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**Novelizing the dissent: Cosmopolitan literature from Latin America and
South Asia**

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

in

Interdisciplinary Humanities

by

Garima Singh Panwar

Committee in charge:

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Professor Nigel Hatton

2019

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2019

Dedicated to the dispossessed people of India fighting for survival and agency.

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ABSTRACT

The Global South is not a fixed geographic entity. Today, it represents a malleable, symbolic notion, with its massive diasporas, migrations, fragmentations, and exchanges. In a similar vein, there is no one defining feature of cosmopolitanism. Thinkers like Sharon Pollock, Bhabha et al. in their book titled *Cosmopolitanism* (2000), sees it as a plural, multifaceted concept. They see cosmopolitans as victims of modernity, “failed by capitalism’s upward mobility and bereft of these comforts and customs of national belongings” (2000:6). The anxieties about the nation and national identities transcend geographical boundaries. This thesis endeavors to showcase this fragmented cosmopolitanism in Global South through a comparative analysis of national identity and urban cosmopolitan space in the novels *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) by the Indian author Arundhati Roy, *How to get filthy rich in Rising Asia* (2013) by Pakistani Mohsin Hamid, *Fábula Asiática* (2017) by Guatemalan Rodrigo Rey Rosa and *El sueño del retorno* (2013) by the Salvadoran Horacio Castellanos Moya’s. It explores the questions such as rooted and unrooted cosmopolitanism, and homelessness, and how these dynamics are dependent on social, political and geographical boundaries and how does it, in turn, shapes national identities? If there is a trend that can be traced across boundaries and if neoliberal politics and political unrest are part of a larger design? And lastly, how the artists and literary figures in the global south have been expressing their dissent against the nation?

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Finally, at this juncture, we could identify the cosmopolitan (cosmopolitique) tradition common to a certain Greek stoicism and a Pauline Christianity, of which the inheritors were the figures of the Enlightenment, and to which Kant will doubtlessly have given the most rigorous philosophical formulation in his famous Definitive Article in View of Perpetual Peace: ‘The law of cosmopolitanism must be restricted to the conditions of universal hospitality.’

(Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism*, 19)

El poder—como dice Borges--actúa siempre siguiendo su propia lógica. La única crítica posible de este poder es quizá la Historia; pero como la Historia se escribe desde el presente, y así lo incluye, no es probable que pueda hacerse una crítica imparcial.

(Rodrigo Rey Rosa, *El Material Humano*, 55)

The world is becoming a smaller place with the ever-expanding claws of neoliberalism and globalization, which are altering the social fabric of nation-states. Nations and nationalisms, as were once understood, are at a decisive juncture where their mere existence is under scrutiny. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the world that was divided into poles ceased to exist. Thus, Marxist theorists Michael Hardt and Antoni Negri remind us that colonialism and imperialism have been replaced by a new global sovereignty, which emerges from the intrinsic logic of capital expansion requiring disparity and hierarchy to function. This current global order is dictated by the movements of the Empire, which they define as a “regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality, or really that rules over the entire “civilized” world. No territorial boundaries limit its reign” (*Empire* xiv). Hardt and Negri theorize Empire as a pragmatic form of biopower and emphasize that “although the practice of Empire is continually bathed in blood, the concept of Empire is always dedicated to peace—a perpetual and universal peace outside of history” (xv).

Owing to the movements of the empire, the Global South is not confined to a fixed geographic boundary. Today, it represents a non-rigid, symbolic entity, with its massive diaspora, migration, fragments, 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. Similarly, Cosmopolitanism can be seen as a project to reexamine the homogenizing process of globalization or the hegemonizing character of Western modernity. On the other hand, it can also function as

a form of dissent against all these processes that deny the agency of the marginal, disenfranchised subject. In my thesis, it is this aspect of cosmopolitanism that I will be exploring by looking at literature produced in the last decade in the Global South. My main argument is that the cosmopolitan novel from the Global South represents a form of dissent against the failing imaginary of the nation and a protest against globalization.

Understanding Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism, as a concept, traces its origin starting from ancient Stoic Greek logic to Enlightenment Kant's rationality, and at the heart, has the concept of a universal citizenship. This makes cosmopolitanism a concept much older than nationalism, against which it is often pitted. Immanuel Kant defines cosmopolitanism, from a Eurocentric perspective, as being "the matrix within which all the original capacities of the human race may develop" (*grounding Cosmopolitanism*, 31). Wallace Brown understands Kant's cosmopolitanism as "being concerned with the cultivation of a global environment within which everyone can fully develop his or her human capacities." (*grounding Cosmopolitanism* 31) Kant expands on what establishing this matrix entails when he proclaims that, "the greatest problem for the human species, the solution of which nature compels him to seek, is that of attaining a civil society, which can administer justice universally". For Kant, the main aim of the cosmopolitan condition is to create a perpetual peace, which is necessary for the functioning of a modern nation-state. With the aim of tracing the origin of cosmopolitanism, Kwame Anthony Appiah also reiterates, that "the early Cynics and Stoics took their contamination from the places they were born to the Greek cities where they taught. Many were strangers in those places; cosmopolitanism was invented by contaminators whose migrations were solitary." (*Cosmopolitanism*, 112) Thus, fundamental to cosmopolitanism's nature is movement.

Globalization has created reluctant cosmopolitans in the Global South, cosmopolitans who do not belong to the quintessential class of educated elites, distinguished pedigree, but cosmopolitans from below, a class (which forms the majority in the Global South) that has been left out of the very upward mobility that globalization promises. Here, by the quintessential cosmopolitan person, I mean someone who identifies and belongs to more than just a regional, national, local identity, and relates to, identify themselves with a more global and universal sense of personhood, culture, etc., even before the age of globalization. In a certain sense, they are the highest personification of the professed cultural logic of modernity, of creating universalists.

This thesis showcases this fragmented cosmopolitanism through four novels from the designated Global South. The reason for choosing literature is quite clear for, as Gayatri Spivak mentions in *Death of a Discipline*, "We must take the languages of the Southern Hemisphere as active cultural media rather than as objects of cultural study by the sanctioned ignorance of the metropolitan migrant" (9), adding later that "If we seek to supplement gender training and human rights intervention by expanding the scope of Comparative Literature, the proper study of literature may give us entry to the performativity of cultures as instantiated in narrative." (13)

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. This thesis puts in perspective the different façades of cosmopolitanism being played out in different parts of the Global South.

As Kwame Anthony Appiah explains, there are two intertwined strands 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 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 latter part of cosmopolitanism is enabled largely by globalization, which gives easy access to witness happenings from around the world, via popular culture, mass media, and print capitalism. To analyze this cultural cosmopolitanism triggered by globalization, I will explore the reactions to globalization and neoliberalism emerging from the literary world of the Global South. I will also explore how cosmopolitanism, expressed with experiences and anxieties common across the South Asian and Latin American countries, is shaping new imaginaries of transnational commonalities. Guided by Pnina Werbner’s notion of a cosmopolitan consciousness, which she defines as “an open, experimental, inclusive and normative consciousness of the other cultures” (498), I show that the emergence of a new cosmopolitan literature is largely due to elements of self-questioning and “reflexive self-disassociation” from one’s own culture, which require the cosmopolitan to be aware of the fact that other cultures, values, share similar anxieties in the face of globalization. Whereas Werbner is engaging with non-elite working-class laborers, migrants and refugees, I am proposing that this non-elite cosmopolitanism is also functioning even without mobility, as this mobility does not necessarily make one a cosmopolitan. In following these questions, I make the case that the “cosmopolitan literature”, is opening up spaces for the emergence and circulation of new transnational imaginaries and discourses that are constructing points of convergence between different parts of the Global South, creating cultural cosmopolitanism.

In this thesis, I problematize the concept of cosmopolitanism and explore the possibility of creating a pool of cosmopolitanisms from the grassroots, representing non-elite subjectivities that are at the margins of the globalization. For this purpose, I look at four contemporary literary pieces emerging from different zones of the Global South, specifically from Central America and the Indian sub-continent. I will be looking at writings of four different authors who are creating ripples around the literary world and drawing attention to the literary richness of these zones of the Global South. In their fictions, these writers have raised concerns over various topics, such as nation, identity, violence, and globalization. In this thesis, I will do a close reading and analysis of selected work of fiction by Arundhati Roy (*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, 2017), Horacio Castellanos Moya *El Sueño de mi retorno* (*The Dream of My Return*, 2013), Mohsin Hamid (*How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, 2013), and Rodrigo Rey Rosa *Fábula Asiática* (*Chaos-A fable*, 2017). As the cosmopolitan works they are, these novels help in expounding the definition of a cosmopolitan subject from the Global South and in questioning the limits and/or futilities of the nation and national identities.

I look at cultural cosmopolitanism as a fragmented concept manifested in different regions and in different anxieties; in other words, there is no one distinctive definition of cosmopolitanism; rather, there are multiple, simultaneous cosmopolitanisms being performed and/or contested in and around the world. For this reason, Carol Breckenridge et al. make the term plural, cosmopolitanism(s), and conceive of cosmopolitans as victims of modernity, “failed by capitalism’s upward mobility and bereft of these comforts and customs of national belongings. Refugees, peoples of the diaspora, and migrants and exiles represent the spirit of the cosmopolitan community” (6). Although I will continue to untangle the layers of cosmopolitanism in the following chapters, here I would like to take a detour to consider some critical concepts that inform my understanding of cosmopolitanism, namely nation and nationalism, world literature, and fragmented subjectivities.

