



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1987 Volume I: The Modern Short Story in Latin America

An Analysis of “The Highroad of Saint James” by Alejo Carpentier

Curriculum Unit 87.01.01
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The purpose of this unit will be to introduce teachers and students to “The Highroad of Saint James” by Alejo Carpentier, in translation by Frances Partridge from the Spanish. “El Camino de Santiago.” The unit will be used initially with an able group of eighth grade students in the spring, when they will have completed Spanish I. Modifications in the presentation of the unit can easily be made to adapt the unit to high school classes in a variety of fields. It could be taught easily in Spanish. Classes of literature, history, art, Afro-American studies, and Latin American Studies all may find the unit relevant.

Alejo Carpentier y Valmont was one of the foremost writers of the modern short story in Latin America. He was born in Havana in 1904 of parents who had immigrated to Cuba in 1902, the year of Cuba’s independence from Spain. Carpentier’s father, a French architect, and mother, a Russian who had studied medicine in Switzerland, came to Cuba exhausted and shattered by the decadence of Europe in search of a new society. This theme of the new world and the search for Utopia is repeated throughout Carpentier’s works.

Like his father, Carpentier studied architecture as well as the fields of music, philosophy, art, and the history of culture. He spoke several languages, including Spanish, French, and English.

Carpentier identified himself as a Cuban, a Latin American, and a writer of fiction and non-fiction about the history, culture, and music of Latin America. He became a newspaper reporter in 1921, and lived in Cuba and Mexico until 1928. After eleven years in France and Spain, Carpentier relocated in Venezuela because he did not want to become an expatriate American writer in Europe. He returned to Cuba after the Cuban revolution in 1959. Carpentier’s publications are innumerable. He died in 1980.

Carpentier wove his story, “The Highroad of Saint James,” with a wealth of visual images, historical references, customs, and detailed descriptions. The historical setting of the Golden Century of Spain is filled with practices and problems which intrigue young students. Deciphering these can be the source of many enriching classroom activities.

Juan begins the story as a regimental drummer, formerly employed by the kingdom of Naples. In the port of Antwerp, he observes a ship which has just returned from a voyage to the Spice Islands, with a cargo, including orange trees, as gifts from the Duke of Alba to his mistress. Juan also observes a plague-ridden rat disembark from the ship.

In Chapter two Juan is taken ill with what he believes to be the bubonic plague. He has a vision or an

hallucination that he is visited by the Duke of Alba. At the end of his vision, Juan looks out of his window where he sees the Milky Way, el Camino de Santiago. When we meet him again in chapter three, Juan has become Juan the Pilgrim, following the Highroad to Compostela in fulfillment of his vow to Saint James whom Juan credits for sparing him during the plague. From Antwerp, Juan travels through France and into Spain and, in chapter four, Juan the Pilgrim enters the city of Burgos where he abandons his pledge to Saint James, and the path to Compostela. He meets travelers from the West Indies and listens to their tales of the New World, stories of fantastic creatures and gold in the streets and fountains of youth. In chapter five Juan throws off his pilgrim attire piece by piece, and claims to be returning from Compostela in order to take advantage of these traditional hospitality extended to pilgrims. In Seville he joins a fleet of ships sailing for the New World, signing on as Juan of Antwerp. The chapter ends with the sighting of Havana.

The life of colonists in Havana in the mid sixteenth century is described in chapter six. Juan is brought to the point of such boredom and distress that he has a knife fight with a shipmate and believes that he has killed the other man. He steals a horse and rides across Cuba to the southern shore. He is discovered by a bearded man, who is a fugitive Calvinist, and an escaped slave called Golomón. They take him to their camp which is a maroon society, a cooperative of runaway slaves and other fugitives. Juan also meets here a Jew, and two women Mandinga and Yolofa who are of different African tribes. Chapter seven describes the stories of these six and the life they live together.

In chapter eight Juan begins to call himself Juan the student, pretending expertise in the European culture for lack of which he is growing despondent. The depression described by Carpentier was very real to early colonists who came to the new world in search of gold and adventure only to discover an extremely uncomfortable and unfamiliar life. The characters in this chapter remember with nostalgia their past homes and experiences which they never had. Juan dreams of himself as Juan the Pilgrim, arriving at the end of his promised pilgrimage to find the doors of the cathedral at Compostela closed to him. He awakes from this dream hallucinating and begging for a ship to return him to Spain. A ship in distress from a storm in the Bermudas arrives and the four fugitives (Juan, the Calvinist, the Jew, and Golomón) return to the Old World.

