A Transatlantic Dialogue: Argentina, Mexico, Spain, and the Literary Magazines that Bridged the Atlantic (1920-1930)

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Fernandez, Vanessa

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A Transatlantic Dialogue: Argentina, Mexico, Spain, and the Literary Magazines that Bridged the Atlantic (1920-1930)

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

by

Vanessa Marie Fernández

2013
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Transatlantic Dialogue: Argentina, Mexico, Spain, and the Literary Magazines that Bridged the Atlantic (1920-1930)

by

Vanessa Marie Fernández

Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literature

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Michelle Clayton, Co-Chair

Professor Maarten H. van Delden, Co-Chair

While the development of Spain and Latin America’s post-colonial relationship during the 1920s has been discussed across multiple disciplines and within various theoretical paradigms, this dissertation engages the topic in an unprecedented manner. Studying specific debates between Spain, Mexico, and Argentina, this project maps a concrete triangular network of cultural exchange. Based on extensive archival research in the three countries, my work maps this dialogue in correspondence, essays and fiction that appeared in literary journals, magazines and newspapers. A critical site that reflected cultural and ideological differences within the literary field, these publications provided a forum in which intellectuals experimented with vanguard aesthetics in prose, poetry, and art, and debated their ideas to create a web of reciprocity that enriched and complicated aesthetic and cultural developments on both sides of the Atlantic. The journals, magazines, and newspapers examined in this dissertation were selected according to their contributions to the triangular network of exchange. Therefore, I
evaluate exchanges that took place in well-known journals such as Madrid’s *Revista de Occidente* (1923-36), Mexico’s *Ulises* (1927-28), and Buenos Aires’s *Martín Fierro* (1924-27), as well as journals that have received considerably less scholarly attention such as La Plata’s *Valoraciones*, Mexico’s *La Antorcha*, and Madrid’s *El Estudiante* (1925-26). My work connects unexamined exchanges with better-known polemics in order to reveal that debates previously considered isolated events were in fact part of a broader and more complex tradition of contention. For instance, whereas scholarship on the well-known 1927-polémica *del meridiano intelectual* has, for the most part, discussed this debate as an unexpected incident, I illustrate that it was the culmination of a series of contentious disputes on related topics that took place during the 1920s. In addition, my thesis demonstrates that these debates and exchanges had a direct impact on literary aesthetics, such as the development of Hispanic vanguard prose.
The dissertation of Vanessa Marie Fernández is approved.

Roberta L. Johnson

Efrain Kristal

Andrea N. Loselle

María Teresa de Zubiaurre

Michelle Clayton, Committee Co-Chair

Maarten H. van Delden, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my grandmothers, Wanda D. Frey and Lavinia C. Fernández, strong women I strive to emulate, for their unconditional love and constant encouragement. I also dedicate my work to my parents, Susan F. Fernández and Ivan M. Fernández, for making my academic career possible, for their love, and for their unwavering support.
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In the United States, I am grateful to Dr. José Aranda for granting me the opportunity to be a Visiting Scholar in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Rice University, where I conducted research at Fondren Library and attended the Global Hispanisms lecture series. At Rice, I am also profoundly indebted to Dr. Lane Kaufmann for his very helpful suggestions concerning Ortega y Gasset and Mexico, and to Dr. Gisela Heffes for sharing her expertise on conducting research in Buenos Aires. At the University of Texas, Austin, I thank T-Kay Sangwand for her assistance at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection and the staff at the Harry Ransom Center. I am also grateful to the incredible librarians at the University of California, Los Angeles, without whom I could not have completed my graduate career. At the Southern Regional Facility, I thank Cynthia Danielle McCullough. I also thank the entire Inter Library Loan Department for their tireless work in finding rare journals, and the staff at the Young Research Library, I Reynoir, Valerie Rom-Hawkins, Davis S. Poepoe, Antonia Osuna-García, George Nicholas, Rodrigo Carlo Medina, Marta D. Martinez, Jennifer C. Lee, Antigone Kutay, Kelly L. Jue, Diane Howell, Cindy Hollmichel, and Sandra Farfan-García. I must also express immense gratitude to Eudora Loh and Jennifer Osorio.

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EDUCATION

2008  M.A. Spanish  
University of California, Los Angeles

2000  M.A. Teaching of Spanish  
Teachers College, Columbia University

1999  A.B. Comparative Literature  
Princeton University

PUBLICATIONS

Review


Interview

“El desafío de publicar una revista trascnacional y bilingüe. Una entrevista a Rose Mary Salum” Mester, XLI:1 September 2012, pp. 123-34.

PRESENTATIONS

“Nationalism and Aesthetics in the Hispanic Vanguard Novel: The Case of Margarita de niebla by Jaime Torres Bodet.” AATSP Annual Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico. 7-10 July 2012.


“Pneumatic Obsessions: Female Protagonists in the Hispanic Vanguard Novel.” XXXVII International Symposium of Hispanic Literature, California State University, Dominguez Hills. 8-9 March 2012.

“Un intercambio trasatlántico: Benjamín Jarnés y Jaime Torres Bodet.” Mid America Conference on Hispanic Literature, University of Kansas. 6-8 November 2009.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2011-2012 Senior Editor, Mester, Journal of the UCLA Department of Spanish & Portuguese
2010-2011 International Associate Editor, Mester, Journal of the UCLA Department of Spanish & Portuguese
2009-2010 Contributing Editor, Mester, Journal of the UCLA Department of Spanish & Portuguese
2008-2009 Conference Coordinator, Motus Sodalis UCLA Department of Spanish & Portuguese
2008-2009 Member of the Organizing Committee of the VI UCLA Department of Spanish & Portuguese Graduate Conference
2006-2007 Member of the Organizing Committee of the IV UCLA Department of Spanish & Portuguese Graduate Conference

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

2012-2013 Collegium of University Teaching Fellows Program, UCLA
2012-2013 Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA
2010-2013 Visiting Scholar, Rice University
2011-2012 Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Best TA Honorable Mention
2011-2012 Faucett Travel Grant, UCLA Latin American Institute and Mellon Foundation
2011 Department of Spanish and Portuguese Ben and Rue Pine Travel Award, UCLA
2010 Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spain’s Ministry of Culture and United States Universities
2010 Department of Spanish and Portuguese Ben and Rue Pine Travel Award, UCLA
2010 Graduate Division Graduate Summer Mentorship Grant, UCLA (Michelle Clayton: “A Transatlantic Dialogue: Argentina, Mexico, Spain, and the Literary Magazines that Bridged the Atlantic (1920-1930)”)
2009-2010 Graduate Division Graduate Research Mentorship Grant, UCLA (Michelle Clayton and Roberta L. Johnson: “A Transatlantic Dialogue: Argentina, Mexico, Spain, and the Literary Magazines that Bridged the Atlantic (1920-1930)”)
2009 Graduate Division Graduate Summer Mentorship Grant, UCLA (Roberta L. Johnson: “Un intercambio trasatlántico: Benjamín Jarnés y Jaime Torres Bodet.”)
### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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<td>Teaching Fellow</td>
<td>UCLA Department of Spanish and Portuguese</td>
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<td>2006-2009</td>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
<td>UCLA Department of Spanish and Portuguese</td>
<td>Spanish 120B Hispanic Literature 1700-1898&lt;br&gt;Spanish 27 Advanced Composition for Native Speakers&lt;br&gt;Spanish 6 Intermediate Spanish&lt;br&gt;Spanish 5 Intermediate Spanish&lt;br&gt;Spanish 4 Intermediate Spanish&lt;br&gt;Spanish 3 Elementary Spanish (Level Coordinator)&lt;br&gt;Spanish 2 Elementary Spanish</td>
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<td>2003-2006</td>
<td>Spanish Teacher</td>
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<td>Spanish 1&lt;br&gt;Spanish 2&lt;br&gt;Spanish 3 &amp; 3Honors</td>
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On September 1, 1927, Ernesto Giménez Caballero, founder and director of Madrid’s La Gaceta Literaria, enthusiastically praised a recent Mexican novel for displaying “la virginidad que le pedíamos a América” (101). Despite Giménez Caballero’s condescending tenor, he believed the novel simultaneously incorporated “Un paisaje de figuras y pasiones: прогната, exótico, milenario, supersticioso, primitivo” and “los reflejos de una civilización audaz y piadosa como la española” (101). Thus, according to the Spanish intellectual, the novel’s strength rested in its ability to portray Latin America as “exotic” in a literary work that, as he saw it, proudly belonged to the Spanish literary tradition. For Giménez Caballero, by using modern narrative techniques, this novel succeeded in securing a space for Latin America in European aesthetic discussions, while at the same time putting Hispanic literature on the international map.

Giménez Caballero’s enthusiastic description of a distinctly Latin American novel that employed modern narrative techniques might easily be attributed to a novel from the Latin American Boom of the 1960s such as Colombian Gabriel García Márquez’s Cien años de soledad. However, the Spanish writer was in fact describing Mexican Mariano Azuela’s Los de abajo (1915), a novel that portrayed the visceral tragedy of the revolutionary war. Anachronistically, he presented it as the counterpart in prose to Rubén Darío’s late nineteenth century movement, modernismo, that had transformed Hispanic poetry: “Se puede hacer sin miedo la afirmación: desde los poemas de Rubén Darío, nada comparable a esta novela” (101). If
Darío’s *modernismo* had conquered “lo fácil: el verso, el lirismo,” Azuela had mastered the novel: “Lo difícil en América seguía siendo la novela. Tanto en Massachusetts como en las Pampas” (101). Furthermore, if Darío had translated French aesthetic techniques into Spanish, Azuela’s accomplishment was greater because he had infused his text with what Giménez Caballero believed was a distinctly Latin American aesthetic. Although he acknowledged that Chilean Eduardo Barrios, author of *El niño que enloqueció de amor* (1915), and Argentine Ricardo Güiraldes, author of *Don Segundo Sombra* (1926), had made great strides in developing the novel, Giménez Caballero maintained that their novels were still excessively European: “había todavía demasiado perfil, demasiada europeidad, cierto sabor de antigua cepa” (*LGL* 101). Azuela’s *Los de abajo*, by contrast, was “esencialmente mexicano” (101). Yet it is worth underlining that *Los de abajo*’s “mexicanness,” in Giménez Caballero’s reading, did not imply that the novel belonged to a separate Latin American literary tradition. Oddly, for the Spanish critic, Mexico was culturally an extension of Spain, and, therefore, Azuela’s novel belonged to a Spanish literary tradition: “es un romance. Un género mediévico, infante, balbuceador” (101).

In spite of his enthusiasm for the Mexican novel, Giménez Caballero’s review reveals a patronizing attitude towards Latin American literature. He considered Mexico a less-developed civilization, an impression further reinforced when he underscored that, with this novel, a Mexican writer had finally met Spain’s expectations. In addition, Giménez Caballero’s insistence that *Los de abajo* formed part of a Spanish literary tradition effectively denied the existence of an autonomous Latin American literature, not to mention a Mexican literary tradition. The first novel to be published in Latin America, José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi’s *El periquillo sarniento* (1816), had appeared almost one hundred years previously. Finally, Giménez Caballero’s condescension, disguised as praise, culminates with a discussion about the novel’s
value as a marketable product, which points to Spain’s larger interest in controlling Latin American book distribution in the early twentieth century.

Azuela’s novel as portrayed in Giménez Caballero’s review clashes, unsurprisingly, with readings of the novel in Mexico, where it was taken as the most meaningful literary representation of the Mexican revolution, as well as a symbol for a distinctly Mexican national literature. Giménez Caballero’s attitude is emblematic of that of many Spanish intellectuals towards Latin America. His review further illustrates the complexity of Latin America’s struggle for cultural independence from Spain, one of the points of contention that, during the 1920s, fueled heated exchanges in journals, magazines, and newspapers between Spanish and Latin American intellectuals. Many Spanish intellectuals shared Giménez Caballero’s view that Latin American literature was part of a Spanish tradition, while Latin American intellectuals argued for an autonomous literary and national tradition for the many countries of Latin America.

In this dissertation I trace the transatlantic debates and exchanges about this polemic across journals, magazines, and newspapers in Spain, Mexico, and Argentina of the 1920s. As Spanish novelist Benjamín Jarnés wrote in Madrid’s Revista de Occidente in 1927, “las revistas … nos ayudan a tasar, a comparar, a justipreciar de algún modo los valores, porque toda revista es un escaparate de valores” (“Revistas nuevas” 263). More recently, Ignacio Sánchez Prado has noted that journals “también dejan ver la naturaleza d los intercambios culturales hacia dentro del campo literario y los intentos de los distintos grupos en pugna de articularse a la esfera pública” (29). Thus, journals, magazines, and newspapers provided a forum in which intellectuals experimented with vanguard aesthetics in prose, poetry, and art, and shared and debated their ideas to create a web of reciprocity that enriched and complicated aesthetic and cultural developments on both sides of the Atlantic.
Benedict Anderson has argued that periodicals aided in the creation of nationalisms and played an important role in fostering “imagined communities.” In the nineteenth century, regional newspapers published different types of political and social news and information, organizing events from disparate areas into a single textual space. In doing so, newspapers created the impression that a particular territory formed a community bound by the written word. While Anderson considered the press to be a means of coalescing a nation, I expand upon his notion to demonstrate that literary journals created intellectual communities—“naciones intelectuales,” as Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado described them for the Mexican context—of the critical imagination that actually traversed national boundaries, fostering a more cosmopolitan imaginary that comprised not just one country but several. This dissertation is therefore a contribution to three areas of study: 1) use of journals to establish literary historiography; 2) debates over nationalism and cosmopolitanism in vanguard aesthetics; and 3) Hispanic transatlantic studies. Taken as a whole, I will demonstrate that instead of seeing literary traditions solely as nation based, it is more productive to read them as an interaction and construction of a developing international “literary field,” to borrow Pierre Bourdieu’s terminology.

The scholarly use of literary journals, magazines, and newspapers as a tool to understand the development of aesthetic movements is a well-established practice in other literary traditions such as in studies of anglophone modernism. As early as 1976, Malcolm Bradbury and James Walter McFarlane devoted a chapter to the question in their *Modernism: 1890-1930*. Much more recently, Gayle Rogers’s *Modernism and the New Spain: Britain, Cosmopolitan Europe, and Literary History* (2012) explores the intersections between Spanish and British Modernism, casting new light on these seemingly separate literary traditions by examining Spanish and
English literary journals, bilingual anthologies, translations, and biographies to prove that Spain was actively involved in debates over the forging of modernism from its earliest moments. However, I would also add—and here lies the value of my reading—that Spain’s dialogue was not only with North but also with Latin America. Moreover, this dialogue was part of an “inverted conquest,” to use Alejandro Mejías López’s phrase, that began with modernismo and played out well into the 1920s (I will return to this point later).¹

Scholars who have traced Spanish literary historiography through journals include Andrés Soria Olmedo, María del Rosario Rojo, César Antonio Molina, Evelyn López Campillo, and Rafael Osuna.² In Latin America, Saúl Sosnowski’s *La cultura de un siglo: América Latina en sus revistas* (1999) has recently been updated by Aimer Granados’s *Las revistas en la historia intelectual de América Latina: redes, política, sociedad y cultura* (2012).³ John King, Nélida Salvador, Patricia Artundo, Beatriz Sarlo, Hector René LaFleur, Sergio D. Provenzano, Pedro Mejías López borrowed the term from Venezuelan novelist Manuel Díaz Rodríguez.

¹ Studies on Spanish journals, magazines and newspapers include Andrés Soria Olmedo’s *Vanguardismo y crítica literaria* and María del Rosario Rojo Martín’s *Evolución del movimiento vanguardista. Estudio basado en La Gaceta Literaria* (1927-1932), which trace avant-garde developments in Spain through literary and avant-garde magazines, César Molina’s *Medio siglo de prensa literaria española* (1900–1950), which surveys literary periodicals by movement and region, and Rafael Osuna’s *Revistas de la vanguardia española* and *Las revistas españolas entre dos dictaduras: 1931-1939*, which provides a comprehensive list that evaluates each publication chronologically. Studies on specific journals include: *La “Revista de Occidente” y la formación de minorías (1923-1926)* by Evelyn López Campillo and *Litoral: La revista de una generación* by Julio Neira. Finally, Manuel José Ramos Ortega’s *Revistas literarias españolas del siglo XX 1919-1975* is a detailed index that includes literary magazines published between 1919 and 1975.

² Granados’s book is an compilation of papers given at a conference in Mexico City in 2011, sponsored by UAM Cuajimalpa. In 1968, Boyd G. Carter was one of the first scholars to use journals in order to construct literary historiography in Latin America.
Alonso, and Nora Pasternac have contributed significant studies on Argentine journals. In Mexico, Fernando Curiel, Carlos Ramírez, and Antonio Sierra have indexed twentieth-century cultural journals, and the Fondo de Cultura Económica has continued to update its collection of facsimiles such as the *estridentista* journal *Horizonte*. In addition, Pedro Ángel Palou, Guillermo Sheridan, and Luis Mario Schneider have all referenced journals in their studies on the vanguard groups *Contemporáneos* and *Estridentistas*. Emilia de Zuleta and Carmen Alemany Bay are among the few scholars to focus on literary magazines and journals as a vehicle for the transatlantic exchange of aesthetic ideas between Spain and Latin America. Emilia de Zuleta’s *Relaciones literarias entre España y la Argentina* (1983) surveys the presence of Spanish authors in Argentinean journals, starting with *Nosotros* in 1907 and concluding in 1949 with the magazine *Realidad*. Published in 1998 Carmen Alemany Bay’s *La polémica del*

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4 Hector René LaFleur, Sergio D. Provenzano and Pedro Alonso published *Las revistas literarias argentinas: (1893-1960)* and Nélida Salvador’s *Revistas argentinas de vanguardia (1920-1930)*. Nélida Salvador and Elena Adrissone published *Bibliografía de tres revistas de vanguardia: Prisma (1921-22), Proa (1922-23) y Proa (1924-26)*, which provides indexes of these particular journals ordered by authors and topics. John King’s *A study of the Argentine Literary Journal and its Role in the Development of a Culture: 1931-1970*, Nora Pasternac’s *Sur, una revista en la tormenta: Los años de formación 1931-1944* and Rosalie Sitman’s *Victoria Ocampo y Sur* are also a significant contribution.

5 Fernando Curiel, Carlos Ramírez and Antonio Sierra recently published their *Índice de las revistas culturales del siglo XX (Ciudad de México)*. Another important contribution is *Las revistas literarias de México*, published by the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes in 1963 is a two-volume collection of conference presentations on Mexican Literary Magazines from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, these presentations are anecdotal accounts by figures that were directly involved, in one capacity or another, with the production of these magazines in order to provide “un examen histórico-crítico de aquellas publicaciones a través de las cuales halló expresión el desenvolvimiento de las letras en el país” (11). The Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico has also published *Irradiador*, the first *estridentista* journal, directed by Manuel Maples Arce.

*meridiano intelectual de hispanoamérica* (1927) is a critical edition of the articles involved in *la polémica del meridiano intelectual*, which I reference in chapter 3.

Adela Pineda Franco’s *Geopolíticas de la cultura finisecular en Buenos Aires, París y México: Las revistas literarias en el modernismo* (2006) offers an unusually broad geographical scope, tracing the development of Rubén Darío’s *modernismo* in Argentinean, French, and Mexican literary journals. Her work is significant for its re-evaluation of *modernismo* as a transatlantic and transnational movement that was modern, cosmopolitan, and Latin American, and, her use of journals as a means of more thoroughly understanding *modernismo* is unprecedented. However, her study focuses on Paris rather than on Madrid as a transatlantic counterpart. While Paris has been a focal point for studies of Latin American *modernismo* and the Latin American vanguards, two movements that engaged with French aesthetic developments, there is more to be said about cultural activities linking Madrid with Latin American metropolises, and this will be a focal point of this dissertation, which aims to contribute to the growing field of Transatlantic Literary Studies.

In *Constelaciones unamunianas: Enlaces entre España y América (1898-1920)*, published in 2009, Claudio Maíz studies correspondence between Spanish thinker Miguel de Unamuno and Latin American intellectuals, such as Peruvian writer Ricardo Palma, in order to prove that an artistic, intellectual transatlantic “imagined community” developed between Spain and Latin America between 1898 and 1920 (14). He argues that this correspondence provides insight into cultural interactions, the role of the intellectual, and nationality as it pertains to literary production (23). In this dissertation I use exchanges in journals and newspapers to demonstrate that the “imagined community” that Maíz describes became stronger, more contentious, and broader during the 1920s vanguard era.
Alejandro Mejías López’s *The Inverted Conquest: The Myth of Modernity and the Transatlantic Onset of Modernism* (2009) expands upon Pineda Franco’s re-evaluation of *modernismo*. Framing his study with Pierre Bourdieu’s notions of symbolic capital and literary field, Mejías López argues that “*modernismo* created a continental Spanish American literature, actively engaged in the international, cultural, and political arena, and became the only post-colonial literature to wrest cultural authority from its former European metropolis” (4). He underscores that “[c]ultural and theoretical models based on an economic neocolonial concept have tended to reduce the nineteenth century to a binary opposition of metropolitan Europe and the United States versus neocolonial and colonial Latin America” failing to account for Latin America’s important role in the advent of modernity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (9). Mejías López therefore proposes a renewed understanding of this Latin American movement as a “groundbreaking postcolonial literary project” (12). *Modernismo* “altered Spain’s literary field, transformed and modernized literary expression in Spanish, and stripped Spain of linguistic authority, the very core of its (imperial) identity” (4). Thus with *modernismo* Latin America affirmed its cultural independence from Spain and claimed its legitimate place in the international field of cultural production. However, *modernismo* marks the beginning of a process that intensified during the 1920s and continued well into the twentieth century. My dissertation, therefore, builds upon and continues Mejías López’s study by analyzing specific debates and exchanges that took place in Spanish, Argentine, and Mexican journals in order to articulate how the battle for cultural prestige played out during the 1920s.
Spain

During a tumultuous nineteenth century, Spain contended with French occupation (1808-1814), the Carlist civil wars (1833-1876), and a short-lived Republic (1873-1874). Although this period of political upheaval concluded with the Restoration of the monarchy in 1874, in 1898 Spain suffered a devastating blow when it lost its last transatlantic colonies—Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. As a result, Spain entered the twentieth century weakened by internal wars and the loss of its overseas empire. Failed attempts to secure colonies in Morocco through the 1920s further exacerbated the malaise, which eventually enabled General Miguel Primo de Rivera’s coup d’état in 1923. Yet, despite political instability, this time of crisis was also a period of intellectual and artistic effervescence, which has come to be known as the Spanish Silver Age (1898-1936). Reforms in education that began in the nineteenth century significantly contributed to this progress. In 1876, Francisco Giner de los Ríos, Gumersindo de Azcárate, and Nicolás Salmerón founded the Institución de Libre Enseñanza, a private institution of higher learning that offered an alternative to public education regimented by Church and State. Bringing this model into the twentieth century, the Residencia de Estudiantes (1910) in Madrid continued the liberal educational values that the Institución de Libre Enseñanza had first implemented. A space intended to foster intellectual exchange across disciplines, the Residencia hosted some of the most prominent thinkers in the arts and sciences in the early twentieth century such as Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, Paul Valéry, and Henri Bergson. Spain’s neutrality during World War I created a period of economic expansion that also made this artistic and scientific development possible.7

7 In Hispanoamérica en las revistas gallegas (1914-1936), María Dolores Reimunde Noreña also notes that World War I was beneficial to Spain in that many displaced writers sought refuge in neutral Spain, thus contributing to Madrid’s development into a center of literary renovation (5).
The Spanish Silver Age has traditionally been divided into three generations of writers: the Generation of ’98, the Generation of ’14, and the Generation of ’27. The so-called generation of ’98 included figures such as novelists Miguel de Unamuno, Ramón del Valle Inclán, and Pío Baroja and poet Antonio Machado. Writers in this generation such as Pío Baroja and Azorín focused their experimental prose on “the problem of Spain”. Yet, by the second decade of the twentieth century, novelists from the Generation of ’14 such as Gabriel Miró and Ramón Pérez de Ayala added additional layers of density to their prose styles that complicated their critiques of Spain's ills. Philosophers José Ortega y Gasset and vanguard novelist Ramón Gómez de la Serna were also significant figures from this generation. Ortega y Gasset, already an important figure since Meditaciones del Quijote (1914), was actively involved in founding journals such as España (a publication of the Liga de Educación Política Española) and the daily newspaper El Sol. However, Revista de Occidente (Madrid 1923-36) was his most important publication and one of the most influential journals in early twentieth-century Spain. Meanwhile, Ramón, as Gómez de la Serna was commonly referred to, revolutionized prose with his fragmented narrative style and the witty aphorisms he called greguerías. A promoter of vanguard aesthetics, his work significantly influenced the younger generation of writers, including novelist Benjamín Jarnés.

The first vanguard literary movement initiated in Spain, however, was ultraísmo. In 1918 Spanish poets including Guillermo de Torre, Rafael Cansinos-Asséns, and Gerardo Diego, together with Argentine Jorge Luis Borges (then living in Madrid), sought to break with modernista aesthetics and transform poetry. Influenced by Futurism, they created ultraísmo, a style that reduced poetry to its most basic element, the metaphor. They published their first Manifiesto ultraísta in Andalusian poet Isaac del Vando Villar’s journal Grecia (Sevilla 1918-
20) in 1919. Ultraísmo spread to Argentina when Borges returned to Buenos Aires in 1921 and had much in common with the Mexican vanguard movement estridentismo, which also began in 1921. However, as I discuss in chapter 2, conflicts arose between Borges and de Torre as they debated whether ultraísmo was either a Spanish or Argentine avant-garde movement.