Nation and Cosmopolitanism

Ernest Renan’s 1882 essay, “What is a nation” attempted to define the nation in the aftermath of the French Revolution. He is known for his famous postulation that “A nation’s existence is a daily plebiscite, just as an individual’s existence is a perpetual affirmation of life” (19). Renan is probably one of the first historians to theorize the making of a modern nation. In his inquiry of the various categories that contribute to the creation of a modern nation, he looks at race, religion, geography, and language, but his most important contribution is expounding the crucial role of “forgetting”. He argues that “Forgetting, (historical error), is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for (the principle of) nationality” (11). This forgetting or partial amnesia has been a major theme for sociologists like Maurice Halbwachs, James Fentress, Christopher Wickham, and Paul Ricoeur, who have explored the presentist aspect of (re)memory/forgetting, how the past is interpreted differently by different social institutions in different historical times. They argue that the past is not dead or static; rather, it is dynamic insofar as it is being enriched from collective sources and (re)interpretation. A narrative is, then, crucial to the task of (re)interpreting the past and making it valuable to the present. This narrative is then the becoming of a nation that, as a spiritual principle, is the outcome for a profound complication (revision and selection of a particular representation) of history.

Benedict Anderson engages with this becoming of a modern nation in his seminal work *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (1983). Putting together two seemingly unrelated words “imagined and community” in the title, Anderson goes on to explain how the modern concept of nationalism and the nation is created by deliberation and imagination, rather than appearing organically as we would like to believe. He chronicles the factors leading to its formation, from looking into the cultural roots of national consciousness to the change from eschatological historical Christian time to a Benjamin’s “homogenous, empty time” (32-33). Anderson found the role played by print capitalism paramount, the rise of newspapers, magazines and novels in vernacular languages ensuing in the creation of a “limited, sovereign, and often homogenous” identity. Anderson rightly observes that

the birth of the imagined community of the nation can best be seen if we consider the basic structure of two forms of imagining which first flowered in Europe in the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper. For these forms provided the technical means for “re-presenting” the kind of imagined community that is the nation. (24-25)

For both Renan and Anderson, forgetting and selective narratives are imperative to the creation of a modern nation. However, identity formation within the nation is still a hegemonic process; there is always a violent tussle involved in the creation and maintenance of a homogenous national identity, while concomitantly leaving a vast majority of people out on the margins of this national imaginary.

Franz Fanon, in his 1952 study *Peau Noire Masques Blancs (Black Skin White Masks)*, explores inherently fragmented postcolonial subjectivities: “Since I realize that the black man is the symbol of sin, I start hating the black man. But I realize that I am a black man. I have two ways of escaping the problem. Either I ask people not to pay attention to the color of my skin; or else, on the contrary, I want people to notice it...” (143). This passage follows a page-long description of a black man killing his white master, all the while metaphorically killing the white man within himself, thus, in a way, opening up to the possibility of violence for achieving independence. This violence, however, is not necessarily physical but rather, symbolic, a symbolic violence that functions on the level of discourse, and which creates postcolonial subjects within a rational/Western episteme; a postcolonial subject educated and trained in a western education which leaves it inherently fragmented. Pierre Bourdieu explores the symbolic violence in the inherent power relations between classes, which serves to subjugate one class and benefit another. Bourdieu posits that

If the relations which make the cultural field into a field of (intellectual, artistic or scientific) position-takings only reveal their meaning and function in the light of the relations among cultural subjects who are holding specific positions in this field, it is because intellectual or artistic position takings are also always semi-conscious strategies in a game in which the conquest of cultural legitimacy and of the concomitant power of legitimate symbolic violence is at stake. (137)

The Subaltern

The elite “Subject” and the subaltern “subject” are of two different becomings. Gayatri Spivak in her seminal text “Can the Subaltern Speak” talks about “epistemic violence” as the process of othering and subjugation by use of discourse and knowledge. Before I move forward, I would briefly like to evoke Gramsci and Guha here to emphasize on the importance of the subaltern subject. Gramsci used the term “Subaltern” in the Prison Notebooks, and by Subaltern he meant the proletariat; the one who find themselves outside the realms of hegemonic political/power relations. The term was later picked up by the postcolonial subaltern study group headed by Ranajit Guha who locates the subaltern in the absence, outside the rhetoric of the official narratives. Guha’s project consists of looking for ways to write histories of the ‘people’, the ‘subaltern’, through a critique of ‘statist’ or elite historiographies that have always approached history writing as the

narration of the advance of colonial or bourgeois state institutions or 'elite' organizations. In context of the historiography of Indian colonialism, his project aims at trying to rewrite history in a way that recognizes the agency of various subaltern groups that formed a major part of all events of the Indian freedom struggle or formed the 'pre-history' of that freedom struggle. Guha takes his notion of negativity, or negative consciousness through Gramsci. "Gramsci helps us to grasp its precise moment in characterizing this 'merely as the first glimmer of such consciousness, in other words, merely as the basic negative, polemical attitude'. The idea of negation for Guha also comes out in the subalterns attempts at politics by way of turning the world upside down, as an absolute negation of the oppressive relations. Spivak, being a true Derridian deconstructionist, posits her subaltern at the end of the limit of the narrative. That's why for her the subaltern can't speak, as the "contemporary invocations of "libidinal economy" and desire as the determining interest, combined with the practical politics of the oppressed (under socialized capital) "speaking for themselves," restore the category of the sovereign subject within the theory that seems most to question it" (278).

As I have mentioned above, the role of symbolic violence functions on the level of discourse. Central to my understanding of this Global South cosmopolitan subject is the Foucauldian notion of "discourse" and his explanation of how, within a specific historical context, things get their meaning and become discourse, and how each historical period produces its specific set of knowledge, object, subject, and practice of knowledge. Foucault, by shifting the emphasis from language to discourse as the system of representation, opened new avenues to understand the nexus between power and knowledge. Knowledge linked to power not only assumes the authority of the truth but also has the power to make itself the truth. For Foucault, knowledge does not operate in a void, but in a discursive formation sustaining a regime of truth. The "subject" is likewise produced within a discourse. In the course of the global project of Modernity, we find these regimes of truth functioning and creating fragmented subjects. It is within this fragmented subject that I would like to situate the cosmopolitan being, left out of the upward mobility of globalization.

Cosmopolitan Literature and Global South

In literature, such cosmopolitanism emerges in writings that seem to be concerned primarily with general human concerns rather than with specific, particular, contextual, culturally specific issues or concerns, allowing it to become something akin to a "world literature", it seems pertinent to concerns that are global, general. However, as it turns out, that particular kind of cosmopolitanism, "world" literature, that supposedly represents the "general" human condition, only truly represented, or was concerned with a certain privileged sense, with the idea of what the general human condition and concerns are or are supposed to be. It emanated from urban, privileged, upper-class characters, usually representing concerns of the Global North and generally excluding concerns that might even contend for a global, cosmopolitan status. It apparently concerned only particular, local, culturally specific, isolated issues for which the rest of the world has no concern. So, by cosmopolitan novels, I mean novels which problematize the question of cosmopolitanism, and its various tenants such as migration, belonging to a

citizenship or identity-national vs international. These novels, even though grounded in very local issues of a region, have a transnational appeal, questioning institutes such as nations and globalization.

We need a fantasy to sustain “the fantasy of the reality,” because since reality itself is fragmented, a narrative is the cohesive force that strings these fragments together. National fictions from the Global South have aimed toward creating the narratives of the newly independent nations, attempting to create and strengthen national identity. These national fictions aspire to create a “whole” that was fragmented by the violence of colonization. In *Foundational Fictions: The national Romance of Latin America* (1991), Doris Sommers notices that early novels worked as exhortations for building a national character, with plots generally ending in marriages, and happily ever after: “even when they would end in satisfying marriages, the end of desire beyond which the narratives refuse to go, happiness reads like a wish-fulfilling projection of national consolidation and growth and a goal rendered visible” (6-7). In case of South Asia, 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 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.

Contrary to these foundational fictions, contemporary cosmopolitan novels are not painting a rosy picture of the nation; rather, they act as subaltern speech-acts, raising concerns over the unfulfilled projects of the nation. The family becomes the core to explore the ruptures in the nationhood. Instead of endless possibilities, and the hope of the nation, there are cosmopolitan desires that bring both nation and globalization under one umbrella of critique. For instance, Salvadoran writer Horacio Castellanos Moya, in his novel *El sueño del retorno* (*The Dream of My Return*) (2013) explores the nation and its identity from the gaze of a refugee, a reluctant cosmopolitan who is stuck in a state of homelessness and experiencing the loss of both his nation and his national identity. In turn, Guatemalan writer Rodrigo Rey Rosa, grounds his cosmopolitan novel *Fábula asiática* (*Chaos, A Fable*) (2017) in Morocco, focusing on the alarming international refugee crisis, war on terrorism, and never-ending human suffering that are wreaking havoc all over the world. On the other side of the world, Indian writer Arundhati Roy, in her *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), gives voice to the “unconsoled”, the disposable citizens left out of the national imaginary. Her cosmopolitanism looks at translational solidarity in struggle against globalization. Similarly, Pakistani writer Mohsin Hamid, in his novel *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013), exposes the challenges of a cosmopolitanism of the margins, underlying concerns of globalization, alienation, corruption and violence. The authors I have considered here are all cosmopolitans both because of the circulation of their work in the west, forming part of cannon, and also because of their dissent against the imaginary of the nationhood and citizenship.

