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**(Un)rooted cosmopolitanisms in Castellanos Moya's  
*El sueño del retorno* and Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness***

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When we think of globalization, we envision changes in sociopolitical, economic, and neoliberal formations. But in what ways does globalization affect the aesthetic formation—not just the content but also the form—of narration and representation? In other words, how is literature informed by globality? This essay is a comparative analysis of national identity and urban cosmopolitan space in the psychological novel *El sueño del retorno* (2013) by the Salvadoran Horacio Castellanos Moya (1957-) and the “total novel”<sup>1</sup> *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) by the Indian author Arundhati Roy (1961-). In particular, this essay contrasts the embittered, unrooted brand of cosmopolitanism espoused by Horacio Castellanos Moya in *El sueño del retorno* and other novels, with the rooted, hopeful cosmopolitanism (or cosmopolitan patriotism, to use Kwame Anthony Appiah’s words) envisioned in Arundhati Roy’s two novels. Overall, whereas resignation and fatalism pervade *El sueño del retorno*, Roy infuses her novels with a perseverant hope in the triumph of a truly democratic regime. In this sense, according to Appiah, one “can be cosmopolitan—celebrating the variety of human cultures; rooted—loyal to one local society (or a few) that you count as home; liberal—convinced of the value of the individual; and patriotic—celebrating the institutions of the state (or states) within which you live” (Appiah, “Cosmopolitan” 633). This is precisely the brand of rooted cosmopolitanism that, in this essay, is associated with *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*.

Homeliness and homelessness go to battle in Castellanos Moya’s and Roy’s works, at times resorting to a ferocious critique of nationalism, or to a cynical resentment toward a

homeland seemingly turned into a failed state. More specifically, this essay considers how cosmopolitanism manifests itself in the form of an “aesthetics of anxiety” regarding nation, self-identity, and family. The two novels considered in this essay address anxieties about losing one’s imagined nation that end up being projected onto certain social groups (mostly Muslims in the case of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*) or the entire (failed) society (in the case of *El sueño del retorno*). These contemporary urban novels from the Global South fictionally articulate how nation-making processes react to the encounter with waves of globalization and their sociological, political, and neoliberal economic repercussions. Even though they are very much rooted in local concerns, these novels are simultaneously informed by a global condition that is reflected in their shared cosmopolitan anxieties.

The Global South is not a fixed geographic entity; today, it represents a malleable, symbolic notion encapsulating diasporas, migrations, fragmentations, and exchanges. As is well known, knowledge on the Global South is primarily produced and consumed in the Global North. There remains no fixed geographic entity of Global South: it can simultaneously be present in both the north and the south, depending on its performativity. In a similar vein, there is no one defining feature of cosmopolitanism. We posit it as a fragmented concept manifested in different regions and in different anxieties; that is to say, there is no one singular cosmopolitanism but multiple alternative cosmopolitanisms being performed and/or contested in and around the world. This essay showcases this fragmented cosmopolitanism through two novels from the designated Global South.

There is a pragmatic need to create dialogue within the Global South, if we are to maintain a dynamic cross-cultural understanding in an ever-changing sociopolitical landscape. For this reason, it is necessary to put in perspective the different façades of cosmopolitanism

being played out in different parts of the Global South. The lived experience of the subjects who form part of this Global South world is crucial for the topic of the “migrating mind,” because it furthers the hypothesis that anxieties about nation and national identities transcend geographical boundaries.

Despite the different trajectories of Castellanos Moya and Roy, both are highly representative of a contemporary trend that takes us on a pursuit of a cosmopolitan identity navigated through the lives of displaced, marginal, contemporary protagonists from the Global South. Another reason for choosing these two authors is that their international fame may be attributed to a sort of formula: both of them attained it thanks to their controversial writings, which simultaneously helped them gain notoriety at home and recognition abroad. Both have been affected by “neoliberal commodification;” grabbed by the West with both hands, giving asylum to one and the Booker Prize to the other. While Roy has been more vocal about the disenfranchisement of groups of Indian citizens, Castellanos Moya represents a more cynical, disillusioned view of the peace accords in El Salvador. Roy’s writing exposes the struggles between the powerful and the powerless; Castellanos Moya’s work, in turn, highlights the post-war reconciliation process carried out by various civil war actors. One common thread that ties both novels and authors together is that they use literary devices to engage in a dialogue with their respective nations.

