

**BELONGING BEYOND BORDERS:
Cosmopolitan Affiliations in Contemporary
Spanish American Literature**

Annik Bilodeau

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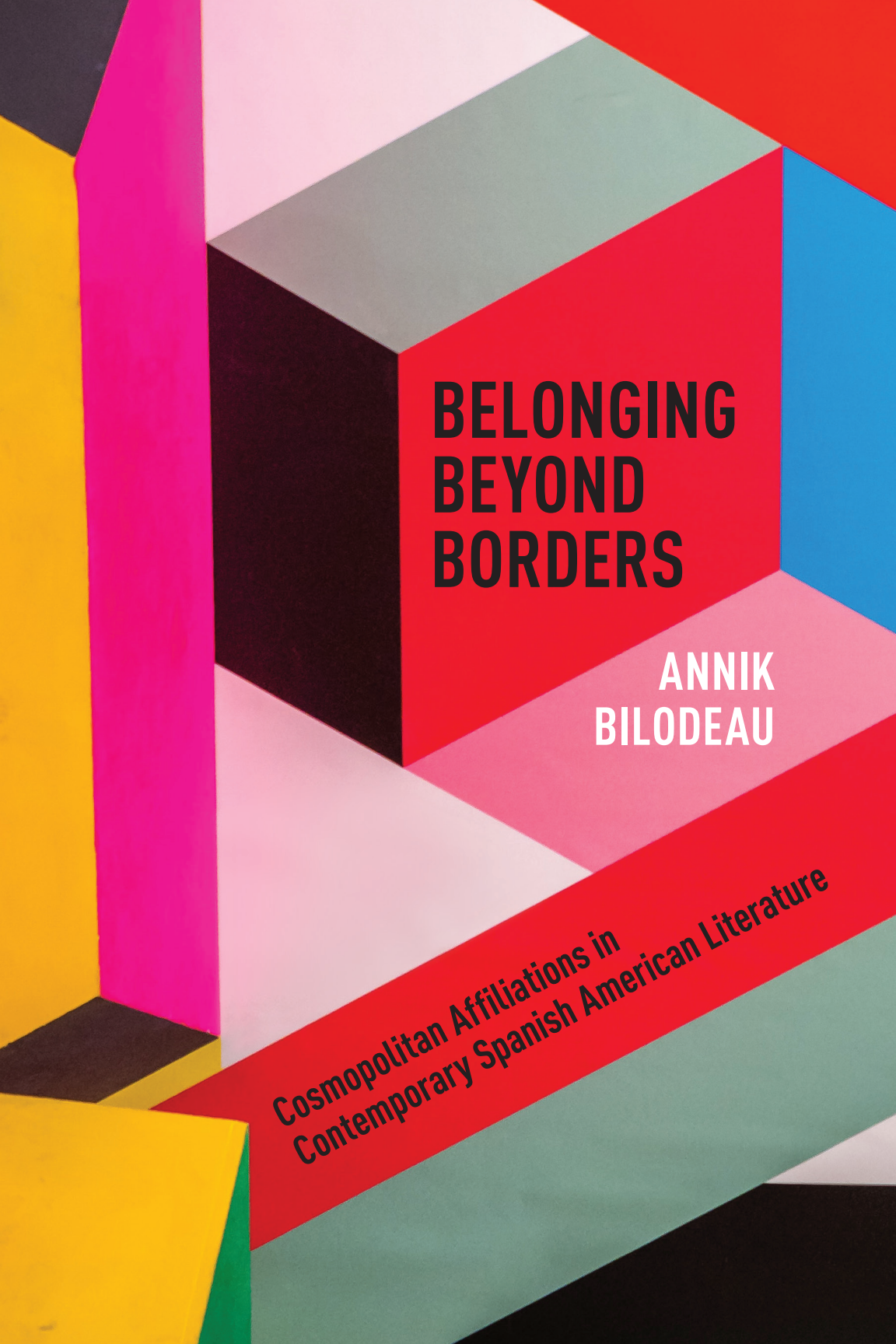
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**ANNIK
BILODEAU**

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Contemporary Spanish American Literature**

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Introduction

“El Perú soy yo aunque a algunos no les guste” (“I am Peru even if some do not like it”¹), claimed Mario Vargas Llosa after he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2011. And indeed, even if it is a great honour for any nation to have one of its citizens receive such a prestigious distinction, many Peruvians questioned the Nobel Foundation’s decision. Vargas Llosa was not—at least in his detractors’ eyes—Peruvian enough to be celebrated for an award that news outlets often report with an emphasis on the recipient’s nationality. Since he moved to Spain in the 1990s, Vargas Llosa has been seen as removed from his birth nation. There were even multiple calls for the revocation of his Peruvian citizenship, some of them made by the government itself.

If we replace *Perú* with *México* in the above quotation, the criticism levelled at Vargas Llosa could also apply to Elena Poniatowska and Jorge Volpi, the two other writers I analyze in this book. Poniatowska is, and has been for the past forty years or so, a staple of contemporary Mexican narrative. While no one called for the revocation of her citizenship when she was awarded the Premio Cervantes—the highest recognition in Hispanic literature—in 2013, as a young female author in 1960s and ’70s Mexico, her aristocratic background and her harsh criticism of the Mexican government after the Tlatelolco massacre made her an outcast in national(ist) literary circles. Volpi, like Vargas Llosa, has faced calls for his citizenship to be revoked—in his case, after the publication *En busca de Klingsor* (*In Search of Klingsor*; 1999), his first work to gain international acclaim. The book’s major flaws in Mexican literary critics’ eyes? The protagonist is not Mexican, and the plot is not set in Mexico.

These anecdotes highlight how closely the conceptions of literature and national identity are intertwined in Latin America. The three

novelists I study in *Belonging Beyond Borders: Cosmopolitan Affiliations in Contemporary Spanish American Literature* are acutely aware of their delicate positioning in the literary tradition. They are cosmopolitans with strong ties to their home nations, positions many critics consider irreconcilable. In spite of this, Vargas Llosa, Poniatowska, and Volpi embraced the tensions engendered by their bodies of work and political positions, and exploited them to serve their intellectual agendas, which promote contacts between cultures through rooted cosmopolitanism. One of the main concerns of *Belonging Beyond Borders* is reconceptualizing cosmopolitanism in order to consider the specific characteristics of Latin America's socio-historical and geopolitical contexts. It traces the shift from the rejection of cosmopolitanism to its emplotment by three contemporary Spanish American authors, and the ways this is reflected in five of their novels. I am particularly interested in how these narratives showcase characters who aspire to be cosmopolitan. The struggle they face in complex political environments and the way they strive to embody rooted cosmopolitanism can provide a template for contemporary readers.