With globalization comes access to the world, which is not without complications in the Global South, since access to social media provides more fantasies to latch on, while also creating fissures within their own imaginaries of the nation. Thus, a cosmopolitan subject is a fragmented subject. These cosmopolitan novels, based on different experiences and concerns, have generated discussion on the similarities among various countries in the Global South. Through these novels, we can gauge into the cosmopolitan consciousness and similar concerns of the youth and the emerging middle-classes in these countries. They deal, in various contexts, with certain aspirations and struggles common to most societies of the Global South coming to terms with a modern world. As will be seen, these novels have certain themes in common, in that they all represent, in various ways, the diverse anxieties and concerns shared by people living under neoliberal economies, aspiring toward a more independent, albeit middle-class existence, not wanting to miss out on, and be left behind from all the new possibilities that the new globalized and modern world seems to offer them. All this goes on to show that globalization affects the aesthetic formation—not just the content but also the form—of narration and representation. Local content is also increasingly informed by globality.

As a concluding remark, one of the shortcomings of the cosmopolitan writers is that, even though all these writers are engaging in a subaltern speech-act, they all belong to the elite intelligentsia of their respective countries. Publishing novels at the end of the day remain subject to market forces, and the salability comes with a certain cultural capital. All these authors bring with them, an air of having seen the world, and an authority to talk about the disfranchised, even though none of them belong to that class. On the literary field, it would be interesting to see if cosmopolitanism, and a transnational imaginary could reach and influence a new wave of writers to surface, something that other grassroots cultural movements have been able to do, for example Hip-hop.

CHAPTER 2: RELUCTANT COSMOPOLITANS AS A CONSEQUENCE OF GLOBALIZATION.

First of all, the passage from the ‘solid’ to the ‘liquid’ phase of modernity: that is, into a condition in which social forms (structures that limit individual choices, institutions that guard repetitions of routines, patterns of acceptable behavior) can no longer (and are no longer) expected to keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them, and once they are cast for them to set.

(Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times-Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, 1)

Globalization promises homogeneity, the access to the same commodities all around the world, to be able to purchase the same brands, anywhere in the world. Globalization also promises a multicultural, heterogeneous cultural space. This global homogeneity, however, also creates ruptures in the social fabric of society; it is a threat to local homogeneity. With globalization comes the migrant, a “reluctant cosmopolitan” looking for their own, what Appiah calls, “pockets of homogeneity.” Explaining these pockets of homogeneity, Appiah avers that cosmopolitan spaces are always a contestation of differences: “More of them have access to medicines that work. More of them have access to clean drinking water. More of them have schools. Where, as is still too common, they don’t have these things, this is not something to celebrate but to deplore. And whatever loss of difference there has been, they are constantly inventing new forms of difference: new hairstyles, new slang, even, from time to time, new religions” (103).

With the move to a metropolis always comes the privilege or curse of anonymity. It is a privilege insofar as it provides refuge from the past and a chance to start afresh, and a curse, as it renders a migrant anonymous. In this sense, Anthony Giddens defines globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant

localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (64). The relation between cosmopolitanism and globalization is explained by Ulf Hannerz thus: “if the term ‘globalization’ had to a remarkable extent been appropriated to refer to the deregulation of markets and the triumphant march of capitalism, ‘cosmopolitanism’ suggested that human beings could relate to the world not only as consumers, or members of a labor force but also as citizens” (9).

From this perspective, this chapter interrogates the reluctant cosmopolitanism of those who are the outcome and victims of globalization by analyzing Arundhati Roy’s second novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) and Mohsin Hamid’s third novel *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013). These contemporary works cannot be confined to the tags of postcolonial literature; rather, they have crossed national boundaries while concomitantly raising local issues. They become truly cosmopolitan by showing the underbelly of a cosmopolitan space. Functioning within this milieu of post-independence nations, these Global South novels are not pessimistic about the future. Whereas Arundhati Roy is optimistic about the power of the people and their ability to rise as a collective force, Hamid is an ardent supporter of the individual success that the neoliberal global world offers. Both novels demonstrate the process of becoming cosmopolitan subjects: however, their primary concerns are quite different, thus exhibiting the fragmented self of cosmopolitanism and of the cosmopolitan subject.

Mohsin Hamid’s Reluctant Cosmopolitan in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*

Mohsin Hamid is one of the most promising writers emerging from Pakistan. He, along with Fatima Bhutto and Mohammad Hanif, represents a new generation of Pakistani writers who are attuned with the local, the global as well as the glocal, and are conscious of the limits of the national imaginary of a postcolonial nation marching ahead to join an open-market world. Hamid received rave reviews for his first novel, *Moth Smoke* (2000), which, situated in Lahore, tells the story of young, ambitious, and often unscrupulous protagonists who are trying to make it in the metropolis of Lahore. It questions the very foundation of Pakistani identity, the roles of women in society, and the underbelly of Lahore’s wealthy class, along with corruption, violence, and drugs consumption. From Lahore, Hamid moves to the US in his next and most acclaimed novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), based on the aftermath of 9/11 and its repercussions on Muslims living in the United States. This novel was later adapted to a cinematic version. *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013), Hamid’s third novel negotiates with anonymous identity. Therefore, by exposing the unstoppable influence of globalization on South Asian societies, he has been moving toward a more cosmopolitan narrative.

While Anthony Giddens argues that globalization is the consequence of modernity, Walter D. Mignolo has reminded us that modernity itself engenders coloniality as its darker side. In this sense, South Asian societies present a clear case of a type of globalization that is a direct result of colonization. Globalization brings movement and a disruption of (purported) local homogeneity that often produces a sense of alienation and

isolation out of which anonymity is born. With the emphasis on anonymity in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, Hamid crosses national borders and frees his narrative from the claws of the history of any particular area. The protagonist could be anyone belonging to a developing economy. The novel's title attaches the word "filthy" to being "rich," making it something that cannot be achieved through honest methods, thus leaving ethics and morality out of the framework of becoming wealthy.

The novel starts as a sort of self-help book, providing twelve recommendations that will guide the reader to become filthy rich in rising Asia, a trope that sets the novel into the framework of an impersonal, pluralistic, "fit for all" narrative. It is addressed to a narratee, a "You" that represents not only the main protagonist but also us, the readers. Self-help books originated in nineteenth-century England, at the turn of the Industrial Revolution, and gained popularity with the influx into the cities of a working-class population that was eager to gain cultural capital, along with financial gains.

Nowhere in the novel does the author mention the name of the country or the city. Notwithstanding the anonymity, it is sensible to assume that Hamid, being a Pakistani, is plausibly thinking of Karachi, Pakistan's commercial capital. However, the narrative could also conveniently fit Mumbai or any other metropolitan city of an economically emerging nation-state. From the very first page, Hamid informs us that this "self-help" book is for the dispossessed one who has nothing to lose and everything to gain, for reluctant cosmopolitans who are made aware, through popular media, of commodities around the world but who have no means to obtain them for themselves:

huddled, shivering, on the packed earth under your mother's cot one cold, dewy morning. Your anguish is the anguish of a boy whose chocolate has been thrown away, whose remote controls are out of batteries, whose scooter is busted, whose new sneakers have been stolen. This is all the more remarkable since you've never in your life seen any of these things.
(8)

All of these consumer products are part of the normative imaginary of a regular childhood from the Global North.

This desire for upward mobility makes thousands of people move to cities to end up living in less than humane conditions. Thus, the first act responding to a cosmopolitan desire suggested by Hamid is the move from a rural to an urban space. The narrator reminds us that to get rich, you have to shift base to an urban space, a contested space for citizenship where everyone toils to "make it", while concomitantly lying at the heart of the cosmopolitanism that Ulf Hannerz defines as an "intellectual and aesthetic openness toward divergent cultural experiences, and an ability to make one's way into other cultures" (103). Thus, as the protagonist sits on the top of an overcrowded bus and makes the transition from village to city, he observes that:

Dirt streets give way to paved ones, potholes grow less frequent and soon all but disappear, and the kamikaze rush of oncoming traffic vanishes, to be replaced by the enforced peace of the deal carriage-way. Electricity makes its appearance, first in passing as you slip below a steel parade of high-voltage giants, then later in the form of wires running at bus-stop eye level on either side of the road, and finally in streetlights and shop signs

and glorious, magnificent billboards. Buildings go from mud to brick to concrete, then shoot up to an unimaginable four stories, even five. (13)

Another major cosmopolitan aspect of the novel is the fact that the author doesn't fritter the time away in delving into the past or into the ethnic or religious background of the protagonists. In fact, the cosmopolitan subject emerges when one leaves these "identity markers" behind and homogenizes the identity enough to fit into any story of the "rising Global South." In this vein, the protagonist is unhinged from any kind of attachments to identity markers conducive to national identity. It is an individual's story of struggle to become a cosmopolitan subject. With this goal in mind, the second important step is to acquire both a formal education and cultural capital, which are essential for developing the required aesthetic consciousness to fit into a cosmopolitan subjectivity. In their quest for a formal education, they undergo what Nestor García Canclini calls "hybridization," which is a series of "sociocultural processes in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in a separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices" (xxv). The hybridization process makes it difficult to separate "elite" culture from "popular" aesthetics. The novel, in its treatment of the secondary characters, engages with Canclini's processes of reconversion and shows us how a "painter becomes a designer, or the national bourgeoisies acquire the languages and other competencies necessary to reinvest their economic and symbolic capital in transnational circuits" (xxvii). Time and again throughout the novel we are made conscious of the importance of acquiring cultural capital. The narrator, for instance, reiterates his stance that:

Why, for example, do you persist in reading that much-praised, breathtakingly boring foreign novel, slogging through page after please-make-it-stop page of tar-slow prose and blush-inducing formal conceit, of not out of an impulse to understand distant lands that because of globalization are increasingly affecting life in your own? What is this impulse of yours, at its core, if not a desire for self-help? (16).¹

By moving the novels' settings to an urban space, Hamid is exposing globalization at its core, including the other side of globalization: the despair and loneliness in a world that is becoming increasingly urban and where the majority of the population lives in increasing physical and emotional isolation. The basic human emotions of love and compassion are also reduced to acts of 'aesthetics of survival.' There are no characters who have the privilege of loving, and love interests are always accompanied by an element of personal advancement. Love is as precarious as gaining financial security. As the third step towards becoming filthy rich, the narrator warns us to not fall in love. He reasons:

Yes, the pursuit of love and the pursuit of wealth have much in common. Both have the potential to inspire, motivate, uplift, and kill. But whereas achieving a massive bank balance demonstrably attracts fine physical specimens desperate to give their love in exchange, achieving love tends to do the opposite. It dampens the fire in the steam furnace of ambition, robbing of essential propulsion an already fraught upriver journey to the heart of financial success. (25)

Even though the protagonist falls in love with "pretty girl," that love is never the center of either's preoccupation, because for a "cosmopolitan subject from the bottom," love and its accompanying libido play out more as a liability than an asset. What sets "pretty

girl” away from a standard heroine of a South Asian novel is that she does not show any ethical or moral dilemma about using her femininity to advance in life. For her, this is the only way to escape a life of poverty and abusive familial relations. From this perspective, she shows no remorse for becoming a mistress to a marketing manager of a shampoo line. She does so unapologetically in a quest for independence and making her way into the cutthroat world of fashion. She is also aware that formal education alone is not enough for her career goal of becoming a fashion model and blending in with the cosmopolitan circle fashion: “What is clear to the pretty girl is that she must bridge a significant cultural and class divide to enter even the lower realms of the world of fashion. Hence her initial interest in movies, and in you” (32).

Along these lines, another important symbol of elite socio-cultural status and a pre-requisite for upward mobility is the knowledge and comfort with knowing and speaking English. “Pretty Girl” represents this very hybrid citizen, who learned the art of moving from popular to elite aesthetics. She starts from being a poor girl working in a parlor, then shifting gears to become a model and finally settling with owning an exotic furniture boutique—the symbol of elite aesthetics. The character development of pretty girl problematizes García Canclini’s question of “whether the access to a greater variety of goods facilitated by globalizing forces democratizes the ability to combine these goods and to develop a creative multicultural reality” (García Canclini, xxiv). Hybridization is a cultural condition marked by the transnational neoliberal market processes where as an effect of the cultural democratization of the transnational market new notions of citizenship arise that may allow for even the subaltern identities to become part of the civil society. Gareth Williams criticizes this notion as a failure to go beyond a thought that is itself structured by the managerial logics of neoliberal market forces themselves. The question arises, then, that cultural hybridity again provides the promise of common cultural ground to construct a new hegemonic formation. Cultural hybridity in this form becomes another form of a representation of the subaltern by the new state forces, that again tries to create a ground for the same old process of hegemonic articulations.

As a way to survive “you” takes up a part-time job as a delivery boy of pirated DVDs of international movies, and because of this job, “you” and “pretty girl” connect: “As a result (of the job) you know the names of actors and directors from all over the world, and what film should be compared with what, even in the case of actors and directors and films you have not yourself seen” (26). The novel pays special attention to specific elements, such as television and films, that aid the becoming of a cosmopolitan subject. Television arrived in South Asia in the 1960s and owning a television set had largely been associated with economic prosperity. In a short period of time, it became crucial in shaping public culture by determining what content was circulated or withheld from becoming part of shared imaginaries. The official state apparatuses that control and determine the circulation of foreign content have been central in limiting cultural interaction between countries and regions. For example, Pakistan has been one of the largest consumers of Bollywood movies, via piracy. In the introduction to the edited volume *Asian Video Cultures* (2017), Joshua Neves and Bhaskar Sarkar explore how “While informal infrastructures (photocopiers, optical discs, hard drives, SD cards, torrents) make up the primary means of media circulation in much of Asia (indeed, in much of the world, but particularly in southern societies), such ubiquitous practices are

criminalized by aggressive legal discourses, regulatory measures, and techno-moral ideologies” (2).

The novel performs a critique of the global economic system that stifles all attempts at creating emotional, familial bonds, putting instead extreme emphasis on individualistic economic growth and prosperity. This theme of extreme pressure to succeed without any support from either the family or the national government resonates deeply with the youth. It points toward something common, a point of convergence for these societies at this moment in their histories. These are certain realities of the emerging economies of the region, common to India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, where societies that have structured themselves around becoming a manufacturing and production-based economies, with a huge section of the population aspiring toward a middle-class existence of relative security, find themselves sharing similar aspirations and experiences. About the relationship with the state, the narrator cautions that:

NO SELF-HELP BOOK CAN BE COMPLETE WITHOUT taking into account our relationship with the state. For if there were a cosmic list of things that unite us, reader and writer, visible as it scrolled up into the distance, like the introduction to some epic science-fiction film, then shining brightly on that list would be the fact that we exist in a financial universe that is subject to massive gravitational pulls from states. States tugs at us. States bend us. And tirelessly, states seek to determine our orbits. (78)

Hamid extends his critique of “pockets of homogeneity” to city planning in the Global South, which is defined by its “lack”, rather than “abundance”—lack of mass transit, lack of governance, lack of space forcing the rich to live near the poor. The only way to get anything done is either by violence or by bribes. Globalization disturbs the uniformity of the city. Yet the city lures more and more people. The narrator observes that:

Your city is enormous, home to more people than half the countries in the world, to whom every few weeks is added a population equivalent to that of a small, sandy-beached, tropical island republic, a population that arrives, however not by outrigger canoe or lateen-sailed dhow but by foot and bicycle and scooter and bus. (48)

Hamid’s *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*² engages with Bildungsroman narrative, in tracing the becoming of a cosmopolitan subject who is, at the same time, a father, husband, son, and lover, or/and nothing at all: just a loner chasing the dream of becoming filthy rich in rising Asia. Thus, along with the story of the protagonist, it is also that of the urban space in the developing Global South, which evolves into a concrete jungle where both dreams and love are laboring to survive. We will see this same narrative trope when I analyze the next novel by Arundhati Roy, who also puts Bildungsroman narrative to service in her character development of the city and its inhabitants. Franco Moretti sees Bildungsroman, in a European context, as a symbolic form of modernity, where youth is chosen as the material sign for the new epoch of modernity:

to become a 'form', youth must be endowed with a very different, almost opposite feature to those already mentioned: the very simple and slightly philistine notion that youth 'does not last forever'. Youth is brief, or at any rate circumscribed, and this enables, or rather forces the a priori

establishment of a formal constraint on the portrayal of modernity. Only by curbing its intrinsically boundless dynamism, only by agreeing to betray to a certain extent its very essence, only thus, it seems, can modernity be represented. (6)

According to Moretti, pre-modern societies provided a sense of stability in social and individual roles, in meaning, knowledge, etc. Most of a person's life was in a sense predetermined, his social role, what he was supposed to do and know, his knowledge. There was a circularity to life. Life's experiences made sense within the overall life of a person, through individual, social, or religious explanations. With the onset of modernity, all this certainty breaks down. The circle of life breaks down and all life starts moving in a straight line with no clear, definable, meaningful endpoint. All of life's experiences start to appear as random occurrences with no logical connection among them; they lose significance within a larger narrative of the individual's life. Without the community that provided certainty of meaning for the life of an individual, in the modern world individual life has the burden of making sense of his life on his own, to find some relevance in the events of his own life. In such a situation, the Bildungsroman narrative form emerges as an attempt within the realm of literature to find a resolution to this new condition represented in a lack of coherence and meaning in the life experiences of the protagonist. It does so by providing an overarching narrative that (re)collects all the events, experiences of the character's life to rearrange them in a manner that leads up to a moment of self-discovery, or to any kind of self-realized or externally imposed moment of closure, a moment of formation of the self. *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* ends with "you" waking up

in a hospital bed, attached to interfaces electrical, gaseous, and liquid. Your ex-wife and son are here, and they look a little too young and you have a moment of panic, as though you have never left the hospital, as though the last half decade of your life were merely a fantasy, but then the pretty girl enters . . . the pretty girl holds your hand, and you contain her, this book, and me writing it, and I too contain you, who may not yet even be born, you inside me inside you, though not in a creepy way, and so may you, may I, may we, so may all of us confront the end. (20)

The novel ends on a hopeful note, highlighting the possibility of achieving the dream of self-made success. With this novel, Hamid demonstrates how a lower-class subject emerges from the bottom to reluctantly become cosmopolitan, as the only way to survive in the globalized world that is altering lives all around the world.