### **Castellanos Moya’s Pessimistic, Unrooted Cosmopolitanism in *El sueño del retorno***

Castellanos Moya has been vehemently critical of the way in which post-war Central American politics have been shaped. Although politics is not the main topic in his novels, political conflict

usually lingers in the background, still hurting Salvadoran families, even when they were not directly involved in the conflict. *El sueño del retorno*, a psychological novel with autobiographical traits where Castellanos Moya brings back characters and episodes from his previous novels, narrates the story of the heavy-drinking and almost paranoid journalist Erasmo Aragón, an expatriate who has been living in Mexico since the beginning of the twelve-year-long civil war in El Salvador (1980-1992), which is almost over at the time of the narration (1991). His family is forced to leave the country in 1980, following life threats as well as the torture and disappearance of Erasmo's cousin, a guerrilla member named Albertico. The novel enters the complexities of the human psyche and explores a labyrinth of memory, trauma, and pain, highlighting the chaotic analogy between family and nation.

The year is 1991 and Erasmo works as a journalist in Mexico. His dream of returning to his home country, El Salvador, starts taking shape as the peace talks between the government and the guerilla fighters are in progress. This also provides an escape from an unhappy relationship with his partner, Eva, and from Mexico, a country that, in his own words, "Was so primitive that abortion was against the law" (27).<sup>2</sup> Erasmo conceives of the return as a chance to start afresh. Before returning, however, he consults a doctor about his liver pains. The protagonist's descent into paranoia is a bona fide trope from Moya's literary arsenal, from Vegas of *El Asco* to the anonymous protagonist of *Insensatez*, Robocop of *El Arma en el Hombre*, to Erasmo.

The physical violence fought on the ground enters urban spaces and becomes part of the struggle to maintain sanity and survive, resulting in a continuous state of paranoia. Consequently, it becomes difficult for Erasmo to trust anyone around him. His first meeting with the eccentric, former communist doctor Don Chente exposes him to the relation between anxiety and

repression. This revelation eases him to the idea of hypnosis and the “therapeutic virtues of memory” to alleviate his anxiety and paranoia. Paradoxically, the confession of his rational and irrational fears during the hypnosis sessions only worsen his condition as opposed to being cathartic, revealing a subjectivity traumatized by the prolonged civil war. Anxiety is leading him to a self-defeating solipsism, to a distrust of everyone around him, and to an inability to communicate effectively with others.

This memory, along with the disintegration of familial ties, aligns with failing models of nationalism and patriotism. At one point, the national allegory becomes apparent when Erasmo admits that he hates his parents: “little by little I became aware of the very deep disdain that dwelled in my heart, not only for my father and my father’s family, but also for my mother, and that all this poison had been injected into my entrails by my maternal grandmother” (127).<sup>3</sup> Erasmo’s profession as a journalist provides him with the mobility that connects him to the cosmopolitan world. Mobility also provides the distance to critically examine the nation/self. The fate of this expatriate is actually tied to a fate of the nation that has continuously been challenged, owing to the interference of global actors in the peace-making process. Erasmo, through his dream of returning, renders the homeland “imaginary”: “although I wasn’t born in El Salvador, it was as if my umbilical cord were attached to that place” (96).<sup>4</sup> He invariably views the homeland as a place where he cannot go back but where he truly belongs. Although Erasmo wants to return home, he does not want to lose his resident permit in Mexico, just in case things do not go as planned. Family and friendship become networked and network membership becomes crucial in a quest to survive in a world with blurring national boundaries.

The protagonist’s dilemma synecdochically suggests how the construction of national identity sits on the fence between collective memory and amnesia. One cannot trust the

memories our brain has selected, as they could end up betraying us. The author's pessimistic outlook is particularly apparent in the anticlimactic denouement of the novel, which turns a supposedly idealist protagonist who has faith in his ability to improve the sociopolitical situation of his country through progressive journalism into a self-absorbed, lecherous man who has rapidly forgotten his daughter and wife back in Mexico City, and is currently lusting after a beautiful woman he sees at the airport surrounded by her two children. The potentially epic, heroic, violent ending suddenly turns into an open ending that leaves a bad aftertaste in the reader, who may even feel disappointed or even betrayed by an unreliable narrator. The suspense is defused in a dull final scene with an individualistic, anti-heroic, and stuffy protagonist. Likewise, at the airport Erasmo manages to see his doctor returning to Mexico, thus revealing all his fears as unfounded. His surprising behavior and the unexpected ending seemingly render the guerrilla's efforts and the widespread suffering produced by civil war futile. The disappointing trajectory from engaged political exile to a self-absorbed conformist subject has been completed. And the fact that the protagonist shares several biographical traits with his author makes the novel's ultimate message even more ambiguous: tired of violence and war, the protagonist and, by extension, the country have eventually lost their idealism. Only the survival instinct seems to keep them alive.

