Final Remarks on Diasporic Marvellous Realism

This study started by situating Carpentier’s *lo real maravilloso americano* in the early colonization of the American continent. For the Cuban author, marvellous realism was conceived as a reformulation of realism, rather than as a denial of it. It was for this reason that Carpentier attempted to find the appropriate language to juxtapose the differing points of view found in the American cosmogony, intermingling them in time and space while setting the European logos against the Amerindian imaginary. The result of this creative exercise was truly productive, fostering a fruitful debate in the arts, one that prevails still in contemporary literature. However, time has passed and the old paradigms need to be revisited.

Many of the numerous studies of magical and marvellous realism that have been published over the last decades have focused on theorizing these as narrative techniques and/or literary philosophies from a structural perspective, something also present in the textual analysis of the corpus selected for this book. Despite this, the innovation that this study has offered in postulating a new term, Diasporic Marvellous Realism, relies on the importance of the social, political, and cultural implications of reinterpreting the supernatural from the diaspora. In view of the findings that have emerged from the texts examined, it seems that a clear motivation can be identified within this process of addressing issues related to history, identity, and memory in fiction. It was my intention to go a step further in analysing magical and marvellous effects in literature, to investigate the consequences of transterritorialization and transculturation in contemporary literature. For this purpose, a number of contemporary works set in the diaspora and written by Caribbean authors or by authors of Caribbean origin appeared to be the most convenient corpus to exemplify what has been referred to as Diasporic Marvellous Realism.

Diasporic Marvellous Realism manifests itself as the evolution in the literary philosophy and narrative technique utilized by certain authors who
produce cultural fictions from their host countries. Bill Ashcroft et al. suggest, in *The Empire Writes Back*, that diasporas have an immediate effect on individuals, highlighting how migration promotes the development of a special sensitivity towards self-identification in relation to different places of residence. Diasporas, transterritorialization, exile, and other migratory movements appear to promote “a valid and active sense of self [which] may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration.”

For Ashcroft et al., ‘dislocation’ implies a deconstructing of identity and a subsequent reconstruction of it in the form of a new hybrid sense of self. The Caribbean, as a case study, perfectly represents this process of identitarian reformulation, since migration is inherent to its history, as I have been at pains to make clear. This reformulation is also seen in the way certain communities in the diaspora, relate to the folklore of their culture of origin. Dislocation from cultural referents might imply that first- and second-generation immigrants, together with post-migrant or transnational authors, will be highly influenced by a different cultural code, one that will prevent them from considering certain phenomena as likely to be factual. Dislocation was actually the key factor that motivated marvellous realism to appear in the *Chronicles of the Indies*, where European languages had to struggle to illustrate in words the magnificence of the Latin American and Caribbean landscapes as well as the peculiarities of the pre-Columbian cultures. Similarly, authors of Diasporic Marvellous Realism experiment in a similar fashion with language and cultural referents in order to come closer to a world that, in certain cases, seems foreign to them.

If the Caribbean diaspora responds to an amalgam of geographical, historical, social, and cultural references, it is difficult to accept that writers are uncontaminated by Western influences. Though some of the authors included in this study still spend periods of time in the Caribbean, they are primarily based in diasporic locations. Thus, as Donnell and Lawson Welsh suggest,

this dispersal from a centre, both in terms of geography and in terms of an aesthetic consensus, need not be read as a sign of the collapse of Caribbean

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2 Cooper, in *Magical Realism in West African Fiction*, considers that writers of magical realism use this literary technique to probe their ‘uncontamination’ by European domination, an idea discussed above in relation to the critical voices around Carpentier’s conceptualization of Latin American cosmogony.