Referred to as the Generation of '27 because they came together in the Ateneo de Sevilla in 1927 to commemorate the Golden Age poet Luis de Góngora, poets including Pedro Salinas, Rafael Alberti, Federico García Lorca, Vicente Aleixandre, Luis Cernuda, Antonio Espina, and Jorge Guillén further developed vanguard activity initiated by ultraísmo. Despite being grouped as a “generation,” these poets had very different approaches to renovating poetry. For instance, Lorca, Aleixandre, and Alberti experimented with surrealist aesthetics, while Guillén’s style was much more concrete. However, these poets did collaborate in many journals published throughout Spain such as Litoral (Málaga 1926-29), Mediodía (Sevilla 1926-33), and Verso y Prosa (Murcia 1927). In addition, spreading beyond Spain, their poetry was featured in Latin American journals such as Martín Fierro (Buenos Aires 1924-27). Moreover, Generation of '27 poets such as Espina and Salinas also wrote experimental prose, which was often featured in Revista de Occidente and Latin American journals such Ulises (Mexico 1927-28) and Contemporáneos (Mexico 1928-31).

Argentina

Argentina achieved its independence from Spain on July 1816 and the century that followed was violent and unstable. The first decades after independence were plagued by civil wars between provinces, which were followed by what elites called La conquista del desierto, a military campaign in which the Argentine government massacred indigenous populations in
order to claim their territories for the Argentine Republic. However, bloodshed rendered Argentina a unified nation with a centralized government in Buenos Aires by the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, President Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1868-1874) promoted education, technological innovation, and European immigration, which strengthened the Argentine Republic. Between 1880 and 1916, the country was run by a series of conservative leaders from the National Autonomist Party (PAN), beginning with Julio Roca (1880-1886 and 1898-1904). His reign saw a transition to industrial agriculture, the construction of a railway system, and increased European immigration, mostly of Italian and Spanish peasants, all of which contributed to economic growth. Nonetheless, the cattle-ranching aristocracy controlled the country’s wealth, segregating the working class. As a result, influenced by anarchist and socialist ideas that European immigrants brought to Argentina, the working class took to the streets protesting economic inequality and demanding reforms. For instance, deeming the events representative of the country’s profound class divisions, in 1910 many unions protested the lavish government sponsored celebrations that commemorated Argentina’s independence from Spain.

In 1916 Hipólito Yrigoyen became president, initiating a period of liberal governments that lasted until 1930 (including the presidency of Marcelo T. de Alvear from 1922 to 1928), with the coup d’état led by General José Félix Uriburu. In contrast to the conservative period that preceded his government, Yrigoyen supported freedom of the press and of expression. For instance, his liberal government enabled movements such as the 1918 Reforma Universitaria, which began when university students in Córdoba demanded the democratization of higher education. They called for academic freedom, free tuition, unrestricted access, and student participation in university governance. The University Reform movement quickly spread
throughout Latin America and led to events such as the 1925 *Congreso de estudiantes iberoamericanos* in Mexico City. Yet despite the social gains that occurred during Yrigoyen’s first term, this contentious era of political unrest and labor strikes also led to violent confrontations. For example in 1919, in an event known as the *Semana trágica*, Yrigoyen’s government violently suppressed a labor strike in Buenos Aires, tainting his otherwise liberal administration.

On an aesthetic front, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Argentine intellectuals participated in Latin American *modernismo*. A reaction to modernity, *modernismo* translated French aesthetic modes such as Symbolism and Parnassianism into Spanish. Nicaraguan Rubén Darío, who lived in Argentina between 1866 and 1929, is credited with having initiated *modernismo* in 1888 when he published his poetic anthology *Azul*. This eclectic, transnational, and transatlantic movement spread throughout Latin America and to Spain, lasting until the 1920s. In Argentina, Leopoldo Lugones mastered *modernista* poetry; his best-known work is *Lunario sentimental* 1909. However, many Argentine intellectuals contested *modernismo*’s elitism. For instance, in 1908 poet Evaristo Carriego published *Misas herejes*, where he highlighted the challenging social conditions faced by the working class in Buenos Aires’s suburbs. In addition, while some of her poetry recalls a *modernista* aesthetic, feminist Alfonsina Stormi veered to a more avant-garde style publishing some of the first cubist poems in Latin America, such as “Cuadrados y ángulos”.

In “Buenos Aires, una metrópolis periférica,” Beatriz Sarlo explains that, while Buenos Aires’s period of intense modernization began between 1890 and 1900, in the 1920s and 1930s, “de manera tumultuosa … se producen cambios acelerados y dramáticos, perfectamente visibles también en la dimensión cultural” (11). Moreover, if technological developments impacted city-
dwellers’ perception of time and space, a massive influx of European immigration further perturbed Buenos Aires residents. While, as I have noted, these immigrants introduced new political ideologies such as socialism, syndicalism, and anarchism, they also imported their cultures and languages, making the Argentine capital a “Babel de las lenguas extranjeras” (16). Threatened by this new population, Buenos Aires’s elites engaged a debate on what constituted an Argentine national identity, “sobre los orígenes europeos de la mezcla racial argentina y sobre si debía preservarse la preeminencia social de la elite hispano-criolla frente al desorden racial immigratorio” (16). Within this context, simultaneously reacting to Buenos Aires’s rapid changes and to international aesthetic developments, vanguard movements began in Argentina during the 1920s, the first of which was *ultraísmo*.

After a period in Europe, Argentine poet Jorge Luis Borges returned to Buenos Aires in 1921 and introduced *ultraísmo*, the vanguard poetic movement he had helped create when he lived in Spain. He first published the *Manifiesto ultraísta* in December 1921 in *Nosotros: Revista mensual de letras, arte, historia, filosofía y ciencias sociales* (Buenos Aires 1907-34), directed by Alfredo A. Bianchi and Roberto F. Giusti. This longstanding journal held a prominent position in Argentine letters and provided a space for diverse perspectives and artistic tendencies. *Nosotros* did not ascribe to specific socio-political ideologies or movements, and this, in part, explains its longevity. Two years after publishing Borges’s manifesto, the journal’s August 1923 “Encuesta de la Nueva Generación” precipitated the consolidation of Argentina’s new generation of young intellectuals, who took on the banner “Nueva Generación.” Traditionally, scholars have divided this new generation of intellectuals in Buenos Aires into two groups: *Florida* and *Boedo*,

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8 Before Borges published *Mural Prisma* and the *Manifiesto ultraísta* in 1921, Bartolomé Galíndez described the movement in the Buenos Aires journal *Los Raros* (1920), where he provided a lengthy overview of European vanguard movements. Carlos García notes that Galíndez’s description evidences his lack of understanding of the movement.
distinguishing between publications and cultural events that took place on or around the upscale calle Florida in downtown Buenos Aires, from the more leftist leaning, politicized groups on calle Boedo, a working-class area farther from the city center. Writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Oliverio Girondo, and artists such as Xul Solar and Norah Borges, were considered part of the Florida cohort. Meanwhile novelist Roberto Arlt, who often incorporated street slang into his prose, and described the darker side of the tumultuous porteño life during the 1920s, has been more frequently associated with the Boedo faction. Less concerned with social injustice than the Boedo group, Florida intellectuals experimented with new narrative, poetic, and artistic forms as they claimed their positions within the international avant-gardes. Thus, publications such as Proa (Buenos Aires 1924-26) and Martín Fierro (Buenos Aires 1924-27) primarily focused on vanguard aesthetics in literature and art. However, as this dissertation will detail, Florida intellectuals also debated issues such as an Argentine language tied to a national identity and the Reforma universitaria in journals such as Inicial (Buenos Aires 1923-27) that combined literary matters with commentary on sociopolitical issues. Moreover, similar journals appeared in La Plata where students from the University of La Plata published Valoraciones, a socio-politically engaged literary magazine. While many more journals were published in Buenos Aires during the 1920s, the ones I include in my discussion are important for their involvement in creating a transatlantic and transnational dialogue with Spanish and Mexican intellectuals.

**Mexico**

Mexico attained its independence from Spain on September 27, 1821, and the decades that followed were marked by political and economic instability culminating in a French invasion (1862-1867). When the Mexican Republic was restored, Benito Juárez became
president and ruled during a period of relative stability (1867-72) and was succeeded by Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada (1872-76). However, General Porfirio Díaz overthrew Tejada’s government, initiating his authoritarian rule over Mexico. Known as the Porfiriato, Porfirio Díaz’s dictatorship lasted for three decades (1877-1911), with a brief hiatus from 1880 to 1884. Following a Positivist philosophy, Díaz successfully modernized Mexico City, built a railroad system, and encouraged foreign investment. However, the Porfiriato’s modernization of Mexico centered in the capital. Moreover, a small upper class, primarily landowners, controlled the country’s wealth. The Mexican Revolution began in 1910 as a revolt against Díaz’s regime and unequal land distribution. While there is no consensus on when the Revolution officially ended, the most heated armed conflicts came to a close by 1917, when a new constitution that implemented sociopolitical changes such as land reform was drafted. By the 1920s, under President Alvaro Obregón, post-revolutionary Mexico began reconstructing its social and political institutions and, in an effort to coalesce the divided country, sought to define a national identity, mexicanidad. Obregón fostered reforms in education, labor, land, and the arts, which made the country, and its capital in particular, a center for cultural and aesthetic development. In 1924 President Plutarco Elías Calles continued many of Obregón’s efforts towards social, political, and educational reform. However, his oppression of Catholics during the cristero revolt (1926-1928) tarnished his legacy. Moreover, he later proclaimed himself Jefe máximo in 1928 and ran the country from the sidelines with a series of installed presidents until 1934. During this period known as the Maximato, Calles became increasingly authoritarian. Moreover, the 1920s were shaped by mestizo populism based on a mixture of indigenous, mestizo, and socialist political rhetoric.
Modernismo reached Mexico during the Porfiriato and poets such as Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and Amado Nervo exemplified the movement’s aesthetic style. In Mexico, modernismo lasted into the twentieth century, although it evolved with poets such as Ramón López Velarde and José Juan Tablada, whose style reflected a transition from nineteenth century modernismo to more experimental forms during the twentieth century. In addition, Enrique González Martínez’s sonnet “Tuércele el cuello al cisne,” is well known for calling the modernista style into question, although the poem is not completely divorced from the movement. As modernismo was winding down in Mexico, responding to the Porfiriato’s positivism, a group of intellectuals in Mexico City founded the Ateneo de la Juventud (officially Ateneo de México) in 1909. The Ateneo promoted humanities and classical scholarship as a means of revitalizing Mexican culture and national identity. Some of the main ateneístas include philosopher and politician José Vasconcelos, poet and diplomat Alfonso Reyes, philosopher Antonio Caso, and Dominican writer and critic Pedro Henríquez Ureña. In order to help free Mexican society from the Porfiriato’s scientism, the Ateneo held public meetings, lectures, and discussions, and published a journal. However, the Mexican Revolution interrupted their efforts.

Faced with a divided society in Post-Revolutionary Mexico, President Obregón turned to culture and education as a means of uniting the fragmented nation. He tasked politician, philosopher, and ateneista José Vasconcelos with rebuilding educational and cultural institutions. Enlisting the country’s artists, writers, and intellectuals, Vasconcelos initiated a massive educational and literacy campaign that aimed at incorporating the masses into a new Mexican nation. In this era of renewal and reconstruction many intellectuals offered their own interpretation of what Mexico and its culture should be. Artists and writers alike proposed competing narratives regarding the direction of the nation. Muralism, for instance, proposed a
didactic historicism, while those affiliated with *estridentismo*, a vanguard literary and artistic movement initiated by Manuel Maples Arce in 1921, envisioned a socialist utopia. Aiming to revolutionize Mexican literature and culture by creating the first Mexican avant-garde movement, poet Manuel Maples Arce plastered Mexico City walls with *Actual N° 1, Manifiesto Estridentista* in December 1921.⁹ As Tatiana Flores explains, Maples Arce proposed that “art be based on the sensory stimuli of urban experience, thus blurring the boundaries between art and life. *Actual N° 1* is an avant-garde reaction to the banality of bourgeois mores, jaded lyrical poetry, and the predictable aesthetic of Mexican academic culture” (211). An interdisciplinary aesthetic movement—poetry, prose, sculpture, graphic design, and painting—Maples Arce’s *estridentismo* demanded a break with *modernismo* and had much in common with Futurism and *ultraísmo*. Participants included writers such as Germán List Arzubide and Arqueles Vela, and artists such as Fermín Revueltas, Leopoldo Méndez, and Germán Cueto.

Contrasting *estridentismo*, which would eventually promote a militant nationalism, other intellectuals, such as the *Contemporáneos*, supported a more cosmopolitan Mexican identity. A group Mexican novelists, poets, and chroniclers, including Jorge Cuesta, Jaime Torres Bodet, Carlos Pellicer, Salvador Novo, and Xavier Villaurrutia, identified themselves as the *Contemporáneos*, but they neither created a specific aesthetic movement nor were they politically engaged like the *estridentistas*. However, the *Contemporáneos* were equally invested in reforming Mexico’s cultural scene. Famously called a “grupo sin grupo” by poet and novelist Xavier Villaurrutia, the *Contemporáneos* came together because they shared a similar vision for Mexican aesthetics, one that was at once Mexican and cosmopolitan. Although the *Contemporáneos’* and *estridentistas’* projects often overlapped—both groups rejected

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⁹ Luis Mario Schneider details how each vanguard movement relates to the advent of *estridentismo* in *El estridentismo, Una literatura de estrategia.*
modernista tendencies and supported the incorporation of vanguard aesthetic practices, such as Cubism and Futurism, into Mexican art and literature—their approaches differed, leading to a divided cultural field that nurtured public discussions and polemics over competing visions.

During the 1920s, when Spain’s Silver Age was at its peak in Madrid, Buenos Aires and Mexico City were emerging as important centers for Latin American intellectual activity and for the creation of an avant-garde art and literature. As these changes were occurring, an important shift transformed the way Latin American countries would see themselves in relation to Spain. For instance, in 1921 in Barcelona, Spain David Alfaro Siqueiros published the first manifesto credited with inaugurating Mexico’s avant-garde. In “Three Appeals for a Modern Direction to the New Generation of American Painters and Sculptors,” the muralist encouraged Latin American artists and intellectuals to bypass Spain, where, he felt, art had been in a consistent state of decline since the nineteenth century. Instead, he exhorted Latin Americans artists to celebrate their pre-Columbian cultural heritage and create a truly Latin American art. This sentiment would echo throughout the continent and inaugurate a sea change palpable in the debates and exchanges examined in this dissertation. While other regions in Spain and Latin America, such as Barcelona and Cuba were also critical, this study focuses the strong triangular network that developed between Madrid, Buenos Aires, and Mexico City, which repeatedly evidenced the significant shift in Spain and Latin America’s relationship during the 1920s.

Mexico’s and Argentina’s important ports enabled transatlantic correspondence with Europe, and Madrid in particular. Moreover the political destinies of these countries positioned them—Mexico City in the North and Buenos Aires in the South—as major cultural and cosmopolitan centers. Mexico’s revolution would inspire Latin American countries to embrace their mesoamerican past. Moreover, intellectuals such as Dominican Pedro Henríquez Ureña,
who wrote *México: El hermano definidor*, would argue that, having experienced the revolution, Mexico would necessarily lead Latin America towards further political renewal. Meanwhile, Buenos Aires’s intellectual class, bolstered by massive European immigration, began to challenge Madrid and other European centers for cultural supremacy. Therefore, as Spain’s political destiny was in a state of decline (and would culminate in the civil war) Mexico and Argentina were on the verge of making the twentieth century their moment to shine on the world stage.

**Research and Organization**

The intense cultural activity that took place in Spain, Argentina, and Mexico during the 1920s produced a rich literary journal tradition that informed what Jürgen Habermas would describe as the public sphere. My study examines the heterogeneous journals that emerged across Spain, Mexico, and Argentina during the 1920s: publications that generally focused on both aesthetic matters (by which I mean that they published and reviewed works engaging current literary and artistic tendencies, including *ultraísmo*) and sociopolitical concerns (such as politics and university reform). However, some of these journals paid closer attention to aesthetic matters, while others were more socio-politically inclined. For instance, publications such as *La Pluma* (Madrid, 1920-1924), *Alfär* (La Coruña 1923-27), *Plural* (Madrid 1925), and *Proa* (Buenos Aires 1924-26) highlighted vanguard literary and artistic aesthetic tendencies. Others, such as *La Gaceta Literaria* (Madrid 1927-32), *Inicial* (Buenos Aires 1923-27), *Valoraciones* (La Plata 1923-28), *La Antorcha* (1924-1925), and *Horizonte* (Xalapa 1926-1927), were much more engaged in sociopolitical concerns. Given that some journals included sociopolitical critiques alongside aesthetic matters, while others eschewed politics in favor of aesthetics, I have
divided my discussion of the exchanges that took place in these publications into two categories: sociopolitical debates and aesthetic debates. Chapters 1 and 3 examine sociopolitical polemics and chapters 2 and 4 consider aesthetic disputes.

Since the majority of the journals in which these exchanges took place are neither online, nor digitized, I traced these exchanges through extensive archival research I conducted in a two-year period in Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Austin, Texas, and at UCLA. In Madrid, I went to the Residencia de Estudiantes, the Fundación Ortega y Gasset, the Biblioteca Nacional, and to the Hemeroteca Municipal de Madrid at Conde Duque. Some of the otherwise inaccessible materials I was able to examine include the journals Plural (Madrid 1925) and El Estudiante (Salamanca Madrid 1925-26). In Mexico City I conducted research at the Biblioteca Rubén Boníjaz Nuño in the Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas at the UNAM, the Hemeroteca Nacional de México, the Hemeroteca at El Universal, the Colegio de México and at the Capilla Alfonso. I was able to access periodicals such as El Universal Ilustrado, El Universal, Revista de Revistas (either in microform or in precarious conditions) and unpublished correspondence such as letters between Alfonso Reyes and Xavier Villaurrutia. In Buenos Aires I went to the Universidad de Buenos Aires where I spent time at the Instituto de Literatura Argentina Ricardo Rojas, at the Instituto de Literatura Hispanoamericana, and at the Instituto de Teoría e Historia del Arte Julio E. Payró. I also conducted research at the Biblioteca Nacional, Villa Ocampo, the Academia Argentina de Letras, the Fundación Ortega y Gasset Argentina, the Centro Cultural Borges, Fundación Espigas, and the Banco Central de la Nación. There I examined otherwise unavailable materials such as the journal Valoraciones (La Plata 1923-28), Criterio (Buenos Aires 1928-Present), and La Nación (Buenos Aires 1870-Present). At the University of Texas,

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10 El Estudiante has been digitized since my 2010 visit, although not all issues are available. Microfilm of the journal is available at the Hemeroteca Municipal de Madrid at Conde Duque.
Austin, I conducted research at the Benson Latin American collection and at the Harry Ransom Center, where I found the only complete collections of the journals *Proa* (Buenos Aires 1924-26) and *Sagitario* (La Plata 1924-27). Finally, at UCLA, I was able to examine journals such as *Revista de Occidente* (Madrid 1923-36), *Inicial* (Buenos Aires 1923-27), *Síntesis* (Buenos Aires 1927-30), *La Vida Literaria* (Buenos Aires 1928-32), *La Antorcha* (Mexico 1925-25), *La Pluma* (Madrid 1920-24), *Ulises* (Mexico 1927-28), and *La Gaceta Literaria* (Madrid 1927-32).

While the development of Spain and Latin America’s post-colonial relationship has been discussed across multiple disciplines and within various theoretical paradigms, this dissertation engages the topic in an unprecedented manner. Studying specific debates between Spain, Mexico, and Argentina during this dissertation maps a concrete triangular network of cultural exchange. Based on extensive archival research, my project connects previously unexamined exchanges with better-known polemics in order to reveal that debates previously considered isolated events were in fact part of a broader and more complex tradition of contention. For instance, whereas scholarship on the well-known 1927-polémica *del meridiano intelectual* has, for the most part, discussed this debate as an unexpected incident, I illustrate that it was the culmination of a series of contentious disputes on related topics that took place during the 1920s. In addition, my thesis demonstrates that these debates and exchanges had a direct impact on literary aesthetics, such as the development of Hispanic vanguard prose.

I divide my analysis of the exchanges that took place in these journals into two categories. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I describe sociopolitical debates that address topics such as university reform, political oppression, and the racial, cultural, and political connotations of the terms *ibero, hispano, and latino-americanismo*. These sociopolitical altercations provide a context for, and often explain, the aesthetic disagreements that I describe.
in chapter two, in which I consider exchanges that hinge upon aesthetic matters, such as the origins of *ultraísmo* and the existence of a Latin American literature separate from a Spanish literary tradition. These first two chapters cover the period between 1920 and 1927, exploring debates which lead up to and inform the 1927 *polémica del meridiano intelectual*, a climactic moment in Spain and Latin America’s intellectual relationship during the 1920s and the subject of chapter 3. Finally, in chapter 4, I offer a case study of how the debate about José Ortega y Gasset’s notion of the dehumanization of art that took place in Spanish, Argentine, and Mexican journals had direct repercussions on the development of the Hispanic vanguard prose genre.

Chapter 1, “Sociopolitical Debates: Reconfiguring the Colonial Paradigm,” examines heated exchanges over *hispano, ibero*, and *latino-americanismo* that occurred at a transnational level within Latin America as well across the Atlantic in journals such as *Martín Fierro, Valoraciones, Inicial, Horizonte* and *El Estudiante*. This chapter also describes the contradictions between instances that reveal Latin American resentment over Spain’s superficial efforts to promote intercultural reciprocity (in matters such as cultural celebrations, “fiestas de la raza,” and transatlantic book distribution) with its former colonies and moments in which young Latin American intellectuals sought guidance from Spanish thinkers. For instance, eager to break with past traditions and advocate sociopolitical reforms, Argentina’s “Nueva Generación,” writing in *Inicial* and *Valoraciones*, embraced many of José Ortega y Gasset’s theories from *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (1921) and engaged in a dialogue with the Spanish philosopher, who responded in Buenos Aires’s *La Nación*. At the same time, inverting this paradigm, Spanish students writing in *El Estudiante* looked to both Argentina’s “Nueva Generación” and Mexican philosopher and politician José Vasconcelos for direction in implementing educational reform in
Spain. Thus, this chapter demonstrates that, despite tensions between Spain and Latin America, social issues, such as university reform often nurtured transatlantic solidarity.

The transatlantic battle for cultural prestige between Spain and Latin America centered primarily on authorship of vanguard tendencies such as ultraísmo. I examine these polemics in chapter 2, “Transatlantic Aesthetic Debates and Nationalist Tensions.” For instance, Guillermo de Torre consistently defended his role in creating ultraísmo and claimed that the movement was Spanish. Writing in Alfar and Plural, he debated this topic with Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro and Argentine Jorge Luis Borges, who responded in Alfar and Proa, respectively. At the same time, even after modernismo, figures such as La Pluma’s Cipriano Rivas Cherif denied the existence of a Latin American literature that was separate from a Spanish tradition. This chapter further considers tensions surrounding the creation of Latin American poetic anthologies. Consolidating Latin American poetry into one volume suggests that intellectuals felt that there was a Latin American aesthetic that transcended national boundaries. However, exchanges in journals, such as Horizonte’s review of Peruvian poet Alberto Hidalgo’s Índice de la nueva poesía americana, reveal transnational tensions between rival cultural hubs Mexico and Argentina. Guillermo de Torre intervened in this discussion from Spain, harshly critiquing the anthology in Revista de Occidente. Thus the debates over cultural capital discussed in chapter 2 indicate that, while Latin America had gained much ground with modernismo, by the 1920s Spain had yet to fully accept the former colonies’ cultural independence.

Chapter 3, “Polémica del meridiano intelectual,” examines this well-known transatlantic polemic as a climactic moment in the development of Spain and Latin America’s relationship during the 1920s. The issues that surfaced in the debates discussed in chapters 1 and 2 came to a head in a much broader polemic. In April 1927, Guillermo de Torre published the controversial
editorial “Madrid: Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica” in *La Gaceta Literaria*. He advocated a “fraternal” cultural relationship between Spain and Latin America, in which Madrid would act as intellectual meridian. Not surprisingly, many Latin American intellectuals found the proposal patronizing and presumptuous and quickly refuted the suggestion. The primary debate took place between *Martín Fierro* and *La Gaceta Literaria*. However, many other publications such as Uruguay’s *La Pluma*, Mexico’s *Ulises*, Cuba’s *Revista de Avance* and Italy’s *La Fiera Letteraria* soon chimed in. One of the most contested topics in this debate was *hispanoamericanismo*, as it pertained to the idea that Spain and Latin America shared the same cultural heritage. While some Spanish and Latin American intellectuals advocated transatlantic cultural solidarity under the banner of *hispanoamericanismo* others, particularly in Latin America, argued in favor of complete independence from the former empire. Yet, despite the rhetorical aspect of this debate, which inflamed passions and made for dramatic and humorous exchanges, I demonstrate that the underlying purpose of the editorial was to shore up or reassert Spanish control over the Hispanophone book market.

In chapter 4, “From Journal Debate to Novelistic Form: The Case of *Margarita de niebla,*** I offer a case study that illustrates how a transatlantic debate that took place in journals directly influenced the development of Hispanic vanguard prose. Writing in Mexico’s daily newspaper *El Universal* and in Argentina’s *Valoraciones*, Mexican poet and member of the *Contemporáneos* Jaime Torres Bodet engaged a debate with Spanish novelist Benjamín Jarnés, who responded in *El Estudiante*, regarding José Ortega y Gasset’s *La deshumanización del arte* (1925). Torres Bodet maintained that Ortega’s Eurocentric description of modern art failed to properly take Latin American cultural production into account. Meanwhile Jarnés condescendingly underscored that the Mexican had misunderstood the concept of
dehumanization. Torres Bodet extended this altercation beyond journal pages when he metafictionally addressed it in his novel *Margarita de niebla* (1927). The novel exemplifies Torres Bodet’s view that Latin American art should be cosmopolitan, but also distinctly Latin American. In addition, I propose that *Margarita de niebla* is also a response to Jarnés’s novel *El profesor inútil*, in so much as Torres Bodet’s novel is a Latin American interpretation of Jarnés’s dehumanized narrative style.