Therefore, instead of describing structural violence during the civil war, Castellanos Moya focuses mainly on its traumatic consequences during a postwar period in which the military has received amnesty. We see its reflection in his protagonists' lives. Overwhelmed by angst, fear and guilt, the protagonist dreams that he killed someone, but does not fully trust his memory: "Memory is an unreliable thing and can put one in rather a tight spot" (103).<sup>5</sup> Like other characters in Castellanos Moya's novels, Erasmo feels uprooted in exile and disappointed

by broken idealistic, revolutionary dreams. Repressed memories, open wounds, and traumas have made human relationships more challenging for him. His stomachache, nightmares, and constant vodka tonic drinking, his failed relationship with his partner, Eva, after five years may all be connected to the war trauma. At one point, Erasmo finds out that his wife is cheating on him and expresses his desire to assassinate her lover. Unexpectedly, one of his Salvadoran friends in Mexico, Mr. Rabbit, who is still a clandestine urban guerrilla member, pretends to have murdered Eva's lover only to prove to Erasmo the foolishness of his thoughts. At that point, the protagonist takes off the mask and admits that he would have never had the courage to kill his partner's lover.

The protagonist, Erasmo, shares autobiographical traits: he was also born in Honduras but chooses El Salvador as his fatherland. Within the context of his author's experience, one may legitimately wonder why a cosmopolitan character like Erasmo would need to identify with a chosen fatherland or whether the failure of such an acquisition motivates a cosmopolitan outlook. Widespread insecurity in El Salvador is suggested in the opening of the novel, when we learn that in 1980 doctor Alvarado had to go into exile in Mexico after healing an injured guerrilla member, just like the protagonist had to do the same, as he was fearing for his life. Likewise, toward the end of the novel, when a Mexican policeman asks him to stop, he is overcome by terror: "My first impulse was to run away full speed, a normal reaction for someone from the country where I came from" (105).<sup>6</sup> Overall, his daily life seems to be entirely affected by fear.

Uncertainty about the longed-for return to the homeland in *El sueño del retorno* is behind all the apprehension for which there seems to be no cure. Incidentally, the topic of the return home had already appeared in a previous semiautobiographical novel, *El asco* (1997),



where the protagonist attends his mother's funeral in San Salvador and immediately feels disgusted by the sociopolitical situation in the country during the transition to democracy.

In Castellanos Moya's *El sueño del retorno*, structural violence, corruption and impunity during the 1980s and 1990s are common denominators. Dark humor, cynicism, and hopelessness mixed with a veiled, painful, and critical love for El Salvador from a cosmopolitan perspective permeate the plot. The pessimistic, self-critical tone of these passages responds to a determined search for truth, to a desire to find the root causes of structural flaws in Salvadoran society. From the perspective of social realism, therefore, denunciation and pessimism underlie his unveiling of Salvadoran historical memory from the perspective of an uprooted cosmopolitanism.

### **Roy's Optimistic, Rooted Cosmopolitanism in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness***

Happiness can be found in the darkest of the places; sometimes cemeteries can provide solace and position themselves as the threshold to new beginnings and becomings. This is the central theme of the second novel by the Booker laureate Arundhati Roy. Besides her literary prowess, Roy has been critical of a process of globalization in which democracy is up for sale to multinational corporations. Globalization is also tied to ecological disasters such as the Bhopal gas leak and the one poetically highlighted in the very first page of the novel, where we learn that sparrows are now missing and white-backed vultures have been poisoned by cattle muscle relaxants. Fashionable junk food consumption trends indirectly end up killing the fauna that had lived in Delhi for thousands of years.

Meenakshi Mukherjee, in her essay titled “Anxiety of Indianness,” defines Indianness as “a good-humored inertia and a casual tolerance which almost any reader in the country is expected to recognize as familiar” (170). Mukherjee sees the emergence of Indian writing in English as a part of a national building process, where the differences between different identities are blurred in favor of a larger national identity, with writers often exploring “a metonymic relationship with India as a whole” (174). This Indianness was also manifested as a struggle between “us” and “them”: a homogenous Indian identity versus an imaginary West.

