

Deborah Cohn

**THE
LATIN
AMERICAN
LITERARY
BOOM
AND U.S.
NATIONALISM
DURING THE
COLD WAR**

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To my beloved boys—
Noah, Benjamin, and Daniel—
and to Peter, for giving me
the joy of his love and our family

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INTRODUCTION

Multiple Agendas

Latin American Literary Fervor

and U.S. Outreach Programs following the Cuban Revolution

In 1967, Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* appeared in Buenos Aires and became a runaway best seller throughout Spanish America. Printing after printing sold out, and excitement about the work coursed through the academy, the publishing world, and the general public alike. As Gerald Martin details, the novel had an unusually high first printing of eight thousand copies (almost three times the standard print run of three thousand), which was followed by three reprintings of twenty thousand each in 1967, and even larger reprintings in subsequent years (*García Márquez*, 307–8). The success of *Cien años* prompted the reissuing of García Márquez's earlier works, with larger print runs and higher sales than they had had when first released. The novel's success also stimulated interest in other contemporary Spanish American writers, and there were reprintings of the works of Julio Cortázar and others in quantities larger than their first print runs (Rama, "El 'Boom,'" 87–88). It also brought works that had been previously published—many of which had gone unnoticed—back into circulation, to a much broader reading public.

In 1970, Gregory Rabassa published his translation of the novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in the United States. It was only the second work by a Latin American writer to hit the *New York Times* best-seller list.¹ John Leonard's review in the *New York Times* declared the novel to be "marvelous . . . a recapitulation of our evolutionary and intellectual experience" ("Myth Is Alive"). For many readers, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was their introduction to literature from Latin America, and the translation's success had a galvanizing effect on the publication, promotion, and reception of works from the region in the United States. But despite Leonard's proclamation that "with a single bound, Gabriel García Márquez leaps onto the

stage with Günter Grass and Vladimir Nabokov,” it would be a mistake to think that García Márquez’s U.S. success had come from nowhere. By this point, Cortázar, García Márquez, José Donoso, Carlos Fuentes, and Mario Vargas Llosa were known as the members of “the Boom,” the movement in which Spanish American literature had entered the international “mainstream”; throughout the 1960s, they and other Spanish American writers had carefully cultivated their reputations in Spanish America, Europe, and the United States. They had also put down strong roots in the U.S. literary and academic scenes. Rather than a beginning, then, the critical and commercial success of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* represented a turning point in the dissemination of Latin American literature in the United States.²

The Latin American Literary Boom and U.S. Nationalism during the Cold War situates this process—and the infrastructures that emerged to support it—within the context of the Cold War, when Spanish American writers’ literary projects and political aspirations simultaneously clashed with and fed into the agendas of U.S. Cold War nationalism. During the 1960s and 1970s, fears about the Cold War in general and anxieties about revolutionary fervor in Cuba and throughout Spanish America were high in the United States. They resulted in the Alliance for Progress, the Bay of Pigs fiasco, the Cuban missile crisis, U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic, strict enforcement of the McCarran-Walter Act’s immigration blacklist, and numerous other phenomena that fostered anti-Americanism in Latin America, especially in intellectual circles. At the same time, public interest in the region translated into interest in its literature. U.S. publishers, translators, critics, and academics were excited both by the quality of the literature and, in many cases, by the politics that it represented, so they worked hand in hand with authors and one another to promote it. Their task was facilitated by the increased availability of funding and subsidies from public and private organizations seeking to cultivate positive relations with Latin American artists and intellectuals.

This book offers a multipronged examination of writers’ efforts to bring their work to ever wider audiences, and of the translation subsidy programs, conferences, literary prizes, and other initiatives that assisted in this process. It examines the growing investment of U.S.-based publishers, translators, and academics in this burgeoning field, along with the Cold War dynamics that influenced the writers’ efforts to establish themselves in the United States. This introduction sets the stage for my study by sketching out a general history of the publication of Latin American literature in the United States from the 1940s through the 1970s, the rise of cultural diplomacy programs and other efforts to reach out to Latin American artists and intellec-