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 dichotomous location of new beginnings and becomings. This is the central theme of the second novel by the Booker laureate Arundhati Roy. Her first novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997), became the biggest bestseller by a nonexpatriate Indian author. The novel was lauded for its progressive politics, for highlighting gender and caste violence, communist political hypocrisy, double standards, and globalization. Beyond her literary capacities, Roy has been critical

of a process of globalization in which democracy is up for sale by multinational corporations. Globalization is also intrinsically 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: “Each chemically relaxed, milk-producing cow or buffalo that died became poisoned vulture bait. As cattle turned into better dairy machines, as the city ate more chocolate-chip, as it drank more mango milkshake, vultures’ necks began to droop as though they were tired and simple couldn’t stay awake. Silver beards of saliva dripped from their beaks, and one by one they tumbled off their branches, dead” (5).

The anxiety of Indianness, that I discussed in the introduction, is palpable with the fallibility of the wholeness of the Indian, as seen in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981), where the author is concerned with writing a historical novel to preserve the imagined past of the nation: “that is why I have resolved to confide in paper, before I forget. We are a nation of forgetters” (Rushdie 42). While Rushdie tackles the question of reality and the past in *Midnight’s Children* as well as in his essay collection *Imaginary Homelands*, Roy wages war against globalization. Thus, in the preface to her book *The Cost of Living* (1999), she states:

Let me say at the outset that I am not a city basher . . . I am not an antidevelopment junkie, nor a proselytizer for the eternal upholder of custom and tradition. What I am, however, is curious . . . The one in which it would be possible to wade through the congealed morass of hope, anger, information, disingenuous socialism, radical activism, bureaucratic subterfuge, misinformed emotionalism, and, of course, the pervasive, invariably dubious, politics of International Aid. (8)

In her two fictions spanning over two decades, Roy makes a conscious move away from this wholeness of Indian identity, focusing instead on various fragmented subjectivities, engaging with narratives of dislocation and disengagement 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. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* takes us on a journey to India’s heartland, from old Delhi to the hearth 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 ridicules the nationalist politician’s purported reinvention of Delhi:

But it was to be the dawn of her resurrection. 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.

She was to become super capital of the world's favorite new superpower. India! India! . . . Across the city, huge billboards jointly sponsored by an English newspaper and the newst brand of skin-whitening cream (selling by the ton) said: Our Time Is Now. Kmart was coming. Walmart and Starbucks were coming. (100)

Furthermore, Roy highlights another undeniable reality: "surrounded by the spectacular cripples, lepers, vagrants and freaks who always accumulate around holy places in India" (162). Indeed, the very 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 rests on 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. Even the semiotics of the cityscape and architecture of certain neighborhoods make apparent what type 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:

Some readers viewed pictures like these as proof of the success of India’s commitment to secularism and inter-faith tolerance. Others with a tinge of relief that Delhi’s Muslim population seemed content enough with its vibrant ghetto. Still others viewed them as proof that Muslims did not wish to “integrate” and were busy breeding and organizing themselves and would soon be a threat to Hindu India. Those who subscribed to this view were gaining influence at an alarming pace. (18)

The narrative tone and mood 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 place 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, 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 Emergency³ (1975-1977), which included 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,⁴ 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 of an old organization that believed that India should be declared a Hindu country. Admirers of Hitler, these ideologues 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, policemen arrested and killed young Muslim boys and men even in hospitals. 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:

Death was everything. Career. Desire. Dream. Poetry. Love. Youth itself. Dying became just another way of living. Graveyards sprang up in parks and meadows, by streams and rivers, in fields and forest glades. Tombstones grew out of the ground like young children's teeth. Every village, every locality, had its own graveyard. . . . Tourists flew out. Journalists flew in. Honeymooners flew out. Soldiers flew in. 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 struggled 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).

Roy represents the case of 'counter-cosmopolitan' or believers without borders, that Appiah defines as those who

believe in human dignity across the nations, and they live their creed. They share these ideals with people in many countries, speaking many languages. As thoroughgoing globalists, they make full use of the World Wide Web. This band of brothers and sisters resists the crass consumerism of modern Western society and its growing influence in the rest of the world. But these people also resist the temptations of the narrow nationalisms of the countries where they were born. They would never go to war for a country; but they will enlist in a campaign against any nation that gets in the way of universal justice. Indeed, they resist the call of all local allegiances, all traditional loyalties, even to family. They oppose them because they get in the way of the one thing that matters: building a community of enlightened men and women across the world. (280)

Her protagonists are also reluctant cosmopolitans as the victims of an upward mobility of the global city, and the neglect the vast majority face at the hand of nation-states, and consequently have to struggle and survive on their own.

Conclusion

South Asian writing has come a long way from the shadows of post-colonial literature: the political and social upheavals in the region has affected the literary scene as well. The upward mobility of a certain class and diaspora helped the literary writing in English. While vernacular writings from South Asia took a toll, English writing

flourished, and enjoyed increasing readership and accolades, not only from national but more importantly international platforms. The novels analyzed in this chapter are only two of the many examples of literary reaction to globalization and the anxiety of nation and national identity emerging from South Asia. Both Roy and Hamid are both product of this rising South Asia that belong to this upward cosmopolitan class. While remaining geographically connected to their countries, their literature crossed national boundaries. Unable to escape the grip of globalization, they both voice concerns in their literature.

Both novels analyzed above contain reluctant cosmopolitans—cosmopolitans for whom it became a battle to survive and stay afloat in the nations marked by intensive globalization. “You”, “pretty girl”, Anjum and Tilo all expose the failure of the nation-state to safeguard its citizens against forced globalization and cosmopolitanism. Their resistance is reflected in their rooted, vernacular cosmopolitanism which makes them seek solidarity beyond national, religious boundaries. These protagonists go on creating their own safe havens with cosmopolitan desires within the larger boundaries of nation—opening spaces for transnational closeness of desire and pain.

CHAPTER 3: COSMOPOLITANISM EMERGING FROM A GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISES

The 1970s and 1980s were a period of great political and social turbulence in Latin America. Country after country was falling due to coups d'état or were marred in bloody and violent civil wars. One region particularly affected by civil wars and general disobedience against the institution of the nation was Central America. Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, all were embroiled in grisly conflicts that caused the death of millions of people and rendered even a larger number homeless, forced to seek asylum elsewhere legally or illegally.

Derrida, in his address to the International Parliament of the Writers in 1996, problematized the concept of Cosmopolitanism—a concept of which Europe often prides itself to be a major propellant—to include the rights of refugees. He questions the partial application of cosmopolitanism while accepting migrants. Derrida redefines cities as the ultimate cosmopolitan open spaces of acceptance, spaces with “duty (*devoir*) of hospitality, and of the right (*droit*) to hospitality” (5) Derrida advocates a cosmopolitanism that facilitates rehabilitation of migrants, refugees, and exiled people:

Whether it be the foreigner in general, the immigrant, the exiled, the deported, the stateless or the displaced person (the task being as much to distinguish prudently between these categories as is possible), we would ask these new cities of refuge to reorient the politics of the state. (4)

In a similar vein, Zygmunt Bauman, in his critical work *Globalization: The Human Consequence* (1998), likens the phenomenon of globalization with mobility, not necessarily physical mobility, but the mobility provided by technological advances, such as social media. In his analysis, Bauman also explores the self-contradictory aspect of globalization. For instance, he looks at the difference between tourists and vagabonds. The difference between them is what Derrida refers to as “sans papiers”, people without documentation.

What is acclaimed today as ‘globalization’ is geared to the tourists’ dreams and desires. Its second effect—a side-effect, but an unavoidable one—is the transformation of many others into vagabonds. Vagabonds are travelers refused the right to turn into tourists. They are allowed neither to stay put (there is no site guaranteeing permanence, the end to undesirable mobility) nor search for a better place to be. (*Globalization*, 93)

Héctor Hoyos, in his book *Beyond Bolaño: The Global Latin American Novel* (2015), examines the literature produced post-1989 geopolitical order and investigates how globalization ushered Latin American literature into new avenues and aesthetics techniques. In his understanding of globalization, he relies on Bauman’s distinction between a tourist and a vagabond. Paraphrasing Bauman, Hoyos suggests that “As Zygmunt Bauman adroitly puts it, the Janus-face of globalization feathers a wandering tourist on the one side and an illegal immigrant on the other—the winner and loser of transnational capitalism” (loc 1153).

The novels discussed in this chapter, also explore the relation between cosmopolitan cities and a migrant in a globalized world. Rodrigo Rey Royá’s *Fábula asiática (Chaos: An Asian Fable)* makes us reflect upon the ubiquitous normative state of violence that a migrant confronts, which has surpassed national boundaries. In tandem with that, Castellanos Moya’s novel *El sueño de mi retorno (The Dream of My Return)* unravels the conundrum of homelessness and home for a refugee, again questioning the

meaninglessness of national boundaries. Both these novels, just like the novels studied in the previous chapter, are situated in the current milieu of globalization, and synchronously offer its critique.

REY ROSA'S COSMOPOLITANISM AS A WAY TO BRING ABOUT WORLD PEACE

Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño wrote about Rey Rosa: “[he] is the most rigorous writer of my generation, the most transparent, the one who knows best how to weave his stories, and the most luminous of all.”⁵ Indeed, Rodrigo Rey Rosa has proven his mettle as one of the most prolific writers from Central America, along with Horacio Castellanos Moya. Primarily residing in Guatemala City, Rey Rosa keeps shuffling among various countries. Moving from the sobering exposure to the sordid aftermath of a violent civil war, in his earlier novels, in *Chaos* Rey Rosa also expands his literary arsenal by venturing into a more ‘world-literature’ camp. Paying tributes to exotic Africa in the *La orilla africana (The African Shore)* and India in *El tren a Travancore (cartas indias)*, Rosa still continues with his critique of the nation, and of the futility of its existence, albeit rather implicitly.