In her two fictions spanning over two decades, Roy makes a conscious move away from a possible wholeness of Indian identity, focusing instead on various fragmented subjectivities, engaging with narratives of dislocation in a post-national India, and bringing up a fastidious critique of corporate globalization. She dedicates her second novel to “the Unconsoled,” the vast multitude of disenfranchised population left out at the margins of the modern nation of India. Roy weaves her protagonists’ trajectories to give voice to and expose the desires of an underestimated multitude that is tied down to the sociopolitical realities existing in the peripheries of the modern Indian State. Alluding to “India Shining” ([Hindi](#): भारत उदय; the marketing slogan referring to the overall feeling of economic optimism and aimed at promoting India internationally) used by the then-ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during the debacle of the 2004 Indian general elections, the author exposes a direct contrast between a Shining India and a Dark India. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* takes us on a journey to India’s heartland, from old Delhi to the heart of the Kashmir struggle. Roy’s self-reflection and critique of the nation must be contextualized with her position as a cosmopolitan activist. She openly mocks the pretention of whitewashing India’s numerous sociopolitical and economic ills with the excuse of

a lifesaving globalizing process that is supposedly turning India into a new superpower. Thus the following passage, which seems to echo Khushwant Singh's monumental novel *Delhi*, ridicules the nationalist politician's purported reinvention of Delhi: "Her new masters wanted to hide her knobby, varicose veins under imported fishnet stockings, cram her withered tits into saucy padded bras and jam her aching feet into pointed high-heeled shoes. They wanted her to swing her stiff old hips and re-route the edges of her grimace upwards into a frozen, empty smile. It was the summer Grandma became a whore" (100). Furthermore, Roy highlights another undeniable reality: "On the last of those visits we sat by Mirza Ghalib's grave, in a pool of beedi and cigarette stubs, surrounded by the spectacular cripples, lepers, vagrants and freaks who always accumulate around holy places in India" (162). Indeed, the notion of Indian citizenship is put into question through this very clash of neoliberal triumphalism and sheer misery. As Arjun Appadurai points out referring to megacities like Delhi, they "are the sites of various uncertainties about citizenship. People come to them in large numbers from impoverished rural areas. Work is often difficult to obtain and retain. The rich in these cities seek to gate as much of their lives as possible" (54-55). The official geopolitical and neoliberal triumphalism suddenly seems out of place in the face of outrageous social inequalities.

Taking place primarily in Delhi, the plot, which deploys intertextualities with Khushwant Singh's *Delhi*, describes the journey of the two main protagonists whose quests draw parallels with or make an extratextual reference to Roy's own social and political activism. The novel is divided into two parts. First, it focuses on the life and adventures of Anjum, an intersex, transwoman (*Hijra*, a woman trapped in a man's body) who will become Delhi's most famous Hijra, and her insatiable yearning for motherhood. From the onset, her marginality is underscored by the fact that small boys constantly throw stones at her and insult her. Anjum

embodies the process of becoming, a ‘woman between women’ (Deleuze: 226). The second part turns to S. Tilottama (Tilo), a woman in search of her *raison d’être*. Tilo, a Syrian-Christian woman who used to be an architect (like the author herself), is in a complicated relationship with a Kashmiri separatist leader. She represents a different struggle of freedom, “to die irresponsibly, without notice and for no reason” (163). The two very different trajectories of these protagonists culminate in the end to create the ‘ministry of utmost happiness’ of the book’s title. Roy made a conscious choice to have a Muslim transwoman and a Kashmir sympathizer as the main protagonists of the novel, as neither has a space in the popular imaginary of the nation.

Notwithstanding the predominance of a story of love, hope and the pursuit of happiness, Roy does not shy away from using her novel as a tool for a brutal critique of the failure of modern nationalist projects to create an inclusive model. And she uses the same stance to criticize the ways in which globalization is responsible for the elimination of cultural differences, imposing a global homogeneity that undermines dichotomous discourses of core and periphery, of self and other. For instance, describing the unfruitful protests led by Muslim mothers of those killed or disappeared in the Kashmir conflict, the narrator laments: “They had told their stories at endless meetings and tribunals in the international supermarkets of grief, along with other victims of other wars in other countries” (119). Their suffering is then contrasted with the attitude of the cheerful, well-off college girls who go shopping to the trendy Connaught Place in Delhi, while considering a vacation in the stunning and supposedly now safe region of Kashmir.