Chapter nine dawns as the ship arrives in the Canary Islands, until recently a safe harbor for fugitives from the Spanish Inquisition. Juan's companions, the Calvinist and the Jew, are taken prisoner and destined for burning. The Negro is safe from persecution by his ignorance. Only learned men who could propagate "false faiths" were seen as a threat to the Holy Office. Juan himself renews his intention to complete the pilgrimage to Santiago, and renames himself Juan the West Indian. As chapter nine ends Juan imagines the fate of his fellow travelers at the stake.

When we meet Juan and Golomón again in chapter ten, they have returned to Burgos, to the fair as described in chapter four. But now Juan is the Spaniard from the West Indies, and Golomón is the Negro with teeth filed to a point and scars on his cheeks. They tell their fantastic tales of the New World to a new Juan the Pilgrim who has vowed a pilgrimage to Saint James after surviving the plague epidemic in Antwerp.

Chapter eleven is the final chapter of the story. The new Juan the Pilgrim abandons his pilgrimage and travels with Juan the West Indian and Golomón to Seville to sign on for a voyage to the West Indies. As they pray at her altar, the Virgin of the Navigators frowns on them. Saint James tells her to Let them pass, saying many of his cities have been built by rogues (P'caros) like them. In Burgos, Beelzebub in disguise sings again the song of enticement to join the next fleet to the New World. The final sentence assures us that many "Camino de Santiago," Milky Ways, point the way of Saint James.

"The Highroad of Saint James" is based on three models of story types. The allegory is a tale in which the

journey and the characters are symbolic rather than realistic, a tale with a message. The second model is a type of allegory called the morality play, a skit performed to teach morality to demonstrate the value of virtue over sin. The third model is the picaresque story in which the central figure is not a person of heroic stature, but a flawed being.

In style the story is baroque like much sixteenth century art, literature and architecture. It is similar to medieval morality plays, called mystery and miracle plays, which were educational in nature and allegorical in technique. They became extremely popular in southern France during and after the Black Death, the plague which devastated northern Europe in 1347-1350. Survivors believed that they had been spared by the intercession of the saints. Mystery plays about the new testament, and miracle plays, about the lives of saints, were performed in fulfillment of vows made in prayers to be spared.

In a world beset with plagues, the causes of which were not understood, morality plays sought to teach the illiterate populace about the New Testament in order to appease God and prevent plagues.

“The Highroad of Saint James” is an allegorical pilgrimage set against the historical background of sixteenth century Flanders, France, Spain, and Cuba. The main character is Juan, Spanish for John, a common name to represent the common man, every man. In Spanish, the story’s title, “El Camino de Santiago,” is also the Milky Way, the stars of which are believed to point the way to the Cathedral of Saint James at Compostela. The Apostle Saint James the Greater, Santiago, is said to have been martyred and buried at Compostela, and a Cathedral built on the spot. Within the Cathedral are said to lie the chains which held Santiago captive. The word Compostela comes from the Latin *campus stelae*, meaning field of stars. Today, it is still a common practice in Roman Catholic countries for the faithful to make pilgrimages to sites of miracles or of holy relics. Tradition has it that Saint James was the Apostle to bring Christianity to Spain, and to be martyred there.

An allegory is a story which has three groups of characters: earthly, celestial, and diabolical. In “The Highroad of Saint James” the earthly characters are Juan in his several identities, Golomon, the Jew, the Calvinist, the people of Antwerp, the pilgrims and others along the way, the people at the Burgos Fair, and the other characters in Seville, aboard the ship, in Cuba, at Havana and Santiago, and in the Canaries. The celestial characters are Saint James and the Virgin of the Navigators. One diabolical character is Beelzebub, who appears at the end of chapter one and at the end of chapter eleven. The sins are characters as well, both the Seven Capital Sins of Juan, and the Sins of Humanity.

In medieval Europe, it was common theology to believe in the Seven Capital (or Deadly) Sins. These were the sins upon which the other sins rested; for example, the sin of theft depends on the capital sin of greed. According to Roman Catholic theologian Gustave This, the Seven Capital Sins are Pride (or Vanity), Envy, Anger, Gluttony, Impurity, Laziness (or Sloth), and Avarice (or Greed), Juan commits several of these in his travels. In Santiago de Cuba he pretends to be a scholar out of Pride and Vanity. He fights Jacome de Castellon out of Anger. He abandons his pilgrimage twice out of Impurity, and in chapter two confessed to Infidelity to the Church. For three pieces of silver and a promise of wine, women, and cards, he gave up his job as cantor, teaching hymns. His schemes for the New World stem from Avarice, Greed, as does his gambling throughout the story. Other sins mentioned in the story included simony and traffic in documents, the sins for which the plague has been sent to Antwerp, according to the fishmonger of chapter one Simony is the sin of selling Holy Relics for earthly gains, for example, splinters of the Cross were commonly sold across Europe, enough splinters, it is said, to rebuild all of Bethlehem. Other sins committed are the Duke of Alva’s adultery and lust, the blasphemy of sailors (which is a sin unto death, or an unpardonable sin), the soldiers’ theft, Lutheranism, and heresy. For further understanding of allegorical plays, students may turn to “Everyman,” Anonymous, a

late fifteenth century morality play, or to *Pilgrims' Progress* .