tuals in the years following the Cuban Revolution, and the fall of one such program that had been the beneficiary of covert CIA funding. Chapter 1 focuses on the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, otherwise known as the McCarran-Walter Act. The act allowed U.S. officials to base the restriction of visas on ideological grounds, and affected most of the top Latin American authors of the day, deeply marking their attitudes toward the United States. Chapter 2 presents a history of the International PEN congress that was held in New York City in 1966.³ Conference organizers put a premium on including Latin American writers in the sessions. The participation of the writers proved to be important for establishing their reputations throughout the West, even as it revealed incipient schisms within the Latin American left. Chapter 3 explores the rising prominence of Latin American authors and Latin American literary studies at U.S. universities during the 1960s and 1970s by assessing a series of initiatives that shined spotlights on the cultural activity in the region. Finally, Chapter 4 offers a history of the Center for Inter-American Relations, an organization devoted to raising the profile of Latin America and its culture in the United States. The center's Literature program navigated the turbulent waters of supporting writers committed to the success of the Cuban Revolution while managing sponsorships by organizations and individuals opposed to Communism. The program also weathered the political rifts and polemics that fractured the community committed to Latin American literature in the 1970s and 1980s.

The approach that I take to this study is contrapuntal, moving back and forth among the perspectives of the Latin American and U.S.-based producers, publishers, and promoters of this literature. I also take into consideration hemispheric policies and political relations.⁴ Consequently, the relationship between literature and the state plays a key and recurrent role in this story. My work reconfigures the way that we study Latin American literary history at the same time that it expands our understanding of the impact of Latin American authors on U.S. writers and the U.S. literary and academic scenes. I explore how the Latin Americans' aspirations of projecting their work onto a world screen benefited from the support of the top commercial and avant-garde U.S. presses of the day, which along with a number of universities developed new initiatives as means of raising both the writers' profiles and their own. U.S. authors such as William Faulkner, Arthur Miller, William Styron, and Kurt Vonnegut, among others, were also profoundly affected by their interactions with these writers and lent them their support. I further show how the state and its collaborators in the private sector participated in this process as well. While the revolu-

tionary politics that both sparked and were sparked by the Cuban Revolution of 1959 motivated the literary production of many authors during these years, official U.S. interest in containing the spread of these politics prompted public and private organizations alike to create funding opportunities to cast the United States in a positive light for foreign intellectuals. Latin American literature's circulation in the United States thus paradoxically benefited from both hegemonic and anti-hegemonic forces—that is, from endeavors that stemmed from commitments to anti-revolutionary and revolutionary politics alike. Hence, the study of the social networks and the literary and political infrastructures through which this work circulated offers significant insights into the behind-the-scenes mechanisms and agendas that played crucial roles in the transmission and ultimate canonization of Latin American literature in the United States.

The promotion of Latin American literature in the United States had its origins in the Good Neighbor era of Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration, but it was in the years following the Cuban Revolution that the Boom reached audiences throughout the West and beyond. The rise of the Boom in the United States was both fueled and hampered by the Cuban Revolution. It was also perfectly timed to capitalize on the increasing vogue for Latin American culture in the United States. For the writers of the Boom, critical recognition of their work was indispensable to the growth of their international profile. Contemporary politics were likewise involved: the career trajectories of these writers were caught up in the dynamics of U.S.–Latin American political relations, both in terms of commercial success and the writers' ability to be physically present in the United States. The web of cultural agents, programs, and events that I study in this book thus constitutes what Gilbert Joseph characterizes as a “transnational ‘contact zone’” wherein “the state's power is deployed (and contested) through a series of representations, symbolic systems, and new technologies involving agents that transcend the state,” including “culture industries, educational institutions, and philanthropic foundations,” among others (17).

In the end, though, it is extremely important not to lose sight of the innovativeness represented by Latin American literature at this time, or of the excitement that it generated. It is not my intention to reduce this literature to a function of contemporary institutional and political contexts. My aim, rather, is to identify the ways in which the production and distribution in the United States of this exciting new body of literature were sometimes at cross-purposes with the contemporary Cold War context, and sometimes able to take advantage of it.