The current political climate, both in Spanish America and around the world, highlights the necessity of discussing cosmopolitanism and its various formulations. Not only are we experiencing globalization at an increasing speed, but the rise of novel and more extreme forms of nationalism makes the study of cosmopolitanism and its new articulations more relevant than ever. In *Belonging Beyond Borders*, I understand cosmopolitanism as a mindset that celebrates diverse affiliations—be they local, national, or global—and I adopt the notion of rooted cosmopolitanism theorized by Anthony Kwame Appiah. Rooted cosmopolitanism—an openness to the world grounded in one's primary affiliation to the nation—illustrates how the individual's relationship to the nation and the world inform their identity, and challenges some of the limitations of early formulations of the concept.

Indeed, despite its pretense of universality, conceptions of cosmopolitanism are not devoid of imperial connotations, and have, since their inception in Ancient Greece, carried a certain Eurocentric and elitist bias. Derived from the extraordinarily ambitious proposition of world citizenship, traditional cosmopolitanism urges us “to recognize the equal, and unconditional, worth of all human beings, a worth grounded in reason

and moral capacity, rather than on traits that depend on fortuitous natural or social arrangements” (Nussbaum, “The Worth of Human Dignity” 31). It sets the ground for a universal fraternity and challenges us to reject exclusive loyalties in favour of an allegiance to humanity as a whole while also emphasizing the need to embrace one’s community. By definition, the concept seeks to erase the fortuitous arrangements of class, gender, and race. In practice, however, cosmopolitanism struggles to overcome the imperial and elitist connotations it carries. Another critique the concept has faced is the erasure of the local, which is why it has been generally so vocally rejected in the developing world, and more specifically in the context of this project, in Latin America. Despite this rejection and the continent’s particular relationship with colonialism, cosmopolitanism is not only reconcilable with Latin American society, but can also be a productive lens through which to analyze its artistic and literary production, as it forces contemporary readers to look outwards and involve the continent in a conversation with global trends.

One of the latest articulations of cosmopolitanism, rooted cosmopolitanism—in which the nation and the world complement each other—is particularly relevant to the study of Latin America. Unlike other forms of cosmopolitanism, rooted cosmopolitanism emphasizes a primary attachment to the nation as a necessary part of expanding one’s ethical commitment to one’s fellow human beings. Rooted cosmopolitanism is also a call to action, a praxis rather than a philosophy. Appiah posits that cosmopolitanism is the articulation of “universalism plus difference” (*Cosmopolitanism* 202); I take this as a starting point for my attempt to develop a definition of rooted cosmopolitanism that is applicable specifically to Latin America. By adding socio-historical considerations—that is, the articulation of place and time—I ground rooted cosmopolitanism in decolonial Latin American perspectives and overcome some limitations of the concept. Drawing from Walter Dignolo’s theories, I also blend the concept of rooted cosmopolitanism with the concept of decoloniality. I argue that both rooted cosmopolitanism and decoloniality are praxes, as opposed to strictly philosophical concepts. Both point to concrete ways to act as a cosmopolitan and/or to develop a cosmopolitan sensibility.

Through fiction, we can better understand the necessity of developing a cosmopolitan sensibility, and take concrete steps toward an ethical

cosmopolitan position. Poniatowska, Vargas Llosa, and Volpi are actively engaged in this conversation, and their interventions in Spanish America and abroad can lead readers to re-evaluate how they choose to be citizens of the world and encourage them to develop empathy for their fellow human beings. Other concepts, such as hybridity or *hibridismo*, third space, and glocal, could be used to analyze the narratives I examine in *Belonging Beyond Borders*. While the relevance of these theories and concepts to Latin American cultural studies cannot be overstated, they are mostly descriptive in nature. They express the inherent politicization of one's identity, but they are not an ethical position one can aspire to or a concrete ethical praxis. Unlike rooted cosmopolitanism, these aforementioned concepts are not ways to behave ethically toward other human beings.

Whereas most investigations of cosmopolitanism in Spanish American literature are about the influx of traditions in a given literary work, and are concerned with discerning how artists and writers try to create a universal artistic language, *Belonging Beyond Borders* identifies novels that express political concerns, and reads them as articulating a form of "cosmopolitics." Poniatowska, Vargas Llosa, and Volpi offer a nuanced understanding of citizenship in which the best way to explore globalization, migration, and the rise of new nationalisms is to be a cosmopolitan, albeit a cosmopolitan who is aware of the pitfalls of the position. Unlike canonical cosmopolitan works that were produced either during *Modernismo*—which developed an aesthetic cosmopolitanism through the blending of traditions—or the Boom—which sought to create a universal language and a universal aesthetic expression—the works that form my corpus tackle the political aspects of cosmopolitanism. They are concerned with representing characters who are politically engaging their localities and the world.

Very few studies look at political cosmopolitanism, and those that do tend to cover the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. In recent years, Fernando Rosenberg and Mariano Siskind have each advanced theories articulated around the notions of "displacement" and *deseo de mundo* ("the desire for the world" or "cosmopolitan desire"). Both researchers have focused on earlier periods to conclude that cosmopolitanism, while always a lingering presence on the continent, has generally been displaced by analogous concepts that emphasize local cultures over

foreign ones—transculturation, *hibridismo*, *antropofagia*—or that cosmopolitanism has always expressed a “desire for the world,” an impulse on the part of artists, including writers, to break with the asynchronicity of living at the periphery of the Western world. I agree with these authors’ assessment of earlier periods, and take the notions of “displacement” and “desire for the world” as starting points for my analysis of contemporary narratives published between 1988 and 2010: Poniatowska’s *La “Flor de Lis”* (*The “Fleur-de-Lys”*; 1988), Vargas Llosa’s *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* (*The Way to Paradise*; 2003) and *El sueño del celta* (*The Dream of the Celt*; 2010), and Volpi’s *El fin de la locura* (*The End of Madness*; 2003) and *No será la Tierra* (*Season of Ash*; 2006). Studying them together for the first time enables the charting of the evolution from displacement to an overt affirmation of cosmopolitanism and its literary emplotment. *Belonging Beyond Borders* is premised on the identification of a new affirmation of cosmopolitanism in these works—both in the treatment of the concept and in narrative form. I examine these three authors together because each belongs to a different literary generation, has a body of work that spans decades, and publishes openly political works. The evolution of their cosmopolitan position can be seen in their writings. They not only represent the political and philosophical concept, they deploy it as a political tool. These novels are about the practicality of rooted cosmopolitanism, how to take concrete steps to be a good global citizen.