My analysis in chapter 4 builds upon studies on Hispanic vanguard prose by scholars such as Fernando de Burgos, Gustavo Pérez Firmat, and Gustavo Nanclares. In *Prosa hispánica de vanguardia*, Fernando Burgos underscores the importance of a unified Hispanic vanguard literary tradition, but he ignores literary magazines in the transatlantic dialogue that took place between Spanish and Latin American writers. In *Idle Fictions: The Hispanic Vanguard Novel 1926-1934*, Pérez Firmat draws upon articles and reviews by Spanish and Latin American authors in order to frame his definition of the Hispanic vanguard novel. Although he notes that exchanges occurred between Spanish and Latin American vanguard prose writers in journals, he does not specify the importance of these interactions, instead privileging the novels as the locus for the development of a vanguard prose aesthetic in a transatlantic setting. Finally, in *La cámara y el cálemo*, Nanclares relies on magazine contributions from Hispanic vanguard prose writers in his discussion on film’s influence on the Hispanic vanguard novel. Like Pérez Firmat and Burgos, Nanclares recognizes the importance of including both Latin America and Spain, but he follows individual trajectories and does not consider specific exchanges between authors. My project, by contrast goes beyond a descriptive exploration of transatlantic connections to examine how these exchanges actually informed the development of the genre. The period of intense transnational and transatlantic cultural interaction between Spain, Mexico, and Argentina
that flourished in the 1920s began to wane by the early 1930s, when each country’s political situation became more conservative and oppressive. In 1936 transatlantic cultural exchange came to a complete halt with the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. Yet, the transatlantic network that had developed during the 1920s facilitated Spanish exiles’ relocation to Latin American countries, especially in Argentina and Mexico.
Chapter 1

Socio Political Debates: Reconfiguring the Colonial Paradigm

La aproximación de España con América es, pues, obra de cultura. Cultura simultánea de la simpatía y de la inteligencia. Somos de la familia hispánica, pero no de la raza española, así como la misma España de hoy es latina, pero no romana. La ascendencia hispánica nos satisface y enorgullece. Queremos a España con particular afecto; pero sin olvidar que somos tan extranjeros, allá, como los españoles en la República Argentina. (Leopoldo Lugones, *La Vida Literaria*, April 1929)

In May 1925 Mexican poet Xavier Villaurrutia observed that “Ningún americano de mediana cultura corre el riesgo de ser el Cristóbal Colón de tierras españolas,” underscoring the uneven relationship between Spain and its former colonies (“Los caminos de Alfonso Reyes” *Proa*, 5). Villaurrutia was commenting on how, despite Mexican poet and critic Alfonso Reyes’s literary success in Spain, the former empire’s paternalistic attitude towards Latin America persisted. Yet, in spite of Spain’s disposition towards Latin American writers, Villaurrutia conceded that Reyes’s accomplishments did represent a positive step forward for the transatlantic relationship. In Spain, Reyes had gained respect as a poet and critic, particularly for his expertise on Spanish Golden Age poet Luis de Góngora. However, Villaurrutia noted that Reyes’s most significant triumph had been his fomenting strong relationships with Madrid’s intelligentsia, including philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. Unlike the violent Spanish conquest of the Americas, Reyes had gone to Spain as an emissary of solidarity and friendship: “Se trata del triunfo de la consideración, de la amistad y solidaridad conseguidas entre los hombres de letras de allá” (5).

As this anecdote illustrates, even a century after independence, the relationship between Spain and Latin America remained tainted by a colonial legacy. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Latin American countries still struggled to define their national identities and, at the same time, Spain, having lost its last imperial claims in 1898, aspired to maintain strong cultural
ties with its former territories. Although many Latin American intellectuals were also interested in sustaining a relationship with Spain, as the example of Alfonso Reyes demonstrates, transatlantic reciprocity still faced many challenges. For the most part, Spain continued to view Latin America as an extension of Spain and Latin Americans also harbored colonial resentments. Moreover, Latin Americans demanded a new relationship with the former empire, one that fully acknowledged their independence. Journals, magazines, and correspondence from both sides of the Atlantic chronicle this often contentious process. This chapter analyzes the array of sociopolitical debates and exchanges that took place between Spanish and Latin American intellectuals during the 1920s as both sides of the Atlantic attempted to reconfigure their relationship.

The first section of this chapter introduces two cases in which Latin Americans protested Spain’s contradictory attitude towards fostering an intercultural relationship with its former colonies. While, on a superficial level, Spain professed an interest in nuturing cultural exchange, in reality, the former empire did not invest the effort necessary to accomplish this goal. The Spanish journal *Hispania: revista de artes y letras de raza* is a case in point. Although intended to document Hispanic culture in Spain and Latin America, as the Argentine journal *Valoraciones: humanidades, crítica y polémica* (La Plata 1923-28) points out, *Hispania*’s editors were ignorant of Latin American culture. In another debate, Argentine Eduardo Schiaffino objected to Spanish booksellers’ aversion to selling Latin American books in Spain in order to protect Spanish national book sales. Both examples suggest that Latin Americans perceived Spaniards as hypocritical in their attempts to encourage intercultural exchanges.

The second section of the chapter evaluates a series of exchanges between Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset and two groups of young Argentine intellectuals that were part
of the “Nueva Generación.” The first group published the journal *Inicial: Revista de la Nueva Generación* (Buenos Aires 1923-26) and the second, the “Grupo Renovación” from the University of La Plata, published *Valoraciones*. After his first visit to Argentina in 1916, Ortega y Gasset began writing regularly for the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación* (1870-present) and between 1923 and 1924 he engaged in a series of exchanges with *Inicial’s* and *Valoraciones’s* enthusiastic young intellectuals. On the one hand, this relationship reveals that while Argentina’s new generation of intellectuals sought reforms for their country as they defined their national identity, they looked to a Spanish intellectual for guidance, thus replicating the colonial relationship. For his part, Ortega saw Argentina as an extension of Spain and exhibited a patriarchal posture as he pontificated from his pulpit at *La Nación*.

The third section of the chapter addresses the complex issues surrounding *ibero* and *hispano-americanismo*. Used interchangeably in many of the journals I examined, these terms refer to the cultural bond between Spain and Latin America as members of the Hispanic race, a widely debated affiliation in Latin America. During the 1920s, many Latin American intellectuals employed *ibero* and *hispano-americanismo* as a means of promoting solidarity among Latin American nations in order to come together to solve social challenges such as educational reform and political oppression. Moreover, Latin Americans’ stances on *ibero* and *hispano-americanismo* revealed their positions on how they understood Latin America should relate to the United States’ overt imperialist advances. Inspired by Latin American young intellectuals who promoted *ibero* and *hispano-americanismo* as a means of procuring solidarity to effect change, a group of students from the University of Salamanca also ascribed to *iberoamericanismo*. They sought support from Latin Americans in their quest to reform Spain. This chapter’s fourth section considers these students’ journal, *El Estudiante: Semanario de la*
juventud española, as a means of establishing a new kind of relationship with their Latin American counterparts.

**False Reciprocity: Spain’s Vacuous Cultural Overtures**

In March 1926, the Argentine journal *Valoraciones* published “La reconquista de América,” an editorial protesting superficial attempts to establish a cultural relationship with Latin America in the Spanish journal *Hispania: revista de artes y letras de raza* (Madrid 1925-26). *Valoraciones* criticized Spain’s “americanismo para la exportación, irrisorio, con intenciones comerciales mal disimuladas y peor encaminadas” evident in events like “días de la raza, viajes de príncipes y publicaciones palaciegas y gemebundas” (297-98). The editorial explained that, while open to developing an intercultural relationship with Spain, Latin America could not accept Spain’s misguided approach, which the journal editors attributed to “el confuso recuerdo de la colonia, convertida ahora en óptimo mercado de afrodisíacos literarios” (297). For *Valoraciones*, Spain’s vacuous gestures revealed the former empire’s inability to acknowledge Latin American independence. According to the editorial, *Hispania’s* content displayed the directors’ complete ignorance of Latin American reality. Calling the publication a “confraternidad de tarjeta postal,” *Valoraciones* disparaged *Hispania’s* shallow portrayal of Latin America (298). Rather than address real socioeconomic and cultural developments in Latin America, *Hispania*, they opined “Dedica abundantes páginas a describir trajes regionales, a publicar himnos, a darnos versitos de las esposas de gobernadores, a delucidar con criterio de portero reumático la nacionalidad de Colón” (298). More disconcerting for the *Valoraciones* editors, however, was *Hispania’s* ignorance and lack of cultural sensitivity towards Latin America. For example, the journal had published a picture of Venezuelan despot Juan Vicente
Gómez next to an image of Latin America’s acclaimed hero in the wars for independence from Spain, Simón Bolívar. Although both were Venezuelan, pairing them was a careless and “infame parangón” (298).

Accusations that Spain’s bid to create strong cultural ties with its former colonies revealed its ignorance of Latin America also surfaced in regard to transatlantic book distribution. In 1924, writing in the Argentine journal *Martín Fierro* (Buenos Aires 1924-1927), Maître Hippolyte (Hipólito Carambat) recounted a debate that had taken place in 1923 between Argentine writer Eduardo Schiaffino and Spanish critic Andrenio (Eduardo Gómez Barquero). According to Hippolyte, Andrenio had stated in *El Sol* (Madrid 1917-39) that literary exchange between Spain and Latin America did not exist. Schiaffino had countered this statement in *Revue de l’Amerique Latine*, affirming that efforts for literary exchange did exist, at least on the Latin American side, but that Spain was either ignorant or indifferent to these overtures.¹¹ Hippolyte’s ironically titled article “Confraternidad intelectual Hispano-americana” appeared in *Martín Fierro* on July 25, 1924 and republished most of Schiaffino’s article. As Hippolyte put it, the debate centered on “la situación paradojal del libro americano frente al español” (46). In the exchange, Schiaffino insisted that Spain made no effort to promote transatlantic book distribution with Latin America. For example, he complained that even Latin American books published in Spain were not sold in Spain. Rather than distribute them to Spanish booksellers, these books were printed and shipped immediately shipped across the Atlantic. Schiaffino contended that Spanish bookstores feared that “la venta de un libro americano escrito en su idioma estorbaría la venta de un libro español” (46). According to Hippolyte, Schiaffino based this accusation on personal experience. Upon seeing announcements for Latin American books

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¹¹ Alejandrina Falcón discusses the connections between Schiaffino’s debate with Andrenio and the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*. 32
in Madrid newspapers, Schiaffino had tried to purchase them on multiple occasions but was always disappointed to learn that recently advertised books were not in stock. After many attempts, he inferred that bookstores in Spain did not want to sell Latin American books because they threatened Spanish book sales. Schiaffino spitefully commented that Spanish booksellers had a hard time selling national publications because Spaniards did not read: “se lee poco en España. Entre las numerosas cualidades del español no figura la curiosidad intelectual” (46). Frustrated by his experience, Schiaffino denounced the false cultural reciprocity between Spain and Latin America. While Latin America readily imported and sold Spanish publications, Spain did not return the favor: “Esta incuria contrasta con la diligencia que los libreros porteños ponen al servicio del libro extranjero” (47). After recounting Schiaffino’s story, Hippolyte chaftingly ended his article by exclaiming, “¡Viva la confraternidad intelectual hispano-americana!” (47). This sarcastic phrasing is particularly poignant considering its placement below “Oliverio Girondo en misión intelectual,” an article by Martín Fierro’s “redacción” that boasts Argentine poet Oliverio Girondo’s expedition through Latin America and Europe in order to foment “confraternidad artística o intelectual de la juventud de América y Europa latina” (47).

Although Valoraciones’s “La reconquista de América” and Hippolyte’s “Confraternidad intelectual Hispano-americana” refer to specific instances of Latin American frustration with Spanish negligence in attempting to strengthen cultural ties with Latin America, this type of accusation surfaced often during the 1920s. For example, in July 1924, the Spaniard Adolfo Salazar quoted Alfonso Reyes in Revista de Occidente (Madrid 1923-36) when expressing his disapproval of Spain’s “Fiestas de la Raza” because they revealed “el mal conocimiento europeo acerca de América” (141). Moreover, in the editorial that ignited the polémica del meridiano intelectual in 1927, which I discuss at length in chapter 3, Spanish poet and critic Guillermo de
Torre connected criticism of superfluous displays of cultural unity with transatlantic book distribution. He dismissed events like “Fiestas de la Raza” calling them “Banquetes y cachupinadas, tremolar de banderas, fuegos de artificio retórico” that only managed to create a greater distance between Spain and Latin America (Alemany Bay 67). He argued that Spanish and Latin American attention should focus on establishing real reciprocity through transatlantic book distribution. Yet, unlike Schiaffino, de Torre felt that Latin America was to blame for Spain’s scarce book sales in Latin America.

12 Taken from Carmen Alemany Bay’s La polemica del meridiano intelectual: Estudios y textos.
José Ortega y Gasset and Argentina’s “Nueva Generación”

Despite contentious disputes over Spanish negligence in attempting to strengthen cultural ties with Latin America, many Spanish intellectuals cultivated transatlantic cultural reciprocity. For instance, as Argentine poet and critic Alfredo Brandan Caraffa’s “Voces de Castilla” (Proa September 1924) reveals, disenchanted with Post-World War I Europe, many Spanish intellectuals saw Latin America’s younger generation as an audience ripe with promise. Reflecting upon a recent visit to Spain, Caraffa narrated his interactions with Spanish intellectuals Ramón Gómez de la Serna, Rafael Cansinos Asséns, and José Ortega y Gasset. Ramón, who Caraffa described as having “algo de gnomo que gobierna con sus paradojas,” regreted dialectical differences between Argentine and Castilian Spanish: “Me habla de Buenos Aires con cierto afectado decir de viajero antiguo. Se lamenta del lenguaje bastardo que empieza a tomar carta de ciudadanía en nuestro país,” one of the polarizing topics that would later be debated in the 1927 polémica del meridiano intelectual (41). As Caraffa explained, Ramón attributed Argentina’s corrupt Spanish to Italian immigration and to Spaniards’ negligence: “no trabajan suficientemente para conservar el casticismo en todas las Américas” (41). Meanwhile, Ortega, “[c]on su cabeza plástica de frente redonda y calva y un prestigio visible que baja como una túnica por su persona,” told Caraffa that despite difficulties adapting to Buenos Aires’s climate during his visit (1916), the experience had reignited his confidence in the new generation (43). Disappointed with Europe’s young intellectuals, Ortega was impressed with Argentina’s younger generation’s “sensibilidad comprensiva” and “curiosidad universal” (44). In addition, Caraffa recounted that he was surprised to find that Ramón and Cansinos-Asséns shared Ortega’s perspective: "Lo que más me sorprendió en estos tres hombres fue su interés coincidente por la juventud de América. Todos me declararon su expectativa por los nuevos valores que veían
surgir inesperadamente” (45). Moreover, Ramón, Ortega, and Cansinos-Asséns admitted to Caraffa that they wrote for a Latin American audience: “me dieron a entender que para quien escribían en realidad era para el público de ultramar” (45). Demoralized over their inability to reach Spain’s young intellectuals, Latin America’s enthusiastic readership provided them new opportunities for intellectual exchange. Thus, Ramón, Ortega, and Cansinos-Asséns’s admission suggests that their interest in fostering transatlantic ties transcended a desire to maintain cultural dominance over their country’s former colonies.

During the 1920s, Ortega’s ideologies significantly influenced younger generations in Latin America. In particular, young intellectuals ascribed to Ortega’s theory on generations, which he detailed in *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (1923).13 For Ortega, while each generation was the product of the preceding generation, each also comprised its own entity, “un nuevo cuerpo social íntegro” imbued with its own “sensibilidad vital” (OC 563). According to Ortega, each generation’s sensibility determined how it related to the previous generation. In some eras, generational sensibilities have much in common, and there was little friction between generations. Yet, when a new generation’s sensibility differed greatly from that of the preceding generation, conflict was inevitable. Young Mexican and Argentine intellectuals identified with the latter type of generation; they felt a great schism between their sensibility and that of the generation that preceded them. However, Ortega cultivated a stronger relationship with Argentina’s young intellectuals. He first visited Argentina in 1916 and later became a frequent contributor to Buenos Aires’s *La Nación*. Argentina’s young generation of intellectuals had adopted the banner “Nueva Generación” following a 1923 survey in the Buenos Aires journal *Nosotros* (1907-43) and came together around common aesthetic and sociopolitical pursuits that

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13 Ortega’s writings also reached Latin America through *Revista de Occidente*; in addition, his articles were published in Mexico’s *El Universal* and Buenos Aires’ *La Nación*. 36
entailed severing ties with the preceding generation’s ideologies. Inspired by vanguard movements such as *ultraísmo*, this generation sought to break with previous literary and artistic traditions. At the same time they participated in demands for social reform such as the *Reforma Universitaria* movement that had begun in the Argentine city of Córdoba in 1918 and quickly spread throughout Latin America. Following Ortega’s writings in *Revista de Occidente* (Madrid 1923-36) and in *La Nación*, this “Nueva Generación” identified with the Spanish philosopher’s theories and frequently reviewed his works in their journals. Two publications that based much of their platform on his philosophies were *Valoraciones: Humanidades, crítica y polémica* and *Inicial: Revista de la nueva generación* (Buenos Aires 1923-27).

The “Grupo Renovación,” a group of students from the University of La Plata, published *Valoraciones*. Directed by Carlos Américo Amaya, the journal professed a “rebeldía contra los valores gastados que perduran, y de afirmación de nuevos valores” (“Intenciones” September 1923, 4). “Grupo Renovación” felt that Argentina needed to catch up with Europe “en material de cultura” (“Intenciones” September 1923, 4). The country’s universities, for example, were ideologically stagnant: “atrofiadas bajo el grueso cascarón de la rutina, siguen siendo esas pesadas y desesperantes carretas del progreso, que llenaron de orgullo al espíritu resignado y elemental de nuestros abuelos” (“Intenciones” September 1923, 4). Nineteenth-century positivism may have been appropriate for their grandparents, but *Valoraciones* proclaimed that Argentine Universities needed an influx of new ideas and philosophies. Moreover, universities could no longer be affiliated with church or state.¹⁴ Echoing Ortega’s theory on generations, “Grupo Renovación” insisted that their generation had to break with the past. Their era demanded new ways of thinking, and the previous generations’ ideologies did not apply to their

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¹⁴ These ideas are aligned with Spain’s Institución de Libre Enseñanza, founded by Francisco Giner de los Ríos in 1876.
present reality: “En los tiempos actuales la fantasía y el pensamiento de los hombres son muy diversos de los de aquellos que veían en la novela experimental la más completa manifestación del arte, y en la espesa filosofía positivista la totalidad del espíritu humano” (“Intenciones” September 1923, 4). In order to address their new reality, “Grupo Renovación” intended to effect social change through culture by publishing Valoraciones: “trataremos de hacer en ese sentido una labor constructiva, orientando a la juventud hacia rutas fundamentales de la alta cultura” (“Intenciones” September 1923, 5). Therefore, although primarily focused on the Reforma Universitaria movement, Valoraciones also published articles on politics, history, philosophy and the arts.

In October 1923, a month after Valoraciones emerged in La Plata, Brandan Caraffa, Homero M. Guglielmini, Roberto Smith, and Roberto A. Ortelli published Inicial: Revista de la nueva generación in Buenos Aires. They stated that their journal would provide a space where “esa juventud dispersa que vagabunda por las publicaciones y revistas más o menos desteñidas” could debate and express their positions on sociopolitical and aesthetic issues (“Inicial” October 1923, 47). If “Grupo Renovación” wanted to break with the previous generation and achieve change that addressed their generation’s new sensibility, Inicial was the “Revista de la nueva generación,” and would register “las palpitations de la juventud,” calling on “todo lo que hay valiente, decidido y sano en las filas de la nueva generación” (“Inicial” October 1923, 47). Like “Grupo Renovación,” Inicial’s editors professed their commitment to their generation and to reform, “la juventud debe renovar constantemente sus horizontes y escalar siempre otros nuevos” (“Inicial” October 1923, 49). Yet, while Inicial and Valoraciones enthusiastically expressed their objectives in their opening pages, Inicial’s tone was much more aggressive, focusing on issues the editors opposed rather than on constructive goals. As a result, the journal’s second issue
(November 1923) opened with an article entitled “¿Reaccionarios? ¿Poco definidos?” in which *Inicial* responded to criticism for its bellicose introduction. The journal defended its position explaining that its generation faced a different reality, which demanded strong convictions: “Hoy todo ha cambiado. El mundo es un gigantesco laboratorio donde se liquida todo lo falso” (103). Despite *Inicial*’s militant rhetoric, the journal shared objectives with *Valoraciones*. Both journals displayed an awareness of their generation and the new world it faced, and both aspired to effect change. Therefore, although they took different approaches, *Valoraciones* and *Inicial* drew on Ortega’s theory of generations and regularly commented on the Spanish philosopher’s publications. *Inicial*, however, more openly declared its allegiance to Ortega, describing him as “uno de los espíritus más cultos de Occidente” (105).

In 1923 and 1924 *Valoraciones* and *Inicial* reviewed Ortega’s *España invertebrada* (1921) and *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (1923); Ortega responded to their attention in a series of articles he published in *La Nación* in 1924. Carlos Américo Amaya’s review of *España invertebrada* for *Valoraciones* in September 1923 emphasized that the philosopher’s analysis took an important step back from detailed and superficial political problems in order to understand Spanish society from a broader perspective. Moreover, Amaya stressed that, while Ortega’s book was about Spain, his discussion was also relevant to *Valoraciones*’s readership: “encierra problemas de tal magnitud que difícilmente no nos encontremos comprendidos en algunos, yo diría en todos los términos de sus proposiciones” (44). A few months later, in January 1924 *Valoraciones* reviewed Ortega’s *Revista de Occidente*, underscoring the philosopher’s journal as important for its effort to express “el pensar y sentir contemporáneo,” which further highlighted the Argentine journal’s endorsement of the Spanish philosopher (158).
Although Valoraciones’s reviews reveal that the journal identified with Ortega and his assessment of the new era, Inicial was much more explicit in championing the Spanish thinker. For example, the journal’s December 1923 review of El tema de nuestro tiempo entitled “Un filósofo de la Nueva Generación,” ardently promoted Orteguean thought as “la justificación filosófica de las nuevas inquietudes” (202). Like Valoraciones, Inicial appreciated Ortega's addressing “la actual sensibilidad,” and bestowed the title “filósofo de la Nueva Generación” (202) on the Spanish philosopher because he articulated “los rumbos cardinales hacia los cuales se proyectan las maneras de pensar y de sentir contemporáneas” (202). In particular, Inicial explained that Ortega’s most original contribution was “el sentido que presta a la cultura, vieja etiqueta de una manera de pensar y de sentir que estamos superando. Esa definición nos aclara todo el misticismo político e idealista de la pasada centuria, y nos abre el camino para la interpretación de las recientes aberraciones históricas” (205). For Inicial, Ortega’s theories confirmed their radical positions and justified their constant clashes with the older generation.

Each issue of Inicial opens with an editorial that sets the tone for the entire issue. For instance, in Inicial 4 (January, February, March 1924), the opening editorial entitled “La nueva mentalidad de Occidente,” which echoed the title of Ortega’s journal Revista de Occidente, responded to accusations that the new generation lacked concrete ideals. Once again following Orteguean postures, Inicial claimed that such assessments were rooted in the older generation’s inability to understand the new generation's approaches:

Reclaman de la juventud intelectual del momento, la sensibilidad y la postura que caracterizaron a las generaciones del pasado, y del pasado más reciente. Y como no nos es posible servirles, a ellos, en bandeja de plata, el manjar a su sabor y gusto de un sistema bien ilustrado y sin resquicios … enrostran al joven pensamiento su carencia de
orientación concreta, de definiciones claras y de afirmaciones constructivas. (221)

Inicial further stressed that, as a new generation, they were responsible for maintaining an “afinidad filial” with the older generation and, furthermore, that they could even become “la negación viviente de las que la precedieron” (221). Explaining that their perspective was in line with the latest European currents, and again recalling Ortega, Inicial emphasized that contradictory sensibilities separated the new generation from the previous one. If the older generation employed dogmatic systems to address their reality, the new generation dismissed all systematic approaches as unfit for the new era. Moreover, Inicial declared that Oswald Spengler, Ortega, and Henri Bergson embodied the new sensibility because they created “el material intelectual de las nuevas generaciones, y están definiendo esa actitud de simpatía infinita, de relativismo tolerante, de amor a la vida concreta, de odio a la inteligencia abstracta, de escepticismo fecundo, de lucha al sistema, que son las notas de este momento culminante de la mentalidad occidental” (221). Finally, Inicial addressed complaints they received regarding their acceptance of Ortega’s theories. Responding to claims that Ortega’s thinking was pagan, Inicial argued that those rendering such an opinion had not understood Ortega. They conceded that Ortega’s ideas had “algo de paganismo” since “eso de amor a la vida” that the philosopher professed “es una frase de sabor pagano” (226). However, Inicial defended Ortega explaining that “ese amor a la vida de las nuevas generaciones de Occidente no es el mismo del de los griegos, que era amor a la vida carnal … La palabra vida, en concreto, ha adquirido otro sentido que el pagano” (226). Ortega promoted the ability to fully engage in and cultivate life, not carnal debauchery.