The Spanish American Literary Boom and the Cold War

The Cuban Revolution sparked hopes of change and the possibility of self-determination throughout Latin America; it also ushered in a period of cultural effervescence that started in Cuba and quickly spread throughout the region.⁵ Support for the revolution provided ideological coherence to the Boom through the late 1960s. The Casa de las Américas was a Cuban state-sponsored foundation committed to disseminating the new Latin American literature in tandem with its celebration of the revolution. It became a magnet for intellectuals from Latin America, Europe, and the United States who wanted to participate in this process.⁶ The organization's efforts were significant beyond the revolution, affecting broader movements: as Jean Franco writes, it "celebrated the liberation struggles of the Third World, the Black Power movement in the United States, the heroic guerrilla, and the tradition of Latin American anti-imperialism epitomized by [José] Martí" (45). The Boom thus came to represent a cultural correlative of the revolution, symbolizing the region's cultural autonomy and the end of literary colonialism. Boom authors felt that their goals formed part of a larger project, and so they strove to surmount the cultural nationalism of the recent past in order to forge a pan-Spanish American cultural identity that would affirm commonalities shared by their nations rather than differences. García Márquez neatly summed this up in 1967 when he declared, "The group is writing one great novel. We're writing the first great novel of Latin American man. Fuentes is showing one side of the new Mexican bourgeoisie; Vargas Llosa, social aspects of Peru; Cortázar likewise, and so on. What's interesting to me is that we're writing several novels, but the outcome, I hope, will be a total vision of Latin America. . . . It's the first attempt to integrate this world" ("Con Gabriel García Márquez," vi). Boom authors further sought to become part of "world" literature and gain a Western audience. In Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann's words, they made up a "cultural unit" working toward "the true birth of a Latin American novel" (32) while simultaneously considering themselves "part of the universe," with Spanish America itself representing "the center of the world, the point of fusion where all trends meet" (24).

The Boom was both a literary movement and a marketing phenomenon characterized by a dramatic increase in the publication, distribution, and translation of Spanish American works. It was also a critical construct rooted in the authors' conception of themselves as a group, their connections to the leading critics of the day, and the concomitant promotion of their work in popular and academic media. Authors and critics alike en-

gaged in the invention of their own tradition—and the consolidation of their canonical status—by working together to promote the movement in the critical and popular spheres. Both the success of their efforts and the clear challenges they faced when trying to overturn long-standing stereotypes not just of Latin American writers but of the region itself are evident in a 1978 description in the *Chicago Tribune* of Vargas Llosa as “one of the better known of that diverse, irrepressible gang of Latin modernist writers, who are making literature a more important South American export than coffee beans and bananas” (Rexer).

The movement was at once transnational and cosmopolitan: most of the authors lived in Europe and spent time in the United States; many published their novels through the Barcelona-based publishing house Seix Barral; they participated in the juries of the Casa de las Américas; and they established close and mutually influential relationships not just among themselves but also with writers from the United States and Europe. Seix Barral gave their work unprecedented levels of publicity, its timing allowing the work to reach a new and rapidly growing middle-class readership throughout Spanish America. In the 1920s and 1930s, regionalism had dominated prose fiction, and writers such as Rómulo Gallegos, Ricardo Güiraldes, and José Eustasio Rivera had foregrounded the local. In José Donoso’s words, they wrote “for [the] parish . . . cataloging the flora and fauna . . . which were unmistakably ours . . . all that which specifically makes us different [from] other countries of the continent” (11, 15). In contrast, as Lois Parkinson Zamora has observed, Boom writers participated in “an unprecedented literary conversation” in which they read and responded to one another’s works, highlighting “the communal nature of their literary project . . . self-consciously engaging, and in some sense also creating, a reality shared by the many countries and cultures of their region” (20–21). Diana Sorensen adds, “At stake was a new articulation of continental identity in the production of high and low forms of cultural consumption, mediated by the emergence of critical discourses that found very strong claims for their own power and relevance in the structure of feeling energized by the Cuban Revolution and the tensions of the Cold War. Thus did Boom writers break through commercial, literary, and national boundaries that had limited the readership of their predecessors” (106–7).

Like turn-of-the-century Spanish American *modernista* authors, Boom writers and their contemporaries deliberately reached out to readers throughout the region in an effort to create and nurture a Spanish American audience and regional imaginary. They also understood their field of cultural production—the institutional framework through which their work

was published, translated, marketed, and canonized—to be the West as well as Latin America. At the same time, they found themselves hindered by politics that cut across national boundaries: as Alejandro Herrero-Olaizola expertly details in *The Censorship Files*, writers who published their work in Spain in the 1960s and early 1970s were subject to significant censorship under the Franco regime; and, some writers fell victim to the infamous Cold War immigration blacklist, in spite of being courted by U.S. publishers and universities, and in spite of their works being translated thanks to subsidies from philanthropies with anti-Communist inclinations. Latin American literary production was thus closely linked to cultural sensibilities and fields of power in Latin America, Europe, and the United States, as well as to the Cold War dynamics that bound the regions to one another.