Naturally, these positions on cosmopolitanism have been shaped by evolving historical circumstances. Examining works published both before and after the end of the Cold War allows me to reveal this shift. In the period marked by the hegemony of the nation-state—which, in Spanish America, ends more or less in the late 1970s and ’80s—the most relevant concepts with which to discuss issues of cultural identity were miscegenation and transculturation.² Writers often produced fictions that revealed the intricacies of these cultural processes, or, conversely, turned them into central themes of their fictions. However, since the late 1980s, the fading importance of the nation-state and the rise of globalization have led to the increased emplotment of cosmopolitanism. The following chapters examine this evolution through the study of the works of three authors. They show that, whereas Poniatowska’s novel is a defence of transculturation, both Vargas Llosa’s and Volpi’s narratives share a conception

of rooted cosmopolitanism. This reflects the limitations of some metaphors of identity in Latin American discourse. Ultimately, these discourses-turned-ideologies failed to achieve emancipatory politics in the region.

Engaging with cosmopolitanism also leads writers to develop new narrative recourses to represent cosmopolitanism in changing cultural, literary, and historical circumstances. My reading is set against national and nationalist literary traditions so as to establish how Spanish American novels explicitly or implicitly represent and create a critical dialogue with various literary genres, and especially with those that have traditionally served to project notions of national identity and history. I show that Poniatowska reworks the codes of the autobiographical novel, Vargas Llosa those of the historical novel, and Jorge Volpi the global novel in order to reflect their vision of a cosmopolitanism grounded in socio-historical circumstances and to critically articulate a global consciousness.

This articulation of a global consciousness is explicit in all three authors' works. My reading of their narratives is predicated on the notion that the representation of travelling and residence across nations always involves the emplotment of cosmopolitanism. For each protagonist, travel or dislocation—either chosen or imposed—is the starting point of his or her identity quest. The characters' dislocation from their primary setting allows them to evolve, and in some cases, to become cosmopolitan. The five texts propose worlds that combine spaces, times, and experiences, and in which cultural and historical specificities are plotted and made to interact. I follow three major lines of inquiry that aim to reveal the political in literary representations of cosmopolitanism: I examine how the emplotment of cosmopolitanism differs in authors from three literary generations; I compare how the conceptions of cosmopolitanism at work in their novels differ, and the impact this has on how the authors inscribe themselves in Spanish American intellectual and literary history; and I assess the rewriting and reframing of literary genres to show how the politics of cosmopolitanism inform aesthetic transformations.

In chapter 1, I explore the displacement of cosmopolitanism in favour of transculturation in Elena Poniatowska's 1988 novel *La "Flor de Lis,"* an autobiographical novel that explores cultural identity in 1950s Mexico through the figure of Mariana, a young, French-born cosmopolitan woman recently arrived in Mexico. In late twentieth-century Spanish

American literature, the first-person narrative, be it testimonial (*testimonio*, autobiography) or fictional (autofiction, autobiographical novel) was the genre of predilection for the representation of memories of trauma and/or the development of an individual's identity. Poniatowska uses it to discuss both the protagonist's evolution and concrete politics of identity, which is rare for this genre. I read the main character's trajectory toward the adoption of a transcultural Mexican identity as marked by tensions between two extremes, the Eurocentric cosmopolitanism of her French family and the exacerbated nationalism of mid-century Mexico. The character's evolution mirrors the adoption of transculturation in the cultural and political discourse of twentieth-century Mexico.

In chapter 2, I consider the importance of liberalism in Mario Vargas Llosa's *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* (2003) and *El sueño del celta* (2010), two historical novels that depict the cosmopolitan and nationalist trajectories of major artists and political figures of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both explore the dangers of socialist internationalism and nationalism, while ultimately celebrating cosmopolitan patriotism. My reading of *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* shows that the parallel cosmopolitan trajectories of Flora Tristán and Paul Gauguin end tragically due to their ideological shortcomings. My analysis of *El sueño del celta* demonstrates that the novel's protagonist, Roger Casement, who has a similar cosmopolitan trajectory, is redeemed by the narrative voice despite his turn to nationalism because he eventually acknowledges the error of his ways. However, Casement differs from Tristán and Gauguin in that he is represented as a tragic hero who is not blinded by extreme ideologies. He is, rather, a patriot who makes a mistake in trying to reconcile his cosmopolitan philosophy and the plight of his motherland. Whereas the twentieth-century historical novel's main purpose was to question, reassess, or fill the void in official versions of history, debate major political ideas and ideologies, and concentrated on the author's setting, Mario Vargas Llosa rewrites the Latin American historical novel by deterritorializing it through the introduction of figures and histories that transcend the continent, and he uses it to promote his own liberal positions.

In chapter 3, I look at Jorge Volpi's *El fin de la locura* (2003) and *No será la tierra* (2006), two global novels about major intellectual and historical events of the twentieth century. Both are set during the period of

radical transformation caused by neo-liberal globalization. While *El fin de la locura* begins in Paris in May 1968 and concludes as the Berlin Wall is about to fall in 1989, *No será la tierra* starts with the Chernobyl disaster of 1986 and uses the fall of the USSR as its backdrop. I argue that these narratives articulate Latin America in a global context by erasing major indicators of identity that are conventions of the Spanish American novel. Indeed, Volpi's narrators, characters, events, and settings are removed from or only partially intertwined with the continent. In *El fin de la locura*, a novel about twentieth-century intellectual history, Volpi represents intellectuals as a global category whose members need to develop an international conscience to fulfill their roles in society. *No será la tierra* is a novel about the emergence of the so-called New World Order and the "end of history" discourse first elaborated by political scientist Francis Fukuyama in the nineties. My analysis highlights how the cosmopolitan aspirations of characters of different nationalities represent modes of universal engagement. The two works also posit rooted cosmopolitanism as a desirable mode of community membership in the global era. Volpi's novels articulate globality, and in so doing reconceptualize the relationship between Spanish America and the world.

Spanish America against the World

To this day, Spanish America has a particularly contentious relationship with cosmopolitanism dating back to its colonial situation and to the various wars of independence waged between 1810 and 1822. During the nineteenth and early parts of the twentieth century, Spanish American literature was characterized by a tension between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, in a context where the new nations sought to develop their own identities in opposition, first to Spain, and later the United States. Even if the vast majority of writers did not explicitly plot political cosmopolitanism in their works, their cosmopolitan works and positions were nonetheless the object of much criticism and debate. Many of these authors were interested in aesthetic cosmopolitanism and drew from multiple traditions to create a richer literary language; aesthetic cosmopolitanism has always been intensely political. Although they did not necessarily deal with the political implications of cosmopolitanism, their literary peers

rejected their worldly position, for it was perceived as diluting the national tradition.