In the same issue, Uruguayan Ariosto D. González commented on Ortega’s España invertebrada. Like Carlos Américo Amaya, González affirmed that although Ortega’s book
specifically evaluated the Spanish condition, it also applied to Latin America because, “Herederos del genio español, los países de la América nuestra reproducen las líneas esenciales de la vieja metrópoli” (261). For example, according to González, Latin America was also guilty of “individualismo exagerado … la ineptitud para crear firmes y vastas unidades internacionales; el carácter personalista y arbitrario de la política; la incapacidad administrativa; el amor a la existencia turbulenta” and “el concepto caballeresco y trágico del deber cívico” (261). As a result, González insisted that Latin Americans pay attention to Ortega’s observations on Spain in order to take steps to avoid reaching “la actual depresión de la Madre Patria” (268).

Ortega first visited Argentina from July 1916 to January 1917. Invited by the Institución Cultural Española to give a series of lectures, he primarily spoke in Buenos Aires, but also traveled to Argentine provinces Tucumán, Rosario, Mendoza, and Córdoba. In Buenos Aires, Ortega gave a ten-lecture series entitled “Introducción a los problemas generales de la filosofía” at the University of Buenos Aires and two public talks: one at the Teatro Odeón (November 15, 1916) and the other at the Teatro de la Ópera (November 22, 1916). In particular, Ortega’s lecture “La nueva sensibilidad” at the Teatro Odeón articulated many of the ideas he would later publish in El tema de nuestro tiempo that profoundly influenced Argentina’s “Nueva Generación.” Thus Ortega and his philosophies were enthusiastically received in Buenos Aires where many events were held in his honor, such as a banquet sponsored by the journal Nosotros. Moreover, the feeling was mutual as the Spanish philosopher recounted in his journal El Espectador in 1917; he sensed that his ideas were better received in Argentina than in Spain: “El Espectador es y tal vez será mejor entendido—mejor sentido—en la Argentina que en España. Podrá herir nuestra nacional presunción, pero es el caso que ese pueblo, hijo de España, parece hoy más perspicaz más curioso, más capaz de emoción que el metropolitano” (9). Considering
Argentina an extension of Spain, and its population part of the Spanish race, this first visit inspired Ortega to take on the responsibility of guiding and educating its zealous and motivated younger generation. Therefore, after his trip, Ortega became a frequent contributor to La Nación where he published articles from 1923 to 1952. Gratified by the attention Valoraciones and Inicial had given him between September 1923 and March 1924, Ortega responded to these journals with two articles in La Nación: “El deber de la nueva generación argentina” (April 6, 1924) and “Para dos revistas argentinas” (April 27, 1924).\footnote{In Ortega y Gasset en La Nación, Marta M. Campomar offers an evaluation of Ortega’s relationship with Argentina and, his dialogue with Argentina’s younger generation in La Nación. She explains that Ortega had intended for his articles responding to Valoraciones and Inicial to be entitled “Para dos revistas argentinas” (Campomar 93).}

In “El deber de la nueva generación argentina,” Ortega first addressed Carlos Américo Amaya’s review of España invertebrada in Valoraciones, calling it “la nota más exacta que se ha hecho sobre aquel libro mío” (Los escritos 47).\footnote{I cite these articles compiled in Los escritos de Ortega y Gasset en La Nación 1923-1952.} He further appreciated the review because his book had received little attention in Spain. Ortega then offered his advice to Valoraciones and Inicial as representatives of Argentina’s new generation. He first explained that Spanish intellectual life was undergoing a period of what he termed “monolingüismo,” noting that rather than engaging in a productive dialogue, Spanish intellectuals were aggressively denouncing each other (Los escritos 48). Fearing that the same could occur in Argentina and, by extension, in Latin America, Ortega urged Argentina’s young intellectuals to seek a “férrea disciplina interior” because “[t]odas las labores valiosas que se han cumplido en la historia nacieron de esa disciplina dura, vibrante, que no sostiene el menor abandono o flojera” (Los escritos 49). He encouraged them to employ disciplined reflection in order to effect constructive social change. According to Ortega, Argentina’s younger generation needed to become “Una juventud que
aspire a ser no consecuencia, repercusión, eco del pretérito en decadencia, sino al contrario, iniciación de un proceso ascensional y constructor” (Los escritos 49). Yet, in taking on this role, the younger generation would bear the responsibility of leadership. In addition, it would have to be open to outside influences in order to be better leaders, but it would also need to be discerning in choosing models to follow. Therefore, discipline, reflection, and discernment, would enable them to develop their own “repertorio de ideas claras y firmes” (Los escritos 50). However, perhaps thinking more of Inicial’s belligerence, Ortega expressed his concern that Valoraciones and Inicial’s approach was reactive. Rather than offer constructive proposals, Ortega criticized both journals for focusing “el ataque a lo que no se estima” (Los escritos 50). For Ortega, antagonistic cries for change were counterproductive because they did not promote lasting solutions.

Ortega published his second article addressing Inicial and Valoraciones, “Para dos revistas argentinas” on April 27, 1924. He again praised Valoraciones’s Carlos Américo Amaya, this time for his “certera nota” on España invertebrada (Los escritos 53). However, Ortega primarily commented on Inicial’s review of El tema de nuestro tiempo entitled “Un filósofo de la nueva generación.” While Ortega conceded that “[e]l autor ha penetrado bien en el sentido de mis pensamientos,” he was disappointed that the article had linked his philosophies to pragmatism (Los escritos 53). For Ortega, such an association was the gravest offense that could be bestowed on a philosopher because “[e]l pragmatismo no ha sido nunca una filosofía de filósofos, sino, a lo sumo, una filosofía para los incapaces de tener ninguna” (Los escritos 54). Therefore, in order to clarify Inicial’s misunderstanding of his philosophies, Ortega dedicated the remainder of the article to carefully articulating how his thinking was unrelated to pragmatism.
Following Ortega’s responses in *La Nación*, *Inicial* and *Valoraciones* published two more articles on the Spanish philosopher in 1924. Homero M. Guglielmini’s “Algo más sobre Ortega y Gasset” appeared in *Inicial* 5, May 1924 and Carlos Américo Amaya reviewed *El tema de nuestro tiempo* for *Valoraciones* in July 1924. In “Algo más sobre Ortega y Gasset” Guglielmini noted that, unlike Argentina’s “Nueva Generación,” Europe’s younger generation had not responded to Ortega. As a result, he claimed, Ortega had engaged in a dialogue with Argentina’s new generation in *La Nación*. Guglielmini underscored that *Inicial* was proud to have played an important role in initiating a discussion with the Spanish philosopher. Offering yet another summary of Ortega’s theories, Guglielmini emphasized that Ortega’s greatest contribution, as a philosopher, was his ability to interpret his era (377). However, Guglielmini did not address Ortega’s efforts to clarify *Inicial*’s claim that his thinking was linked to pragmatism. In fact, it would seem that Guglielmini did not pay close attention to Ortega’s article in *La Nación*, because he again referred to Ortega’s postures in *El tema de nuestro tiempo* as pragmatic. In closing, Guglielmini did note that Ortega had offered much advice to Argentina’s younger generation, but that *Inicial* would respond to this topic at a later date. Carlos Américo Amaya’s review of *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (*Valoraciones* 4 July 1924) synthesized Ortega’s theory on generations and, just as *Inicial* proposed in “Un filósofo de la Nueva Generación,” Amaya accentuated the relevance of Ortega's ideas for Argentina’s young intellectuals. Echoing Guglielmini’s comment that Ortega’s greatest achievement was his ability to assess the current era, Amaya affirmed that “Entre la nueva generación argentina, la influencia de Ortega es evidente; y no podía resultar de otro modo ya que este pensador al hacer la anatomía de nuestro tiempo, sugiere ideas, alude a hechos que constituyen algo así como la fisiología del momento histórico” (78).
Although *Inicial* did not respond to Ortega’s advice in *La Nación* as Guglielmini had promised, the journal did write Ortega a letter regarding *Revista de Occidente* in September 1924. If *Inicial* had advocated Ortega and his philosophies in almost every issue, this letter offered another expression of solidarity with the philosopher, his goals, and *Revista de Occidente*. First, *Inicial* underlined its kinship with *Revista de Occidente* because both journals were founded at about the same time (*Revista de Occidente* in July 1923 and *Inicial* in October 1923). Moreover, if *Revista de Occidente* embodied the “nueva sensibilidad” in Spain, *Inicial* professed “esa manera de ver el actual momento histórico” on the other side of the Atlantic (489). According to *Inicial*, although *Revista de Occidente* could be considered “el fruto maduro de discreta y larga meditación” while *Inicial* embodied “la expresión de un fervoroso entusiasmo juvenil,” both journals shared “la misma ansiedad” (489). Therefore, *Inicial* and *Revista de Occidente* bridged the Atlantic by connecting Spain and Latin America in the united effort to reignite Hispanic culture: “La *Revista de Occidente* e *Inicial* [sic] han surgido de una común inspiración, y realizan así, un acorde perfecto a través de la distancia, incorporándose a esa vaga armonía que en Europa y América entona el treno fúnebre de una cultura que muere y la música augural de una cultura que nace” (489).

Ortega’s “Generación contra generación” (*La Nación* July 28, 1924), responded to a separate debate in *La Nación* on his theory of generations, but it is worth mentioning because he rearticulated his theory of generations from *El tema de nuestro tiempo* in order to defend the young Argentine intellectuals who were drawing fire for having assimilated his ideas.17 “Carta a

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17Natalio R. Botana explains that Ortega wrote this article in support of young Argentine intellectuals who had adopted his philosophy and who were being criticized for their rejection of the previous generation’s values by older intellectuals like Adolfo Posada (Spain), who was a regular contributor to *La Nación*. Marta M. Campomar also describes this debate over generations.
un joven argentino que estudia filosofía” (La Nación December 28, 1924) concludes the series of articles that Ortega directed to *Inicial* and *Valoraciones*. In *Los escritos de Ortega y Gasset en La Nación 1923-1952*, Natalio R. Botana speculates that this article most likely addressed *Inicial’s* Homero M.Guglielmini (65). Here Ortega summarized the main ideas he had been conveying to Argentina’s young intellectuals. First he stressed that while Argentina’s new generation inspired much hope, he was not yet certain they would succeed in their endeavors:

La nueva generación goza de una espléndida dosis de fuerza vital, condición primera de toda empresa histórica, por eso, espero en ella. Pero, a la vez, sospecho que carece por completo de disciplina interna—sin la cual la fuerza se desagrega y volatiliza--, por eso, desconfío de ella. No basta curiosidad para ir hacia las cosas: hace falta rigor mental para hacerse dueño de ellas. (*Los escritos* 66)

Once again, Ortega accentuated the need for young intellectuals to be disciplined and constructive. Seeing “demasiado énfasis y poca precisión” in the “Nueva Generación” journals, Ortega observed that Argentina’s young intellectuals, like all Latin Americans, were guilty of excessive narcissism: “[a]l mirar las cosas, no abandona[n] sobre éstas la mirada, sino que tiende[n] a usar de ellas como de un espejo donde contemplarse” (*Los escritos* 66). According to Ortega, narcissism led to superficial and reactionary evaluations of situations instead of more profound and productive analysis. Ortega insisted that Argentina’s young generation overcome their limited perspective in order to effect real progress because “la ciencia y las letras no consisten en tomar posturas delante de las cosas, sino en irrupir frenéticamente dentro de ellas merced a un viril apetito de perforación” (*Los escritos* 66). He also cautioned that, unless they became introspective and disciplined, they would not become self-sufficient and generate their own distinct ideas. Instead, they would depend “integralmente de Europa en el orden intelectual”
Los escritos 66). Ortega concluded by reiterating that Argentina’s “Nueva Generación” exhibited much promise, but would only earn his belief in their success when “la encuentre resuelta a cultivar muy en serio el gran deporte de la precisión mental” (Los escritos 68).

Ortega y Gasset’s relationship with Argentina’s younger generation during the early 1920s was productive in that it created a strong transatlantic dialogue between Spain and Latin America. However, Argentina’s younger generation and Ortega assumed stances within the relationship that also replicated the colonial power structure that Latin Americans were vigorously attempting to eliminate. While Argentina’s younger generation advocated breaking with the past generation’s ideologies in order to promote reform in their country and solidify their national identity, they looked to a Spanish philosopher for guidance. Their admiration for Ortega, therefore, implicitly upheld Latin American subjugation to European models. Although Ortega encouraged the “Nueva Generación” to generate their own ideas and overcome their dependence on Europe, at the same time his paternalism reinforced the power structure that he preached against by dictating behavior from his pulpits at La Nación and the University of Buenos Aires. Moreover, while the Spanish philosopher proclaimed that he wrote for Latin America’s younger generation because he was disillusioned with young European intellectuals, Ortega also directed his writing to the “Nueva Generación” because he considered Argentina an extension of Spain.

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18 Marta M. Campomar makes this point in the cover art for her book Ortega y Gasset en La Nación; the image depicts Ortega pontificating.
In 1925, the Argentine journal *Martín Fierro* invited Spanish poet and critic Guillermo de Torre to contribute to their publication. De Torre, whose significant role in transatlantic debates between Spain and Latin America I will discuss in detail in chapters 2 and 3, was one of the founders of the Spanish vanguard poetic movement *ultraísmo*. Active in the European vanguard aesthetics scene, de Torre published *Literaturas europeas de vanguardia* in 1925, an account of Futurism, Cubism, Dada, *creacionismo*, and *ultraísmo*. Responding to Martín Fierro’s request, de Torre wrote an open letter to the journal’s director, Évar Méndez. The Argentine journal published “Carta abierta a Évar Méndez,” in two parts, the first on June 26, 1925 and the second on July 18, 1925. Effusively accepting the invitation, de Torre welcomed the “pura y desinteresada aproximación intelectual amércio-española que se inicia” (136). De Torre considered Martín Fierro’s gesture an important step in reconfiguring Spain and Latin America’s relationship. Setting aside “todos los equivocos y todos los recelos, fomentados por la estupidez de nuestros antecesores” the younger generation of Spanish and Latin American intellectuals could create a new relationship of mutual reciprocity between equals, “como una ancha corriente unánime de claras simpatías recíprocas” (136). Yet, de Torre warned that this new relationship’s success was contingent upon both sides’ willingness to abolish residual tensions from the colonial power structure, a suggestion that, as I will show in chapter 2, he would not follow. De Torre therefore advocated basing their renewed relationship on a shared Hispanic heritage, an idea that he would also endorse in his controversial 1927 editorial “Madrid, meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica,” which I will further address in chapter 3. While this proposal promoted cultural unity, it also implied maintaining a colonial power structure since Spain had imposed its customs on Latin Americans. Moreover, focusing on Hispanic heritage also ignored Latin
America’s indigenous cultures. One of de Torre’s motives for endorsing Hispanic camaraderie was to challenge French cultural dominance in the Western World: “Francia como un puente de conocimiento, está en vías de terminar” and, therefore, “lo más urgente y digno de conocimiento está en nosotros, en las propias fronteras del ‘Dominio Español’”(136). De Torre supported his position by quoting vanguard novelist Ramón Gómez de la Serna who had also encouraged Latin America’s younger generation to turn to Spain: “La nota de renovación de las juventudes americanas no podía ser francesa: necesariamente tenían que volver a España” (136). However, de Torre’s phrasing of “Dominio Español” intimated that he had not entirely shed his own colonial perspective as he still envisioned a world where one culture could dominate or conquer others. Moreover, his use of “Español” rather than “Hispano” in the phrase “Dominio Español” can be understood as referring to the Spanish nation, Spain, and not to its Hispanic culture. Thus, de Torre’s phrasing suggests that he advocated strengthening cultural ties with Latin America as a means of attaining Spanish, not Hispanic, cultural dominance. However, aware that his wording could be controversial, de Torre mitigated his use of such terminology by asserting that his words did not imply Spanish control over Latin America. He assured Martín Fierro’s readership that “Dominio Español” referred to replacing French’s linguistic dominance over Western cultures with the Spanish language. De Torre also suggested that, given its French origin, to use the term América Latina, would be confusing if the goal were to promote Spanish as a dominant language. He thereby implied that Hispanoamérica would be more appropriate since the term alluded to Latin America’s Hispanic heritage. Finally, de Torre maintained that he envisioned hispanoamericanismo as a dialogue between Spain and Latin America, “un fluir espontáneo de las simpatías y curiosidades intelectuales,” which did not indicate imperialist aspirations (136).
Although de Torre claimed that the primary intent of his “Carta a Évar Méndez” was to promote camaraderie and productive intellectual exchanges between Spain and Latin America, his contradictory stances demonstrate why, even a century after independence, the transatlantic relationship remained contentious. While Latin American countries defined their distinct national identities, they were also delineating their relationships with each other. This complex process elicited numerous national and transnational debates, many of which centered on *hispanoamericanismo*. For example, in August 1923 the Buenos Aires journal *Nosotros* published “Hispanoamericanismo literario” by Cuban-born Dominican national Federico García Godoy. Referring to Simón Bolívar’s dream of a politically united Latin America, García Godoy acknowledged that that ideal was becoming less likely with each passing day. A century after independence, Latin America remained divided into independent nations. However, García Godoy affirmed that these separate nations remained bound by a shared *hispanoamericanismo*, a cultural identity that surpassed political borders. He optimistically proposed that transnational dialogues between Latin American intellectuals would help nurture and define this shared cultural identity: “Desde México, desde las Antillas, hasta las más lejanas tierras australes del Continente, échase de ver un movimiento intelectual … que demuestra cumplidamente … que el pensamiento y la sensibilidad hispanoamericanos, están saliendo ya, resuelta y triunfalmente, del período amorfo” (433). Therefore, if Latin American nations could not come together as one political entity, Bolívar’s vision could still be accomplished through *hispanoamericanismo*, which he described as “la vibración cultural armónica y coherente de pueblos identificados por la sangre, por el habla y por la Historia” (441). According to García Godoy, race, language and a history of Spanish colonization constituted a shared cultural heritage, and he proposed that Latin Americans capitalize on these commonalities in order to strengthen transnational bonds. More
than an idealistic vision, García Godoy maintained that his notion was also practical, a tool that could be used to fight against the United States’ looming hegemonic aspirations.

Appearing on the front page of Nosotros, García Godoy’s article is but one example of the many views expressed on hispanoamericanismo and ibero-americanismo (these terms were often used interchangeably) in literary journals and magazines across Latin America during the 1920s. Although these terms imply a transatlantic connection between Spain and Latin America, intellectuals employed them within Latin America as a means of fostering continental unity. Like García Godoy, proponents of hispano and ibero-americanismo felt that cultural, historical, and linguistic commonalities brought Latin Americans together. Thus, superseding nationalist differences, cultural unity fostered solidarity among Latin Americans, which was necessary to confront social challenges, such as educational reform. Primarily employed for ideological, cultural or political objectives, these terms were also subjected to a number of interpretations and were used for a variety of purposes. Moreover, these objectives were not mutually exclusive. For example, García Godoy’s understanding of hispanoamericanismo could be considered primarily cultural as well as also politically motivated.

A discussion that took place in correspondence between French thinker Romain Rolland and Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos illustrates an interpretation of iberoamericanismo based on race. In April 1924 Valoraciones published “El espíritu de América,” a series of letters where Rolland and Vasconcelos discussed Latin America’s role in the West. Rolland maintained that “latinos de América y de Europa” needed to unite in opposition to the threat of Anglo hegemony (264). Vasconcelos agreed, further urging Latin Americans to come together as one “raza ibero-americana,” not as a means of achieving “supremacía racial,” but in order to “garantizar la libertad de expresión de todos los tipos humanos dentro de géneros cada vez más
altos” (265). Yet, while Vasconcelos advocated solidarity among *iberoamericanos* as one race, he condemned hegemony: “Queremos impedir que una raza, por alta que ella sea, imponga sus caracteres a las otras, pues creemos que la vida debe ser fecunda y múltiple, infinita y libre” (265). However, two years later, *Valoraciones* published a review that dismissed Vasconcelos’s views. In 1925, the philosopher and Mexico’s Secretary of Education published *La raza cósmica* where he more fully developed his theories on the Hispanic race. Vasconcelos argued that the Hispanic race would lead racial evolution into an era that surpassed racial differences. In “Vasconcelos y el Uruguay” (*Valoraciones* 9 March 1926), José Mora Galindo rejected the Mexican philosopher’s superficial idealism, dismissing his approach as shallow and naïve. For example, Galindo noted that in *La raza cósmica*, Vasconcelos sought to “crean una teoría hispanoamericana” and “hacer la unidad del continente Americano, por un nuevo procedimiento de aglutinación, como si ésta fuese una masa cómodamente moldeable” (290).

Galindo rejected Vasconcelos’s theory because he failed to acknowledge differences between Latin Americans. Despite racial similarities and a Spanish colonial legacy, Latin Americans were also part of distinct nations, each of which had struggled to define their identity. In addition, Galindo underscored that Vasconcelos failed to account for indigenous cultures that were also Latin American, though not Hispanic.

In August 1925, *Inicial* put forth a similar argument advocating a cultural approach to *iberoamericanismo*. In “Iberoamericanismo,” *Inicial* responded to an invitation to participate in an upcoming Congreso de la Juventud Iberoamericana. Although *Inicial* agreed with the topics on the conference agenda, which included 1) political problems such as dictatorships, Pan Americanism and militarism in South America; 2) the *Reforma Universitaria*; and 3) the United States’ Monroe doctrine (instituted a century earlier on December 2, 1823), the Argentine journal
opposed the organizing committee’s superficial approach (630). The article first established *Inicial’s* position on *iberoamericanismo* and then addressed the issues on the conference agenda. Like García Godoy, *Inicial* declared that Bolívar’s notion of a politically united Latin America was not feasible: “Toda tentativa encaminada a construir de cualquier grupo de pueblos americanos una unidad política superior es irrealizable y a histórica, debe relegarse sin piedad al archivo de las piadosas utopías” (564). Instead, *Inicial* called for a cultural understanding of *iberoamericanismo*: “el iberoamericanismo no debe entenderse en primer término con una interpretación política, sino cultural” (564). Echoing Ortega’s posture that championed approaching situations in a constructive manner in order to achieve lasting solutions, *Inicial* affirmed that a political interpretation of *iberoamericanismo* was shallow and unsuitable for confronting Latin America’s challenges. First, barring geographical obstacles that impeded one political union, *Inicial* explained that Latin American countries had already developed distinct national identities that would be hard to fuse into one political entity. Argentina, for example, as one of the more stable and developed countries in Latin America, had no need for political ties with other countries. Therefore, in order to effect enduring change in Latin America, *Inicial* proposed that the Congreso de la Juventud Iberoamericana choose a cultural approach: “En definitiva, sostenemos que un Congreso de intelectuales y universitarios asume su verdadero carácter al reducir los problemas en función de un factor común, la cultura, que es el ámbito formal y lógico donde los aspectos particulares de la realidad trascienden su propia particularidad y se funden en una síntesis superior” (565). Throughout the article, *Inicial* repeatedly insisted that profound cultural change would most effectively address the issues outlined in the conference agenda. For example, *Inicial* argued that postures taken in the *Reforma Universitaria* movement lacked substance: “creemos imprescindible superar la
interpretación puramente socializante y demagógica del año 18 … La Reforma Universitaria no puede tener esa finalidad meramente social: circunscribiéndola en esa definición, se disuelve ella misma” (567). Instead, Inicial recommended a more comprehensive plan towards achieving Reforma Universitaria: “Generalización y coordinación del movimiento reformista en todas las universidades de Íbero América, en su triple aspecto político, pedagógico y social” (568).

While Inicial advocated cultural unity as a means of achieving significant reforms in Latin America, the article only speaks of culture in abstract terms and does not specify how to use culture to effect change. However, along with Martín Fierro, Valoraciones and other Argentine and Uruguayan journals, Inicial co-sponsored Argentine poet Oliverio Girondo’s journey through Latin America, the United States, and Europe from 1924 to 1925. In “Oliverio Girondo en misión intelectual,” July 25, 1924, Martín Fierro reported that the poet set forth on a “trascendente misión de confraternidad artística e intelectual de la juventud de América y Europa latina,” that was meant to encourage cultural collaboration and promote Argentine and Uruguayan intellectuals (47). Girondo’s mission as “embajador de nuestra juventud intelectual,” would also foster a transnational and transatlantic “intercambio de producciones, revistas y libros; ideas, poesía, arte” (47). This enterprise geared towards cultural unification, however, did not specifically promote hispano or ibero-americanismo.

Despite varying definitions and understandings of hispano and ibero-americanismo, the terms were also used to elicit Latin American solidarity. To this end, throughout the 1920s, Mexican and Argentine intellectuals’ discussions of hispano and ibero-americanismo in literary journals and magazines hinged on three recurring topics: Reforma Universitaria, political oppression, such as Augusto Leguía’s government in Peru, and views on the United States.

19 Inicial had previously disputed superficial activism in “Nuestra crisis universitaria” (Inicial 5 May 1924).
However, throughout Latin America, young intellectuals primarily came together around the issue of *Reforma Universitaria*. In Argentina, for example, La Plata’s “Grupo Renovación” published *Valoraciones* as a voice for the movement and, in Mexico; José Vasconcelos’s *La Antorcha* (Mexico 1924-25) also endorsed student activism on educational reform. Although *Valoraciones* primarily reported on issues pertaining to the *Reforma Universitaria* in Argentine universities such as the Universidad de La Plata and the Universidad de Buenos Aires, the journal also noted the movement’s broader scope throughout Latin America. For instance, *Valoraciones*’s second issue, January 1924, honored recently deceased Argentine poet and activist Héctor Ripa Alberdi for his efforts in the *Reforma Universitaria*. Dedicating the entire issue to Alberdi, *Valoraciones* published his poetry along with his speeches to university students in Mexico and Peru. At the first Congreso internacional de estudiantes in Mexico, Alberdi had pronounced, “Por la unión moral de América,” where he called on all Latin American university students to participate in “el renacer vigoroso de la filosofía idealista y la sana rebeldía de la juventud” (115). *Reforma Universitaria* needed to be a transnational effort in Latin America, if it expected to effect systemic change: “Contribuyamos todos a este nuevo despertar del espíritu … es menester arrojar a los mercaderes de la enseñanza, derrumbar la universidad profesionalista y levantar sobre sus escombros la academia ideal de los hombres” (115).