Much important work has been done on the Hispanic infrastructure supporting the Boom—e.g., the Spanish publishers, the high-visibility literary awards that brought the movement international prestige and publicity, and journals such as *Casa de las Américas* (Cuba) and *Mundo Nuevo* (Paris) that disseminated new works.⁷ There has been substantial scholarship as well on the Spanish government censors who tried to rein in the writers (see Herrero-Olaizola). Much less attention has been paid to the infrastructure supporting the promotion of Latin American literature in the United States, or to the inflection of the latter by the Cold War. Jean Franco's *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City*, Irene Rostagno's *Searching for Recognition*, and Diana Sorensen's *A Turbulent Decade Remembered* are important exceptions that do engage with a number of these issues, but as part of projects whose main emphases lie elsewhere. Claudia Gilman's *Entre la pluma y el fusil* (Between the pen and the gun) also deftly situates Latin American literature in relation to contemporary politics, although it focuses more on intra-Latin American literary and political dynamics than on the Latin American–U.S. context.

The Cold War cultural politics and diplomacy at play in U.S.–Latin American relations fundamentally shaped the promotion of the Boom in the United States, and merit more study. In recent years, scholars such as Thomas Borstelmann, David Caute, Walter Hixson, Michael Krenn, Frances Saunders, Lawrence Schwartz, Penny Von Eschen, and others have made significant contributions to documenting the Cold War background of outreach programs that supported the cultural production of foreign artists in the United States and sent U.S. intellectuals abroad. For the most part, though, their work focuses on U.S. cultural diplomacy efforts with Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, as well as within the United States, making research on Latin America, which was the subject of increasing official atten-

tion during these same years, all the more critical. Claire Fox's forthcoming study, *Creating the Hemispheric Citizen*, which examines the cultural policies of the visual arts programs of the Pan American Union from the 1940s through the 1960s, will help to fill this gap. Her work additionally shares with my own research an emphasis on the hemispheric infrastructure for the dissemination of Latin American cultural production and the political context in which it was embedded, as well as foregrounding the at times parallel, at times conflicting agendas of artists, cultural impresarios, and U.S. foreign policy.

On a broader level, my project coincides with some of the transnational tendencies of recent revisionist approaches to the Cold War. The work of Odd Arne Westad in particular has received quite a bit of attention. Westad's *The Global Cold War* studies the policies of the Cold War superpowers concerning the so-called Third World. Westad argues that the superpowers' interventions "to a very large extent shaped both the international and the domestic framework within which political, social, and cultural changes in Third World countries took place," and that "Third World elites often framed their own political agendas in conscious response to the models of development presented by the two main contenders of the Cold War [. . . and that] their choices of ideological allegiance brought them into close collaboration with one or the other of the superpowers" (3); he further studies the reverberations of events in the "Third World" back through the strategies and the trajectory of the Cold War itself. Westad's transnational, dialectical approach is useful to my own examination of the conflicting and competing agendas of cultural impresarios, opinion leaders, and political agents in the United States and Latin America. I would argue, though, that the Latin American writers whom I study here, while keenly aware of the ideological stakes and poles of the day, valued their autonomy and took care to position themselves in relation to Cuba as well as the United States, and thus their agendas did not always fit within the broader frame and goals of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War. Also, where Westad focuses on political and economic mechanisms of intervention and response, my own research explores the cultural media through which individuals as well as public and private organizations sought to channel their aspirations for and designs on Latin America.

In *Cold War Exiles in Mexico*, Rebecca Schreiber argues that the work of the dissidents whom she studies, its "form and content . . . as well as its historical and political significance, cannot be understood in terms of any singular national context and is more than the sum of its locations of production and distribution" (xiii). My own project speaks less to the form

and content of Latin American literature *per se* during the Cold War and more to a process of production and dissemination that, as in Schreiber's case, not only took place in multiple nations, but involved the collaboration of agents from different nations and was both enabled and hindered by the interactions of multiple fields of power in different nations. Such interactions challenge us to redefine the parameters of study of literary history during this period as fundamentally transnational.