Unhinged neoliberal policies that put economic profit ahead of the people’s welfare are causing ineffable human heartbreak that is generally ignored by the media. And international corporation CEOs do not seem to care about calamities such as the gas leak in the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal that killed thousands of people: “a jaunty young Warren Anderson, the

American CEO of the Union Carbide Corporation, arriving at Delhi airport days after the disaster. ‘I’ve just arrived,’ he tells the jostling journalists. ‘I don’t know the details yet. So hey! Whaddya want me to say?’ then he looks straight into the TV cameras and waves, ‘Hi Mom!’” (115). Along these lines, the snippet about the survival throughout the subcontinent of Rooh Afza, a popular summer drink, through the 1947 partition of India, and its eventual overthrow by the corporate giants Coca-Cola and Pepsi nostalgically displays the power of corporate globalization: “The Elixir of Soul that had survived wars and the bloody birth of three new countries, was, like most things in the world, trumped by Coca-Cola” (17). The narrative goes on to describe how the same privatization process has led to other heartless corporations’ takeover of Delhi’s garbage, sewage, electricity and water distribution, always to the detriment of the most vulnerable sectors of society. Here, looking beyond nationalism from a cosmopolitan perspective, Roy seems to suggest that it is actually Indian national failures that have paved the way for the arrival of predatory, multinational corporations. Even the semiotics of the cityscape and architecture of certain neighborhoods make apparent what types of people are not welcome there: “In a part of the city they oughtn’t to be in. No signs said so, because everything was a sign that every fool could read: the silence, the width of the roads, the height of the trees, the unpeopled pavements, the clipped hedges, the low white bungalows in which the Rulers lived” (139). Planned urbanism contributes to further segregation and to underscore socioeconomic disparities in India.

By using a bildungsroman narrative structure to trace the transformation of Aftab into Anjum, from a “he” to a “she,” Roy not only exposes the looming risk of a fascist Hindu Nationalist India, but at the same time unmasks the liberal façade of secular India. In her walk down memory lanes in the walled city of Old Delhi, the narrator lays bare the peculiarities of Old

Delhi, from being the Mughal capital to becoming a refuge for Hindus fleeing Pakistan after partition, resorting to a narrative tone and mood that reflect a mix of irony, anger, satire, sadness, and flabbergasts.

Anjum's character also embodies a resistance to this rampant modernization and globalization. In the center of the changing dynamics of the nation, Roy creates a chronotope called the Khwabgah (the House of Dreams), which stands in contrast with *Duniya* (the world). A character named Ustad Kulsoom Bi explains that the Khwabgah "was where special people, *blessed* people, came with their dreams that could not be realized in the Duniya. In the Khwabgah, Holy Souls trapped in the wrong bodies were liberated" (57). It welcomes a motley crew of different types of human beings, each with their own peculiarities: "Mary was the only Christian among the residents of the Khwabgah . . . Gudiya and Bulbul were both Hindus and did occasionally visit temples that allowed them in. The rest were Muslim . . . The most masculine person in the Khwabgah, however, did menstruate" (26). The Khwabgah provides, in other words, an alternative world, a model of multiculturalism and tolerance of cultural difference that should be imitated by the Indian nation as a whole.

However, the Khwabgah, which provided Anjum a safe haven, began to grow fissures with the arrival of Zainab, a child Anjum found on the steps of Jama Masjid. With the child also arrived the yearning to be a mother, a common, mundane mother who would want nothing else but to "dress Zainab in a school uniform and send her off to school with her books and tiffin box" (33). An additional fissure developed in the Khwabgah with the arrival of Saeeda, another trans woman who signaled one more shift in the resistance against modernization and globalization. Saeeda, unlike Anjum, is a graduate and speaks English. She is also aware of the new discourses of gender and sexuality: "she could use the terms *cis-Man* and *FtoM* and *MtoF* and in interviews

she referred to herself as a ‘transperson.’ Anjum, on the other hand, mocked what she called ‘trans-france’ business, and stubbornly insisted on referring to herself as a Hijra” (42). The entrance of this new globally informed trans person who displaced Anjum from the number one spot with the international media fits well with the new image of India, “the New India—a nuclear power and emerging destination for international finance” (42). We accompany Anjum in her journey from a boy in Duniya to a mother in the Khwabgah, and finally to *Jannat* (Heaven), which is poetically re-created inside a graveyard.

