

**Alejo Carpentier, *The Harp and the Shadow*:
Literature, History and Fiction**

Rodica Grigore¹

Not entirely a historical text, *The Harp and the Shadow*, the last novel published by Alejo Carpentier, takes as its pretext certain historical data in order to offer the readers a specific view of the protagonist, Christopher Columbus. Considered by some the great discoverer of the New World or highly regarded as “The Admiral of the Seas” and despised by many others as an adventurer and a liar, Columbus is also the author of some disturbing writings that still put critics and literary historians in discomfort. This is the novel’s point of departure, together with the intent of Pope Pius IX to initiate the canonization of Columbus, an idea regarded by the great majority of his contemporaries as a complete blasphemy. At the aesthetic level, comparable up to a certain point to the conception of Jorge Luis Borges, Carpentier’s form of understanding and practicing literature is always, in a more or less obvious way, reliant on Cervantes himself. But it is not limited to *Don Quixote*: in *The Harp and the Shadow*, the Cuban author builds an endless network of intertextual associations connecting his own creation to *The Works of Persiles and Segismunda*, the last work by Cervantes. [Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2021 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]

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