The Sins of Humanity include those which Thils lists as sins which “. . .cry to heaven for vengance . . . which have a particularly disgusting aspect, especially from the point of human brotherhood and charity towards neighbor . . . tormenting widows and orphans, stealing the salary of workers . . .” ¹ Hugo Rodriguez-Alcala, a critic of Carpentier, includes as characters Fanaticism and Intolerance, ² which indeed led in sixteenth century Europe to considerable torture and persecution.

“The Highroad of Saint James” can also be described as picaresque, a story in which the protagonist is a rogue. Like most of Carpentier’s fiction, it is not about heroes, but about common men leading imperfect lives in the midst of dramatic history. The characters weaken, falling victim to their own vices, and like Juan do not reach their lofty goals. The goals, however, are achieved in spite of the flawed humanity of the actors. At the end of the story Saint James intercedes for Juan, explaining to the Virgin of the Navigators that people like Juan have built hundreds of Santiagos in the New World. Juan in effect, if not in intention, completed his pilgrimages to new Santiago in the New World. To Carpentier, history is circular, and in its repetition, the actors change but the achievements remain the same. To symbolize this view of the world, the geography of Juan’s travel is circular. The plot brings Juan back to meet himself. He discovers in the New World what he left in the Old: the Inquisition, Carnival atmosphere, and gossip.

Whether this is good or bad news Carpentier leaves to the discussion of students: Is humanity so flawed that the most sacred vows cannot be completed, that we are doomed to repeat the mistakes of our ancestors? Or do we reach our goals in spite of our weaknesses and even by means of our errors?

Juan leaves Antwerp having vowed to reach Santiago de Compostela. In Burgos he abandons the path to Compostela and departs from Spain for the West Indies with dreams, not of saving souls or for the glory of Spain, but of acquiring a fortune by scheming. Yet Saint James finds his pledge fulfilled. Santiago de Cuba lies on the far southeastern shore of Cuba at 20°N by 76°W. The Rand McNally *International Atlas* of 1969 lists fifty-eight Santiagos from the Phillipines to Spain and from California to Chile. Sharon Magnarelli discusses “The Highroad of Saint James” as a picaresque story. A picaro is an egocentric being in search of a position in society, a person to whom the problems of society are unimportant, for only personal goals matter. Juan throughout the story chooses the identity which will benefit him most. He becomes a pilgrim in chapter three because he thinks that will save him from the plague. In chapter five he claims to have completed his pilgrimage in order to benefit from the tradition of hospitality granted to pilgrims. In Cuba he becomes Juan the Student to elevate his status in the maroon society which he has joined. In the Canary Islands he is once more intended for pilgrimage, but when he reaches Burgos, he becomes Juan the West Indian.

Each of these changes Juan makes are signaled by the changes in his name and his clothing. In a new situation he takes on the guise of something he has been, or fantasizes that he has been, or the identity of someone else he has known. In each new present he chows himself to be a reflection of something in his past. Juan’s changes of costume are a technique from morality plays to show changes in character. That might be understood as a medieval precursor to the twentieth century films in which heroes wear white hats and the forces of evil, the criminals wear black.

Magnarelli ⁵ also points out that the story is a fiction created from other fictions: the writings of colonials and the myths about the New World which Juan hears in Burgos, the imaginings of Juan that he has the plague, that he sees the Duke of Alba, that he has killed Jacome de Castellon, and his memories of the world he left to go to Santiago de Cuba. Throughout the story Juan doesn’t recognize himself. Clearly at the end, when Juan

the Pilgrim meets Juan the West Indian, they do not see each other. When Juan the Student criticizes the maroons for their drum and chant he does not attend that he himself is a drummer.

