Shipyard*), by Juan Carlos Onetti (Uruguay); *Vidas Secas* (*Barren Lives*), by Graciliano Ramos (Brazil); and *Hijo de hombre* (*Son of Man*), by Augusto Roa Bastos (Paraguay). The other works chosen were: *Los forzados de Gamboa* [*The Gamboa Road Gang*], by Joaquín Beleño (Panama); *Cumboto* (translated with the same title), by Ramón Díaz Sánchez (Venezuela); *Marcos Ramírez*, by Carlos Luis Fallas Sibaja (Costa Rica); *Érase un hombre pentafácico* [*There Was a Man with Five Faces*], by Emma Godoy (Mexico); *Los enemigos del alma* [*The Enemies of the Soul*], by Eduardo Mallea (Argentina); *La víspera del hombre* [*The Eve of Man*], by René Marqués (Puerto Rico); *Los deshabitados* [*The Uninhabited Ones*], by Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz (Bolivia); and *El buen ladrón* [*The Good Thief*], by Marcio Veloz Maggiolo (Dominican Republic). Except for *Cumboto*, none of these novels were ever translated into English. The results of the competition were broadcast throughout the US 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 among 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).¹⁶ Del Greco was an ex-officio member, and several other Spanish and Spanish

American critics were consulted.¹⁷ 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 US. 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 US in the postwar years¹⁸ also played a role in this competition, as it did in Latin American studies (cultural, political, etc.) throughout the US 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 (201-02). 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 Boom years, when authors who had been profoundly influenced by Faulkner, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf both drew on modernism's formal experimentation and thematics even as they demonstrated their commitment to the Revolution, the force that gave the movement its ideological coherence. The novels chosen by the Project reflected both avant-garde and traditional styles and politics. However, like Faulkner's visits to Latin America, the competition took place against the backdrop of the Cold War, and US interest in the region was heightened during these years 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 DC—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.¹⁹ Del Greco also proposed to Muna Lee that the State Department coordinate (and fund) a symposium that would bring the authors together in the US: "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."²⁰ Finally, during these same years 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’s, Donoso’s, Fallas Sibaja’s, and Ramos’s 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 to 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.”²¹ Del Greco agreed that 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.”²² 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.”²³ Del Greco agreed to suspend the search “because Fernando Alegría has not voted on the choice of the best Cuban novel” (!), but asked to be notified if the committee heard from Alegría;²⁴ as they never did, no Cuban novel ever received the award. Ultimately, this exchange was as ironic as it was interesting, for it need never have happened: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. had actually published *The Lost Steps* in 1956, to positive reviews and disappointingly poor sales.²⁵ 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 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 project’s director had “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."²⁶

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 US—two not until many years later, and without the assistance of the Foundation²⁷—and *Coronación* and *El señor presidente* were already under contract by the time the awards were announced. Also, although the authors whose prizewinning novels were published in English later had others translated, and Mallea and Marqués likewise have several novels published in English (not, however, their prizewinning novels), and despite initial interest by publishers in Godoy's and Fallas Sibaja's novels, to the best of my knowledge, *no work by any of the other prizewinning authors has ever been published in English.*²⁸ Fewer 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 (and without remuneration) coordinating the competition and 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 US 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 US.

I believe that the explanations for the Project's shortcomings lie elsewhere. Interest in Latin American literature in the US was on the upswing in the early 1960s, the Boom years, when authors such as Julio Cortázar, Donoso, Fuentes, García Márquez, and Vargas Llosa were gaining acclaim for their experimental works throughout Latin America and the West. 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 US.²⁹ 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:³⁰ for plot summaries, he referred publishers to the novels' bookjackets (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.

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 higher 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.³¹ Some rejected it based on their readers' active dislike of the novel.³² In November of 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."³³ Others simply declined claiming that it would be difficult to find a market for it in the States.³⁴

Díaz Sánchez anxiously followed his novel's peripatetic trajectory over the years. In 1965, he wrote to José Antonio Cordido-Freytes, a compatriot who was a member of the Faulkner Foundation, to express his frustration with the competition's outcome. 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. . . .³⁵

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.³⁶

In late 1965, the Foundation authorized a \$2,000 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 US, 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 US. 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.³⁷ The regionalist novel, a genre that had its heyday in Spanish America in the 1920s and 1930s, was 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). In this way, this genre "reinforced the boundaries between region and region, between country and country" (25). If this emphasis on "local color" was unlikely to have any appeal to Latin American readers outside of the author's homeland, it was even less likely to be of interest to a US audience; the use of an outmoded style rendered the works even less marketable.