In Mexico, José Vasconcelos also advanced university reform efforts in his journal *La Antorcha* (Mexico 1924-25). As Secretary of Education (1921-1924), Vasconcelos had revolutionized his country’s educational system. He reorganized the department of education into three branches (schools, arts and libraries and archives) and promoted education by founding schools in provincial communities, making literature available to the masses by publishing
inexpensive editions, founding libraries, and inaugurating the first national book fair in Mexico, an event that takes place to this day. Vasconcelos was also responsible for commissioning murals by Mexican artists Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, Diego Alfaro Siqueiros, Roberto Montenegro, and Jean Charlot on government buildings. Moreover, his journals *El Maestro* (Mexico 1921-23) and *La Antorcha* played a significant role in publicizing his vision of reform for Mexico and for Latin America.

Although Vasconcelos claimed that *La Antorcha* would have “una entonación general y elevada que esté por encima de las ambiciones mezquinas y de las pasiones personales,” the journal primarily focused on his interest in education: “Educar al pueblo para que el progreso adquirido se conserve. Educarlo para que, como una consecuencia natural, desaparezca el caudillo. Convencerlo de que no es posible que un solo hombre encarne el talento o encarne la fuerza o encarne el éxito” (“Programa” *La Antorcha* October 4, 1924, 1). For Vasconcelos, education was the only means of achieving peace and solidarity. He wanted to educate people to understand that change could only be attained through collaboration. And, reaffirming his egalitarian views that opposed racial and cultural hegemonies, Vasconcelos’s journal was also meant to “demostrarle [al pueblo] que el talento, la fuerza o el éxito, no son monopolio de nadie en los pueblos que han sobrepasado el régimen de tribu;” for him reform was a collective endeavor (“Programa” *La Antorcha* October 4, 1924, 1).

Sharing Héctor Ripa Alberdi’s perspective, *La Antorcha* endorsed a collaborative and transnational vision of *Reforma Universitaria*. Therefore, in an effort to promote Latin American solidarity around the movement, the journal consistently reported on actions taking place throughout the continent. For example, it featured multiple articles by Argentine political thinker Alfredo Palacios, such as his address, “A la juventud universitaria de Iberoamérica,” in which he
incited Latin America’s young generation to abandon European models in their quest for educational reform. Palacios argued that, currently in a state of decadence, Europe could no longer provide a suitable example for Latin America. Thus, coinciding with Ortega y Gasset’s advice to Argentina’s “Nueva Generación,” Palacios encouraged Latin Americans to focus on themselves by coming together in solidarity to effect change. Endorsing Palacios’s ideology, *La Antorcha* helped promote the university reform movement throughout Latin America. For instance, Vasconcelos responded to a request for support from the “Asociación de Estudiantes Universitarios e Intelectuales de Costa Rica” (“Las tres claridades,” *La Antorcha* October 25, 1924). These Costa Rican intellectuals pledged their solidarity with Vasconcelos’s vision as “Una legión de jóvenes, vinculados por una misma sangre, ungidos por una misma lengua, quemados por un mismo ideal …[c]reemos en la raza que palpita en todos los pechos de las generaciones vivientes de Nuestra América” and asked for Vasconcelos’s guidance (*La Antorcha* 4 October 25, 1924, 4). Humbled that they had addressed him as “maestro,” and inspired by their conviction, Vasconcelos pledged that, even from a distance, he would work with them (*La Antorcha* 4 October 25, 1924, 1-2). Consistent with his vision of a united Hispanic race, Vasconcelos also endorsed transatlantic ventures promoting *Reforma universitaria*. For example, *La Antorcha* published “Mensaje de la Federación universitaria americana a las juventudes de América y España” (January 10, 1925), which called for collaboration between Spanish and Latin American students.

Calls for cultural solidarity among Latin Americans based on *ibero* and *hispanoamericanismo* also focused on political oppression. For instance, *Valoraciones* addressed this topic twice in the second issue (January 1924), dedicated to Héctor Ripa Alberdi. First, the journal reported on a recent Pan American conference where strong animosity between Latin
American governments threatened peace. “Grupo Renovación” called on Latin America’s young generation to come together in an effort to overcome political estrangement: “Entre los gobiernos de América se ha interpuesto una sombra de suspicacia [i]nexplicable y absurda que debemos disipar nosotros los jóvenes representantes de las nuevas tendencias ideológicas y de nuevos principios jurídicos-políticos” (“Armamentismo Continental” January 1924, 135). As part of their tribute to Héctor Ripa Alberdi, Valoraciones also published the Argentine poet and activist’s speech entitled “Por qué os amamos profundamente,” which he gave at Peru’s Universidad Popular de Lima. Ripa Alberdi spoke of kinship among Latin Americans, an “hermandad de los pueblos americanos” that could solve its disputes “por la indulgencia de los corazones” instead of turning to violence. In addition, Ripa Alberdi insisted that this ambitious goal could only be achieved through education: “[e]s menester, pues, dar una nueva educación a los pueblos, una educación idealista, o sea, una educación para la libertad, que es la tierra donde arraigan las más nobles esperanzas y la[s] más fuertes empresas de los hombres” (117). Thus echoing Vasconcelos’s position in La Antorcha, Ripa Alberdi promoted education as a means of achieving peace and solidarity.

La Antorcha also contested tyranny in Latin America. For example, on November 29, 1924 Vasconcelos’s journal published student voices that came together against political oppression. In “Los estudiantes uruguayos protestan: Contra el militarismo en Híbero-América [sic],” La Antorcha reported that Uruguayan students protested Chile’s military government and linked dictatorial governments in Latin America with social corruption in Europe: “toda dictadura en América no representa sino una sola cosa: todas las corrupciones, todas las enfermedades sociales de Europa” (37). Recalling Alfredo Palacios’s speech in which he encouraged Latin American students to turn away from European models, Uruguayan students
argued that corruption in Latin America had been inherited from a decaying Europe. *La Antorcha*’s views on amnesty also surfaced in two issues that commented on the commemoration of the Battle at Ayacucho. *La Antorcha*’s tenth issue (December 6, 1924) celebrated the centenary of the Battle of Ayacucho, a pivotal event in Latin America’s struggle for independence from Spain. Gaining Peruvian independence, the battle was also a turning point that eventually led to independence for all South America. Alluding to Augusto Leguía’s increasingly repressive government in Peru, in his opening editorial Vasconcelos made clear that he would focus on the victorious encounter in Ayacucho as an important commemoration, although the situation in Peru deeply troubled him. Yet, a few weeks later, Vasconcelos discussed military dictatorships in his opening editorial entitled “Amnistía Continental,” asserting that celebrations of Ayacucho inspired a new call for freedom in Latin America: “Como era de esperarse, la celebración del Centenario de la batalla de Ayacucho ha dado lugar a que se propague por el mundo una corriente de renovación de la libertad” (December 27, 1924, 1).

Calls for solidarity also focused the United States’ imperialist advances towards Latin America. For example, the Mexican *estridentista* journal *Horizonte* (1926-27) endorsed Argentine author and socialist Manuel Ugarte’s vision for Latin American solidarity in opposition to the United States' hegemonic tendencies when it published “Manifiesto de Manuel Ugarte a la juventud Latino-Americana” in May 1927. Ugarte’s message addressed Latino-americanos, alluding to a common affinity with the Latin race rather than the Spanish or Hispanic race. Coined by French statesman Michel Chevalier in the 1830s, the term Latin

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20 While Vasconcelos had taken a more tempered position in condemning Leguía’s government, *Inicial* belligerently denounced all celebrations of Ayacucho, citing that such events were objectionable in light of Peru’s perils (“Protestamos” *Inicial* 7 December 1924).
American came to refer to an alliance with French culture. However, despite his use of the term *Latino-americano* rather than *ibero-* or *hispano-americano*, Ugarte’s call for Latin American solidarity based on cultural affinity coincided with similar goals set forth by proponents of *iberoamericanismo*. Promoting solidarity among Latin American countries that transcended national boundaries, Ugarte urged “la juventud, desde el río Bravo hasta el estrecho de Magallanes” to support “la América Latina para los Latino-americanos” in opposition to the United States’ imperialist advances (499). He affirmed that in the last twenty years, Latin America had not taken the necessary steps to defend its independence. Ugarte asserted that an inability to collaborate as a unified front, largely due to national interests and regional disputes, sanctioned the United States’ hegemonic overtures. Condemning “el imperialismo de los Congresos Pan-americanos,” military occupations in Central America and the Caribbean, and the Monroe doctrine, Ugarte stressed that Latin American inaction had enabled the United States’ financial and political dominance over the region (499). He therefore urged the young generation to come together in cultural solidarity and intervene with their governments to find a solution. Alluding to Latin America’s fight for independence against Spain, Ugarte proposed bringing about “la segunda independencia, renovando el Continente por la democracia y por la juventud” (501). He advocated reviving Bolívar’s ideals of creating a unified Latin American opposition to United States’ imperialism through “una política seria, una gestión financiera perspicaz” and “una coordinación estrecha de nuestras repúblicas” (501). Thus Ugarte promoted cultural solidarity, *Latino-americano*, as a means of attaining political and financial independence.

While *ibero-*-, *hispano-*-, and *latino-americano* were employed throughout Latin America to invoke cultural solidarity in order to address Latin American challenges such as *Reforma Universitaria*, tyrannical governments and United States’ imperialist overtures, as I
noted earlier, the terms’ definitions and usage varied greatly during the 1920s. *Inicial*, for example, argued in favor of a cultural understanding of *iberoamericanismo* while Vasconcelos defined the term as referring to racial ties, but they coincided in their view that *iberoamericanismo* could bring Latin Americans together in solidarity. These diverging interpretations, however, are examples of how *ibero*, *hispano*, and *latino-americanismo* were debated in terms of delineating transnational relationships between Latin American nations. However, moving beyond the transnational sphere, these conflicting definitions became even more complicated, and controversial when used to define Spain and Latin America’s relationship. As I have mentioned, *ibero*, and *hispano-americanismo* refer to Spanish cultural heritage, while *latino* alludes to French culture. Therefore, ascribing *ibero* or *hispano-americanismo* meant an allegiance with Spain and a Hispanic heritage, while choosing to identify with *latinoamericanismo* implied allegiance to France. Moreover, identifying as *latinoamericano* also signified, as Guillermo de Torre noted in his “Carta a Évar Méndez,” a rejection of the former empire. In Spain, many intellectuals like de Torre advocated *ibero* and *hispano-americanismo* as a means of endorsing a transatlantic cultural relationship with Latin America. Yet, while many Latin Americans did ascribe to this terminology as a means of strengthening transatlantic cultural ties with Spain, often these terms were also taken to imply Spanish cultural hegemony over the region. As a result, if *ibero*, *hispano*, and *latino-americanismo* were used to encourage solidarity on a transnational level, they proved much more divisive when Latin Americans debated these terms’ transatlantic ramifications.

Peruvian Edwin Elmore’s 1923 initiative to organize a Congreso de Intelectuales Hispano-Americanos led to a series of transnational and transatlantic intellectual exchanges over *iberoamericanismo* that extended through 1925. Writing in the newspaper *Mercurio Peruano* in
March 1923, Elmore proposed convening a Congreso de Intelectuales Hispano-Americanos that was not affiliated with any official or diplomatic institutions. This event would 1) foster an open dialogue between Spanish and Latin American intellectuals on *hispanoamericanismo* in contrast to the *panamericanismo* proposed by the United States, and 2) strengthen cultural ties between Spain and Latin America. The Peruvian writer garnered initial support from José Vasconcelos and from Columbian essayist and editor for Buenos Aires’s *La Nación*, Baldomero Sanín Cano, who wrote an open letter to Madrid’s daily newspaper *El Sol* inviting Spanish intellectuals to participate. Elmore’s proposal then sparked a series of articles and correspondence (1923-25) that discussed the feasibility of such an event. For example, Spanish politician and writer Luis Araquistáin’s “Un congreso de escritores” (*El Sol* November 21, 1924, 1) elicited responses from Argentine poet Leopoldo Lugones and Peruvian essayist and critic José Carlos Mariátegui. In his article, Araquistáin supported Elmore’s idea, but noted that the Peruvian had not defined how he would go about organizing such an event, remarking that his plan was idealistic, “no un Congreso, sino la aspiración, casi el sueño, de un Congreso de intelectuales hispanoamericanos” (1). However, Araquistáin conceded that historically, great accomplishments usually began as vague dreams. In addition, Araquistáin questioned how Elmore would define “intelectuales hispanoamericanos” in order to devise a guest list. Yet, he commended the Peruvian writer for his symbolic selection of Havana, Cuba as the first conference location. Holding a conference on Spanish and Latin American cultural relations at the place where Spain had lost its last colonies to the United States would set an ideal tone.
Mariátegui joined the discussion on Elmore’s proposal in January 1925 with “Un congreso de escritores hispano-americanos” (Mundial January 1, 1925).\(^{21}\) Coinciding with Araquistáin’s position, Mariátegui believed that the topic needed to be debated, but he also felt that Elmore’s project also needed to be more clearly defined. First, he questioned whether a conference could provide the best forum to address hispanoamericanismo since this type of event often resulted in superficial discussions: “[c]asi inevitablemente, estos congresos degeneran en vacuas academias, esterilizadas por el íbero-americano formal y retórico de gente figurativa e histrionesca” (3).\(^{22}\) Mariátegui then expressed concern over how Elmore would select participants, fearing that a vague requirement like “escritor hispano-americano” would bring a heterogeneous and, therefore, unproductive, group together. While Mariátegui advocated hispanoamericanismo, he believed that the term implied profound spiritual unity among Latin Americans and needed to be addressed as such. Therefore, he urged Elmore to consider whether his conference could meet this goal. Finally, Mariátegui attacked Argentine poet Leopoldo Lugones, who had apparently opposed Elmore’s proposal. He notes that the only explanation for this posture would be the Argentine poet’s nationalist, reactionary and fascist motivations, which he had recently revealed in a speech during a celebration for the Battle of Ayacucho. In the speech Lugones had proclaimed allegiance to Leguía’s autocratic rule.\(^{23}\)

\(^{21}\) While I cite the digitized versions of the original articles available at filosofía.org, Mariátegui’s articles in El Mundial are also reprinted in Temas de nuestra América. Obras completas, volume 12.

\(^{22}\) I cite digitized versions of these articles available at filosofía.org.

\(^{23}\) Luis Araquistáin also addressed Lugones’s militaristic stance in “Lo explicable y lo inexplicable del Sr. Lugones” (El Sol April 18 1925, 1). The speech that Mariátegui referenced was published in La Nación on January 14, 1925. Lugones affirmed his support for “militares” instead of “políticos” in Chile and then said that “[c]l pacifismo no es más que el culto del miedo o una añagaza de la conquista roja” (“Lo inexplicable” 1).
Lugones clarified his perspective on Elmore’s proposal in “Un congreso libre de trabajadores intelectuales” in El Sol (April 16, 1925, 1). First he deemed the conference impractical because writers would not be able to afford the cost of the journey, but most importantly, he dismissed Elmore’s call for an “Organización del pensamiento hispanoamericano,” deeming it a vacuous concept. Echoing Inicial’s article “Iberoamericanismo,” Lugones stated that attempting to organize so many nations, with varied geographies, distinct interests and different races, was not feasible. Hispanoamericanismo could not unite such disparate entities. Moreover, favoring panamericanismo, he insisted that the United States’ political influence over Latin America was not only undeniable, but also necessary. Lugones firmly disagreed with Araquistáin’s and Mariátegui’s perspective that considered hispanoamericanismo a cultural and even spiritual bond based on a common heritage. For the Argentine poet, “[l]a uniformidad de intereses hispanoamericanos es una ilusión engendrada por la comunidad del idioma” (1). The United States, he averred, had had a much more profound impact on Argentina’s economy, judicial system, and industry than Spain. Yet, Lugones contradicted himself when he maintained that “los argentinos jamás subordinaremos la patria” (1). Echoing Inicial’s perspective in “Iberoamericanismo,” Lugones felt that independent and self-sufficient, Argentina need not subscribe to any type of union

Following Lugones’s proclamation, Araquistáin countered in two articles published in El Sol: “Una carta desconsoladora” (April 17, 1925) and “Lo explicable y lo inexplicable del Sr. Lugones” (April 18, 1925), where he pointed to Lugones’s contradictory affirmation of independence and simultaneous affiliation with the United States. He also denounced the poet’s stance against disarmament. However, Araquistáin most convincingly refuted Lugones in a third article, “Organización de la cultura hispánica,” El Sol April 20, 1925, where he firmly defended
hispanoamericanismo. He argued that Spain and Latin America shared a cultural affinity, an “entraña hispánica,” based on language (1). This common heritage needed to be defended and maintained, especially in light of the United States’ imposition of English on some Latin American countries. More than a term to describe cultural commonalities, the Spanish writer declared hispanoamericanismo a practical means of coming together in solidarity. Together, Hispanic countries could preserve their culture; oppose the United States’ panamericanismo and work to fight tyranny. Araquistáin stressed, however, that while some Hispanic countries remained subjected to authoritarian governments, hispanoamericanismo could not be attained, because the term also implied peace and unity. Thus as a staunch advocate of hispanoamericanismo, the Spanish critic endorsed the conference of Hispanic intellectuals:

“¿Pues quién mejor que los trabajadores de la inteligencia, reunidos en cualquier punto de América o de España, podría articular esos problemas de homogeneidad de lengua, cultura, formas de gobierno y política de paz hispanoamericana?” (1). Yet, Araquistáin also suggested that there be multiple conferences for intellectuals from different fields, such as the sciences. In addition, he also noted that more specific topics like book distribution between Spain and Latin America needed to be addressed.

Mariátegui joined the discussion once again with “¿Existe un pensamiento hispanoamericano?” (Mundial May 1, 1925) where he more explicitly articulated his position on hispanoamericanismo. First, he described La Plata’s “Grupo Renovación’s” bid for an organization entitled Unión-Latinoamericana, which, like Elmore’s proposal, he considered abstract, but also a necessary step towards engaging a debate on hispanoamericanismo. Yet, Mariátegui criticized “Grupo Renovación” for professing a schism between Latin America and Europe. Just as Alfredo Palacios had argued in his speech to Latin American students, “Grupo
Renovación” insisted that a decrepit Europe had nothing to offer Latin America. According to Mariátegui, such proclamations were overstated and extreme. Furthermore, discussions of *hispanoamericanismo* ignored indigenous populations and neglected to confront Latin America’s racial diversity: “[e]n gran parte de Nuestra América constituyen un estrato superficial e independiente al cual no aflora el alma indígena, deprimida y huraña, a causa de la brutalidad de una conquista que en algunos pueblos hispano-americanos no ha cambiado hasta ahora de métodos” (9). Although he maintained his original skepticism, Mariátegui supported the idea of a “congreso de intelectuales ibero-americanos” as long as it addressed all key issues pertaining to *hispanoamericanismo*, including racial diversity in Latin America (9).

These exchanges on *hispanoamericanismo* incited by Edwin Elmore’s call for a convening of intellectuals inform his tragic fate. In the wake of the Elmore affair, the temperature of the debates between Latin American intellectuals reached a boiling point. While views on *hispanoamericanismo* varied even among its supporters, intellectuals such as Lugones completely dismissed the idea. Others, such as Araquistáin and Mariátegui, were open to a discussion on *hispanoamericanismo* and put forward the notion that unity based on cultural commonalities could help overcome Latin America's problems. For them, *hispanoamericanismo* could transcend national and political boundaries, but Lugones found this idea fallacious and instead preferred a political association. Ensuing tensions between these opposing positions increased exponentially when Santos Chocano ascribed to Lugones’s point of view by endorsing Leguía’s government. This action provoked Vasconcelos, who chimed in with his article “Poetas y bufones.” Calling Lugones and Santos Chocano “bufones,” he condemned both poets for
supporting tyranny in Latin America.\textsuperscript{24} Moreover, he denounced Santos Chocano for his long legacy of sanctioning despotism in Latin America. Vasconcelos accused the Peruvian of supporting Pancho Villa during the Mexican Revolution and sanctioning totalitarian regimes in Venezuela and Guatemala. For Vasconcelos, in upholding authoritarianism, Santos Chocano and Lugones had abdicated their title as poets and were nothing more than “retóricos en verso” (\textit{Poetas y bufones} 11). Reacting to Vasconcelos, Santos Chocano retorted with “Apóstoles y farsantes: Vasconcelos sin mascara” in Mexico’s \textit{Excelsior}, where he labeled the Mexican politician a fraud.\textsuperscript{25} Arguing that political views could not negate a poet’s merits, Santos Chocano dismissed the connections that Vasconcelos drew between poetry and politics: “[e]l licenciado Vasconcelos tiene el candor de hacer creer que la Poesía debe quedar subordinada a la Política … es farsa” (\textit{Poetas y bufones} 27). Furthermore, Santos Chocano called Vasconcelos a hypocrite for professing an all-inclusive \textit{hispanoamericanismo}, when, in reality, he rejected those that did not share his political views.

Edwin Elmore intervened in this debate between Vasconcelos and Santos Chocano with “Un nuevo ibero-americanismo,” the article that, according to Mexico’s \textit{Horizonte}, provoked Santos Chocano and led to Elmore’s demise (\textit{Horizonte} April 1926).\textsuperscript{26} Elmore posited that if views on \textit{iberoamericanismo} as a means of bringing together “la actividad espiritual de nuestros pueblos en un harmonioso plan de cooperación internacional, en el que quepan las diversas tendencias y los variados elementos de nuestra cultura” had always varied, even among its

\textsuperscript{24} Vasconcelos’s article was most likely originally published in Mexico’s \textit{Excelsior}. I reference the 1926 book \textit{Poetas y bufones} that reprinted this article and is available at filosofia.org.

\textsuperscript{25} Included in \textit{Poetas y bufones} (1926).

\textsuperscript{26} This article was first published in Peru, but later reprinted in \textit{Horizonte}’s first issue in April 1926.
proponents, the topic had become more divisive (Horizonte April 1926: 27). He explained that
sociopolitical positions were infringing on iberoamericanismo, creating unnecessary friction and
disputes over a term that had originally advocated cultural unity. In particular, Elmore supported
Vasconcelos’s claims and rebuked “La defección de los Poetas” (Horizonte April 1926: 27).
Elmore denounced Santos Chocano and Lugones for their opposition to iberoamericanismo and
support of violence: “Ayer Lugones bajo la invocación de Ayacucho profetiza el culto de la
Espada; después … Chocano … llama farsante a un apóstol respetado y respetado de nuestros
sueños de confraternidad y justicia” (Horizonte April 1926: 28). Both poets had succumbed to
fame and popularity, betraying the new generation of intellectuals that ardently pursued Latin
American camaraderie.

In a surprising and tragic turn of events, this series of transatlantic and transnational
exchanges over hispanoamericanismo came to a halt when Santos Chocano murdered Elmore.
According to El Sol’s account at the time, enraged when Elmore took Vasconcelos’s side, Santos
Chocano confronted Elmore in front of the offices of the Peruvian newspaper El Comercio.27 A
physical altercation ensued and quickly ended when Santos Chocano shot and killed Elmore.
Sparking transatlantic outrage, the event made headlines across Spanish journals and
newspapers, such Madrid’s El Estudiante, which lamented the loss of “la figura de Edwin
Elmore—hombre que laboró como nadie a favor del acercamiento de España y América”
(“Edwin Elmore” December 6, 1925, 5).

Edwin Elmore’s murder is, of course, an extreme example of the divisive positions
surrounding hispano and ibero-americanismo in Latin America during the 1920s. Yet, other

27 For Santos Chocano’s version of the events see his El libro de mi proceso, published in Lima
in 1927 and in Madrid in 1931. The anthology Poetas y bufones, compiled by José María
Rodríguez, also includes other texts related to the polemic.
dissenting voices such as Argentine Pablo Rojas Paz and Peruvian poet Alberto Hidalgo also debated the terms. In “Hispanoamericanismo,” *Martín Fierro* 17 May 17, 1925, Pablo Rojas Paz, like Lugones, indicted the term as meaningless—“no es ni un concepto geográfico ni político, ni étnico, ni idiomático”—and only appropriate as a “tema literario para congresos y juegos florales” (112). He further maintained that organizing conferences, as Elmore had suggested, would be superficial and pointless. Moreover, since *hispanoamericanismo* implied unity with Spain and other Latin American countries, Rojas Paz—again agreeing with Lugones—argued that Argentina, self sufficient and culturally independent, would have no need for such affiliations, either with Spain or other Latin American countries. Furthermore, Rojas Paz cited Spain’s oppression under Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship as a deterrent to nurturing cultural reciprocity with the former empire. While Rojas Paz did acknowledge that Spain had a “formidable tradición artística,” citing well-respected thinker Miguel de Unamuno, he believed that Argentina would have nothing to gain from a relationship with a country in such political disarray (112). Less developed countries like Bolivia might stand to benefit from such a relationship, but not Argentina. Thus Rojas Paz concluded by defending Argentina’s distinctive Spanish and further affirming that “[e]n definitiva, la Argentina no tiene nada que ver con el hispanoamericanismo” (112).