We also witness The Emergency (1975-1977), which exposes the mass sterilization of Muslim men in India; the massacre of thousands of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984, after Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards; the September 11 terrorist attacks (Anjum blames Saeeda’s curse for the tragedy) and the subsequent war on terror; the 2002 Gujarat Riots, where, according to official figures 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus were killed (other sources count more than 2,000 deaths), which heralded a new right-wing India under the leadership of Narendra Modi. The cynical tone used in the description of The Emergency reflects the critical approach of much of the novel. The narrator likewise describes how after the brutal massacre of Sikhs, the maddened murderers simply returned to their routines and daily chores, as if nothing had happened. All of these historical events become crucial to explain the stage where India stands today. For instance, within the context of globalization, we learn that the September 11 attacks by al Qaeda were used by nationalist Indian politicians who believed that India should be declared a Hindu country. The narrator explains that these ideologues, admirers of Hitler, compared the Muslims of India to the Jews of Germany and, as a result, anti-Muslim hostility grew in the country: Muslim shrines and mosques were destroyed; even in hospitals, policemen arrested and killed young Muslim boys and men. Major elements within Anjum’s

bildungsroman, these historic landmarks also function as a sort of coming of age for a new India under globalization that continues to retain fragments of its older unified imaginary.

Tilo's story underpins larger discussions around the concepts of nation, democracy, and freedom. Through Tilo, we interrogate the absurdity of nationalism, the massacres and coldblooded murders, the shared amnesia and madness erasing any trace of individuality from the collective identity. Tilo's story intersects with three men: Musa (a pro-Kashmir independence militant), Naga (a renowned journalist), and Biplab (an intelligence officer), all of them linked in their own way to the conflict between India and Pakistan in Kashmir, widely regarded as the world's most militarized zone. Tilo, therefore, is instrumental in sketching out Roy's intrinsic commitment to the cause of Kashmir's freedom. Charting out Kashmir's changing environment during the 1980s, we are informed about the insurrection: "Women flocked around police stations and army camps holding up a forest of thumbed, dog-eared, passport-sized photographs grown soft with tears: *Please sir, have you seen my boy anywhere? Have you seen my husband? Has my brother by any chance passed through your hands?*" (320). Roy packs the novel with details about life under occupation to reiterate the state of exception in which Kashmiris struggles to survive. She does not mince words from criticizing the mindlessness of the nationalist discourse that turns people into "Cold soldiers from a war climate patrolling the icy highway" (322). The novel, however, ends on a hopeful note with a wedding that takes place in Jannat, and with Musa going back to fight the old war of freedom in Kashmir against Indian occupation: "But even he knew that things would turn out all right in the end. They would, because they had to" (444).

### **Hopeful versus Cynical Cosmopolitanism**



The kind of mobility that Roy gives to her characters in this total novel that rewrites the official recent history of India will not necessarily turn them into cosmopolitans. Whereas despite receiving death threats, the author still resides in India, talking back to the nation from within, Castellanos Moya moved first to Mexico, then to Europe and Japan, and currently resides in the United States, perhaps representing an unrooted cosmopolitanism. While Castellanos Moya's main protagonist is looking forward to returning home, an anticipated international mobility, Roy's protagonists travel through different parts of India to reach their final destination in Jannat—the heaven for all rejects of the patriarchal/national model of homeland. Both authors intricately weave human relationships. Roy, however, seems to be more nuanced in going through the depths of these interactions; by contrast Castellanos Moya's representation of unscrupulous and promiscuous women may occasionally have misogynistic overtones. Along these lines, whereas Roy's cosmopolitan consciousness is forward looking, Castellanos Moya's is diverted towards an aesthetics marked by an anxiety of survival. The failing of the family as the core symbolic trope of the nation works in tandem with the impact of globalization in the Global South. Indeed, the two novels engage this type of disruption of meaning, together with the altered experience of the nation and its imaginary.