In a 2013 interview for *Boom Magazine*, Rodrigo Rey Rosa responding to the question about being a Guatemalan writer amidst the violent situation of his country, states that

It hurts you. You don't feel the same about it every day. It's a question I've been asking myself for a long time, since I came back here almost 15 years ago: When do I leave for good, until what point is it wise to put myself at risk? Writers are personas non grata here, or nearly. For someone who wants to make a living as a writer, Guatemala is a good place, because it's cheap. With the little money that I make from my books, I can live well here, and I don't have to do other jobs, which wouldn't be the case if I decided to live in Europe or even Mexico. Here I have family ties, a daughter. But I'm always fantasizing about leaving, even about where I'd go in a hurry, if I felt threatened. I have imaginary escape routes.

Originally published in Spanish in 2016 as *Fábula asiática*, translated in 2019 as *Chaos: A Fable*, the novel returns to Tangier as the main setting of the narrative. Rey Rosa's second novel in Tangier after his 1999 *The African Shore (La orilla africana)*, it deploys a cosmopolitan outlook that surpasses national boundaries and advocates for a type of borderless, world citizenship. Rey Rosa adroitly draws attention to the world refugee crisis and shows us that we, irrespective of our nationality and allegiance, are not untouched by the situation. In this novel, Rey Rosa makes a conscious decision to move away from carrying the baggage of being a Guatemalan writer. He has engaged in the anxiety of nation and national identity in his older works, like *El material humano* and *El cojo bueno*, which were a poignant reminder of the failure of the Guatemalan nation enmeshed in virulent atrocities against the majority, but marginal indigenous population. This novel, unlike his previous works, and works of fellow contemporary Central American writer Horacio Castellanos Moya, whose writing I will discuss later in the

chapter, is a work of ultimate optimism and faith in transnational solidarities. However, in doing so, he still maintains a critique of the failure of the nation and the national imaginary.

The novel opens with one of its main protagonists, a Mexican writer named Porfirio Rubirosa giving a talk on the contemporary Mexican novel at a book fair in Tangier. The subsequent passages establish Rubirosa's globe-trotting, cosmopolitan character—his friend from Majorca, whom he met in Paris, asks him to go and meet his Moroccan friend Mohammed. The trope of using a wondering Latin American writer would, at first, come across as stale and overused, as Héctor Hoyos reminds us “telling stories of globe-trotting Latin Americans and their (mis) adventures is a trend in the work of Roberto Bolaño and his contemporaries” (loc 1153). However, this is not a simple story of a globe-trotting Latin American writer. Even though he is the protagonist, it is not his story. He is just one of the many links to explain the various events unfolding in the novel, which, in its core essence, is a suspense thriller that invites the reader to connect the clues left by Mohammed's mysterious son Abdelkrim. The novel in its narrative treatment is a reminiscence of a Bolañosque thriller, set in the exotic Orient, full of Oriental stereotypes. Describing Tangier, the omnipresent narrator informs us that

Vendors of all ages hawked their wares, reveling in a privilege afforded them by tradition: unmeasured time. Heaped among the rows of stalls, under laminate or cane awning, the products of a new century—smartphones and LED lamps; multibladed vegetable choppers; fiberglass sinks and toilets, transparent or colored—lived alongside objects both timeless and of the past: typewriters, giant cigarette lighters, salt and pepper shakers, show and belts, mirrors and picture frames, suitcases and backpacks, vases... (6)

Taking a leaf out of his own life, Rey Rosa situates the main plot of the novel in Tangier. As is well known, Tangier became the turning point of Rey Rosa's career too, when he met there Paul Bowles, who translated his work into English and brought in a much larger readership and acknowledgment from the Global North. This acceptance and recognition from a section outside Latin America perhaps played a part in Rey Rosa's turn toward themes and stories outside Latin America, stories originating from an augmented cosmopolitan consciousness that is a direct outcome of economic globalization. In *Chaos*, he also pays tribute to Paul Bowles by creating the character of John Field in his image. Just like Paul Bowles,

John Field, the American artist and critic who'd spend the last half of his life in Tangier, had been a friend and mentor to both men. Over the years, he'd given Mohammed paper and Chinese ink, then canvas and paint, so that he could develop his talents . . . And he'd provided the Mexican with contacts in the publishing world, helping him become a writer and translator. (4-5)

Hoyos calls the Latin American novels situated in exotic locations novels of South-South escapism, “which serves as the testing ground for different ways of being in the world as a Latin American. For once, readers from the First World assume the role of spectators, while the actors are from elsewhere. Their reserved situation is similar to that of Latin Americans in regard to the spy novels and early James Bond films of the Cold War: it

always seems history happens to someone else” (loc. 1520). At first sight, *Chaos* also appears to fit this description. However, far from escaping the violence back home, this novel brings its virulent milieu to the transnational arena to show how war and its consequent violence are consequences of the working of the hegemonic global world empire.

The novel takes time to slowly pick up the pace. It dwells for quite some time in the leisurely mundane, quotidian happenings—roaming in bazaars, clad in Fez caps, smoking pipes, life is at ease in a world seemingly unaffected by globalization. It is a world exotic enough to attract elite intellectual cosmopolitans. We are introduced to more figures of “two old woman painters, one from Paris, the other from New York; a professor from Boston, Massachusetts; a German journalist; a young Mexican writer” (35). Tangier, converted into a space of mere cosmopolitan desire, has been stripped off from anything beyond its exotic aesthetic value and serenity. Yet even in these moments of peace, violence is always lurking in a corner, because in the global geopolitical world order run by the Empire, you don’t go to violence; it comes to you. For our cosmopolitan protagonists, it comes in the form of the news of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the twin towers in New York. John and Rubirosa, having a discussion about the possible identity of the attackers, speculate:

“It’s incredible,” he said. “They’ve gone insane.”

“You think there’ll be a war?”

“There’s already a war, isn’t it there?”

“A Muslim didn’t do this,” I told him. “That’s impossible”

“Come again?”

“Believe me John. The Jews did this.”

He laughed, but I could see he didn’t think it was funny.” (23)

The revelation of the Muslim identity of the attackers is one of many catalysts in creating ripples in the lives of many hundreds of thousands of innocent Muslims, one of them being Mohammed’s son Abdelkrim, who was 11 when the attack happened and had just joined an American school in Tangier to get more formal education besides the religious education imparted by the mosque. The first shift in his life comes in the form of formal Western education. Reminiscing Abdelkrim’s childhood, his father fondly remembers: “The sea stirred up foamy eddies that murmured at our feet, while I told my son fantastic stories, and some true ones too. Then Abdelkrim started school, and all that came to an end” (24). This is a caveat of the advancing interference of modernizing face of globalization. This is also a sly reference to the colonial matrix of power. In this context, while discussing how the rhetoric of modernity inevitably gave way to the logic of coloniality, Ramon Grosfóguel explains the history and the present of Western domination:

We went from the sixteenth-century characterization of “people without writing” to the eighteenth and nineteenth-century characterization of “people without history,” to the twentieth-century characterization of “people without development” and more recently, to the early twenty-first-century of “people without democracy.” (214)

This quotation presents a good case for the ways by which Western education is introduced to overtake local knowledges. One of the aftermaths of this education is a

homogenous knowledge production based on Western ethos and values. Mohammad represents a resistance to this hegemony of Western education. One recurring phrase from the novel talks about the inexistence of time. Mohammad voices concerns about the end of time, or “Time—our great friend, our great enemy—never stops, even though time doesn’t really exist. This is the will of Allah” (29).

The next historical event evoked in the novel is the execution of Saddam Hussain. This event provides the elite, and privileged cosmopolitans from the Global North to reconnect with the first world (staying within the geographical boundaries of the exotic orient) and speculate Saddam’s escape and eventual arrest as a light piece of gossip without much thought about the lives of thousands affected by the event. A critique of the Global North is also conceived through the narrator’s analysis of the hanging. He informs us that “It was around this time that the Americans hanged Saddam Hussain, their old friend. That is how they are, and Saddam was wrong to trust them” (32). The narrator goes on to wonder if the gulf was used as guise to hide then American president Bill Clinton’s extra-marital affair. This coincides with Abdelkrim topping his class and getting an opportunity to study science at a prestigious institute in the United States.

The hanging of Saddam Hussain is followed by the siting of Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan. By this time, Abdelkrim had finished his studies in the United States and was on his way to become an astronaut and an American citizen. But his dreams of flying into the outer-space and migrating to the US are trampled by his Muslim identity. The novel also throws light on another important issue, that of the refugee crisis. With Abdelkrim’s Greek friend Xeno, we travel to the island of Leros, which has an epidemic breakout of meningitis due to overflow of refugees escaping war and violence. The following passage highlights the inhumane/ conditions under which the refugees live while struggling to escape violence and death at their home countries.

“How many?” asked Dr. Galanis.

“Thirty-four,” the nurse said. “Yesterday there were almost a hundred. Meningitis. They are going crazy all at once.”

“What kind of meningitis?”