The story "The Highroad of Saint James" takes place in 1568 and 1569, although Carpentier uses an elastic timeline of historical events in which to place the story. Sharon Magnarelli has tirelessly researched the historical dates of events in the story, particularly of passengers to the New World from the books of the Casa de la Contratacion in Seville, where colonists signed up and were assigned to particular areas of the colonies, as Juan discovers in chapter five. The passengers listed as his shipmates in chapter five are created from his list, including Juan himself. Carpentier discovered an immigrant to Cuba in 1557, Juan de Emberas, drummer, and on this fact built the story. Magnarelli's research shows that Jacome de Castellon, a Genoese merchant, made the trip twice, in 1510 and in 1512.⁷ The others listed were also actual passengers on other voyages between 1510 and 1557. Other historical references can be found in histories of the "Siglo de Oro." Spain's Golden Century, from 1501 to 1621,⁸ It is important for the story that students understand the climate of Spain in 1565-1570, and to do that students must understand a little of Spain's earlier history, that which we call Spain today took many centuries to become a united kingdom, and today is still a nation of four major languages. Parts of Spain were occupied by a succession of nationalities (Phoenecians, Greeks, Romans, Visigoths, and Moors) from the beginning of history. In 711 Spain was invaded by the Moors, who surged across north Africa in a fervor stimulated by the birth of a new religion and named for its founder, Muhammed. An essential component of the Muslim faith was, and is, the work of converting non-Muslims to what was considered the only True Faith. In the Middle Ages this commitment was fiercely expressed in a series of bloody confrontations in the name of religion. Christians responded with equal violence in their attempt to protect their true faith. The result was centuries of battles between two religions for the right to protect the holiness of their own faiths (particularly the Crusades). When the Moors invaded Spain, they brought a heritage of language, religion, art, law, literature, medicine, and architecture which endures today. It took nearly eight hundred years for the last Moors to be driven from Spain. The celebrated date is 1492, which students will recognize as the year of Columbus' landing in the New World. In 1469 Spain had been unified by the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon to Isabella of Castile. Their language, Castilian, became the national tongue. The vision of Ferdinand and Isabella reached far beyond this kingdom. Spurred by the energy of the final expulsion of the Moors, they embarked on a campaign that reached half way around the world. Their motivations were many. Wealth was no doubt the greatest, but one cannot discount religious fervor. The first half of the sixteenth century saw the conquest, exploration, and colonization of the Americas and the Philippines well under way.

In the Old World, religious fervor also grew. Perhaps as a result of hundreds of years of political domination, or threat of it, by non-Christian forces. Spain developed an intensely conservative religious identity, even paranoia, still evident today. At the very moment Martin Luther and John Calvin in Germany were challenging the church to prove the scriptural religious basis for numerous practices and beliefs, the Church in Spain was investing itself in seeking out those who questioned the authority and veracity of the Church. In 1478 the Spanish Inquisition was founded by Pope Sixtus IV at the request of Ferdinand and Isabella. By 1492, an edict had been declared that all Jews must be baptized Christian or expelled from Spain. Those who complied and stayed were called marranos. Moors were offered the same choice; the converts became Moriscos. These two groups, Moriscos and Marranos, were the focus of the Inquisition, to detect those who had been baptized but not converted. Those who maintained cultural and religious practices in secret were accused of heresy, tried, and often burned at the stake. These lives are remembered with nostalgia by the Jew in chapter eight. In chapter nine, both the Jew and the Calvinist are caught out by their customs: the marrano has been caught making unleavened bread and washing on Saturday, and told to recite the Lord's Prayer or Ave Maria. He

responds with a psalm of David. The bearded man, the Calvinist, is a Huguenot. He is handed by the coxwain to the courts for them to decide his fate. Huguenots were French Calvinists who fled Catholic France for the Channel Islands, and thence to the New World. Their brutal decimation at the hands of Menendez de Aviles in Florida took place in 1567. ⁹

R. Trevor Davies, a historian of the Golden Century of Spain, maintains that the punishments of the Spanish Inquisition were fair according to the punishments of the times, and may in fact have protected the accused from the mobs and witch hunts of northern Europe.

Martin Luther the German Reformer, was born in 1483 and died in 1546. His ideas, threatened the Church of Rome by challenging practices that could not be defended by the Scriptures. He was condemned by the Diet of Worms May 26, 1521 and excommunicated by the Church for his challenge to its authority.