Castellanos Moya, having lived through one failed revolution, is more skeptical about democratic institutions and more embittered by the peacemaking process. By contrast, the ultimate message of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* remains hopeful about a democratic future. Yet Roy still laments how nationalisms of one kind or another were the cause of most genocides in the twentieth century. In Castellanos Moya's case, perhaps it is the physical distance from the homeland that makes him lean toward an unrooted cosmopolitanism. At any

rate, both authors resort to individual stories for their critique of the nation and of the national imaginary.

Castellanos Moya resorts to the individual's attempts at survival as a way to demonstrate the failure of the national project to provide peace and security for the citizens. Roy, on the other hand, is more inclined toward pushing forth the individual voices lost in the homogenizing process of the national project. She fights for the right to heterogeneity within a purportedly homogenous global nation. In turn, Castellanos Moya postulates the passive stance of a never ending heartbreak caused by the failure of revolutionary battles in the national territory. More proactively, Roy surpasses the nation in order to create a larger sense of solidarity against the evils of globalization that disenfranchise most of the Global South as well as marginal communities in the Global North.

Formally, while Castellanos Moya's cynicism and skepticism is reflected in his stoic tone and frugal use of vocabulary, Roy's optimistic outlook is enhanced by the engaging poetical tone and approach of numerous passages in the *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. In fact, even the most marginalized citizens make a conscious effort in the pursuit of happiness. Thus, when in the second chapter another Hijra named Nimmo Gorakhpuri explains their existence by claiming that God decided to create a living creature that was incapable of happiness, and argues that the external conflicts that make other Indians unhappy are internalized in their own case, "The riot is *inside* us. The war is *inside* us. Indo-Pak is *inside* us. It will never settle down. It *can't*" (27), Aftab immediately disagrees by pondering that she was happier than ever before. And once a three-year-old abandoned girl grabs her finger, her inner war stops and she manages to feel complete love (love being an entirely absent feeling in *El sueño del retorno*).

Altogether, both *El sueño del retorno* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* suggest that anxieties about the nation and about national identities transcend geographical boundaries, producing contrasting outcomes. Establishing a fruitful South-South dialogue between them may bring out life lessons worth learning. As Appiah explains,

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. People are different, the cosmopolitan knows, and there is much to know from our differences. (*Cosmopolitanism* xv)

This rooted cosmopolitan openness to the world, the recognition that we can learn from each other's cultural differences is particularly important, in our view, when engaging East-West cross-cultural connections. Respecting legitimate differences as well as being interested in and receptive to the lives, worldviews, literature, art, and culture of other places may provide potential informed solutions for ours and help us develop improved habits of coexistence.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mark Anderson has summarized the definitions of the Total Novel: “It was not until the 1960s that the denomination *novela totalizadora* or ‘total’ novel, surfaced in Spanish American letters, along with the authors of the Boom. During this period, writers such as Alejo Carpentier, Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Gabriel García Márquez published a series of essays and novels in an attempt to redefine the parameters of the novelistic tradition in Latin America. Among these writings was Vargas Llosa’s critical introduction to Joanet Martorell’s *Tirant lo Blanc* (1969), where he articulates the beginnings of a theory of the total novel, in which the novelist supplants or displaces God by creating an autonomous fictional world capable of competing with exterior reality. According to the Peruvian novelist, Martorell begins this tradition of fictive creation in his chivalric novel *Tirant lo Blanc*: ‘Martorell es el primero de esa estirpe de suplantadores de Dios—Fielding, Balzac, Dickens, Flaubert, Tolstoi, Joyce, Faulkner—que pretenden crear en sus novelas una ‘realidad total,’ el más remoto caso de novelista todopoderoso, desinteresado, omnisciente y ubicuo” (11).

<sup>2</sup> “Un país salvaje donde el aborto fuera penado por la ley” (43).

<sup>3</sup> “Poco a poco comprendí que en mi corazón anidaba el mayor de los desprecios no solo hacia mi padre y mi familia paterna, sino también hacia mi madre, y que ese veneno había sido inoculado en mi víscera por mi abuela materna” (97).

<sup>4</sup> “Aunque yo no había nacido en El Salvador era como si en ese lugar estuviera mi ombligo, de tan chico que era cuando me llevaron” (145).

<sup>5</sup> “La memoria es cosa poco fiable y puede ponerlo a uno en aprietos” (80).

<sup>6</sup> “Mi primer impulso fue salir a la carrera, a todo lo que dieran mis piernas, reacción normal para alguien procedente del país de donde yo procedía” (160).