From the birth of the new Latin American nations in the 1800s up to the Boom of the 1960s, there was a clear divide between Latin American authors: either they focused on nation-building processes in their narratives and aligned with government policies, or they reached beyond the confines of their national borders and became pariahs within national literary circles. Across the continent, the debate raged; one was either open to the world and rejected the nation, or looked inwards and rejected the world. This black and white understanding of cosmopolitanism meant that it was almost impossible to have a level-headed conversation about it. Both “nationalist” and “cosmopolitan” were insults of choice, with cosmopolitan authors criticizing their colleagues’ supposed close-mindedness and nationalist authors and literary critics calling for the revocation of their peers’ citizenship.

For the former group, cosmopolitanism, understood as a productive engagement with global artistic practices, was never about rejecting the nation. It has been at the heart of every artistic and literary movement or school since the nineteenth century, whether we think of *Modernismo* (1888–1910), the *Vanguardias* (1920–30), or more recently, the Boom (1962–72). For many authors, the desire to assert their national identity was not irreconcilable with adopting the best elements from various cultural and literary traditions. For instance, Rubén Darío immersed himself in the French tradition; more than just a poet, he was a cultural translator who tried to make sense of European modernity for the continent. In his classic 1932 essay “El escritor argentino y la tradición” (“The Argentine Writer and Tradition”), Jorge Luis Borges, claiming the world as the repository from which he could draw inspiration, articulated his cosmopolitan position in the following manner: “Todo lo que hagamos con felicidad los escritores argentinos pertenecerá a la tradición argentina . . . no debemos temer y . . . *debemos pensar que nuestro patrimonio es el universo*” (273–4; my emphasis) (“Anything we Argentine writers can do successfully will become part of our Argentine tradition. . . . We should not be alarmed . . . and *we should feel that our patrimony is the universe*”³).

Embracing aesthetic cosmopolitanism was a means to address the problems of a continent perceived as lagging behind in terms of culture,

intellectual life, and political organization—a term Ángel Rama had dubbed “arritmia temporal” (“temporal arrhythmia”). Artists and writers saw themselves as involved in bridging the gap between Europe and Spanish America, and their work as a way of deconstructing the faulty perception that relegated the continent to the periphery of modernity. This asynchronicity explains why cosmopolitanism has always been at the forefront of artistic and intellectual discussions. This catching up with modernity extended to all areas of intellectual life. It was both aesthetic and political, but never political in the true sense of cosmopolitanism, since it did not involve a reflection about the universal ideas and values of a global community. Criticism of cosmopolitanism was both triggered by the aesthetic proposals authors were making in engaging various literary traditions and by the debates on identity. The mere addition of literary devices and styles was seen as diluting pure national elements, thus sparking debates about authenticity.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, *Modernismo* was one of the first movements to attempt to bridge the gap between Latin America and Europe. It is, to this day, one of the most cosmopolitan literary movements in Spanish American letters. To their critics, the *Modernistas*’ cosmopolitanism was merely aesthetic and thus frivolous, and a strong rejection of their birth nation’s culture. Artists were (seemingly) seeking “una identidad internacional . . . artística” (“an international artistic identity”) and their work reflected a distancing approach (Grünfeld 35, 36). Literary scholars have long maintained that “a través de su escritura, los poetas modernistas participan en el proceso de creación de una mitología del extranjero” (“through their writing, Modernist poets participate in the creation of a mythology of the foreign”; 37), one that necessarily rejected national aspects in order to emphasize foreign ones. However, a more nuanced assessment of the *Modernistas*’ political engagement reveals that in a context in which Spain’s hegemony was fading, cosmopolitanism was one of several critical tools to rework the hemispheric dynamic, as well as to establish a stronger *rapport de force* with the growing cultural weight of the United States. Ultimately, the *Modernistas*’ openness to and integration of multiple cultures in their work was a tactic to avoid falling prey to cultural neo-colonialism, be it Spanish or American—a demonstration of what Jeff Browitt and Werner Mackenbach call a “cosmopolitismo

cultural crítico” (“critical cultural cosmopolitanism”; 7). The liberalization of the “trade in contributions to Spanish American cultural autonomy” ultimately helped artists undermine the Spanish monopoly in that field (Aching 12).

Yet, the Western European culture to which cosmopolitans subscribed meant more than mere cultural products and consumerism. Scholars such as Camila Fojas maintain that such cosmopolitanism was in part a reaction to this crisis of modernity and provided writers and artists with the tools necessary not only to gain a better understanding of their own culture, but also to criticize it through a different paradigm, one that was both political and cultural: “Cosmopolitanism . . . [was] also a political sign of international diplomacy and justice, a sign of world-wide hospitality for the outcast, the exiled, migrants, foreigners, and travellers” (ix). Like Fojas, I see this cosmopolitan ideal as a way to acquire a different cultural framework that added nuance or even rejected nationalist perspectives. Writers not only felt an urge to write ground-breaking poetry, but also a need to create a new literary language, replete with new forms and techniques, that would confine them neither to a specific space nor to their own time frame. Their aesthetic cosmopolitanism was a form of political engagement, a rejection of subordination, and this dimension of their work reveals them as artists engaged in dislodging coloniality, rather than as alienated or self-absorbed, as tradition branded them. Octavio Paz is correct in stating that “Los modernistas no querían ser franceses, querían ser modernos. . . . En labios de Rubén Darío y sus amigos, modernidad y cosmopolitanismo eran términos sinónimos. No fueron anti-americanos, querían una América contemporánea de París y Londres” (“El caracol y la sirena” [“The Siren and the Seashell”] 94–5) (“The Modernists did not want to be French, they wanted to be modern. . . . Modernity and cosmopolitanism were synonymous to Rubén Darío and his friends. They were not anti-Latin American; they wanted a Latin America that would be contemporaneous with Paris and London”⁴). The *Modernistas* had no interest in creating a new cultural dependency on yet another cultural metropole; they wanted to change the Spanish American literary order (Rama, *Rubén Darío* 22).

Modernismo’s cosmopolitan impulse is present in the incorporation of the European canon in its production (Rama, *Las máscaras democráticas*

del Modernismo [*The Democratic Masks of Modernism*] 173; Fojas 3), which, as was already established, led the nationalists to view their work as a form of cultural amnesia and a conscious avoidance of the past. The cosmopolitans were not national enough to be integrated into a national culture that sought to rally everyone under a single identity: cosmopolitans were oddballs and outcasts, captivated by various foreign cultural metropolises. In sum, they appeared to their critics as lacking an interest in undoing colonial legacies. However, the *Modernistas* aimed to integrate the framework of modernity, so that Latin American cultural identity would be contemporaneous with that of Europe, and in the process rejected its colonial legacy. By doing so, they were able to enter a wider sphere of cultural influence that would later prove useful in defining the Latin American literary canon. Like the authors of the Boom and those of the later Crack movement, the *Modernistas* wanted to work within the Western literary tradition writ large.