John Calvin (1509-1564) challenged the Church in a similar way. Davies describes him as having charisma, a kind of “negative energy” and “dogmatic clarity” ¹⁰ that gave him mass appeal. In Antwerp in August 14-19, 1566 Calvinists rioted and destroyed the fabulous Cathedral there. Antwerp is a major city in Belgium in the province of Flanders, a territory which is now divided by the French-Belgian border. In 1560, the Netherlands included what are now Belgium and Luxembourg. The Netherlands and Spain had been linked politically, but not united, which would depend strategically on a friendship between Spain and England. England’s King Henry VIII had broken with Rome in order to divorce Katherine of Aragon. However in 1553 Mary Tudor, the daughter of Henry and this Spanish wife, became Queen of England. England became Catholic again and a marriage took place between Mary and Philip, heir to the throne of Spain. The marriage was a disaster, largely because the upper classes of England did not want to relinquish their new found power to Rome. Philip returned to Spain to become King.

The Duke of Alba (1508-1582) was sent by Philip II to Flanders after the “Calvinist Fury” which destroyed the Cathedral in Antwerp. Alba had been a favorite of Charles V. Philip’s father, and one of the Spanish Grandees. He was a devout Catholic and an ambitious man who took to his task in Flanders with vigor. He arrived in Flanders in 1567 and formed the Council of Tumults which in 1568-1569 tried and executed thousands for treason. When the story opens in Antwerp. The Duke has stayed in that city through the winter and into the spring of 1568.

The liturgical calendar or year is an important vehicle for Carpentier’s sense of circular history. The reputation of Carnival, of the forty days of penance of Trinity Sunday, lends the story a sense of repeated pattern. Carnival is the traditional festival of the flesh held on the eve of a period of atonement. Now it is seen most in Mardi Gras, or Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday and the forty days of Lent when Christians are supposed to repent their sins of the previous year. Trinity Sunday is in the late spring after the Easter season. These Holy Days were, as we are told in chapter nine, popular days for auto-da-fe. This was the public announcement of the sentences imposed by the Inquisition, frequently the burning alive at the stake of heretics. Davies mentions four autos-da-fe in Seville and Valladolid; (These were the two cities in Spain where native Protestant communities grew.) on Trinity Sunday May 21, 1559 in Valladolid; on September 26, 1559 in Seville, leading to the burning of sixteen protestants; also in Seville, on December 22, 1560; and on April 26, 1562, leading, to the burning of thirty three more protestants in Seville. According to Davies the last native Spanish protestant to be burned was Leonor de Cisneros, the widow of Herrezuelo, a lawyer of the crown who had been burned at the stake some ten years earlier ¹² in Valladolid on September 28, 1568. This is referred to in chapter eleven as Juan reenters Burgos.

By 1560 the conquest and colonization of the New World was three quarters of a century old. The great conquistadors, Francisco Pizarro in Peru, and Hernan Cortes of Mexico, were dead, and a substantial mythology had been born. El Dorado and the Golden City of Manoa, the search for the Fountain of Youth, and reports of fantastic creatures founded in Old World legends of Harpies and New World legends of the serpentbird Quetzalcoatl were common fables of the market place. The exaggerations were encouraged to recruit colonists who were needed to work the mines and repartamientos. No Casa de Contratacion in Seville acted as a clearing house for those who had heard the myths and wanted the adventure. The access to the New World was limited and managed from Spanish shores. The silver mines of Potosi, mentioned by Carpentier in chapters four and ten, were in Peru, exploited by Gonzalo Pizarro, half brother of the bastard Francisco. When Francisco was assassinated in a coup in 1541. Gonzalo became governor. Stories of Gonzalo's horse shod with golden shoes are repeated in "The Highroad of Santiago." Repartamientos were grants of land given to Spaniards of position, along with Indians to work them. The Indians did not survive the early days in the mines and African slaves were brought early, from 1502 to the Americas.

When Juan thinks he has killed Jacome de Castellon and flees across the island, he comes to live in a community settled by fugitives from the authorities, mostly escaped slaves. These were called "maroon societies." from the word "cimarron" which referred to domestic cattle which had fled into the hills in Hispaniola. The first maroon was one of the slaves brought to Hispaniola in 1502. The size and duration of the communities varied from small temporary groups to entire cultures which lasted generations and centuries. They were known variously as palenques, quilombos, mocambos, cumbes, ladeiras, and mambises. Maroons were hunted, returned to their owners, and punished severely. As a result the hideouts were well defended and well hidden. Most of the early maroons were native Africans, skilled from their life there, though a group could easily be composed of people from different tribes, and therefore different cultures, and, most importantly, of different languages. Most maroons in the early days were men. Francisco Perez de la Riva quotes Lucas Vazquez de Ayellon in 1530 listing settlements near Trinidad, Bayamo, Baracoa, and Santiago de Cuba. ¹³ He also points out that not all maroon leaders or inhabitants were Negroes; many were fugitives and criminals. The word palenque often refers to a barrio in modern cities. Such a neighborhood exists in Santiago de Cuba. Another article in Richard Price's book, *Maroon Societies*, by Demoticus Philalethes is about "Hunting Maroons with Dogs in Cuba." a practice to which Carpentier refers on page forty-two in chapter eight. The best known maroon was perhaps Cudjoe in Jamaica. In countries surrounding the Caribbean remnants of old maroon societies still exist. The geography of the world in the sixteenth century was changing rapidly. In 1450 there was still a lively debate about the shape of the world and what lay to the west across the ocean. By 1500 the idea of sailing around the world was no longer absurd. ¹⁴