In 1926, Peruvian poet Alberto Hidalgo compiled his *Índice de la nueva poesía americana*, the first anthology of Latin American vanguard poetry, which he co-edited with Chilean Vicente Huidobro and Argentine Jorge Luis Borges. In his introduction, Hidalgo boasted: “Dejo aquí asesinadas las distancias,” implying that this text annihilates distance by bringing multiple Latin American poets together: “[s]e puede ir ahora en pocos minutos desde la esquina de Esmeralda y Corrientes en Buenos Aires, hasta la calle Magnolia, en México” (5).
However, he made clear that his action did not endorse *hispanoamericanismo*. Hidalgo considered the term repugnant, “una cosa falsa, utópica y mendaz” (5). He argued that the “confraternidad” proclaimed by *hispanoamericanistas* was a fallacy (5). Latin American nations were too different to come together in utopian unity: “Nada tiene que ver un peruano con un paraguayo. Entre un argentino y un colombiano el abismo que se columbra es inconmensurable” (5). Moreover, he affirmed that language did not constitute a premise for cultural affinity between Latin American countries; it was a tool for subjugation imposed by the Spanish empire, nothing more. He added that the Southern Cone’s immigrant population (Russian, Italian) was rapidly increasing and erasing Spanish heritage in the region. Furthermore, Hidalgo asserted that United States imperialism would not threaten South America, but would eventually overcome Mexico and Central America. While he clarified that he did not support *panamericanismo* either, he predicted the United States’ appropriation of Mexico and Central America to be inevitable: “Nuestro continente, en cumplimiento de quién sabe qué secreto designio, está formado de tal modo, que toda una parte debe ser sajona; toda la otra latina” (6).

Mexico’s *Horizonte* reviewed the *Índice de la nueva poesía americana* in November 1926 and responded to Hidalgo’s prologue. *Horizonte* applauded the co-edited anthology as the first compilation of “todos los poetas de América—en habla española—en un libro unido” (431). Yet, while the Mexican journal shared Hidalgo’s views on *hispanoamericanismo*, *Horizonte* strongly opposed the Peruvian’s forecast that the United States would soon overpower Mexico and Central America. The review conceded that the United States’ influence in Latin America was undeniable, underscoring that even the poetry in the anthology “está fecundada por un ansia de vida nueva, que tiene su fábrica en ese gran país de los rascacielos y la industria gigantesca, que ha despertado la envidia y la maledicencia de una Europa mezquina y centavera” (431).
However, *Horizonte* postulated that Latin America had no obligation to welcome the United States’ “aviesa intención imperialista” and reminded Hidalgo that despite the United States’ influence, Latin Americans were a different race with their own “forma de desenvolverse” that would remain intact (431).

During the 1920s, the many debates and exchanges that ensued regarding varied perspectives on the terms *ibero* and *hispano-americano* reflected the complex negotiations taking place between Latin American nations as they tried to define 1) their own identities, 2) their relationship with each other, and 3) their approach to former and looming empires in the West. While many intellectuals such as members of Argentina’s “Nueva Generación,” Mexico’s José Vasconcelos, and Peruvian Edwin Elmore saw the benefits of coming together as one Hispanic culture in order to advance *Reforma Universitaria* and to oppose tyranny and the United States’ imperialist advances, others such as Argentines Leopoldo Lugones and Pablo Rojas Paz, Peruvians José Santos Chocano and Alberto Hidalgo, and the editors of Mexico’s *Horizonte* dismissed the notion as a hollow ideal. Nevertheless, regardless of their stance on *ibero-hispanoamericano*, and the idea of Latin American unity, discussions on the topic fostered dialogues between Latin American intellectuals. And, despite Elmore’s tragic death, many of these dialogues also fomented solidarity, particularly around the issue of *Reforma Universitaria*. Moreover, these discussions extended across the Atlantic as Spanish intellectuals such as Luis Araquistáin and journals including *El Sol* and *El Estudiante* entered the conversation and promoted solidarity with Latin America. As a result, *ibero* and *hispano-americano* incited transnational and transatlantic dialogues, further developing Latin America’s relationship with Spain during the 1920s.
Contradicting Ortega y Gasset’s claim that young European intellectuals were demoralized, in May 1925 a group of students from the University of Salamanca intent on transforming Spain’s educational stagnation and overall cultural decay founded *El Estudiante: Semanario de la juventud escolar española* (Salamanca and Madrid 1925-26). Inspired by Latin America’s younger generation’s campaigns for *Reforma Universitaria*, and overall commitment to breaking with the past, *El Estudiante* envisioned freeing Spain from “sombras engañosas de otro siglo” (“Nuestra Misión” May 1925, 1). The students of Salamanca, an institution that symbolized Spain’s past, wanted to remove the cobwebs that prevented their country from entering modernity and viewed reinventing the role of the University in Spain as an important first step towards achieving cultural and political reform for the country as a whole. This renewal implied resistance to Miguel Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship and *El Estudiante* daringly touted an anti-oppression political agenda despite the regime’s censorship. *El Estudiante* voiced the opinions of university students from all across Spain regarding issues related to education such as the role of women in the classroom, incompetent professors, and the misguided use of testing. In so doing, *El Estudiante*’s editors hoped to inform, unite, and enlist other Spanish students in their cause.

These students contended that Spain needed to progress and “catch up” with the present, just as Latin American countries were doing on the other side of the Atlantic. The Spanish students recruited support from Latin American students and intellectuals, since they viewed “La acción removedora de las juventudes universitarias de América” to be an example that they could follow (“Nuestra Misión” May 1, 1925, 1). Just as *Reforma Universitaria* movements across Latin America had contributed “como nadie a crear la Universidad nueva, hoy próspera y
fecunda, liquidando la triste herencia escolástica de la época colonial,” *El Estudiante* wanted the old world to shed colonial era ideologies through educational reform (“Nuestra Misión” May 1925, 1). Their first step would be to propose measures with this end in mind, seeking guidance from their Latin American contemporaries. The journal’s first issue introduced a recurring section entitled “América” that initiated the transatlantic dialogue:

> Enviamos desde aquí un saludo reverente a los grandes maestros de tierras americanas y un mensaje de cordial solidaridad a aquellas juventudes estudiosas, que representan acaso lo mejor de la savia espiritual vitalizadora de nuestra vieja España. Y les pedimos el calor de su simpatía, un aliento fraternal, para nuestra empresa apasionada de lucha por ideales que nos son comunes. (8)

Appealing to a shared cultural heritage, the Salamanca students asked for solidarity from Latin American students and intellectuals. Like Ortega, they considered Latin America an extension of Spain. However, contrary to the philosopher’s paternalistic stance, they wanted to establish a new relationship with their Latin American counterparts, one that transcended a history of colonization and violent struggles for independence. For example, in the ninth issue, *El Estudiante* asserted that “La nueva generación … nuestra juventud universitaria victoriosa, es la llamada a abrir a nuestra nación la ruta espiritual de América, y esta vez no en son de conquista, sino en empresa de hermandad” (“Otra voz de América” July 1925, 10).

Although *El Estudiante* engaged many Latin American countries, its exchanges with Argentina and Mexico were the most salient. *El Estudiante* reached out to Argentine thinker Alfredo Palacios, La Plata’s “Grupo Renovación” and “el maestro” José Vasconcelos in Mexico. The second installment of “América” (*El Estudiante* 2 May 10, 1925) published selected excerpts from Alfredo Palacio’s address to Latin American students, which had been published
in *La Antorcha. El Estudiante* noted Palacios’s importance for his efforts to bridge “nuestro pueblo con la joven y vigorosa nación argentina,” and, therefore, felt that his message was also intended for them (9). *El Estudiante* shared many of Palacios’s goals and ideals including “una Universidad nueva … una Universidad libre, que sea el alma de una Universidad mejor” (9). They also supported Palacios’s observation that the new generation had to overcome the past and focus on the present. Furthermore, *El Estudiante* endorsed *iberoamericanismo*, championing Palacios’s call for a “confederación de los pueblos ibero-americanos” as a means of strengthening Hispanic culture against the United States’ expanding hegemony (9). Most importantly, however, *El Estudiante* published and promoted Palacios’s discourse as a means of encouraging Spanish students to overcome differences and foster a spiritual unity that superseded nationalist boundaries. Subsequent installments of “América” reported on Palacios’s continuing efforts for reform in Argentina, and he responded to *El Estudiante*’s attention in “A los estudiantes españoles” (*El Estudiante* 2.1 December 6, 1925). Palacios enthusiastically offered his solidarity and urged Spain’s younger generation to join Latin America’s social reform movements: “[p]oned vuestra alma en contacto con el alma americana, que encarna los ideales de la nueva humanidad” (2). Commending *El Estudiante*’s views on *iberoamericanismo*, Palacios stated that Spain and Latin America needed to capitalize on their shared racial heritage and work together towards social renovation: “Estamos en los albores de un nuevo día, en que nuestra raza deberá decir al mundo su palabra, portadora de un mensaje de justicia y de fraternidad” (2).

From the University of La Plata, *Valoraciones* and “Grupo Renovación” also responded to *El Estudiante*’s call for solidarity and reviewed the Spanish journal in June 1925. In “De la España joven,” *Valoraciones* applauded the Salamanca students’ audacious undertaking by
declaring them “bravos amigos del quijotesco Unamuno,” because “nos demuestran que aún circula por el agrio tronco ibérico, savia moza” (*Valoraciones* 6, 315). In particular, the Argentine journal commended *El Estudiante’s* brave stance against Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship and wondered why more Spanish intellectuals did not join their cause: “[s]i en Salamanca, donde todo lo vetusto tiene su origen y asiento, pueden decirse verdades tan rotundas, ¿cómo el resto de la masa liberal española permanece callada?” (315). According to *Valoraciones*, *El Estudiante* proved that reform movements were possible in Spain, even during a dictatorship, because their effort emerged from one of Spain’s most conservative institutions.

In “Una nueva revista” the following month, *El Estudiante* reviewed *Sagitario* (La Plata, 1925-28), another journal from the University of La Plata, also directed by Carlos Américo Amaya.28 *El Estudiante* praised *Sagitario*’s understanding that educational reform played a crucial role in the broader project of seeking social progress. *Sagitario* responded enthusiastically in March 1926 and, like *Valoraciones*, lauded *El Estudiante*’s valiant stance against Spain’s political oppression. The Argentine journal also offered solidarity with the Spanish students’ struggle: “Los representantes de la España digna, para América y para los hombres libres, no están en los ministerios, están en *El Estudiante*…. Con el nuevo espíritu, toda nuestra solidaridad” (*El Estudiante* 10 July, 1925, 10).

*El Estudiante*’s final installment of “América,” entitled “Significación social de la Argentina” (*El Estudiante* 13 July 1925) examined Argentina’s progress in the *Reforma Universitaria* movement. The Spanish journal underscored that much of the movement’s success

28 For further information on exchanges between *El Estudiante* and *Sagitario* see Luciana’s “Relaciones culturales hispanoargentinas en la década del veinte. Universitarios, intelectuales y maestros, un diálogo a través de revistas estudiantiles.”
rested on its ability to work in conjunction with other actions advocating social change.

However, this article was also intended as a veiled critique of Primo de Rivera’s rule. While a cursory glance reveals effusive praise for Argentina’s Reforma Universitaria, closer inspection betrays El Estudiante’s real message. For example, the article expressed admiration for how Argentina’s movements had employed “la repudiación revolucionaria de los dogmas de orden y de autoridad, proclamada dentro de la Academia [que] trasciende ahora a postulado del pueblo todo y a grito de combate contra oligarquías y despotismos” (11). Although, in context, “repudiación revolucionaria,” and “grito de combate contra oligarquías y despotismos” do apply to Reforma Universitaria in Argentina, this wording also discloses El Estudiante’s call to action against their country’s tyrannical government.

El Estudiante’s exchanges with Mexico began in June of 1925 with a “Número de homenaje al Dr. José Vasconcelos y a los estudiantes mexicanos” (El Estudiante 8). The opening article, “José Vasconcelos,” paid tribute to the Mexican thinker’s “voz de maestro, de campeón de empresas ideales … tal vez, en el presente, la más potente y sonora de toda América latina” (1). Yet, for El Estudiante, Vasconcelos was a significant figure because he stood in stark contrast to Spain’s “casta de ‘intelectuales’ dormilones” (1). Thus, if Argentina’s “Nueva Generación” had turned to Ortega for support in its quest for reform in Latin America, Spain’s young intellectuals also sought a model on the other side of the Atlantic and encouraged their peers to “seguir la llamada apremiante de los maestros de América y de las generaciones juveniles” (1). Vasconcelos replied in “Vasconcelos a los estudiantes españoles” (El Estudiante 8, June 1925). Since the Mexican intellectual firmly advocated iberoamericanismo, he supported El Estudiante’s appeal for solidarity between Spain and Latin America based on a shared heritage: “Jóvenes españoles, sois europeos y está bien que viváis con Europa, pero recordad …
que esa misma sangre que en vosotros hiere es la sangre que, renovada en la América, se
enciende en el afán de un mundo espiritual nuevo” (2). He emphasized that, although Spain and
Latin America were bound by the same race, in a role reversal, Latin America became a model
for the former empire’s decaying society. However, Vasconcelos insisted that Spain’s younger
generation bore a responsibility to their ancestors who had imposed their culture on Latin
America. Spain’s conquest had created an “alianza definitiva de las razas aborígenes con la
cultura hispánica,” which Spain’s new generation would have to help develop. Moreover,
Vasconcelos affirmed that although they were European, they were also Spanish and
“principalmente, por ser españoles, sois también iberoamericanos”(2). Furthermore, sharing El
Estudiante’s vision of creating a new relationship with Latin America that could transcend
colonial resentments, the Mexican politician acknowledged that the time had arrived to move
forward and focus on a present of progress and alliance: “La América española no guarda rencor
al pueblo español, porque junto con nosotros ha sufrido, porque nuestras penas y nuestros yerros
han sido comunes. Haced vosotros, los jóvenes de hoy, que también sea común el esfuerzo
ardiente de la libertad y el amor al progreso” (2). For Vasconcelos, cultural solidarity outweighed
resentments about a past that could not be changed. But, more importantly, as iberoamericanos,
Latin Americans and Spaniards were one race and, as such, were equally responsible for their
violent history.

Like many of their Latin American counterparts, the Salamanca students were concerned
over the Unites States’ increasing imperialist advances. For instance, El Estudiante supported
Alfredo Palacios’s idea of a Federación de los pueblos ibero-americanos that could help
strengthen Hispanic solidarity against the United States’ hegemonic aspirations. In addition, in
“Otra vez la voz de América” (El Estudiante 9, July 1925); the journal made its anti-United
States stance more explicit. El Estudiante endorsed Argentina’s “Grupo Renovación” and its progress towards organizing an “Unión Latino-Americana,” which was part of “[e]l clamoroso hervor del espíritu de la América Latina que, acuciado y encendido … se levanta viril contra el materialismo opresor de Norteamérica” (10). El Estudiante proclaimed an unwavering opposition to panamericanismo and to an “Unión Panamericana,” which they viewed as “el órgano embrionario de un supergobierno que el imperialismo del Norte pretende establecer en el Nuevo Mundo” (10). Moreover, the Spanish journal further professed its commitment to iberoamericanismo as a means of forging Hispanic solidarity in opposition to the United States:

“He aquí la legítima lid del verdadero hispano-americanismo, que, para ser algo, algo vivo y fecundo y digno de ser, ha de ser comunidad de lucha ideal, unidad de alientos para una gesta histórica común” (10). However, painfully aware of their political subjugation, El Estudiante admitted that although it yearned to “luchar al lado de América por la libertad de la propia civilización, que es también la nuestra, y por los altos ideales de pueblo que son patrimonio conjunto de nuestra raza,” Spain would first have to face the “enemigo … dentro de nosotros” and overthrow the regime (10).

El Estudiante’s dialogue with Vasconcelos continued in “Una conversación con Don José Vasconcelos” (El Estudiante 12 July 1925). In this interview, the Spanish students asked the Mexican thinker how he would suggest they react to “la tendencia absorbente de los Estados Unidos del Norte” (8). In response, Vasconcelos clarified why many young Latin Americans pursued higher education in the United States. He noted that although Latin America’s younger generation was “hispanoamericanista … entusiasta de un acercamiento a España basado en una común vida espiritual,” the United States provided “un medio propicio para capacitarse en las profesiones técnicas,” unavailable either in Spain or Latin America (8). Impressed with the
United States’ significant technological progress, Vasconcelos admitted that, in this respect, except for Argentina, Hispanic culture had fallen behind. As a result Hispanic students stood to learn something from the United States’ model. In *El Estudiante*’s next issue (13 July 1925), Vasconcelos further compared Anglo and Hispanic cultures in “El deporte regenerador,” where he detailed his observations of Spanish culture during a visit to Spain. Highlighting exercise as indicative of a progressive culture, he underscored Spanish society’s lack of effort in engaging in physical activity as a sign of backwardness. Vasconcelos contended that Anglo cultures surpassed Hispanic cultures in this capacity. As a result, in his view, although Spain had “conquered” America, Anglo cultures had “civilized” America (2-3). Moreover, Vasconcelos indicated that a culture’s relationship to physical activity was linked to its political organization: “Primero el deporte, después la democracia. Donde hay toros, hay tiranía,” thus critiquing the dictatorship that oppressed Spain, but simultaneously declaring that Spain’s population was also to blame for accepting the regime (3).²⁹

Although *El Estudiante* disagreed with Vasconcelos’s opinion of the United States, the journal’s publication of the Mexican thinker’s views suggests that it was more interested in an open dialogue with Latin America than in coinciding on all issues. Furthermore, throughout its publication, *El Estudiante* repeatedly made clear that its primary concern was to foster unity with Latin America based on a shared cultural heritage. Therefore, diverging viewpoints did not affect the productive dialogue in which the journal frequently engaged with Latin America’s youth and intellectuals. Just as Alfonso Reyes had “re-conquered” Spain with solidarity and friendship, throughout its short-lived publication, *El Estudiante* was able to build a network of intellectual

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²⁹ Despite these remarks, in *La Antorcha* Vasconcelos expressed strong solidarity with Spain against Primo de Rivera.
and cultural exchange between Spain and Latin America that emphasized a united pan-Hispanic culture of equals.

_El Estudiante’s_ call for Latin American solidarity constituted a significant, albeit short-lived, step in recreating Spain’s relationship with its former colonies. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, throughout the 1920s, sociopolitical exchanges between Spain and Latin America were often contentious and divisive. In some cases, such as Schiaffino’s critique of book distribution, Latin Americans were incensed by Spain’s half-hearted efforts to foster transatlantic cultural reciprocity. Moreover, understandings of _hispánico, ibero, and latino americanismo_, which often promoted solidarity within Latin America, proved contentious in a transatlantic context. In addition, even amicable discussions, such as Ortega’s dialogue with Argentina’s “Nueva Generación,” replicated a colonial power structure. Thus the sociopolitical exchanges examined in this chapter demonstrate that, while interactions between Spain and Latin America were often polemical, they were also forging a network of exchange that reconfigured and strengthened the transatlantic relationship. Moreover, many of the tensions that surfaced in the debates discussed in this chapter inform the heated quarrels concerning aesthetics that I consider in chapter 2. Hinging primarily on ownership of aesthetic capital, these encounters illustrate that Latin Americans sought cultural autonomy while many Spanish intellectuals, such as Guillermo de Torre, were unwilling to acknowledge the former colonies’ cultural independence from Spain.
Chapter 2

Transatlantic Aesthetic Debates and Nationalist Tensions

La existencia de la literatura se marca por las polémicas que suscita. (Salvador Novo, *El Universal Ilustrado*, January 22, 1925)

While often contentious, the sociopolitical debates and exchanges discussed in chapter 1 helped forge a network of transatlantic reciprocity that reshaped Spain and Latin America’s relationship during the 1920s. Also contributing to the creation of this network, this chapter examines transatlantic altercations in which Spanish and Latin American intellectuals competed for control over aesthetic capital and vied over the existence of a Latin American literature that was separate from a Spanish literary tradition and the creation of stylistic tendencies. The first section explores a debate over *modernismo*’s origins and success in Central America, Spain, Argentina, and Mexico. The second section traces the polemical interplay between Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro’s *creacionismo* and Spanish poet and critic Guillermo de Torre’s *ultraísmo* across the stages of Chile, Argentina, Madrid, and Paris. Finally, traversing Spain, Mexico, Peru, Chile, and Argentina, the third section discusses a sequence of exchanges regarding Latin American poetry that disclose both vertical and horizontal tensions; Mexico and Argentina rivaled for the lead in shaping Latin American poetry while, interjecting from Spain, Guillermo de Torre attempted to regulate the process.

A Diplomatic Approach: Alfonso Reyes Responds to Cipriano Rivas Cherif

During the 1920s, Mexican poet and diplomat Alfonso Reyes was well regarded in Spain for his literary accomplishments, but even more so for his personality. In December 1924, writing in the Argentine journal *Proa*, Spanish poet and critic Guillermo de Torre, for example, professed his appreciation for Reyes’s “¡Admirable actitud equidistante!” (40) between Spain
and Latin America. In Mexico, Reyes had been a founding member of the Ateneo de la Juventud (1909), a group of intellectuals that sought cultural and social reform, primarily through education. When he later arrived in Madrid in 1914, as Barbara Bockus Aponte notes in *Alfonso Reyes and Spain*, he found kinship with the Spanish Generation of 98 intellectuals such as Antonio Machado and Miguel de Unamuno, who shared his *ateneísta* values (12). Reyes soon joined Madrid’s literary milieu, coming into contact with figures such as Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset and Spanish vanguard writer Ramón Gómez de la Serna. Regularly published across Spanish literary journals such as *La Pluma, Alfar, Revista de Occidente*, and *La Gaceta Literaria*, the Mexican thinker emerged as a figure capable of transcending national boundaries and tensions between Spain and Latin America. As Bockus Aponte explains, “Reyes represented something unique in their experience with Latin Americans: a free and open spirit who was at the same time a figure of refinement and culture, a man of dignity and integrity. He was different from them but not adverse, stimulating but not antagonistic; they could consider him one of themselves” (185). Moreover, from their perspective, Reyes consolidated the best qualities of Hispanic culture.

In November 1920 Cipriano Rivas Cherif reviewed Reyes’s collection of stories *El plano oblicuo* for Madrid’s *La Pluma*. Rather than focusing on Reyes’s writing, however, Rivas Cherif commented on the poet and diplomat’s position as a prominent figure within Spanish letters, underscoring his equanimity: “Distingue a Alfonso Reyes entre los cultivadores de nuestras letras una ecuanimidad rarísima, no ya en sus hermanos del Continente—tan diferentes, pero caracterizados a nuestros ojos con ciertos rasgos hiperbólicos comunes—, sino en los españoles de hoy, menguados herederos de la castiza sobriedad de espíritu” (283). Using Reyes’s figure as a starting point, Rivas Cherif evaluated the current state of Spanish letters: “La personalidad de
Alfonso Reyes nos sugiere la respuesta a una pregunta que acaso nadie ha formulado todavía, con estar en la conciencia de todo crítico; es esta: El descubrimiento del Nuevo Mundo literario, sintetizado en términos generales en el viaje y la conquista de Rubén Darío, ¿qué continuidad ha tenido en las relaciones hispanoamericanas de los últimos veinte años?” (283). Refering to Nicaraguan Rubén Darío’s late nineteenth century modernismo, Rivas Cherif appraised the movement’s legacy two decades later. While he first implied that the Latin American movement conquered Spanish letters, Rivas Cherif immediately clarified that modernismo did not create a separate Latin American literary tradition. Instead, he deemed modernismo: “la participación española en el concierto europeo” (283). According to Rivas Cherif, a Latin American contribution to Spanish literature, modernismo had enabled Spain’s participation in a pan-European aesthetic discussion. In addition, he proposed that the movement had strengthened Spain and Latin America’s relationship, a tradition continued by figures such as Reyes were continuing to enrich: “Alfonso Reyes, escritor en quien se cumplen verdaderamente las afinidades electivas hispanoamericanas, tan gastadas en las salvas oficiales” (283).

Two years later, in November 1922, writing in Madrid’s La Pluma once again, Rivas Cherif reviewed American journalist, author, and critic Isaac Goldberg’s La literatura hispanoamericana. Citing Spanish poet Enrique Díez Canedo’s prologue to Goldberg’s book where he dismissed the notion that Latin America had its own literary tradition separate from Spanish letters, “o una sola literatura con la de España, o tantas, si no como repúblicas, más o menos artificiales en sus límites, como países naturales haya en la América española,” Rivas Cherif asserted his support of Díez Canedo’s point of view. He added that Latin Americans overestimated Darío’s contribution to literature in Spanish and, yet again, affirmed that modernismo did not entitle Latin America to a separate literary tradition: “presumen en demasía
los escritores españoles de América de la aportación que puedan significar sus licencias al caudal riquísimo de la lengua común” (396-97). Emphasizing a topic that would resurface in the 1927 polémica del meridiano intelectual, which I discuss in chapter 3, Rivas Cherif asserted that Spanish and Latin American literatures were one entity bound by a common language. While he did not disregard the Nicaraguan poet’s significant aesthetic contribution, Rivas Cherif maintained that modernismo was not a Latin American movement simply because Darío was from Latin America: “En todo caso, Rubén Darío, poeta excepcional, por excepcional y no por Americano adquiere en la historia del español una preponderancia sin par en los tiempos modernos” (396-97). He noted that Darío’s success had created confusion by leading Latin Americans to believe that his stature affirmed a separate Latin American literary tradition. Moreover, Rivas Cherif proclaimed that, at least in prose, Spanish modernistas were much better writers than their Latin American counterparts: “la supremacía de los ‘modernistas’ españoles sobre los hispanoamericanos en los géneros de prosa: [u]n Valle Inclán, un Baroja … no tienen equivalencia literaria del otro lado del Atlántico” (397). Thus, he suggested that, even if modernismo were to be considered a Latin American movement, Spanish writers were responsible for the movement’s success, which further invalidated Latin American claims to a separate literature.

Further elaborating his argument, Rivas Cherif once again cited Reyes as an example. If two years earlier Rivas Cherif had postulated that Reyes was an exceptional author because he was part of a Spanish literary tradition, this article seems to contradict his previous stance by affirming that literary success was not contingent upon nationality. Instead, he proposed that Reyes had achieved his stature precisely because his writing transcended a “mero colorismo local” and “patriotismo de circunstancias” (398). Moreover, Rivas Cherif suggested that Reyes’s
“neutral” style proved that a Latin American literature did not exist. Finally, the Spanish critic concluded that there was only one literature, “la de España,” which “los grandes españoles de América” enriched with their valuable contributions (398). Thus, following Rivas Cherif’s convoluted argument, nationality entitled Spain to its own literature, but not Latin America.