With the exception of *Cumboto*, the novels that were published were 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, frequent 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.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to the University of Virginia Library's Special Collections Department, where I conducted much of the research on this project, and to Regina Rush for her assistance. I am also indebted to McGill University for a grant that allowed me to travel and conduct this research and to Vanderbilt University's Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, as well as to its Director, Mona Frederick, for the fellowship that gave me the time to work on this project. I am thankful, too, for the opportunity to present my work at the "Rethinking the Americas" conference at Vanderbilt in 2002. Brief sections of this essay appeared in "Retracing *The Lost Steps*: The Cuban Revolution, the Cold War, and Publishing Alejo Carpentier in the U.S.," in *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3.1 (Spring 2003), published by Michigan State University Press.

NOTES

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

² Muna Lee, memo to Mr. Colwell, 2 May 1961, box number MSS 7258 a, Joseph Blotner-William Faulkner Collection, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library. Subsequent references to materials in this collection will be identified by the prefix MSS followed by the box number.

³ Muna Lee, office memo to Thomas Driver, 26 July 1954, box number MSS 7258 a.

⁴ Muna Lee, note to Harold H. Tittman, Jr., 2 Sept. 1954, MSS 7258 a.

⁵ Muna Lee, note to Harold H. Tittman, Jr., 2 Sept. 1954, MSS 7258 a.

⁶ Philip Raine, unsigned typed copy of note to Mr. Riley, no date, MSS 7258 a. Raine 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” (memo to Mr. Riley, 22 June 1954, MSS 7258 a). 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” (Muna Lee, memo to Charles Harner, 29 Nov. 1960, MSS 7258 f). Afterwards, this visit was hailed as “one of the greatest boons to US-Venezuelan relations that has happened for a long time” (C. Allan Stewart, qtd. in a Muna Lee memo to Mr. Colwell, 2 May 1961, MSS 7258 a). And, according to the US 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” (Cecil Sanford, qtd. in a Muna Lee memo to Mr. Colwell, 2 May 1961, MSS 7258 a). 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 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” (Report to the North American Association on the Visit of Mr. Faulkner, 10 May 1961, MSS 7258 a).

Even events marking Faulkner’s death were turned into a platform for promoting the US’s interests and reputation. In late September of 1962, William Faulkner Week was held by the US 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" (Saxton Bradford, cable to unspecified recipient, 9 Oct. 1962, MSS 7258 f).

⁷ Muna Lee, memo to Mr. Mattison, 30 Aug. 1955, MSS 7258 a.

⁸ Muna Lee, memo to Mr. Colwell, 2 May 1961, MSS 7258 a.

⁹ Muna Lee, note to Harold H. Tittman, Jr., 2 Sept. 1954, MSS 7258 a.

¹⁰ Arnold del Greco, Summary of the Ibero-American Novel Project, no date, MSS 10677, box 3, William Faulkner Foundation Ibero-American Novel Project Collection, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library. Subsequent references to materials in this collection will be identified by the prefix MSS followed by the box numbers.

¹¹ Curiously, very little has been written in either the US or Latin America about this competition, despite its high visibility in both areas. Blotner mentions it very briefly in *Faulkner: A Biography* (1786), as does Frederick R. Karl in *William Faulkner, American Writer: A Biography* (1019). More recently, Helen Oakley has examined the political pressures on the Novel Project in "William Faulkner and the Cold War: The Politics of Cultural Marketing."

¹² The year 1945 was chosen as the cut-off 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" (Letter to Elizabeth Sutherland, 16 June 1961, MSS 10677, box 2).

¹³ 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 (Antonio Puerto, Jr., letter to del Greco, 19 Oct. 1961, MSS 10677, box 2), and the others whom he invited to participate either declined or did not respond.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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" (letter to Robert Kingsley, 22 August 1963, MSS 10677, box 2).

¹⁶ The PhD candidates were Doris Baum, Renée Corty Donelson, Jerry Johnson, Silvia Novo Blankenship, Ahrrel Thomas, and Esther Camacho Burch, an EdD candidate and teaching assistant in Spanish (del Greco, Ibero-American Project report for Apr. 1963–June 1964, July 1964, MSS 10677, box 3).

¹⁷ 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 (del Greco, Ibero-American Project report for Apr. 1963-June 1964, July 1964, MSS 10677, box 3).