The nurse shrugged his shoulders. “Epidemic,” he said.

“They can’t keep coming like this.”

“They are not coming because they want to.” (69-70)

Later, we are made aware of the horrifying and lamentable condition of an abandoned mental hospital where the undocumented immigrants are kept. There is a dire shortage of doctors, medicines or other basic amenities or hygiene at the refugee asylum. This is place where refugees are coming in large numbers hoping to survive and get entry into Europe, the flagbearer of ‘openness’. Abdelkrim’s and Xeno’s stories converge when they meet in the US and start discussing ideas about finishing human suffering. Both of them have first-hand experience of how different identities fare differently. It is during their discussions that topics of universal euthanasia, death by fire as an alternative way to the inferno of burying, that “Thinking of something he’d read the night before by Paul Bowles, Xeno asked, ‘Wouldn’t it be better to go back technologically to where humanity found itself in the Middle Ages—to begin again from there and take a less violent path?’” (79). Thus, begins their clandestine adventure of bringing about a technological

apocalypse, which would liberate the world—particularly the Global South—from the claws of lingering coloniality.

The narrative of the novel moves between the West and the Orient, bringing characters from all walks of life. It also introduces a Guatemalan character, Matías Pacal, who is named after the great Maya cosmonaut. Together, Abdelkrim, Xeno and Pacal, remnants of ancient worlds, aim to take on the new world and its technology “Instead of being shocked by the ideas that divided them—the Sunni Muslim, the Greek Orthodox Christian, and the Guatemalan atheist—they had taken the heavens above them as a point of reference in relation to which they could be almost equals” (86). Their mission, as explained by Xeno, is to disable as many satellite systems as possible: “To offset the damage done, and to prevent further damage by other nation-state, we’ll need to go back several centuries, technically speaking” (87). Going further back in time also means going back to the time when there was no concept of nation-states, ending the refugee crisis emerging out of nation-states. Thus, the novel ends with a hopeful note of an attempt at ending at least the physical suffering of the world in the name of identity and creating truly cosmopolitan subjects who believe in the greater good, with the world’s one place with space for all to share equally.

CASTELLANOS MOYA’S COSMOPOLITANISM AS A DISSENT AGAINST THE NATION IN *EL SUEÑO DEL RETORNO*

Horacio Castellanos Moya is another prolific writer coming from Central America, a region often considered part of the periphery of mainstream Latin American cultural production. He has been vehemently critical of the way in which post-war Central American politics have been shaped. Norman Rush, in his review of the translation of Castellanos Moya’s novel *El sueño del retorno* (*The Dream of My Return*, 2013), describes him as “a stellar fixture in the still-running second boom in Latin American literature, whose leading artist is the late Roberto Bolaño” (n.p.). Like his contemporary Rodrigo Rey Rosa, Castellanos Moya was also praised by Bolaño, who famously stated, in his essay collection *Entre paréntesis* (*Between Parentheses*, 2004), that he wrote “as if from the bottom of one of his country’s many volcanoes” (186),⁶ and described him as “the only writer of my generation who knows how to narrate horror, the secret Vietnam that was Latin America for a long time.”⁷ Bolaño further celebrated Castellanos Moya’s use of acid humor in the criticism of his own society’s flaws, which so disturbed Salvadoran nationalists (as is well known, he received death threats after the publication of *El Asco: Thomas Bernhard en El Salvador* [*Disgust: Thomas Bernhard in El Salvador*]). Indeed, Castellanos Moya is one of the Latin American candidates to see their works become part of the so-called world literature, for which translation to English is currently a must.

As stated, Castellanos Moya’s fiction, like that of the aforementioned Rey Rosa, often focuses on the social aftermath of Central American civil wars. 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 Rey Rosa 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 civil war in El Salvador, which is almost over at the time of the narration (1991).⁸ 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 (this event is narrated in social gatherings by Albertico's traumatized father in tears, thus contributing to the creation of a collective, social memory). 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 marriage with wife Eva, and from Mexico, a country that, in his own words, "Was so primitive that abortion was against the law" (27).⁹ Erasmo conceives of the return as a chance to start afresh. Before returning, however, he consults a doctor about his stomach pains, which gradually slip into paranoia as the novel progresses. This descent into paranoia is a bona fide trope from Castellanos Moya's literary arsenal, from Vegas of El Asco to the anonymous protagonist of *Insensatez*, Robocop of *El arma en el hombre*, to our present protagonist Erasmo. In this sense, Erick Aguirre Aragón avers,

Pese a los nuevos tiempos de paz, la mayoría de estas novelas todavía se inscriben dentro de la vertiente narrativa centroamericana inevitablemente vinculada a la violencia como la manifestación propia de una cultura forjada en la lucha permanente contra la injusticia. Las poblaciones de la región centroamericana están estrechamente unidas por tradiciones específicas y ámbitos comunes, así como por el enfrentamiento secular a esa injusticia que, en literatura, se ha visto reflejado como una especie de cotidianidad de la violencia. (n.p.)

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. Thus, Don Chente states that "anxiety and bowel control are closely related. If a child is raised strictly and is thereby strongly repressed, he will have anxiety throughout his life" (9).¹⁰ 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. In any case, they reveal a subjectivity traumatized by the prolonged civil war, as evidenced by the almost paranoid fear (revealed in multiple, long interior monologues) of having military informants around him or of being killed once he returns to El Salvador to participate in the creation of a progressive political magazine. Erasmo is even suspicious of the motivations don Chente may have behind his suggestion of writing a life story.

The hypnosis sessions reveal a deep existential angst ostensibly produced by the death of relatives who fought alongside the guerrilla against the dictatorship. 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. These sessions become, for him, a sort of rediscovery: “the events of Saturday night having plunged me into a morbid state of disquietude for several days, because without wanting to, I had had to face certain repulsive parts of myself that I refused to accept but whose existence panicked me, giving me the feeling that something very powerful had disintegrated inside me” (81).¹¹ Furthermore, concerned about the fact that he cannot remember what he revealed to the doctor, Erasmo now fears that he may have provided his doctor with compromising information.

Memory is both visual and semantic. We do not remember things unless we try to remember what we have forgotten; thus, forgetting is a vital part of the act of remembering that gives it perspective and different interpretations. Memory can be social insofar as it can be transmitted and articulated, thus becoming social memory. This is demonstrated in Castellanos Moya’s novel through Erasmo’s meetings with Muñecón, with their common affinity for drinking and gossip. For them, the ritual of meeting and talking with fellow Salvadorans about the civil war is a way to buttress their articulated memory. When Erasmo (re)visits his memory, he discovers that it is unreliable and that perhaps he is using his first “memory” of a bomb blast to justify how violence has taken root in him from a very early time.

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).¹² Erasmo’s profession as a journalist provides him with the mobility that connects him to the cosmopolitan world. At the same time, 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).¹³ As a journalist, he developed a certain distance, which also brings with it doubts and removes the façades of the homeland. 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 (and who had earlier dreamt of being a rocker and a guerrilla member) 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. This scene, in fact, seems to validate Eva's accusation about his having cowardly left El Salvador instead of joining the guerrilla like his friends and only wanting to return now that the war was almost over, after years of dissolute life in Mexico City. 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 (only the stories of three guerrilla members, Roque Dalton, Tamba and Negro Héctor, are briefly mentioned), 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, including the posttraumatic stress disorders they suffer. Erasmo, for example, realizes that his first childhood memory is that of a bomb explosion at his grandparents' house when he was only three years old and believes that it is perhaps because of this event that the sound of sirens still terrifies him. Along these lines, overwhelmed by angst, fear and guilt, the protagonist dreams that he killed someone, but does not fully trust his memory: "Memory is unreliable thing and can put one in rather a tight spot" (103).¹⁴

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, even though he is aware that her infidelity has finally provided the perfect excuse for him to leave her, and even though he seems to be aware that his reaction responds to stereotypical toxic masculinity: "As if I finally I was going to going to be capable of carrying out an act that would consolidate my masculinity on many different levels" (61)¹⁵. 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 criticism of the country that Erasmo considers his fatherland, El Salvador, is prefigured early in the epigraph taken from Salvadoran poet Roque Dalton's (1935-1975) poem "El hijo pródigo" (The Prodigal Child), included in "La ternura no basta". *Antología poética de Roque Dalton* ("Tenderness is not enough." Roque Dalton's Poetic Anthology, 1999), where we read: "You cannot spend your life going back, especially to

the crap you have for a country, to the disaster to which they turned your parents' home, just for the eagerness to say hello or bring us consolation words. All commiseration here is cruel if it does not set something on fire. Every sign of maturity here must prove its capacity for destruction."¹⁶ Widespread insecurity in El Salvador is then 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 after fearing for his life. Erasmo also recalls, in the sessions with his doctor, how in 1972, when he was only eleven years old, his father was shot in the back and murdered. Later, he fears that his doctor may have been tortured and disappeared in El Salvador, and that he will follow his footsteps—thus repeating his cousin Albertico's mistake—if the government remembers the journalistic articles critical of the Salvadoran army that he published years earlier while in exile. Likewise, toward novel's end, 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).¹⁷ Overall, his daily life seems to be entirely affected by fear.

El sueño del retorno is, after all, an exploration of the way in which violence, exile, and war trauma disrupted Salvadoran citizens' psychology, affecting their sense of security and the way in which they interacted with one another in everyday life during the 1990s. Uncertainty about the longed 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 goes to his mother's burial in San Salvador and immediately feels disgusted by the sociopolitical situation in the country during the transition to democracy.