The quest for contemporaneity remained at the centre of artistic and literary endeavours of the various vanguard movements that spanned the 1920s. The *Vanguardias* marked a period of literary experimentation, during which numerous manifestos—many attacking Western modernity itself, and exhibiting a certain tension between renewal and tradition—were published across the continent. Every nation had its own form, rooted in its particular experiences.⁵ The ultimate objective of these movements was to renew the national artistic vision and literary references, as well as to debate the notions of national and continental identity in a changing geopolitical order. This questioning of tradition and of the function of art happened simultaneously in Europe and Latin America—a first step in reducing the deeply felt sense of *arritmia temporal*.

Whereas the European vanguard tended to be socially and aesthetically radical, the members of the Latin American *Vanguardias* were more moderate, “their function resid[ing] more in the building of cultural and artistic institutions that the European movements strove to destroy” (Rosenberg, “Cultural Theory and the Avant-Gardes” 414). These artists shared national preoccupations and were influenced by the production that had taken place during the celebrations of the centenary of independence a decade before. The alternative modernities that were being proposed by the European vanguard movements were not productive tools

in Latin America, since they did not question Latin America's position at the periphery of the Western world (Rosenberg, *The Avant-Garde* 2). These authors thus engaged in a form of critical cosmopolitanism that sought to undo the colonial mindset and create works of art that took into consideration the continent's pre-Hispanic cultures. The Avant-Garde was a turning point in Latin American literature, since, unlike the *Modernistas*, who drew on the French tradition but never really questioned it, the *Vanguardistas* questioned various traditions and the function of art itself in the creation of their cultural identity. One of the major successes of the Avant-Garde was that the authors were able to reconfigure their locus of enunciation: they stopped reproducing "global cultural hierarchies that legitimated different levels of subordination" ("Cultural Theory and the Avant-Gardes" 415), and put Latin America on par with the rest of the world. This critical stance displayed both local and cosmopolitan affiliations, since artists were able to redefine their identity as one that included the best of both the native and the foreign. By incorporating modern values, they were able to acquire tools that would help them undo the colonial mindset, embracing an ideal of "non-Eurocentric, always-situated universalism" (*The Avant-Garde* 40). Their creation of a new modernity was grounded in a more nuanced understanding of their colonial past, as demonstrated, for example, by Brazilian *antropofagia*.

A few decades later, the members of the Boom were also forced into the debate over the authenticity of the Latin American author's identity. It was arguably the last literary movement compelled to engage in the debate over the adoption of aesthetic cosmopolitanism. Most Boom writers thought of their art in universal terms, and some consciously tried to develop a universal aesthetic through the introduction of international art forms such as jazz and photography (Russek 7). Like the *Modernistas*, the Boom writers did not necessarily want to be international; their priority was being modern, and this meant being published in Spain—indeed, this is one of the major criticisms the movement faced.⁶ After years of Latin America literary independence, Spain acted once again as the literary metropole, since most publishing houses were located in Europe.⁷ Nevertheless, whether they published in Latin America or Spain, their literary language was the same: as Carlos Fuentes observed in *Geografía de la novela* (*Geography of the Novel*; 1993) "A partir de la certeza de esta

universalidad del lenguaje, *podemos hablar con rigor de la contemporaneidad del escritor latinoamericano*, quien súbitamente es parte de un presente cultural común” (“Given the certainty of this universality of language, *we can truly speak of the contemporaneity of the Latin American writer*, who suddenly becomes part of a common cultural present”; 34; my emphasis). For the first time in Spanish American literary history, a cultural movement broke with the asynchronicity that had characterized the dynamic between the core and the periphery of the Western world.

This central quest finally bore fruit, thus opening new possibilities for the next generation of writers. This new attitude toward cosmopolitanism coincided with the advent of globalization, with its global ethos and global consciousness. By becoming contemporaneous with their European counterparts, the Latin American writer was faced with “la necesidad de sumarse a la perspectiva del futuro a fin de dirigirse a todos los hombres” (“the need to assimilate the perspective of the future in order to address all mankind”) while also remaining a writer “que debía superar varias etapas a fin de integrar una literatura que se dirigiese a los lectores de su comunidad” (“who had to survive several stages in order to integrate a literature that addressed his community of readers”; *La nueva novela* 23). This double process, international yet local, was a treacherous one, and unsurprisingly, many literary critics disapproved of the internationalization of the Spanish American literary market and the ever-growing exposure of their national authors. This supposedly meant that these authors’ novels were not continental or national enough, as if living and publishing abroad somehow disconnected them from Latin America. History was repeating itself.

As a matter of fact, the Post-Boom movement (1972–80) arose partly in reaction to the formal experimentation and ambitious continental allegories of the Boom novels. The Post-Boom was a return to realism and to more concrete issues like exile and dislocation, more fitting to the historical circumstances in which these authors were evolving at the height of the Cold War and the emergence of dictatorships across the continent, such as those in Chile under General Pinochet and Argentina under General Videla. The Post-Boom authors completely questioned the work of their predecessors, and ultimately deemed it elitist and reader-unfriendly (Shaw 6). Its excessive cosmopolitanism and universality at the expense of local

preoccupations, as well as its emphasis on technique, were also criticized. Post-Boom authors, by virtue of their historical circumstances, were more focused on national issues than universal ones, and they displaced political cosmopolitanism in favour of national narratives.

Later literary movements, especially those emerging in the 1990s, issued manifestos that strove to renovate the novel, and that set aside the historical obsession for which their predecessors were known. For the most part, they wanted to distance themselves from the narratives about identity put forth by both the Boom and the Post-Boom.⁸ Rather than a generational movement, the Crack is more of a thematic-formal nature. In 1996, the group penned the “Manifiesto Crack” (“Crack Manifesto”), in which the authors proclaimed themselves a new literary group, exposed their ideas about literature—be it Mexican, Latin American, or global—and traced the genealogy of Mexican literature in order to situate themselves within it. The manifesto also served as a way to break free from national and continental structures. About that same time, Alberto Fuguet and Sergio Gómez published *McOndo*, a collection of short stories, all of which broke with the tradition of *realismo mágico* (“magical realism”). *McOndo* is also the name of the literary movement that emerged from the publication of Fuguet and Gómez’s anthology. The collection appeared as a reaction to the pervasiveness of magical realism, which American and European critics and readers expected of Latin American literature since the 1960s. They presented a *post todo* generation, one that sidelined family values in favour of individualism, and focused on describing the individual realities of the protagonists (“Presentación del país McOndo” [“Presentation of McOndo”]). The so-called McOndo novels are characterized by their realistic settings, which do not exaggerate or emphasize Latin American exoticism. The background of McOndo fictions is more apolitical and individualistic than that showcased in the novels of the Boom, and they set aside the deliberate pursuit of Latin American identity. For the Crack and McOndo movements, the *arritmia temporal* appears to be resolved, such that Latin American authors no longer feel compelled to engage in debates about cosmopolitanism; on the contrary, they seem to feel part of a global system of letters.