¹⁸ See *Creating Faulkner's Reputation*.

¹⁹ Quiroga Santa Cruz and Maggiolo both visited in 1964.

²⁰ Del Greco, letter to Muna Lee, 1 Apr. 1963, MSS 10677, box 2.

²¹ Esquenazi Mayo, letter to del Greco, 22 Mar. 1962, MSS 10677, box 1. The correspondence between del Greco and Esquenazi Mayo was in Spanish. All translations in this essay are mine.

²² Del Greco, letter to Esquenazi Mayo, 27 Mar. 1962, MSS 10677, box 1.

²³ Esquenazi Mayo, letter to del Greco, 9 June 1962, MSS 10677, box 1.

²⁴ Del Greco, letter to Esquenazi Mayo, 12 June 1962, MSS 10677, box 1.

²⁵ I discuss *The Lost Steps's* publishing history with Knopf in "Retracing *The Lost Steps*."

²⁶ Massey, letter to Edgar Shannon, 16 Mar. 1963, MSS 10677, box 2.

²⁷ Arguedas's *Deep Rivers* was not translated until 1977, while Roa Bastos's *Son of Man* was published by Victor Gollancz (London) in 1965, but was not released in English in the US until 1988.

²⁸ 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. It is far easier to find that a novel has been translated than it is to demonstrate that it has not appeared in English. I have searched for information on these books in the US 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.

²⁹ 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" (Letter to del Greco, 6 Jan. 1964, MSS 10677, box 1). Also, in 1963, the Inter-American Committee (the precursor to 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 US reading public—in them. 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.

³⁰ 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 bookjackets 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.

³¹ See correspondence between del Greco and various publishers, MSS 10677, box 1.

³² See correspondence between del Greco and various publishers, MSS 10677, box 1.

³³ Frank Wardlaw, letter to del Greco, 2 Nov. 1965, MSS 10677, box 1.

³¹ 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" (Letter to del Greco, 1 July 1966, 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." (Letter to del Greco, 21 Sept. 1966, MSS 10677, box 1), as did H.I. Rainey of Simon and Schuster: "it is not a novel we could publish successfully" (Letter to del Greco, 28 Aug. 1966, 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's *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" (Letter to del Greco, 28 May 1963, 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" (Letter to Arnold del Greco, 2 Mar. 1964, MSS 10677, box 2).

³⁵ Ramón Díaz Sánchez, letter to José Antonio Cordido-Freytes, 7 July 1965, MSS 10677, box 1.

³⁶ 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 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" (Letter to Linton Massey, 4 Dec. 1967, MSS 10677, box 1). He acknowledged that he did want to join the Foundation, but "before doing so [we] want to satisfy ourselves that we are supporting something that is substantial and offers reward to authors that provides incentive and recognition" (Letter to Linton Massey, 4 Dec. 1967, MSS 10677, box 1).

³⁷ Style does not, curiously, seem to have been correlated with age: winning novelists were born between 1892 (Ramos) and 1936 (Velozy 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.

WORKS CITED

- Blotner, Joseph. *Faulkner: A Biography*. Vol. 2. New York: Random, 1974.
- Cohn, Deborah. *History and Memory in the Two Souths: Recent Southern and Spanish American Fiction*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1999.
- _____. "‘Of the same blood as this America and its history’: William Faulkner and Spanish American Literature." *South to a New Place*. Ed. Suzanne Jones and Sharon Monteith. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002. 320-39.
- _____. "Retracing *The Lost Steps*: The Cuban Revolution, the Cold War, and Publishing Alejo Carpentier in the U.S." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3.1 (2003): 81-108.
- Del Greco, Arnold. Personal interview. 9 May 2001.
- Donoso, José. *Historia personal del ‘boom.’* Madrid: Alfaguara, 1998.
- Joseph Blotner-William Faulkner Collection. Special Collections, University of Virginia Library: MSS 7258a; MSS 7258f.
- Karl, Frederick R. *William Faulkner, American Writer: A Biography*. New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989.
- Oakley, Helen. "William Faulkner and the Cold War: The Politics of Cultural Marketing." *Look Away!: The U.S. South in New World Studies*. Ed. Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. 405-18.
- Schwartz, Lawrence H. *Creating Faulkner's Reputation: The Politics of Modern Literary Criticism*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1988.
- William Faulkner Foundation Ibero-American Novel Project Collection. Special Collections, University of Virginia Library: MSS 10677, box 1; MSS 10677, box 2; MSS 10677, box 3.