In January 1923, La Pluma dedicated a special issue to Spanish modernista Ramón del Valle Inclán. Articles in this issue praised Valle Inclán’s dexterity in multiple genres, such as prose, poetry, and theatre. Alfonso Reyes penned “Valle-Inclán y América,” the only contribution by a Latin American author. While Reyes did not directly respond to Rivas Cherif’s previous articles in La Pluma, he did engage the Spanish critic’s earlier commentary in his article. Whereas Rivas Cherif dismissed the idea that Latin America could claim to have its own literature, Reyes discredited this notion by illustrating that Mexico had shaped Valle Inclán’s modernismo. First, Reyes noted that Mexico’s topography had inspired Valle Inclán’s modernista novel Sonata de estío. While Reyes acknowledged that Argentina’s pampa, featured in La lámpara maravillosa, also propelled the Spanish writer’s creativity, the Mexican writer asserted that Valle Inclán was most drawn to Mexico (“prefiere la América mexicana: la más misteriosa y la más honda”) where he fully developed as a writer: “El hombre que México le devolvió a España, contenía ya todos los gérmenes del poeta” (32). Furthermore, Reyes explained that Valle Inclán was one of many Spanish intellectuals to be captivated by Latin America. According to the Mexican intellectual, dating back to the colonial era, “La imaginación y la voluntad de los españoles peninsulares volaban hacia América, que ejercía en la vida de la raza una función tónica, de ideal, de golpe de viento purificante” (32). And, at present, he claimed, Latin America influenced intellectuals such as philosopher Ortega y Gasset and author
and essayist Miguel de Unamuno. Thus Reyes affirmed that, for centuries, Latin America, and Mexico in particular, had provided a spur for Spanish intellectuals.

True to his characteristic equanimity, Alfonso Reyes’s tone in “Valle Inclán y América” is laudatory. Describing Valle Inclán’s novels as a positive result of transatlantic exchange, this article was meant to bring Spain and Latin America together. In contrast to Rivas Cherif, who posited Latin America’s literary developments as an extension of a Spanish tradition, Reyes credited Latin America’s cultural and geographic diversity for its role in the advent of new aesthetic forms that were both Spanish and Latin American. However, Reyes’s balanced approach towards transatlantic literary exchange between Spain and Latin America was an exception. For the most part, aesthetic exchanges in journals and newspapers between Spanish and Latin American intellectuals during the 1920s revealed biased perspectives. As Rivas Cherif’s example indicates, intellectuals’ views on aesthetics were often influenced by their nationalist stances.

Polemical Guillermo de Torre

Spanish poet and critic Guillermo de Torre instigated the 1927 polémica del meridiano intelectual with his editorial “Madrid, Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica” published in Madrid’s La Gaceta Literaria (April 15, 1927). His proposition that Madrid should function as an intellectual meridian between Spain and Latin America incited heated responses from Latin American intellectuals, sparking a debate in literary journals that lasted until 1929 (see chapter 3 for a full discussion of this exchange). However, de Torre’s controversial editorial was not an isolated incident; the Spanish critic’s polemical nature was evident throughout the 1920s when
he provoked multiple contentious exchanges with Latin American intellectuals. These debates primarily centered on *ultraísmo*, the vanguard poetic movement that he helped initiate in Madrid.

In 1918 Spanish poets including de Torre, Rafael Cansinos-Asséns, and Gerardo Diego, together with Argentine Jorge Luis Borges (then living in Madrid) sought to break with *modernismo* and revolutionize poetry. Influenced by European vanguard movements such as Futurism and (to a lesser degree) Dada, they created *ultraísmo*, a style that focused the metaphor, poetry’s most rudimentary element. Andalusian poet Isaac del Vando Villar’s journal *Grecia* (Sevilla 1918-20) published their first *Manifiesto ultraísta* in 1919 and the movement spread across Spain in other short-lived journals, which I mention in the introduction. *Ultraísmo* became a transatlantic movement when Borges returned to Argentina in 1921 and plastered the Buenos Aires cityscape with *Revista Mural Prisma*. Almost simultaneously, Mexican poet Manuel Maples Arce posted his *Estridentista* manifesto, *Actual 1*, on Mexico City’s walls, which, as de Torre claimed in his *Literaturas europeas de vanguardia* (1925), resembled the *ultraísta* manifesto *Vertical*, which he had published in 1920.\(^{30}\) In fact, as Luis Mario Schneider points out in *El estridentismo en México (1921-1927)*, in *Actual 1* Maples Arce called de Torre his “hermano espiritual” (Schneider 43). Moreover, in *El estridentismo o la literatura de estrategia*, Schneider helps explain the affinity between *ultraísmo* and Maples Arce’s *estridentismo* noting that *ultraísmo* had reached Mexico through journals like *Ultra, Grecia*, and *Cosmópolis*. In addition, in “Manuel Maples Arce: Correspondencia con Guillermo de Torre (1921-1922),” Carlos García cites exchanges between these intellectuals, which establish de Torre’s role acting as an “intellectual meridian” between Borges and Maples Arce. Furthermore, Manuel Maples Arce published Borges’s poem “Ciudad” (a version that did not make it into *Fervor de Buenos

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\(^{30}\) Noted by Carlos García in his article “Manuel Maples Arce: Correspondencia con Guillermo de Torre, 1921-1922.”
Aires) in his first *estridentista* journal, *Irradiador*, and Borges deemed Maples Arce’s poetry collection *Andamios interiores* to be *ultraísta* in “Acotaciones: Eduardo González Lanuza,” published in Buenos Aires’s *Proa* in August 1924.\(^{31}\) Thus despite its Spanish origins, *ultraísmo* became a transatlantic poetic movement, quickly spreading to Argentina and Mexico. However, throughout the twenties, de Torre consistently defended the movement’s Spanish inception and his role in its creation.

Debates in *Alfar*: Guillermo de Torre, Vicente Huidobro, and Oliverio Girondo

According to Mihai Grünfeld, Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro first introduced his poetic movement *creacionismo* in Chile in 1914 and two years later in Buenos Aires.\(^{32}\) *Creacionismo* called upon poets to stop imitating reality and instead take control of their medium. Huidobro proposed that by employing adjectives and metaphors, poets could create a world of their own with verse. Transporting *creacionismo* to Europe, Huidobro moved to Paris in 1916, where he came into contact with leading cubists and futurists. Actively involved in Parisian avant-garde circles, the Chilean poet further developed his aesthetic, which he then brought to Madrid in 1918. Similarities between *creacionismo* and *ultraísmo*, forged during Huidobro’s presence in Spain, set the stage for an extended feud between de Torre and Huidobro.

In *Literaturas europeas de vanguardia*, de Torre narrates the inception and development of European vanguard movements including Futurism, Cubism, Dada, *creacionismo*, and *ultraísmo*. However, rather than describe the advent of these movements chronologically, he inverted the order and began with *ultraísmo*. According to Antonio de Undurraga in “Huidobro y

\(^{31}\) Rose Corral Jorda points to connections between Borges and Maples Arce in “Un poema de Borges en la revista “Irradiador” (1923).”

\(^{32}\) *Antología de la poesía latinoamericana de vanguardia 1916-1935*. 89
sus acusadores o la querella del creacionismo,” de Torre chose to discuss *ultraísmo* first because he wanted to place it before Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro’s *creacionismo*.\(^{33}\) In his discussion on *ultraísmo* de Torre referred to a dispute with Huidobro who, he claimed, described *ultraísmo* as a “degeneración del creacionismo” (79). Countering the Chilean poet, de Torre insisted that *ultraísmo* was not a weak imitation of *creacionismo* and instead suggested that Huidobro’s movement itself replicated the style of French poet Pierre Reverdy, thereby discrediting the Chilean’s claim to have created a new poetic technique. In addition, de Torre showcased *ultraísmo*’s originality among European vanguard aesthetics and, in a footnote, the Spanish poet and critic presented himself as the movement’s creator (74).\(^{34}\)

De Torre published many of the essays that would become *Literaturas europeas de vanguardia* in the *Revista Casa América Galicia*, later renamed *Alfar*. One of his first articles, “Visita de Interviewer Ignotus al autor de *Hélices*,” appeared in March 1923. In *La revista Alfar y la prensa literaria de su época (1920-1930)*, César Antonio Molina summarizes this article and explains that de Torre’s purpose was to interview “al más ultraísta de todos los poetas sobre la repercusión que había logrado su primer libro de poemas, *Hélices*” (151).\(^{35}\) Thus de Torre interviewed himself because he was the most *ultraísta* of all poets and, therefore, the best judge of his own collection, *Hélices*. He described *Hélices* as a series of heterogeneous poems written

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\(^{33}\) Mentioned by Mireya Robles in “La disputa sobre la paternidad del creacionismo” (BICC 1971).

\(^{34}\) De Torre mentions an article in the journal *Cosmópolis* in 1920 as evidence.

\(^{35}\) I have not obtained access to this issue of *Revista Casa América Galicia* and am therefore referencing César Antonio Molina’s thorough study. Molina explains that “Esta autoentrevista, que yo no he vuelto a ver jamás reproducida ni siquiera citada, es un magnífico documento en donde se hace historia de una manera sucinta, pero muy clara, de todo el ‘Ultra’ por boca de uno de sus principales (por no decir el principal de manera absoluta) creadores y teóricos del mismo” (155). De Torre also quotes this *Cosmópolis* article in his footnote on page 74 of *Literaturas europeas de vanguardia*. 

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between 1918 and 1923 that depict the poet’s aesthetic development and evolution. With respect to *ultraísmo*, once again de Torre insisted on his role in its origins and distinguished himself as the first to have defined the movement’s aesthetic style: “he sido el primero, desde el año 1920, en la revista *Cosmópolis*, en definir la estética del ultraísmo y el único, en unión de Jorge Luis Borges y Eugenio Montes, por dotar de una ideología este movimiento” (Molina 152). He also noted that Spanish poet Rafael Cansinos Asséns’s role was minimal: “fue sólo durante un momento, el de alentador cordial” (Molina 154). Furthermore, according to Molina, de Torre reproached his contemporaries, including Ramón Gómez de la Serna and Cansinos Assens, for their lack of focus in spreading *ultraísmo*. Irate, de Torre proposed *ultraísmo*’s expatriation to France, which he deemed a “lugar ideal” (Molina 153). Such a suggestion from de Torre is surprising in light of his later pronouncements against French cultural hegemony. In “Carta a Évar Méndez” published in Buenos Aires’s *Martín Fierro* on July 18 1925, which I discuss in chapter 1, de Torre disputed French cultural hegemony over Latin America. He revisited this topic two years later in “Madrid, Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica,” the editorial in Madrid’s *La Gaceta Literaria* that instigated the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* in April 1927, which I examine in chapter 3. In spite of de Torre’s proclamation that he would turn to France in order to propagate *ultraísmo*, Molina recounts that the Spanish poet also admitted that the movement’s days were finite. Much like dada, *ultraísmo* had achieved its purpose and run its course. Yet, despite considering France an ideal place for *ultraísmo*, de Torre criticized Huidobro’s *creacionismo* for being an imitation of French aesthetics. His intent was, of course, to discredit the Chilean poet, who, de Torre maintained, was not respected either in Paris or Spain.

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36 According to Molina, de Torre was more forgiving when he discussed Reyes and Spanish essayist Melchor Fernández Almagro.
Six months later, de Torre accused Huidobro of plagiarism. In September 1923 the *Revista Casa América Galicia* became *Alfar* and de Torre initiated a polemic with the Chilean poet that lasted through 1924. In “Los verdaderos antecedentes líricos del creacionismo en Vicente Huidobro,” published in *Alfar*, the Spanish poet claimed that his goal is to establish Uruguayan poet Herrera y Reissig as a precursor to creacionismo: “revelar, prefacialmente, las sorprendentes anticipaciones de un precursor genial, incógnito y desconocido: el uruguayo Julio Herrera y Reissig” (33). However, the article more pointedly set out to defame Huidobro and mock his claims to having initiated creacionismo by proving Herrera y Reissig to be a “genuino e insospechado precreacionista, que ha ejercido un influjo muy próximo sobre uno de los pretendidos monopolizadores de esta” (32). De Torre made his case by comparing multiple examples of Herrera y Reissig’s and Huidobro’s poetry, highlighting their similarities, which, he insisted, denied the Chilean poet authorship of creacionismo (32). For example, he claimed that Herrera y Reissig’s lines from his collection *El laurel rosa*, “Los astros tienen las mejillas tiernas” and “Ríen los labios de leche de los luceros precoces,” clearly resembled Huidobro’s “Apretando un botón todos los astros se iluminan” and “Miro la estrella que humea entre mis dedos” from his *Poemas árticos* (34). Moreover, two months later, in November 1923, in “Esquema sobre el ‘caso’ Rimbaud” (also published in *Alfar*) de Torre evaluated the French poet’s style and proclaimed him a precursor to modern vanguard poetics. In doing so, de Torre emphasized that “Rimbaud es un auténtico creador de imágenes y metáforas genuinamente creacionistas,” again implying that Huidobro’s creacionismo was not unique (*Alfar* 34, 122).

Huidobro responded to de Torre’s allegations in a pamphlet sarcastically titled “Al fin se descubre mi maestro,” reproduced in *Alfar* 39, April 1924. The Chilean poet sardonically expressed his appreciation for de Torre’s achievement in naming Herrera y Reissig as his
predecessor: “Gracias a los esfuerzos del sagaz detective Guillermo de Torre se descubre finalmente los orígenes del Creacionismo” (347). Maintaining a contemptuous tone, Huidobro cast his article as a letter addressed to the Spanish cubist painter Juan Gris where he described de Torre’s accusations: “mi querido Juan Gris … el inefable de Torre me acusa en la revista ALFAR [sic] de haber sido influenciado por el poeta Herrera Reissig que hace algunos años comentábamos … como el prototipo del arte decadente y refinado … sin un átomo de lirismo puro, modelo acabado de todo aquello que hay que huir como la peste” (347). Not only had de Torre affirmed that Huidobro did not invent creacionismo, he had also accused him of imitating a poet whose style the Chilean did not appreciate. Since de Torre had painstakingly compared and contrasted specific examples of Huidobro's and Herrera Reissig’s poetry in order to prove his point, in his response, the Chilean poet satirized the Spanish critic’s methodology. Huidobro sardonically praised de Torre’s article as “la prueba flagrante de su gran conocimiento en poesía y de la profundidad de sus estudios técnicos” and then uses the same examples de Torre had selected in order to ridicule his analysis: “Parece ser que el verso de Herrera Reissig: ‘Los astros tienen las mejillas tiernas’(Qué hermoso verso? [sic] verdad, inenarrable Guillermo? [sic] y qué moderno[sic]) ha influenciado otro mío: ‘Apretando un botón todos los astros se iluminan’. El lector puede ver el parecido no solo de idea sino de procedimiento […]” (347). Huidobro’s facetious tone leads the reader to infer that the only similarity between the two verses is the use of the word “astros”.

He jeeringly compared de Torre’s “discovery” of the true origins of creacionismo with Christopher Columbus’s fortuitous “discovery” of the America’s when he originally set out to reach India, implying that, like Columbus, de Torre didn’t “discover” anything: “Al fin se descubrió, gracias a este egregio rival de Colón que se llama Guillaume de Torrés” (347).
Moreover, by connecting de Torre’s minor “achievement” with Columbus’s much grander feat, Huidobro ridiculed the Spanish poet’s presumptuous attitude. In addition, Huidobro’s allusion to Columbus also intimates that, just as Columbus had “conquered” America for Spain, de Torre was attempting to impose Spanish hegemony over Latin American aesthetics. Furthermore, Huidobro pointed to de Torre’s arrogance by translating his name into the French “Guillaume de Torrès.” Since the leading aesthetic movements during the early twentieth century were French, de Torre would undoubtedly have to be French in order to have such original insight into the roots of creacionismo. Finally, Huidobro was also suggesting that a Spanish poet would not be capable of such a breakthrough since Spain had yet to catch up to French culture.

Continuing his parody, Huidobro accused himself of having imitated none other than–de Torre! Comparing de Torre’s Hélices (1923) to one of his own poems, Huidobro noted that “[l]os versos del libro de mi amigo empiezan en la página dos en un poema que canta el mundo en el momento de la guerra, tal como yo tuve el cinismo de hacerlo en mi poema ‘Ecuatorial’, publicado hace seis años” (348). Again, employing the de Torre's technique of juxtaposing Huidobro’s and Herrera y Reissig’s verses in order to impugn the Chilean for plagiarism, Huidobro compared examples of his poetry to de Torre’s, repeatedly admonishing himself for not having predicted what de Torre would write in the future. For instance, Huidobro explained that when he wrote “La barca se alejaba sobre las olas cóncavas” in his poem “Départ” from Poemas árticos (1918), he should have guessed that de Torre would later compose “Canciones marineras/ letifican las olas convexas” in Hélices (351). Citing his irresponsible behavior, Huidobro apologized, hoping the reader could differentiate between concave and convex. Moreover, as Huidobro surveyed his poetry in comparison to de Torre’s, he continuously stressed that the Spanish poet’s verses were far superior to his own. For example, although he
had written “En el boscaje oblicuo se quedó mi canción” in his poem “Ruta,” before de Torre published “Un árbol oblicuo sacude/ mareado sus melenas-hojas/ amarillas del otoño” in Hélices, Huidobro humorously conceded that his composition was almost certainly inferior: “[s]eguramente mi estrofa es inferior, yo no tengo el vuelo lírico suficiente para cantar las melenas del árbol” (351). Brimming with irony, Huidobro praised de Torre’s more sophisticated poetic dexterity and thanked the Spanish poet for reviving his creations. Moreover, he ironically posited that the similarities between their poetry in no way suggested that the Spanish poet committed plagiarism: “este angelical Guillermo no ha plagiado jamás, te lo juro lector, él solo escribe basado en mis hallazgos creacionistas” (350). Huidobro underscored that de Torre’s use of creacionista aesthetics could not be misconstrued as plagiarism, since, as the author of Hélices had so accurately illustrated, the only one guilty of that infraction had been Huidobro.

De Torre retorted in the same issue of Alfar with “Rasgos polémicos: Réplica a Vicente Huidobro” (Alfar 39, April 1924). He first attacked the Chilean poet’s grammar and punctuation, accusing him of having “created” his own morphology: “¿Acaso será también creacionista o más bien “creado”[?] … son tantas y de tal calibre las enormes incorrecciones idiomáticas acumuladas—faltas elementales y abundantísimas de sintaxis y ortografía—que hay ocasiones en que el lector pierde el sentido de párrafos tan lastimosos, sin concordancia ni puntuación” (352). De Torre questioned whether Huidobro even wrote in Spanish since he was so clearly influenced by French: “por momentos, se parece algo al castellano y otros a francés no llega, en puridad, a poder enclavarse en ninguno de ambos idiomas” (352). This comment on Huidobro’s inability to correctly articulate (or punctuate) either French or Spanish most likely alludes to the many years the Chilean spent in Paris, insinuating that French culture had adversely affected his linguistic competence, a grave insult for a poet. However, de Torre may also have been responding to
Huidobro’s having snidely called him “Guillaume de Torrés,” alluding to the Spanish poet’s pompous demeanor. De Torre then reproached Huidobro’s “tono polémico ridículo, inepto y de mal gusto inexcusable,” discrediting the Chilean’s satirical tone as “fácil humorismo” (353). Moreover, de Torre snubbed Huidobro for succumbing to the “tosco e ingenuo procedimiento de defenderse acusando: esto es, no de enfilar razonamientos propios, sino argumentos ajenos vueltos del revés” (353). By recurring to tactics such as indicting his opponent of the same crime, Huidobro had undermined his own argument. De Torre maintained that Huidobro’s response would have been stronger had he actually addressed de Torre’s accusations. Following his own advice, de Torre denied having accused the Chilean of plagiarism in the first place; he had merely noted Herrera y Reissig’s evident influence on Huidobro (353). To prove his point once again, the Spanish critic revisited his initial examples illustrating Huidobro’s affinity with Herrera Reissig’s style. For instance, de Torre underscored the likeness between Herrera y Reissig’s “Y se durmió la tarde en tus ojeras” from Los parques abandonados (1908) and Huidobro’s “El día muere en tus mejillas” published in Grecia twelve years later (353). For de Torre, both verses clearly illustrated a similar aesthetic that Huidobro had come to call creacionismo. Therefore, if Herrera y Reissig had been employing a creacionista style since 1908, Huidobro’s claim to having authored creacionismo was indisputably inaccurate.

De Torre further charged Huidobro with excessive vanity saying that the Chilean poet would have preferred for the history of poetry to have begun with him: “Sus susceptibilidades, sus pretensiones vanidosas no reconocen límites. Ha llegado a creer que solo él tiene la autorización exclusiva para ayuntar palabras en un sentido determinado” (353). Calling him a megalomaniac, de Torre referred to an instance in which Huidobro had been appalled by French poet Pierre Reverdy’s use of “nuit polaire” in one of his poems because the phrase too closely
resembled the Chilean’s book title *Poemas árticos*. Therefore, de Torre explained that Huidobro’s enormous ego left him no other choice but to comb through *Hélices*, line by line, in an attempt to refute the Spanish critic’s position. Thanking Huidobro for his attention, de Torre affirmed that the Chilean’s argument was weak and unfounded: “En la imposibilidad de hallar, por lo general, coincidencias fundamentales—ya que yo poseo motivos, predilecciones temáticas y fuentes de inspiración distintas a las del autor de 'Ecuatorial' [sic], se conforma modestamente en querer marcar alguna semejanza en la manera de estructurar el poema, de lograr las imágenes o de emplear ciertos adjetivos […] que por otra parte, no se parecen en nada” (353). Echoing accusations Huidobro had made against de Torre, the Spanish poet claimed that Huidobro selected verses from *Hélices* that were only loosely related to the Chilean’s poetry, because they either used similar vocabulary or employed metaphors in a comparable manner. Thus, as Huidobro had done employing de Torre’s own methodology, the Spanish critic deemed the Chilean poet’s associations flimsy and incapable of sustaining a valid argument against him: “¿[d]ónde, pues, está el plagio? ¿Dónde, siquiera, la analogía? Verdaderamente, la sagacidad de V.H. es temible y sus descubrimientos son estremecedores” (353).

De Torre’s conviction that Huidobro’s accusation of plagiarism was invalid would have been more plausible if the Spanish poet had not attempted to impugn the Chilean for the same transgression in the first place. Moreover, Huidobro was not the only Latin American poet that de Torre indicted for plagiarism. De Torre also intimated that Argentine poet Oliverio Girondo had committed a similar offense when he reviewed *Veinte poemas para ser leídos en el tranvía* (1922) and *Calcomanías* (1925) for *Alfar* in May 1925. Overall, de Torre judged both poetry collections to be excellent manifestations of a modern aesthetic: “se nos aparecen como proyecciones corroboradoras de la poesía más genuina de nuestro tiempo” (36). According to de
Torre, Girondo’s poetry was at once lyrical and modern: “Sus poemas nos refrescan la memoria de nuestros verdaderos amores líricos y nos reconfortan por el impulso que imprimen a la consolidación de los módulos modernos” (36). Yet, despite his appreciation for Girondo’s poetry, de Torre found suspicious commonalities in their work and suggested that the Argentine poet had imitated him: “Me sorprendieron gratamente, causándome al mismo tiempo—¿lo confesaré?—un cierto desasosiego: pues al advertir en tales versos algunas curiosas similitudes con otros míos (insertos en un poema de Hélices, titulado ‘Playa’)” (37). Upon noticing the similarities between his poem “Playa” and Girondo’s “Croquis en la arena” from Veinte poemas, de Torre was both flattered and disconcerted. However, de Torre’s approach towards Girondo is much more conciliatory than his aggressive treatment of Huidobro. Moreover, de Torre subtly recognized that although Girondo may have copied his ideas, the Argentine poet’s manipulation of the material was superior: “experimenté la perpleja, la agridulce sensación de aquel que contemplándose soslayadamente, al pasar, en un espejo percibe su silueta deformada, pero con una deformación favorable que escamotea los puntos débiles y lleva a límites de perfección los perfiles inacabados que uno quisiera para sí más definidos y personales” (37). De Torre explained that in “Croquis en la arena,” Girondo used the same “tema matriz,” a “visión de un meridio ardoroso, en una playa mundana, ante la monodía geométrica de un mar domesticado,” that he had employed in “Playa” (37). Yet despite having chosen the same core theme, de Torre admitted that Girondo achieved more precise “efectos de síntesis visual, aliados a un humorismo descriptivo y a un relieve metafórico, que yo tal vez no pasé de insinuar” (37). Moreover, de Torre acknowledged Girondo’s superior poetic dexterity, admitting that Spanish vanguard novelist Ramón Gómez de la Serna was the only writer whose talent paralleled the Argentine’s ability.
Setting the topic of plagiarism aside, de Torre then focused on Girondo’s poetic accomplishments. He contended that, unlike multiple contrived attempts to create a modern aesthetic “compuestos de imágenes aisladas o de metáforas incrustadas con intermitencia en las estrofas,” Girondo “visualiza la realidad con profundidad, color y relieve” and successfully manipulates reality, creating unexpected ways of seeing the world (38). The Argentine poet agilely articulated “matics insospechados y polarizaciones metafóricas,” displacing the reader’s perspective while maintaining lyrical continuity. In addition, Girondo’s vision was ironic and infused with humor, which caricaturized his subjects. Therefore, in de Torre’s estimation, Girondo was truly a “poeta nuevo” (38). Further commenting on Girondo’s characteristic use of humor, de Torre highlighted how in Calcomanías (stickers) the Argentine played with Spanish stereotypes. The collection is a series of snapshots that exaggerate clichés of exoticized Spain: “España taurina, la de los colmados andaluces, del tren mixto, de las piedras seculares, de una Semana Santa sevillana” (39). De Torre noted that, in general, Spanish intellectuals worked to suppress such stereotypical representations of Spain, but contended that Girondo’s audacity was not reproachable. Instead, the Argentine’s contemptuous parodies engendered a position Spanish thinkers welcomed: “nos sentimos traviesamente cómplices de los humoristas líricos como el jovial Girondo” (39).