Publishing Latin American Literature in the United States: From Bust to the Boom

Prior to World War II, Alfred A. Knopf Inc. had established itself as the premier U.S. publisher of Latin American literature. In 1942, Blanche Knopf traveled to Latin America under the aegis of the State Department. The relationships she established with writers and publishers fit nicely with the Good Neighbor agenda, as did the cultivation of the image of U.S. publishers as prestigious venues for publishing one's work. At the same time, the excursion offset her inability to travel to Europe for new prospects during the war (Balch, 50). During her travels, she contracted a number of works for the firm that, in Irene Rostagno's words, "fed the officially promoted appetite for things Latin American" (33).⁸

U.S. interest in the region waned following the war, but Alfred and Blanche Knopf's commitment to it did not, despite the fact that publishing Latin American literature was a labor-intensive and unprofitable proposition. Work from the region did not sell to a large market and was expensive to publish, for not only was greater investment in publicity needed to gain name recognition for authors who were often unknown in the United States, there was also the up-front cost of having works translated into English. However, profit was, in this case, largely beside the point for the Knopfs: over the years, and despite the losses, they remained committed to cultivating literary value and making a literary impact, all the while knowing that the works they published were more likely to become prestige items than best sellers. But if their monetary returns were disappointing, their symbolic capital was quite strong, and the couple and their firm (however unwittingly) performed an invaluable service for the United States. As public intellectuals, Latin American writers had the ability to influence public opinion in their native countries. The Knopf imprint offered them a chance to further their careers, and the publishers both fostered close relationships with them and worked with their editors to ensure that their publications

were widely disseminated and positively reviewed, which helped to cultivate goodwill—and offset anti-Americanism—among the authors. Renowned Brazilian sociologist and longtime Knopf author Gilberto Freyre claimed that “the presence of Alfred A. Knopf among the Latin peoples of the continent has been that of an extra-official ambassador . . . [who brought] the United States, through the charm of his personality, closer to these same Latin peoples” (209). Translator Harriet de Onís’s declaration in the 1960s that Knopf was “a one-man Alliance for Progress” was perhaps more accurate than she realized (203): the Knopfs’ dedication to the promotion of Latin American literature in the United States generated a tremendous amount of positive sentiment and publicity for the nation.

The Cuban Revolution opened up an audience interested in Latin America, but the Knopfs and their fellow publishers discovered that politics and history could also be a double-edged sword. Most U.S. readers came to Latin American literature with relatively little knowledge of the region, and publishers were concerned that works with too much emphasis on the local would be too demanding and therefore less marketable. In this context, Boom novels had an advantage: although they were deeply imbued with contemporary history, their use of modern thematics and modernist techniques and their recourse to long-standing Western paradigms made them seem familiar to readers. As a result, invocations of modernism, comparisons to U.S. and European writers, and characterizations of works as “universal” in their implications—suggesting greater accessibility and, therefore, marketability—became fairly commonplace in readers’ reports and published reviews, as well as in Latin American writers’ assessment of their own work. Fuentes’s analysis of Donoso’s *Coronation* for Alfred A. Knopf Inc. offers a textbook example of this strategy:

American readers and reviewers should be warned: José Donoso’s *Coronation* is not only an analysis . . . of Chilean class structure and relations (and, as such, “interesting” to Americans who have suddenly become aware of Latin America via Fidel Castro and the Alliance for Progress). It would be meager indeed to limit Donoso’s powerful literary creation to these boundaries. *Coronation*, first and foremost, is a work of universal artistic value. It meets the best work being done in the United States—Bellow, Styron, Mailer and Baldwin—in its refusal to bow down before the fragmented dead end of traditional realism as regarbed by the cold priests of the French nouveau roman and in its anguished affirmation, not of realism, but of reality.⁹

Kurt Vonnegut's blurb for *This Sunday* hit the same notes:

I love José Donoso's new novel, *This Sunday*, with all my heart. It is a masterpiece. . . . This English version contains some of the most intricate games with language, time, and point of view that I have ever been dazzled by, *Finnegans Wake* excluded. It would be perfectly fair to present Donoso as an American writer and this book as an American book—the best American novel this year. . . . Donoso speaks English better than I do. He is an elegant product of Princeton with straw on his hair and dung on his shoes from two years of teaching at Iowa. This is a Chilean?¹⁰

This approach had to be taken carefully, though, for overplaying comparisons could backfire, and end up with the Latin Americans tagged as derivative or as imitators.