Conceptions of Cosmopolitanism and Cosmopolitan Reading

Even if cosmopolitanism still causes tensions in Spanish America, we are now past a black and white understanding of the concept. Current articulations like rooted cosmopolitanism—as proposed by Anthony Kwame Appiah and Will Kymlicka—expose the limitations of former models and are particularly relevant to the study of the continent, for they deconstruct the dichotomy that pits cosmopolitanism against nationalism, and not only make cosmopolitanism applicable to, but also reconcilable with the Spanish American context. In Appiah and Kymlicka’s approach, rooted cosmopolitanism is a celebration of diversity in which cosmopolitans are able to reconcile their love and responsibilities for their birth nation with a universal commitment. With rooted cosmopolitanism, then, one does not need to choose between conflicting allegiances anymore.

In order to understand the specificities of Spanish American cosmopolitanism, we must first look at the origin of the concept and at some of the debates surrounding it. Cosmopolitanism was first brought to the fore by the Greek philosopher Diogenes of Sinope, the founder of the Cynic school. His views emerged from major disappointments with traditional Greek expectations. He “declared himself *a-polis* (without a city), *a-oikos* (homeless) and *kosmo-polites* (a citizen of the universe)” (Goulet-Cazé qtd. in Inglis 13). By living at the margins of society, the Cynics attempted to purge themselves not only of the *polis* itself, but also of social ties of any sort, and they aimed to remove themselves from society to criticize it with a fresh perspective—a rather extreme take on cosmopolitanism, one we can hardly reconcile with our understanding of the world as highly globalized and interconnected. This detachment, which the Cynics deemed essential to their work as critical intellectuals, was often considered out of place in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Latin America, where intellectuals were expected to contribute to the building of national, and often nationalist, states.

Unlike the Cynics, the Stoics maintained that local affiliations could be reconciled with cosmopolitanism (Nussbaum, “The Worth of Human Dignity” 37), and believed that the cosmos itself should be considered a *polis*, albeit one with which we cannot have physical ties. They mapped our

affections as a series of concentric circles surrounding each individual, each circle containing different groups of people. While the largest contains the entire human race, subgroups of humanity are in smaller ones; the smaller the circle, the closer one's attachment to the people in it (Bett 539; Nussbaum 37). The objective, then, is to treat every single human being as if they were a member of the smaller circle, not to treat anybody as a stranger, and eventually to collapse circles altogether to erase any "degrees of distance." However necessary it was to treat everyone fairly, the most significant aspect of Stoic cosmopolitanism was the immediate political environment to which a citizen had ties—their roots.

Most common contemporary definitions originate from these views and include the idea of "a posture of worldly sophistication which is naturally contrasted with more provincial or parochial outlooks" (Scheffler 255); treat cosmopolitanism as involving a "reflective distance from one's original or primary cultural affiliations, a broad understanding of other cultures and customs, and a belief in universal humanity" (Anderson qtd. in Goodlad 400); describe the core of cosmopolitanism as "an intellectual and aesthetic openness toward divergent cultural experiences, and an ability to make one's way into other cultures" (Hannerz 200); and/or focus on the cosmopolitan—the person—rather than on the concept. Ulf Hannerz, for instance, thinks of the cosmopolitan "as possessing [a] set of cultural skills . . . a cultural repertoire" (210). Aligned with Scheffler and Hannerz, I argue that cosmopolitanism is a mindset rather than an ideology. I also go one step further by claiming that rooted cosmopolitanism is a praxis, one made of concrete actions toward the Other. Cosmopolitans are not only open to learning about diversity, both in their local environment and on a global scale, but also to extending empathy toward others. As mentioned, this ability to transcend one's local surroundings is what often led in Latin America to the association of cosmopolitan writers and their works with a lack of commitment to and disengagement from the nation.

In order to assess cosmopolitanism in contemporary Spanish American literature, it is crucial to ground the concept in the context of the continent's trajectory on the periphery of the modern Western world, and to consider its history of colonialism and neo-colonialism. I side with contemporary thinkers Kwame Anthony Appiah and Walter D. Mignolo in

their reconceptualization of cosmopolitanism, and blend the concepts they have proposed in order to create a conception of cosmopolitanism that does not deny Latin American specificities. I build on Appiah's theorizations to develop my own working definition of Latin American rooted cosmopolitanism. Appiah posits that cosmopolitanism is the articulation of "universalism plus difference" (*Cosmopolitanism* 202); I take this as a starting point for developing a definition of rooted cosmopolitanism that is applicable specifically to Latin America, by adding socio-historical considerations to Appiah's work. More specifically, I add Mignolo's concept of decoloniality, which I deem highly receptive to rooted cosmopolitanism. They are both praxes, as opposed to strictly philosophical concepts, and are achievable and attainable. By adding the articulation of place and time to Appiah's theories, I ground rooted cosmopolitanism in decolonial Latin American perspectives.

Appiah defines cosmopolitanism as a sentiment, and as an ethical stance regarding world citizenship. In *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, he proposes that

there are two strands that intertwine in the notion of cosmopolitanism. One is the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship. The other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance. (xv)

Cosmopolitans are "secure in [their] difference, but also open to the difference of others" ("Cosmopolitan Reading" 215). Later on, Appiah expanded on that view by suggesting that cosmopolitanism "commits you to a global conversation, or a set of global conversations, about the things that matter. I count someone as a cosmopolitan if they're willing to engage in that conversation without the hope of making everybody like them" ("Making Sense of Cosmopolitanism"). In "Cosmopolitan Patriots," Appiah expresses his belief that "the cosmopolitan patriot can entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of

one's own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people" (618). Consequently, rooted cosmopolitanism is a celebration of diversity that takes both the nation and the world into account.⁹

In my view, the cosmopolitan *par excellence* is a person who cares about other human beings, but more crucially, is aware that the specificity of their values and social practices is an integral part of their identity. Cosmopolitans are also conscious that such practices may be different from theirs, but are willing to accept them nonetheless, even if there is a clash between practices. After all, cosmopolitanism is about human beings and whatever practices they choose to enjoy. I maintain that cosmopolitanism ought to be an ideal to which one aspires, not a complete identity one assumes. It advocates difference in the name of universalism. The fact that it promotes cultural difference as the basis of any articulation of a universal community makes rooted cosmopolitanism a particularly apt tool for the study of Spanish American literature. I conceive rooted cosmopolitanism as a conversation among peoples and places, with diversity as its core principle. The nation cannot be the locus of absolute sovereignty anymore. While affirming the enduring and necessary reality of the nation, cultures and states must be constrained by universal moral cosmopolitan commitments. Rooted cosmopolitanism thus redefines our understanding of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, and, in the process, subverts the foundations of the traditional binary opposition.