By 1600 the existence, if not the extent of both North and South America, was known. Carpentier lists many geographical names of sixteenth century countries and cities. This unit includes maps of Juan's voyages from Antwerp to Burgos to Seville to Cuba, to the Canary Islands, and back to Burgos. Students may find these cities and states on modern maps and may research early maps of the world. Mandinga and Yolofa are the names of African tribes from which many slaves were taken. Mandingo is still one of the largest tribes in mall and Guinea. Yolofa probably refers to the Wolof people, another very large tribe in Senegal. Guinea in 1565 was all of West Africa from Modern Guinea to Equatorial Guinea, so named by the Portuguese. Golomon's memories of the rushing rivers in chapter eight may have been the Futanjalea Mountains ¹⁶ of Eastern Guinea and western Mali where the Niger and Senegal Rivers rise. This area was a large source of Mandingo slaves. The scars on Golomon's cheeks would be in a pattern particular to his tribe. The practice of ritual scarification is only beginning to die out in modern times.

Carpentier describes the plague in chapters one and two and refers to it again in chapter ten. It is commonly

believed that the bubonic plague was endemic around the Mediterranean and became pandemic three times: in A.D. 542 through trade routes to the east; in 1347-1350 and lasting until 1720, via the Crimean ports; and from 1850 until current times. The Black Death refers to the epidemic of the fourteenth century which is supposed to have killed one third of the populations of Europe between 1347 and 1350, and continued to ravage various cities between its onset and 1720. The plague to which Carpentier refers is probably the pandemic outbreak of bubonic plague in 1565, during the above mentioned period, and which affected Flanders. Twigg¹⁷ questions the assumption that what struck as a plague was always the bubonic plague. The biological process of the bubonic plagues depends on fleas which live on rats and then carry the infection to humans and to other rats as their hosts die. The incubation periods are not always accounted for historically, nor was the presence of rats in European cities well established by the mid fourteenth century. However debatable the specifics of the disease, its transmission and the numbers who actually died, there is no question that Europe in the middle ages was devastated repeatedly by epidemics which quickly felled vast populations. It seems clear that there was a causal connection between shipping, both trade and war, and the spread of disease. Carpentier's description of infected rats and sailors is an accurate record of the experience of the times. Smallpox, anthrax, cholera, and typhus were all prevalent and all deadly. In one sense the question is moot, or at least as mysterious to us now as it was to them then. People died in huge numbers of horrible illnesses which included, in their varying symptoms the swollen glands and hallucinations in delirium which Juan suffered.

Students interested in the plague will find a wealth of material in any library, including *The Plague* by Albert Camus. As mentioned above, the plague had strong religious connections. There were particular saints who interceded for victims of the plague. Saint Roch, 1295-1327, was a romano, as pilgrims to Rome were called, when he came across plague at Aquapendente. He spent the remaining years of his life nursing plague victims until he too finally succumbed. He is traditionally depicted in pilgrim attire, with scallop shells on his hat, a staff, and a gourd for water, but also holding up his robe to show the plague bubo (from which bubonic plague takes its name) on his thigh. A painting by Niklaus Manuel (a.d, 1484-1530) at Basle shows Saint Roch together with the Virgin, Jesus, Saint Anna, and Saint James as mediums of intercession between God and those suffering from the plague.¹⁸ (The nursery rhyme "A ring around of rosies" is meant to refer to the subcutaneous hemorrhage at the waist of plague victims. The line "a tishoo a tishoo we all fall down" is meant to be a form of bubonic plague called pneumonic plague which killed very rapidly and was spread by bacilli in the moisture from sneezes.¹⁹)

We have mentioned trade above in connection with the spread of the plague. Trade was also a great spur to the expansion of the known world. By 1565 trade between Europe and the east was well established. Indeed one of the rationales for the trips west by Columbus, Magellan, and others was a search for shorter routes. In chapter one Carpentier mentions a variety of goods sought in the European market place: dwarf orange trees, pepper and cinnamon,²⁰ coral from the Levant, inventions from Denmark, balms from Muscovy, scents, flowers, parrots from India, and exotic dogs. The ships used for these voyages may be interesting to students. National Geographic, of November, 1986 contains an article describing the debate among scholars about where Columbus truly landed. It contains maps of his voyage and a section about a fifteenth century manuscript which describes Columbus' ship the *Nina*. *The Conquistadores*, Hammond Innes, 1969 has many maps and drawings of ships like those used in the sixteenth century.