As Rostagno has observed, though, even Alfred Knopf and his staff expressed ambivalence toward the region and its literary production, and their concerns speak to some of the roadblocks that Latin American literature faced in the U.S. market (54). There were times when Mr. Knopf seemed to look down on literature from the region.¹¹ The firm declined to publish Jorge Luis Borges in the early 1950s, claiming that his work wouldn't sell in the United States, and reiterated this stance in 1963, *after* Borges had begun his rise to fame in the United States and Europe.¹² Mr. Knopf also expressed concern that the fiction of Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector (which he ultimately did publish) would be perceived by readers as too derivative of the contemporary French novel.¹³ Also, as late as 1965, when translator Harriet de Onís proposed an anthology of stories to editor Herbert Weinstock, the latter's patronizing response spoke as much of his lack of enthusiasm for the volume per se as it did of the hurdles involved in publishing Latin American literature in general, despite the rising profile of the Boom at this time:

I am not at all convinced about the desirability of an anthology of present-day Latin American short stories. I am, however, willing to be convinced. But really, Harriet, there are too many strikes against this kind of book. First of all, no one is really interested in Latin American fiction. Second, very few people are interested in reading volumes of short stories. Third, by the time we pay the various authors for rights to the stories, pay the greatest translator in the world, and carry on endless correspondence about copyrights and other details, our investment has become so huge that only a best-seller could possibly repay us. Nonetheless, as I say, if you can produce a manuscript that sets me on fire, I will burn.¹⁴

Even Pablo Neruda's work was met with some disdain at the firm: a 1966 reader's report on "The Heights of Macchu Picchu" felt that the poem was too political and that the poet's reputation was overstated.¹⁵

Correspondence from Weinstock and fellow editor Angus Cameron, as well as that of de Onís, further reveals a shared skepticism toward modernism that was particularly manifest in their assessments of Latin American writers. Weinstock at one point told Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier that Faulkner's complicated prose did not help him to be accepted by readers, and de Onís informed Donoso that while his style was similar to that of the southerner, Faulkner succeeded despite his style, not because of it (J. Donoso, 85).¹⁶

Cultural politics also inserted themselves into the publishing process. Weinstock in particular seemed to share with the New Critics the presumption of separate spheres for literature and politics. This could on occasion be helpful, such as when he endorsed publishing the work of Carpentier, despite the writer's high-profile support for the revolution and even after his call for a boycott of all Latin American cultural activity in the United States.¹⁷ On the other hand, it made it difficult for Weinstock to understand the contemporary trajectory of Latin American literature, to say nothing of the activism of the writers themselves. On several occasions, he even urged writers to ignore politics and focus on the literary. In 1966, for instance, after Fuentes was publicly criticized in a letter signed by Carpentier and other Cuban intellectuals, he rescinded an agreement to write an introduction for a new edition of Carpentier's *The Lost Steps*. Weinstock unsuccessfully tried to convince Fuentes to complete the essay, arguing that literary concerns should trump political ones.¹⁸ Likewise, when Emir Rodríguez Monegal sent Weinstock an issue of *Mundo Nuevo* that contained articles on the Vietnam War, Weinstock asked if so much political writing was necessary, as he did not want to see the journal dominated by politics.¹⁹

Harriet de Onís's views on literature and politics similarly affected her work. As the Knopfs were virtually the only publishers of Latin American literature in the United States through the 1950s, and de Onís was the Knopfs' primary translator—and arbiter—of literature from the region from 1950 through the late 1960s, she was in effect an extremely powerful gatekeeper: in José Donoso's words, "she controlled the sluices of the circulation of Latin American literature in the United States and, by means of the United States, throughout the whole world" (85). As a result, her preferences had an important ripple effect throughout the burgeoning field. They were not, however, always easy to pigeonhole. As Rostagno has noted, she tended to take liberties in her translations, and while her translation style was gen-

erally traditional and she harbored some skepticism toward modernism, her literary tastes were not as stodgy as critics often make them out to be (34). In fact, it was she who suggested that the firm publish Borges, as well as other experimental writers such as Carpentier, Donoso, Lispector, and João Guimarães Rosa. She also recommended several political authors, including Neruda. While strongly held, her political beliefs were not absolute, nor did they impose blinders on her literary tastes. Her correspondence with Weinstock and the Knopfs reveals that she had fairly strong anti-Communist tendencies, and that she tried to use her own work—and the Knopfs' position—to complement the government's foreign policy efforts. Soon after John F. Kennedy was elected president, for example, de Onís noted that he was cultivating relations with Brazil and suggested that the company could contribute to the process by publishing works by authors such as Guimarães Rosa and Jorge Amado.²⁰ She also had Weinstock send books by Amado and Freyre to Robert Kennedy prior to his 1965 trip to Brazil in order to prepare him for his visit.²¹