Above all, in my conceptualization I take the term "rooted" to invoke cultural difference—cosmopolitanism is universalism plus difference (Appiah, "Cosmopolitan Reading" 202). I understand cultural difference as the articulation of place and time, subverting the inherent Eurocentrism of cosmopolitanism. As in most of the developing world, Latin America's relationship with cosmopolitanism is closely tied to the notions of nationalism, colonialism, and post-colonialism. Most post-colonial readings of cosmopolitanism thus focus on how the very concept has promoted a Eurocentric view and has been tied to imperialism from its inception. By combining the nation and the world with the history of a given culture, my rearticulation accounts for this flaw. Although post-colonial scholars of cosmopolitanism frequently underline the lack of critical assessment of colonialism and neo-colonialism, a pragmatic approach to the concept

provides for a theorization that does not circumvent the complexities of cosmopolitanism and its Eurocentric history. Indeed, I understand cosmopolitanism as a concept that implicitly carries historical considerations. In this regard, I take “rooted” to mean the cultural difference of a given nation across place and time.

Grounding cosmopolitan thought in history is instrumental for assessing its place in Latin American intellectual and literary development. Walter D. Mignolo examines it in the context of the colonial and neo-colonial histories that characterized Latin America’s relationship with Europe and the United States. He considers coloniality to be the darker side of modernity, albeit a constitutive one (“Many Faces of Cosmo-polis” 724). Without coloniality, modernity would not have happened. For Mignolo, the close proximity (two sides of a coin) between modernity and coloniality made it nearly impossible for Latin America to enter the realm of modernity as long as it was bound by its colonial mindset (*The Idea of Latin America*). The impact of colonialism was such that, even long after the Spanish colonizer had left, Latin Americans struggled to modify their epistemic understanding of themselves. A true dialogue among nations—a colonial power and a colony—is improbable as long as the empire retains its superiority. The challenge is to undo the impact of colonization, and for that Mignolo proposes the notion of decolonial cosmopolitanism, conceptualized as devoid of imperial world views, and therefore distinct from some formulations of Western cosmopolitanism in the modern era. Western cosmopolitanism could then be one of many possible cosmopolitanisms, but not the sole option.¹⁰ The conceptual range of terms such as “nationalism” and “cosmopolitanism” vary across place and time, especially given the plurality of social imaginaries of modernity. Despite its premise of universality, cosmopolitanism is the object of discourses that are specific to cultures and their historical circumstances. This multiplicity of incarnations serves to reconcile the concept with Latin America because it allows the continent to transcend the core/periphery dogma, and engage in the cosmopolitan conversation. These post-colonial readings are creating a space for the subaltern to erase the idea of a passive reception of the positive aspects of the Western world by the other. In a sense, post-colonial cosmopolitanism is attempting to reach the ideal within the very

concept of cosmopolitanism—that is, a relationship in which there are no subaltern cultures. It seeks to create a relationship based on true equality.

My reading of rooted cosmopolitanism—considering the cultural difference of a given nation across place and time—is thus particularly receptive to Mignolo’s notion of decolonial cosmopolitanism. These conceptualizations are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, both explicitly or implicitly advocate for universal values in the context of the absence of subaltern cultures. This post-colonial perspective can be productively reconciled with Appiah’s formulation by instilling the notion of rooted cosmopolitanism with post-colonial and decolonial history. Rooted cosmopolitanism articulates a redefined notion of nationhood and universalism, and grounds that articulation in historical concerns.

Literature is a privileged discourse in which to discuss cosmopolitanism, since the concept of narrative is universal. Even national narratives can resonate with readers that are not necessarily native to a national setting; human experiences are, after all, similar. “Literature creates the world and cosmopolitan bonds,” stresses Pheng Cheah, “not only because it enables us to imagine a world through its power of figuration, but also because it arouses in us pleasure and a desire to share this pleasure through universal communication” (*What is a World?* 27). The worlds postulated by literature, in which characters move about in situations similar to ours, face obstacles, and debate ideas, are among the best ways to spread cosmopolitanism, for “literature [plays] an active role in the world’s ongoing creation because, through the receptibility it enacts, it is an inexhaustible resource for contesting the world given to us” (35). Literature creates empathy and allows readers to develop solidarity across space and time.

This idea of a narrative, be it national or global, and that of the “narrative imagination” (Nussbaum, “Cultivating Humanity” 44) are two of the cosmopolitans’ most important tools. I agree with Appiah that everyone can be a cosmopolitan because every human being understands the concept of narrative—indeed, it is “through their shared exposure to narrations of those events” (*Ethics of Identity* 245) that human beings acquire an understanding of other people’s lives, for “the basic human capacity to grasp stories, even strange stories, is also what links us, powerfully, to others, even strange others” (257).¹¹ Appiah postulates that “our modern solidarity derives from stories in which we participate through

synecdoche” (245). In simpler terms, narratives allow us to put ourselves in other people’s shoes (Nussbaum, “Cultivating Humanity” 45), and to begin to understand their life and circumstances. We recognize ourselves through others and their stories, and in the end, the solidarity and empathy we develop commit us to others. For Appiah, a

Cosmopolitan reading presupposes a world in which novels (and music and sculptures and other significant objects) travel between places where they are understood differently, because people are different and welcome to their difference. Cosmopolitan reading is *worthwhile* because there can be common conversations about these standard objects, the novel prominent among them. Cosmopolitan reading is *possible* because those conversations are possible. But what makes the conversations possible is not always shared culture . . . ; not even, as the older humanists imagined, universal principles or values . . . ; nor shared understanding. . . . What is necessary to read novels across gaps of space, time and experience is the capacity to follow a narrative and conjure a world. (“Cosmopolitan Reading” 224)

As a result, a cosmopolitan reading is more than aesthetic cosmopolitanism—taking from multiple traditions—or a cosmopolitan interpretation—deeming a novel cosmopolitan—since it is the very condition of possibility for a cosmopolitan community. The universality of narrative clearly indicates that cosmopolitanism is within reach of every human being. A cosmopolitan reading entails two aspects: narrative is cosmopolitan because it is universal, and as such can reach any human being, and literature is among the best spaces to discuss cosmopolitanism due to its universality. The reading of narratives of diverse nationalities promotes cosmopolitanism since narratives reveal the universality of human experience. These do not need to be cosmopolitan narratives—on the contrary, their cultural specificity allows for the detection of the universal in all humans and therefore reinforces the very idea of cosmopolitanism.