Much like Rey Rosa's earlier works, in Castellanos Moya's *El sueño del retorno*, structural violence, corruption and impunity during the 1980s and 1990s are common denominators. The novel reveals how terror did not end with the peace accords, as social violence and corruption linger well beyond the war. It offers a dystopian image of the country through the description of governmental corruption and widespread violence, among many other social evils. Dark humor, cynicism, and hopelessness mixed with a veiled, painful, and critical love for the fatherland 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 a rootless cosmopolitanism. Both novels establish obvious references to the extra-literary world and use the historical facts based on the real archives, in the creation of their meta fiction, filling in the gaps left by the official story that leaves the subaltern voice out of the hegemony.

Conclusion

To conclude, apart from the obvious themes of trauma, memory, paranoia, the two novels talk about entangled relation of human rights and western hegemony. Both Rey Rosa and Moya have witnessed violence, and homelessness first hand. Thus, this is a

topic which is close to their heart. Apart from their brilliant writing, international interest and attention played a part in their fame. Their work published by major publishing houses based in Global North, and the subsequent translation into English, helped to gain a larger readership globally—much larger than readership at home. Whereas Moya left El Salvador fearing for his life, Rey Rosa, continues to call Guatemala his home. Rubirosa and Erasmo both draw from their authors' experiences of war, violence and subsequent homelessness.

In this chapter I discussed the aftermath of a war which results in massive refugee crisis which is not limited to one country or another. I also discussed the cosmopolitanism as a mode to escape the crumbling boundaries of nation and as an act of solidarity in the face of crisis.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

As this thesis has sought to establish, the works of writers from global south like the one studied here—work that refuse to be categorized under one label—help us to refine the meaning of canonical literature. This thesis attempted a comparative analysis of national identity and urban cosmopolitanism in four selected novels of global south. It demonstrated different expressions of cosmopolitanism. These different subjects, which according to Appiah, “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” (“Cosmopolitan patriots” 633).

I also showed that a cosmopolitan subject is present in the in-between space between home and homelessness. The specter of past violence and trauma haunts the cosmopolitan subject, and the subaltern is then in the presence of this absence in the in-between spaces. The cosmopolitan subject from global south is redefining the definition of home. The mobility—forced or voluntarily—renders the home fluid. Thus, home, like I have been emphasizing about global south, and cosmopolitanism is multiple, plural and hybrid. Homeliness and homelessness go to battle in all the four novels 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, how cosmopolitanism manifests itself in the form of an “aesthetics of anxiety” regarding nation, self-identity, and family. Here, the term anxiety is used instead of fear because fear is an emotional reaction to a specific and identifiable perceived threat. By contrast, in Stanley Rachman's words, anxiety is “the tense, unsettling anticipation of a threatening but vague event; a feeling of uneasy suspense” (3). As Rachman explains, “When feeling anxious, the person has difficulty in identifying the cause of the uneasy tension or the nature of the anticipated event or disaster. The emotion can be puzzling for the person experiencing it. In its purest form, anxiety is diffuse, objectless, unpleasant, and persistent. Unlike fear, it is not so

obviously determined; it is usually unpredictable and uncontrollable” (3). Along these lines, Sara Ahmed adds that “The anxiety of the possibility of loss becomes displaced onto objects of fear, which seem to present themselves from the outside as dangers that could be avoided” (67). As has been seen, the novels considered in this thesis address anxieties about losing one’s imagined nation that end up being displaced into certain social groups (refugee around the world or minority within a nation) or the entire (failed) society. 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.

While the Latin American protagonists are looking forward to returning home, an anticipated international mobility, South Asian protagonists travel through different parts of the country to reach their final destination in the heaven for all rejects of the patriarchal/national model of homeland. Along these lines, whereas Roy’s and Hamid’s cosmopolitan consciousness is forward looking, Castellanos Moya’s is diverted towards an aesthetics marked by an anxiety of survival. Rey Rosa has moved beyond the anxiety of national identity and is advocating for a borderless map. 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. In this sense, Jessica Berman quotes Raymond Williams to discuss the crisis of the subjects in their search for meaning: “The growth of towns and especially of cities and a metropolis; the increasing division and complexity of labour; the altered and critical relations between and within social classes: in changes like these any assumption of a knowable community—a whole community, wholly knowable—became harder and harder to sustain.” (Berman 1). Indeed, all four novels engage this type of disruption of meaning, together with the altered experience of the nation and its imaginary.

Hope and Hopelessness also come from author’s personal relation to it. Castellanos Moya and Rey Rosa having lived through failed revolution and civil wars respectively, are more skeptical about democratic institutions and more embittered by the peacemaking process. For them nation has become a redundant institution which only instigate more violence. By contrast, Roy and Hamid remain hopeful about the future democracy, and chances of surviving and succeeding. Yet Roy still laments how nationalisms of one kind, or another were the cause of most genocides in the twentieth century: “Flags are bits of colored cloth that governments use first to shrink-wrap people’s minds and then as ceremonial shrouds to bury the dead. When independent, thinking people (and here I do not include the corporate media) begin to rally under flags, when writers, painters, musicians, film makers suspend their judgment and blindly yoke their art to the service of the nation’s it’s time for all of us to sit up and worry” (Roy, *War Talk* 49).

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. In a similar vein, Rey Rosa uses the increasing refugee crisis and western interference at all part of the world to question the existence of nation States. Roy, and Hamid on the other hand, is more inclined toward pushing forth the individual voices lost in the homogenizing process of the national project. Roy fights for the right to

heterogeneity within a purportedly homogenous global nation. Hamid takes up the case of individual's aspiration in a nation without any support. 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. Altogether, the novels analyzed, *El sueño del retorno* (*The dream of my return*), *Fabula Asitica* (*Chaos: A Fable*), *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* suggest that anxieties about the nation and about national identities transcend geographical boundaries, producing contrasting outcomes. They successfully show that cosmopolitanism can function as a constructive dissent against the homogenizing forces of nation and globalization.

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¹ This reminds me of the 'Rapidex English Speaking' self-study books that started in the 1970s and became immensely popular in India among the young rural population which newly arrived in the cities with hopes of gaining enough language skills to mix with the city crowd, which was better versed in English due to better schooling. This also helped them advance in their professional life

² *White Tiger* (2008) a novel on similar lines by the Indian writer Aravind Adiga won him his first man Booker prize in the year 2008, which also uses similar tropes of bildungsroman and tells the rags to riches story of in the protagonist and as well of the nation coming to terms with the economic development.

³ In India, "The Emergency" refers to a twenty-one-month period when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency as a result of a perceived "internal disturbance" that was seen as an imminent threat to the country. As a result, the Prime Minister gained authority to rule by decree, suspend elections, and limit civil liberties. Most of her political opponents were imprisoned, the press was censored, and there was a forced mass-sterilization campaign.

⁴ The 2002 Gujarat riots was a three-day period of violence in the state of Gujarat. Subsequently, the violence continued in Ahmedabad for three months and anti-Muslim attacks continued for the next year. As the novel explains, it is believed that the burning of a train in Godhra, in which

fifty-eight Hindu pilgrims karsevaks died sparked the outbreaks of violence. Besides the more than 2000 deaths, there were numerous rapes and widespread looting and destruction. Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat at the time, along with other government officials and the police, were accused of inciting the violence.

⁵ Goldman, Francisco “Rodrigo Rey Rosa by Goldman” *Literature review*. Boom Magazine. 1 oct 2013

⁶ “Como si viviera en el fondo de alguno de los muchos volcanes de su país” (173).

⁷ “El único escritor de mi generación que sabe cómo narrar el horror, el Vietnam secreto que durante mucho tiempo fue Latinoamérica” (Pinto n.p.).

⁸ El Salvador’s Civil War, a conflict between the governmental army, the Fuerza Armada de El Salvador (FAES), and the insurgent Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), began in 1980 and ended in 1992.

⁹ “Un país salvaje donde el aborto fuera penado por la ley” (43).

¹⁰ “La angustia y el control de los esfínteres están estrechamente relacionados Si a un niño se le educa con método estrictos y se le reprime en ese momento, a lo largo de su vida llevará su angustia al esfínter” (20).

¹¹ “Me había sumido en un morbosos estado de desasosiego en los días siguientes, porque sin quererlo me confronté con partes repugnantes de mi ser que me negaba a aceptar, pero cuya existencia me producía una sensación de pánico, como si algo muy fuerte se hubiese desintegrado en mi interior” (65).

¹² “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).

¹³ “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).

¹⁴ “La memoria es cosa poco fiable y puede ponerlo a uno en aprietos” (80).

¹⁵ “Como si por fin fuera capaz de realizar un acto que consolidara mi hombría en todos los órdenes” (57).

¹⁶ “No puedes pasarte la vida volviendo, sobre todo a la porquería que tienes por país, al desastre en que te han convertido la casa de tus padres, solo por el afán de saludar o traernos palabras de consuelo. Toda piedad aquí es cruel si no incendia algo. Todo signo de madurez aquí debe probar su capacidad de destrucción” (246). Like the protagonist in the novel, Castellanos Moya was born in Honduras but moved early in his life to El Salvador. And also like the protagonist, the author studied in a Marista school, worked as a journalist in Mexico City, and returned briefly to El Salvador in 1991.

¹⁷ “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).