De Onís asked to read novels by Cuban writers Guillermo Cabrera Infante and José Lezama Lima, both of whom had distanced themselves from the revolution, but she also requested that Knopf send her works by Heberto Padilla, whose poetry in the 1960s was viewed as emblematic of the revolution's willingness to accommodate dissent from within. She had mixed feelings about Amado, though, that stemmed from his involvement until the mid-1950s with the Communist Party. When first asked by Knopf Inc. to review *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* (1962), she made sure that the publisher was aware of the writer's political affiliations. She agreed to read the book despite her own reservations, and then enthusiastically recommended it.²² Nevertheless, she never forgot Amado's background, and she often looked for clues to his shifting political inclinations as she reviewed his books for Knopf (at times, she appeared more put off by the sex in his novels than by his politics). When Knopf sought to build on the unprecedented success of *Gabriela*, de Onís waxed eloquent about the author's skill in some of his earlier novels, but expressed concern about their Communist message.²³ At the same time, she tried to conduct her own cultural diplomacy efforts in order to draw Amado toward the United States. In 1962, for example, when she asked the *Saturday Review* to review one of his novels, she stated that the work deserved good press for its quality, but she also underscored the importance of a positive reception in the United States for Amado and his fellow Latin American writers—one that could dispose them favorably toward the nation and, in turn, affect the image of it that these opinion molders conveyed to their compatriots.²⁴

In the early years, despite the Knopfs' efforts, the publication of Latin American literature in the United States was largely piecemeal. Through the 1950s, there were generally four to six translations published per year; the majority of these were of works from the colonial period or the nineteenth century, but there were also a few twentieth-century novels, such as Carpentier's *The Lost Steps* (Knopf, 1956) and *The Kingdom of This World* (Knopf, 1957) and Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (Grove, 1959), as well as the occasional collection of contemporary poetry.²⁵ Following the Cuban Revolution, the tide began to turn: in addition to Knopf and Grove, presses such as Dutton, Harper and Row, Pantheon, and Farrar, Straus and Giroux started to be more interested in publishing literature from Latin America, and the number of works from the region published per year began to rise steadily. The proportion of contemporary prose and poetry likewise grew.

Publishing Latin American literature remained a process of trial and error, though—of battles against the odds, and surprise successes. It required editors to be proactive and take risks. For example, Gregory Rabassa was a professor of Spanish and Portuguese at Columbia University with no formal training in literary translation when, based on some pieces he had published in *Odyssey Review* in the early 1960s (see Chapter 3), Sara Blackburn of Pantheon asked him to take on Cortázar's *Rayuela*; it was a decision that fundamentally altered the course of Latin American literature in the United States. Roger Klein at Harper and Row, in turn, was one of the few editors at the time who knew Spanish, and his interest in Latin American literature led him to reach out to Spanish publishers and agents, and to make connections that ended up bringing García Márquez and Vargas Llosa, as well as others, to the firm.²⁶ Editors also needed to be careful with how they did their marketing, for their job was as much about creating an audience as it was about publishing books. Some deliberately sought blurbs from well-known U.S. or British writers, as they were convinced that the public would not be impressed by endorsements written by other Latin American authors (Fuentes was an exception to this rule, but only occasionally).

Publishers additionally needed to believe enough in what they were doing to be willing to take chances and forgo their usual marketing strategies and practices. The publication history of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* offers a good example of this. Different versions of the story exist, but all agree that Harper and Row almost turned the novel down, despite the buzz associated with it even before its publication in Spanish, and despite its immediate best-seller status in Spanish America. Rostagno claims that Harper editor Cass Canfield Jr. received negative readers' reports for the novel, but that his wife, Gabriela, convinced him to publish it anyway (124). In con-