In line with the notion of the cosmopolitan reader who turns fictions into spaces of universality, I identify the emplotment of cosmopolitanism

in novels whose worlds are populated with characters who reside in multiple localities, travel across cultural boundaries, and live through global events. The ability to enact a cosmopolitan reading and to empathize with fictional characters is one more skill in cosmopolitans' set of cultural skills. To make the concept of cosmopolitan reading fully applicable to Latin America, I ground it in historical and cultural concerns, much like what I have done with the concept of rooted cosmopolitanism. Of all literary genres, the novel appears as an ideal space to promote cosmopolitanism, since it creates complex worlds that resemble the one in which readers evolve. Readers also play a primary role: it is incumbent on us to produce, through the confirmation of commonalities across cultures, a cosmopolitan reading. Readers, then, are in charge of connecting the dots, turning novels into spaces of universality, getting closer to the cosmopolitan ideal in the process.

Rooted Cosmopolitanism in Spanish American Literature

As shown above, while nationalism and cosmopolitanism operate hand in hand in Spanish America, they have mostly been seen by literary critics as irreconcilable: one was either a national or a cosmopolitan author. Any examination of literary histories published until very recently reveals that there was no middle ground. On the one hand, the notion of political cosmopolitanism, however vague its uses in Latin America, has been intricately associated with more politically expedient concepts such as miscegenation and modernity, which were perceived as useful tools with which to reinforce national aspirations. On the other, aesthetic cosmopolitanism, invariably understood as receptiveness to a universal artistic and literary tradition, has been at the forefront of efforts to undo colonial legacies. Cosmopolitan artists and works were engaged in an important mission, albeit one not always perceived as such, especially by nationalist critics.

Up to the very early twentieth century, one major problem with the definition of the word "cosmopolitanism" or the concept of the cosmopolitan artist or intellectual in Latin America is that they have been de-semanticized to mean diverse things. "Cosmopolitanism" was recurrently associated with luxury, decadence, the imitation of everything foreign,

extraterritoriality, and the denial of locality, all tied to elitist and imperial connotations. In my view, this appears to be the major problem of writers deemed cosmopolitan faced when encountering a nationalist critic. This perception correctly echoes the preoccupations of the scholars to which this investigation refers—namely, that cosmopolitanism has mostly been misunderstood in Latin America. Indeed, cosmopolitanism has almost always been exaggerated in the region.

Cosmopolitanism does not need to be understood as dissociated from national concerns. In fact, one of the major flaws seen in the critical reception of cosmopolitan authors in Spanish America is the belief that cosmopolitanism is exclusive and cannot coexist with other ideologies or concepts in the creation of an artistic identity. The proposed notion of rooted cosmopolitanism allows for a more appropriate assessment of this complexity. From this perspective, Spanish American writers and thinkers have never been absolute cosmopolitans; their position, rather, was one of rooted cosmopolitanism.

Moreover, contemporary Latin American intellectuals defined as cosmopolitan, such as Borges or Reyes, while moderate cosmopolitans, were often read as immoderate because their critics worked within the binary framework of cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Borges's profound understanding of the Western canon left a deep mark on his corpus. His full acknowledgement of the world's literary traditions, as well as his cosmopolitan outlook on literature, never led him to a cosmopolitanism that denied the relevance of national difference. This makes him, in my understanding, a rooted cosmopolitan, one who made use of the best elements of what he considered to be the epitome of Western literary culture to showcase his own. Mexican Alfonso Reyes, also criticized for his cosmopolitan openness, claimed that "Podemos ser muy buenos mexicanos pero paralelamente podemos ser universales" ("We can be very good Mexicans but at the same time we can be universal"), underlining the fact that nationalism and cosmopolitanism are not irreconcilable. However, these authors' cosmopolitan positions and the reception of their work were always conditioned by the colonial and neo-colonial trajectories of the continent. Rooted cosmopolitanism was synonymous with inclusivity and diversity for these authors. It allowed them to be national writers while also belonging to the Western canon, two roles that were complementary.

Although they were criticized for their supposed rejection of their nation and continent, Spanish American rooted cosmopolitans never rejected the importance of national belonging—they only framed it on a global scale.

In Latin America, cosmopolitanism has always been explicitly or implicitly associated with the quest to undo the legacies of colonialism. The positions of cosmopolitan authors should be understood as those of rooted cosmopolitans, but the heated intellectual and literary debates of a continent in political turmoil—turmoil that was due partly to foreign interference—impeded this nuanced assessment until only a few decades ago. The advent of the Boom in the early 1960s meant, for most artists and intellectuals, the end of the *arritmia temporal* that had characterized artistic and literary production; and the end of this artistic and intellectual gap coincided with the fading of the nation-state and the advent of globalization. Both of these intellectual and structural transformations have led to a new era in which some Spanish American writers have begun to engage the world on new terms that can now properly be called cosmopolitan.

I intend *Belonging Beyond Borders* as a contribution to Spanish American literary history in two ways. It posits rooted cosmopolitanism as the form that has been embodied by Spanish American authors since the nineteenth century, and combines narrative emplotment of cosmopolitanism with recent theories of cosmopolitanism to explore how Spanish American literary works have served to deconstruct the binary opposition that has pitted nationalism against cosmopolitanism. I read these contemporary Spanish American novels as cosmopolitan fictions or fictions about cosmopolitanism. The novels analyzed in this book specifically plot the politics of cosmopolitanism, and this emplotment affects narrative form. In this regard, these fictions have acquired another function, different from that of their so-called cosmopolitan predecessors, at least according to literary history.

The five narratives can be read with a view to cosmopolitanism as a political and philosophical idea, and to its effect on one's identity. Unlike the previous generations' literary output, these novels are not in search of a universal language. Their main focus remains political. The fact that they are not set in Latin America may make them more accessible to a global readership, but no specific literary technique is used to make them universal, as was the case with *Modernismo*, the *Vanguardias*, or the Boom. This

marks a break in the treatment of cosmopolitanism in Spanish American literature. Most Latin American authors referred to as “cosmopolitan” by the mainstream critical tradition have not written cosmopolitan novels in the sense of writing narratives, as Berthold Schoene-Harwood puts it, with the political “purpose and intention . . . to imagine humanity in global coexistence . . . or to conceive of real cosmopolitics as [the] communal tackling” of the world’s problems (186). This tackling of the world’s problems, as we will see in the chapters that follow, is represented through the selected novels, in which characters show a preoccupation with being world citizens.