"The Highroad of Santiago" contains many vivid descriptions very like the works of art which are contemporary to the historical setting of the story. Valuable classroom activities will stem from studying paintings by sixteenth century painters, contemporaries of Juan who painted scenes which he would have

seen in his journeys. In particular, chapter two contains in Juan's dream, a description of the Duke of Alba and his mistress, discussed by Ramon Garcia Castro in his article, "La Pintura en Alejo Carpentier." He finds the description by Carpentier as reminiscent of the works of two sixteenth century painters, Hieronymous Bosch and Peter Brueghel. Garcia Castro mentions the paintings "The Temptation of Saint Anthony" and the "Garden of Delights" by Bosch, and "The Blue Coat" and "The Land of Cocaigne" by Brueghel. These four paintings each have elements from Juan's dream. Another painting which Garcia Castro mentions by Brueghel is the "Triumph of Death" which depicts terrible fire and slaughters such as those described on Juan's voyages. Other painters of the era to explore include Jordaens, Antonio van Dyke, and Rubens, particularly his paintings of exotica and of blacks. Adrian Sanchez Galque painted in the sixteenth century and Sanchez Coello painted Seville in the sixteen hundreds. Both sixteenth century American Art and West Indian Art can be explored for scenes similar to those used by Carpentier. The portrait of the Duke of Alba by El Greco is reminiscent as well. Garcia Castro says that Carpentier seems to pay homage to Bosch in "El Camino de Santiago." Bosch was a favorite painter of Philip II who commissioned nine works by him to be hung in El Escorial, including one called "The Seven Capital Sins."

Costumes play a symbolic part in "The Highroad to Saint James." Juan's clothes, like his name, change gradually to reflect the changes in his roles. Pilgrims of Saint James wore clothing which symbolized their identity. Statues and paintings of the Apostle depict him in a long cloak carrying a staff and a leather purse and wearing a hat, the latter two having scallop shells sewn to them. The shells are symbolically kissed by believers in chapter three by the friar at a hospital and in chapter four by a whore. He carries a gourd for water on a thong. He often wears beads crossed on his chest. Though it is clearly a "uniform," it is also true that pilgrims of different classes showed their differences even in dress.

In "The Highroad of Saint James" we find references to clothing throughout. In chapter two the Duke of Alba appears and his clothing is described. Juan's pilgrim attire is described in chapter three. In chapter five he begins to exchange it, a scallop shell for a compass, and his cloak for shoes. The sambenito, mentioned in chapter nine, literally meaning Saint Benedict, was a yellow robe with a red Saint Andrew's cross which was worn by those who had been found guilty by the Inquisition. Some repented and were given light punishments. The sambenito, however, was a stigma which remained with the family for generations. In chapter nine Juan imagines his erstwhile friends, the marrano and the bearded man, being taken to be burned—the marrano in a black sambenito and the Huguenot in a yellow with red Saint Andrew's crosses front and back. Carpentier seems to be pointing out a distinction between the sambenitos intended for heretics guilty of different crimes. In chapter eleven Juan smells burning sambenitos, representing those penitents accused a second time by the Inquisition and burned at the stake. In chapter five we meet the passengers in Juan's ship and various people in the streets of Seville. Traditional Guatemalan costume is described, and the traditional white trousers of Yucatan.

Two last categories of sixteenth century life to which Carpentier exposes the racer are food and professions. A listing of these and where they are found is included in the appendix.

Using 16th century art, literature, history, and geography the conquest colonization of the Americas, maroon society religion, clothing and daily life including foods and professions. Carpentier has created a story which depicts life in 16th century Spain. Flanders and the colonies. The barroque style of the story mimics the style of era. Used as a study guide, students may explore numerous aspects of Spain's Golden Century through "The Highroad of Saint James."

The following pages contain maps of the geography mentioned in the story, and a chart of geographical

names. Also there are lists of foods, and professions. A bibliography for students cities books which may deepen their knowledge of various topics. The teacher's bibliography cites references by category to facilitate further research. A copy of the story. "The Highroad to Santiago" is available at the Yale New Haven Teachers' Institute at 53 Wall Street. The book. *The War of Time*, in which the story is published in English, is regrettably out of print. In Spanish. "El Camino de Santiago." is available in the collection *Guerra del Tiempo*.

Topics for Discussion of "The Highroad of Saint James"

1. Statement: Now, during your youth, is the hardest time in history for people to have to grow up.
2. Compare and contrast the medieval reaction to the Black Plague with modern world reaction to AIDS.
3. Does "The Highroad to Saint James" intend that humanity is doomed to fail in its best intentions? Or, conversely, do great goals succeed even when people fail?
4. Juan's identity wherever he goes is that of where he has just been. How does he answer the question, "Who am I?" Do most people assume roles in different situations? How is this shown in clothing? In the names by which people are addressed?
5. Magnarelli says that a p'caro is always in search of his/her position in society. The problems of society do not matter to the p'caro, only his/her own personal goals matter. How do you feel about these ideas?
6. Davies says the atrocities of the Spanish Inquisition and the Duke of Alba were viewed as acceptable, just, and humane punishments. Have we changed in four hundred years? Was the Inquisition just? Are we? Consider war and capital punishment. Are they just? Defend your answer.
7. How do costumes today symbolize roles in society? What kinds of uniforms can you think of? How does dress show people's allegiances? Politics? How does an artist dress? A dancer? A teenager?
8. In the middle ages, the mid-east was a center for conflict between the west and the east. The conflict was both religious, the Crusades, and commercial, the trade routes to the east. What parallels can be drawn between the current mid-east conflict and that of the 14th century?
9. What vocabulary in Spanish comes from Arabic?

Daily Life in "The Highroad of Saint James"

Professions

bone setters

tooth pullers

alchemy

preceptors

pyrotechnics

towncrier

encomendero

chief gunner

beadle

barber

public registrar

treasurer

stone cutter

drummer

ranchers

Foods—Old World

tripe

calves foot

oranges

juice

pepper

cinnamon

fish

cheese

beer

doughnuts

wine

pancakes

grilled meat

cabbage soup

rye bread

sardines

partridges

capons

turkey

pickled fish

blancmange

honey

puff pastry

almond bread

crystalized citrons

cider

roast goose

lentils

salmagundi

Foods—New World

tomatoes

sweet potatoes

prickly pears

tobacco

manioc bread

cane syrup

conch
side of beef
annatto sauce
powdered chills
porgies
freshwater tortoises
sugar cane
clams
wild boar
deer
purple fruit of shore shrub
crab
coconuts
manioc
chicken

Chronology for “The Highroad of Saint James.”

1469—Ferdinand and Isabella marry and unite Spain
1478—Spanish Inquisition formed
1483—Martin Luther born
1492—Moors expelled from Spain
 —Edict requires the baptism of Jews in Spain
 —Columbus first voyage
1504—Isabella dies; Charles V crowned
1508—Duke of Alba born
1509—John Calvin born
1510—Jácome de Castellón, merchant of Genoa, listed passenger in the records at the Casa de Contratación in Seville
1512—Jácome de Castellón, second voyage
1514—Passengers include the Dean of Santa Mar’á del Darién and Lucia, a freed slave
1521—Diet of Worms condemns Luther
1527—Jorge, freed slave of the archbishop listed as passenger
1535—Hairdresser to the Emperess listed as passenger
1541—Francisco Pizarro assassinated in Peru

1543—Council of Trent excommunicates Luther
1546—Luther die
1553—Mary Tudor crowned in England
1554—Philip II crowned in Spain
1557—Juan de Emboras, tambor, listed passenger
1559—May; Auto da fé in Valladolid
 —September; Auto da fé in Seville
1560—Auto da fé in Seville
1562—Auto da fé in Seville
1564—Calvin dies
1565—Pandemic plague strikes
1566—“Calvinist Fury” in Antwerp
1567—August; Duke of Albe in Flanders
 —Menéndez attacks Huguenots in Florida
1568—Antwerp is secured for Spain
 —Spring; Juan is in Antwerp
 —Council of Tumults called in Flanders
 —Summer; Juan is in Landes
 —September; Loenor Cisneros burned in Valladolid
 —Fall; Juan is in Burgos
1569—May; Juan sails from Sanlúcar
1570—June; Juan returns to Seville

(figure available in print form)

The Iberian Peninsula in the time of Juan in “The Highroad of Saint James”

(figure available in print form)

CUBA

(figure available in print form)

Juan’s road to Santiago

(figure available in print form)

Juan’s travels in “The Highroad of Saint James”

(figure available in print form)

Geographical references in “El Camino de Santiago”

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