Ultraísmo(s): De Torre vs. Argentina’s “Nueva Generación”

Upon his return from Spain in 1921, Jorge Luis Borges brought ultraísmo to Argentina. In December 1921 Alfredo A. Bianchi and Roberto F. Giusti’s journal Nosotros published his manifiesto ultraísta, and the Revista Mural Prisma graced Buenos Aires’s façades announcing
the new poetic movement. Signed by de Torre and Argentines Eduardo González Lanuza, Guillermo Juan and Borges, *Mural Prisma* proclaimed *ultraísmo*’s intent to “desanquilosar el arte” and surpass “esas martingalas de siempre [sic] descubrir facetas insospechadas al mundo” (Schwartz 140). The poetic movement’s arrival in Buenos Aires represented a significant break with past aesthetic tendencies and helped consolidate Argentina’s new generation of intellectuals. As *ultraísmo* began to spread among the Argentine capital’s literary circles, *Nosotros* published “Nuestra encuesta sobre la nueva generación literaria” from April to August 1923. Authors that responded to the survey, including Borges, González Lanuza, Héctor Ripa Alberdi, Roberto A. Ortelli, and Brandan Caraffa, generally felt that, with the exception of *ultraísmo*, their generation had not defined a specific literary orientation. However, this survey was significant because it helped define Argentina’s new generation of intellectuals and, furthermore, affirmed *ultraísmo* as a new generation aesthetic. Following *Nosotros*’s survey, Argentina’s young intellectuals appropriated the title “Nueva Generación” and began working towards defining their aesthetic pursuits.

In October 1923, two months after the last installment of the *Nosotros* survey, *Inicial: Revista de Nueva Generación* made waves in Buenos Aires. This militant and rebellious journal, which I discuss in chapter 1 for its transatlantic exchanges with Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, sought to revitalize Argentine aesthetics and provide a space for the “Nueva

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37 *Ultraísmo* was also published in Buenos Aires in *Los Raros*, where in 1920 Bartolomé Galíndez provided a lengthy overview of European vanguard movements and dedicated much space to *ultraísmo*, publishing poems as examples. In “Periferias ultraístas: Guillermo de Torre y Roberto A. Ortelli (1923),” Carlos García considers Ortelli’s position most likely linked to a 1920 polemic that ensued when Spanish poet Isaac del Vando-Villar disputed *ultraísmo* with Uruguayan Ildefonso Pereda Valdés. Vando-Villar accused the Latin American writer of having misunderstood *ultraísmo*, citing the distance across the Atlantic as the reason why Latin Americans “incurrian en grandes errores confundiendo las cosas de una manera lamentable” (98). In addition, García suggests that Ortelli’s reaction was in keeping with *Inicial*’s program to liberate Argentine culture from European hegemony (98).
Generación.” Affirming the journal’s aesthetic allegiance to *ultraísmo*, *Inicial* published “Dos poetas de la nueva generación” in its first issue. Penned by Argentine poet Roberto A. Ortelli, this article defined *ultraísmo* and reviewed the latest works by two of the movement’s founders: Borges’s *Fervor de Buenos Aires* and de Torre’s *Hélices*. Opening his article with a description of *ultraísmo*’s origins, which he had heard from Borges, Ortelli made a disparaging remark about Cansinos Assens pontificating at “La Puerta del Sol” in Madrid. However, Ortelli’s article affirmed his appreciation for *ultraísmo* and, referring to de Torre’s March 1923 “autoentrevista” in *Revista Casa América Galicia*, condemned the “prematuru ‘R.I.P.’ pronunciado por el ya prismático y apocalíptico señor de Torre” (89). Contesting de Torre’s suggestion that, like dada, *ultraísmo* had run its course, Ortelli argued that dada and Futurism were ephemeral and “demoledores” while *ultraísmo* was constructive and will therefore survive (89).

Ortelli assessed that Borges’s *Fervor de Buenos Aires* was not entirely *ultraísta*, but “nos trae varios poemas elaborados sobre la base del enfilamiento de metáforas singulares” (89). While *Fervor* included poetry that was somewhat aligned with an *ultraísta* aesthetic, Ortelli was chagrined that some of the poems’ “prosaísmo” and “mezquinidad de metáforas” illustrated a style that Borges himself repudiated. In addition, the collection denoted Borges’s penchant for “la frase arrabalera, y compadrona … el tango malevo, soez y sensual … el estilo criollo … el verso impuro de Silva Valdés” and “la elegancia artificiosa de Góngora” (89). Such an array of themes and poetic styles, in Ortelli’s estimation, did not correspond to an *ultraísta* style, which was disappointing because Borges’s poetry should have exemplified the movement’s aesthetic: “[c]omo expositor teórico y como factor práctico demostrativo, Borges es uno de los mejores si no el mejor elemento con que cuenta el ultraísmo” (89). Since Borges had introduced Buenos Aires to *ultraísmo*, Ortelli expected that the poet’s work would best illustrate the new style, but,
instead, his collection only vaguely alluded to the technique he had so exuberantly circulated in *Revista Mural Prisma*. As a result, Ortelli contended that *Fervor*’s weakness was “su error en mezclar las poesías puramente novísimas con las que no ostentan ningún valor nuevo mayormente apreciable” (91). Moreover, he lamented that, overall, *ultraísmo* was a tendency that “no tiende a perpetuarse sino a ser adaptada o complementada” (89-90). A champion of *ultraísmo*, Ortelli was disillusioned with Argentine poets’ inability to assimilate the new style, “no han sabido utilizar los indiscutibles valores que esta teoría contiene,” although he held out some hope for forthcoming books by Guillermo Juan and Eduardo González Lanuza (90).

If he had deemed *Fervor* insufficiently *ultraísta*, Ortelli was even more frustrated with de Torre’s *Hélices*. He conceded that de Torre was “un escritor de talento,” but considered his collection a “selva inextricable” and a “libro prismático” in which too many contradictory literary tendencies converged (91). Ortelli first condemned de Torre’s poetry for being too aligned with French aesthetics and then argued that *Hélices* was not *ultraísta*. Again referencing de Torre’s March 1923 article “Visita de Interviewer Ignotus al autor de *Hélices,*” the “autoentrevista” in *Revista Casa Amèrica Galicia*, Ortelli criticized the Spanish poet for having admitted that his “mirada ideal está fija en París” (91). While de Torre had considered expatriating *ultraísmo* to Paris where he envisioned the movement expanding more than it had in Spain, Ortelli understood de Torre’s remark as a glorification of everything French. Moreover, Ortelli explained that de Torre’s affirmation was unnecessary because his poetry clearly denoted French influence and critiqued the inherent contradiction in the Spanish poet’s “admiración por todo lo que viene de Francia” (92). For Ortelli, poetry needed to reflect a “personalidad íntima” and “carácter local,” neither of which were possible if de Torre was thinking of Paris when he wrote. As a result, Ortelli considered this discrepancy in de Torre’s poetry to be “una grave falla
que ataca la base misma de su obra” (91). While, as I have already mentioned, de Torre’s position on France in “Visita de Interviewer Ignotus al autor de Hélices” contradicts his later stances against French cultural hegemony, Ortelli’s disapproval of French influence on de Torre is also striking.

Ortelli based his assessment that Hélices was not ultraísta on the first section of the collection, “Versiculario ultraísta,” which he criticized for having a “prosaísmo al parecer voluntario,” a “deseo de imaginar o subjetivar el objeto inspirador,” and “un afán por asombrar con un léxico rebuscado” (92). Revealing his own conservative notion of poetry, Ortelli particularly despised de Torre’s “prosaísmo” and argued that poetry should neither attempt to resemble prose nor lack rhyme and rhythm. In addition, Ortelli dismissed de Torre’s naïve invocation of current technologies (93). While Ortelli conceded that ultraísta did not necessarily describe a specific style—a point that de Torre would have strongly opposed—he contended that, at the very least, ultraísta referred to new aesthetic tendencies in general, which de Torre should have recognized. Therefore, Ortelli was dumbfounded that de Torre dared define his poetry as ultraísta: “es el caso que el señor de Torre no puede desconocer que el ultraísmo, nombre adoptado por una fuerte tendencia literaria nacida al amparo de Rafael Cansinos-Assens, está lejos de su Versiculario ultraísta. No sabemos qué rara simpatía siente De Torre [sic] por ese nombre, que hasta se lo ha adjudicado a sí mismo, llamándose poeta ultraísta” (92).

Ortelli’s understanding of ultraísmo’s development seems skewed since de Torre was involved in creating the aesthetic tendency. Moreover, by 1923, Ortelli should have been privy to de Torre’s participation in ultraísmo and to the movement’s manifestoes. At the very least he would have seen Revista Mural Prisma where de Torre had published his poetry in 1921. Moreover, Ortelli himself claimed that he learned about ultraísmo from Borges, who had a role
in the movement’s creation in Madrid and was close to de Torre. In addition, Ortelli contradicted himself by alleging that *ultraísmo* could refer to a plurality of new aesthetic tendencies while at the same time, he held de Torre accountable for not adhering to an *ultraísta* aesthetic. García sheds some light on these discrepancies in his evaluation of correspondence between Borges and de Torre that mentions Ortelli’s review. In a letter to de Torre, Borges suggested that Ortelli’s position on *ultraísmo* was due to his narrow interpretation of the aesthetic style that only considered the movement’s emphasis on the metaphor: “todo lo que no es metáfora (¡metáfora evidente y sin visualidad y sin alarde verbal!) le parece antigua” (García 95).

In December 1923 (*Inicial* 3), Ortelli published “Una curiosa epístola” a letter de Torre had written in response to his critique of *Hélices*. He first noted his reluctance to publish the letter because it unfavorably represented de Torre. Moreover, Ortelli pitied “la juventud española, que puede producir un tipo de esta clase” (207). Framing the letter with introductory and concluding remarks, Ortelli also annotated de Torre’s text inserting his own comments in parentheses. De Torre opened his letter with pleasantries, thanking Ortelli for his review and for having sent him *Inicial*, but his tone quickly became hostile and defensive. The letter consisted of a series of diatribes that refuted Ortelli’s negative review of *Hélices* and disparaged the Argentine writer’s character. However, Ortelli’s parenthetical notations in his transcription of the letter humorously interrupted de Torre’s angry tone and denoted the Argentine’s contempt for the Spanish poet’s defensive reply: "Me limitaré, empero a advertirle—todavía amigablemente—(¡gracias!) que no es ese tono falso, ridículamente definidor y arribista (!!!) el que más le conviene. Ya que es usted, y sus amigos, los necesitados de amabilidades y benevolencias.

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38 García also notes that Borges had encouraged de Torre to give Ortelli a copy of *Hélices* so that he could review it for *Nosotros*, where he was an administrator. However, Ortelli left his position in *Nosotros* and became one of *Inicial*’s editors, which is why the review appeared in *Inicial* (94).
comprensivas (¡pobre!) como indubitables epígonos (!) del ultraísmo castellano, y no ninguno de nosotros, los iniciadores” (207). De Torre insisted on his role as one of the founders of ultraísmo and condescendingly declared that the Argentine and his peers were ignorant of “ultraísmo castellano” (207). In addition, by affirming that ultraísmo is “castellano,” de Torre emphasized that the movement was specific to Castilian Spanish, and responded to Ortelli’s claim that he was excessively influenced by French tendencies. Furthermore, de Torre condemned Ortelli for having written a review on ultraísmo without having appropriately researched the movement, although he did not rectify Ortelli’s claims by clarifying his mistake. Instead, de Torre referred the Argentine writer to his upcoming book Gestas y teorías de las novísimas literaturas europeas (Literaturas europeas de vanguardia), where he would detail “los verdaderos orígenes y fisonomía del ultraísmo” (208). Addressing Ortelli’s critique of Hélices, de Torre first pointed out that the Argentine’s review did not do his poetry justice because it emphasized the least interesting section and ignores the collection’s full scope, which depicted the Spanish poet’s development in four stages from 1918 to 1923. Finally, de Torre chastised Ortelli for his review’s reckless misrepresentation of facts and demanded that he rectify his behavior.

Ortelli responded to de Torre in his concluding commentary where he revealed that while he had initially hesitated to publish the letter, he had resolved to do so because his colleagues at Inical pointed out its value as a humorous document for posterity. He then mocked de Torre for repeatedly insisting on his role in the creation of ultraísmo, “aqui lo tenemos pontificando desde una tribuna tan falsa como su pose de original” (209). Moreover, Ortelli lamented de Torre’s need to ascribe such importance to ultraísmo’s origins: “El señor De Torre [sic] habla de la creación de una tendencia estética como del invento de un específico convenientemente registrado en el Departamento de Marcas y Patentes” (209). Taking offense at de Torre’s
comment that he and his Argentine peers needed “amabilidades y benevolencias comprensivas,” Ortelli postulated that they were creating their own art, “al margen de la pedantería europea,” and did not need to either imitate or claim authorship of ultraiísmo. Moreover, art in Argentina had nothing to do with “las realizaciones apocalípticas, falsas, arbitrarias de Hélices” (209). Finally, Ortelli underscored de Torre’s hypocrisy in proclaiming himself “seudoteorizador de vanguardia,” when his own poetry was a poor imitation of Italian futurists and “[e]l buen humor de los franceses” (209).

As I have noted, unpublished correspondence between Borges and de Torre cited by Carlos García attests to Borges’s peripheral involvement in the altercation between Ortelli and de Torre surrounding Hélices and ultraiísmo. Despite his close friendship with both writers, Borges commented on Ortelli’s limited understanding of ultraiísmo and seemed to side with de Torre. However, Borges and de Torre also had diverging interpretations of ultraiísmo, evident in a series of reviews and commentary on the movement and on each other’s work published between 1923 and 1925. In July 1923 Borges reviewed Hélices for Proa (first series). While Borges’s review praised de Torre’s use of metaphor (“Apiña un increíble acopio de imágenes en la estrechez de una frase sola y las deja luchando juntas con esa silenciosa vehemencia de las enredaderas y malezas que inquietan una selva”), it reveals that Borges did not find de Torre’s collection entirely convincing (Textos recobrados 211). He began his discussion of Hélices by focusing on de Torre’s use of language. Borges explained that there were as many dialects as speakers of a language and offered “la chulería madrileña” and Buenos Aires’s “encanallamiento arrabalero” as examples. In his view, de Torre effectively created his own dialect in Hélices: “el poeta se manifiesta inalterable antipoda de cuanto diccionario conozco. En ellas hay energicas asperezas de metro y un apedreo pertinaz de impávidos neologismos” (Textos recobrados 210-11). As a
result, Borges expected that *Hélices*’ awkward, artificial vocabulary would not be well received and would instead incite “indignaciones” (*Textos recobrados* 210). Thus, despite the article’s positive tone, Borges’s language suggests that he found de Torre’s text unappealing. His use of negative and violent words such as “antípoda,” “asperezas,” and “apedreo” also point to his disapproval of de Torre’s contrived linguistic concoctions. However, Borges’s conclusion, while somewhat ambiguous, was positive: “Felizmente la tal complicación [sic] es reidora y franca. Está hecha con alborozo, con ímpetu, con gran fervor de mocedad. En conjunto *Hélices* me parece una bella calaverada retórica” (*Textos recobrados* 211).

In August 1924 Borges published “Acotaciones” in the first issue of *Proa* (second series), a review of Argentine poet Eduardo González Lanuza’s *Prismas*. He discussed *ultraísmo* and posited González Lanuza as the most accomplished *ultraísta*, the “arquetipo de una generación” (31). Borges framed his argument by first establishing a distinction between *ultraísmo* in Spain and *ultraismo* in Argentina. In both cases he described the movement in the past tense, suggesting it had had ended. In Spain, “el ultraísmo de Sevilla y Madrid fue una voluntad de renovuo, fue la voluntad de ceñir el tiempo del arte con un ciclo novel, fue una lírica escrita como con grandes letras coloradas en las hojas del calendario y cuyos más preclaros emblemas—el avión, las antenas y la hélice—son decidores de una actualidad cronológica” (30). If *ultraísmo* in Spain was a bold effort to bring Spanish letters into the present by transforming poetic language to reflect the latest technology, in Argentina the movement called for an aesthetic overhaul that broke with previous literary traditions: “El ultraísmo en Buenos Aires fue el anhelo de recabar un arte absoluto que no dependiese del prestigio infiel de las voces y que durase en la perennidad del idioma como una certidumbre de hermosura” (30). While Borges pointed to Huidobro’s and French poet Guillaume Apollinaire’s influence on Spanish *ultraísmo*, he cited
Spanish Golden Age poet Garcilaso de la Vega as a model for Argentine *ultraísmo*. This distinction implies that, while Spanish *ultraísmo* followed novel aesthetic currents initiated by contemporary poets, Argentine *ultraísmo* was fashioned after a more enduring archetype. In contrast to *ultraísmo* in Spain, which, again, he characterized as an attempt to modernize poetic language, Borges described Argentine *ultraísmo* as a much more profound campaign to create “un limpio arte que fuese tan intemporal como las estrellas de siempre” (30). He explained that, in Buenos Aires, *ultraístas* wanted to do away with Darío’s *modernismo* by eliminating “los matices borrosos del rubenismo,” and finding new ways of using metaphors.

Borges underscored that González Lanuza had been involved with *ultraísmo* in Buenos Aires, dating back to 1921, when he contributed to *Prisma*: “primera, única e ineficaz revista mural” (31). Three years later, González Lanuza had managed to fully develop “nuestro gesto de entonces, tan espontáneo y fácil” in a collection that comprised “[t]odos los motivos del ultraísmo” (31). Moreover, Borges affirmed that in contrast to other recent poetic publications, *Prismas* was “el libro ejemplar del ultraísmo” (31). De Torre’s *Hélices*, Mexican Manuel Maples Arce’s *Andamios interiores*, Alfonso Reyes’s *Barco ebrio*, Spanish poet Gerardo Diego’s *Imagen*, Argentine poet Francisco Luis Bernárdez’s *Kindergarten* and *Agua del tiempo*, and Borges’s own *Fervor de Buenos Aires* did not come close to accomplishing the *ultraísta* aesthetic that González Lanuza’s *Prismas* so fully illustrated.³⁹ More firmly asserting the opinion he had tactfully expressed in his July 1923 review of *Hélices*, Borges stated that in de Torre’s text, “[e]storb ... la travesura de su léxico huraño” (31-32). Moreover, Borges admitted that his own *Fervor de Buenos Aires* fell short for its “duradera inquietación metafísica” (32). Most

³⁹ In *Inquisiciones* (1925) Borges includes a more complete review of Maples Arce’s *Andamios interiores* (1922) in which he explains that he critiques the Mexican poet because he admires his work (129-132).
importantly, however, by stating that *Prismas* surpassed all Spanish and Latin American attempts at an *ultraista* aesthetic, Borges was also promoting Argentine *ultraísmo*’s supremacy:

“González ha logrado el libro nuestro, el de nuestra hazaña en el tiempo y el de nuestra derrota en lo absoluto” (31).

Not surprisingly, de Torre strongly disputed Borges’s perspective. In February 1925 the Spanish poet responded to Borges’s position on *ultraísmo* from the short-lived Spanish journal *Plural* (Madrid). His review of Argentine poet Norah Lange’s *La calle de la tarde* contended that her poetry exemplified an *ultraista* aesthetic that was the same “[t]anto en la constelación española, como en la situada más allá de los trópicos, en la ribera del Plata” (27). According to de Torre, characteristics of Lange’s poetry such as a “[p]esquisa de metáforas y desdoblamiento de imágenes,” and an “[e]spejamiento dinámico o reducción elíptica de sensaciones múltiples,” were present in both Spanish and Argentine versions of *ultraísmo* (27). Replying to Borges’s review of *Prismas*, de Torre insisted that *ultraísmo* was one and the same in Spain and Argentina, “a mi juicio, no ha existido esa esencial disparidad que Jorge Luis Borges señalaba al separar las dos ramas gemelas del árbol ultráico” (27). He conceded that Borges’s argument that *ultraísmo* in Spain was “una voluntad de renuevo,” while in Buenos Aires the movement aimed to “recabar un arte absoluto que durase en la perenidad” might have been true for “el caso íntimo y personalísimo del autor de *Fervor de Buenos Aires*” (27). However, de Torre considered Borges to be presumptuous in assuming that such a distinction applied to all Argentine poets: “sería en extremo aventurado extenderlo como un denominador común a los poetas bonaerenses” (27).

If Borges had argued that González Lanuza’s *Prismas* proved that Spanish and Argentine *ultraísmo* were different, de Torre proposed that Lange’s *La calle de la tarde* confirmed the
opposite. Lange’s starting point was love, a theme rooted in “lo eterno y lo absoluto,” but her text’s “estructura formal posee todas las virtudes y las máculas de lo coetáneo y eventual” (27). Moreover, Lange’s imagery was consistent with “el repertorio de tropos vanguardistas” (27). As a result, at once modern and enduring, Lange’s La calle de la tarde reflected the “voluntad de renuevo” that Borges had attributed to Spanish ultraísmo, while simultaneously emulating the “arte absoluto” that, according to Borges, Argentine ultraísmo envisioned. Therefore, de Torre affirmed that by focusing love within an urban landscape, Lange’s collection illustrated that there was only one ultraísmo, thereby disproving Borges’s theory.

Seven months later, in September 1925, de Torre reviewed Borges’s Inquisiciones (1925) in Alfar. Critiquing Inquisiciones’s arbitrary organization, de Torre explained that he would have divided the collection of critical essays into three sections. The first two sections would have included articles on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century figures and the third would have comprised essays on contemporary topics. De Torre noted that the uneven thematic distribution of Borges’s articles, in which seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature was most prominent, reflected the Argentine’s penchant for “las posibilidades continuadoras de los modelos pretéritos” over “el valor de la sorpresa, elemento gustativo del arte nuevo” (148). While de Torre did not mention their disagreement concerning ultraísmo, this observation citing Borges’s preference for more enduring aesthetic modes over modern trends seems to be a jab at the distinction the Argentine writer had drawn between Spanish and Argentine versions of ultraísmo. Moreover, de Torre ascertained that Borges had conflicting views on modern aesthetic trends: “De ahí esa oscilación que se advierte en su espíritu, queriendo hallarse, por un lado, de acuerdo con los imperativos sensibles de nuestro tiempo, y rehabilitando por otra parte figuras egregias y
modos de decir antañones,” which could also be interpreted as an attempt to further discredit the Argentine’s position on *ultraísmo* (148).

Despite this veiled allusion to their disagreements on *ultraísmo*, de Torre praised Borges’s writing noting that “su facultad prosificadora se manifiesta pujante y de cuerpo entero” in *Inquisiciones*. However, he also suggested that Borges’s use of language was another example of his tendency to prefer classical forms of expression. De Torre explained that, primarily educated in Europe, upon his return to Argentina, Borges had developed an “obsesión idiomática castellanista,” evident in his “léxico … rebuscado y tupido” (149). According to de Torre, Borges had reacted to “el afrancesamiento” and “el galicismo sin disfraz” that dominated Buenos Aires’s literary scene. Therefore, de Torre proposed that, in an effort to preserve Castilian Spanish’s linguistic purity, Borges’s prose had become dense, “severo y racial” and “algo rígido y abstracto” (149). Again contradicting the anti-French stance he had taken only months earlier in “Carta abierta a Évar Méndez” (*Martín Fierro*, July 18, 1925) and would later uphold in the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* in 1927, de Torre noted that he did not disapprove of French influence on literature in Spanish. As long as such practices were undertaken by “espíritus de talento y con conocimiento preclaro de sus propósitos” like Girondo and Argentine novelist Ricardo Güiraldes, who employed an “estilo suyo, genuinamente expresivo de su psicología,” de Torre found Gallicisms acceptable (149). Moreover, de Torre underscored that writers like Girondo and Güiraldes were the product of “el maridaje de sensibilidades y culturas que en tierras trasatlánticas se efectúa,” thereby suggesting that he expected Latin American writers to be more syncretic and open to other influences as they developed a personal style, a view that by 1927 he would staunchly opposed (149). Therefore, de Torre found Borges’s orthodox views on literary Spanish to be restrictive, noting that his prose was “[a]mbiciosamente clásica de
estructura” (149). However, he did concede that Borges’s prose did not reach the level of linguistic sterility that academics employed in their writing. While de Torre’s views on Borges’s use of language are unexpected in light of the examples I have given in which he opposed French influence and advocated in favor of either an “ultraísmo castellano” or Castilian Spanish’s importance in bridging Spain and Latin America (polémica del meridiano), his harsh criticism could also be a response to Borges’s review of Hélices. If Borges had scrutinized de Torre’s “léxico uraño,” de Torre seemed to be returning the gesture in his appraisal of the Argentine’s “estilo tan severo y racial” in Inquisiciones (149).

Poetic Disputes: Latin American Poetry and Guillermo de Torre

Shifting hemispheres, de Torre also debated Latin American poetry with Mexican intellectuals. In November 1926 the Mexican journal Horizonte reviewed Índice de la nueva poesía americana, a compilation of Latin American poetry. The review first commented on each of the anthology’s co-editors: Peruvian poet Alberto Hidalgo, Huidobro, and Borges, acknowledging their achievement in bringing “todos los poetas de América—de habla española” together in one collection (431). The Mexican journal complimented Borges, noting that the Argentine “está como siempre a la hora en punto, es el hombre actual que dice lo que se debe decir y se va a tiempo” (431). However, as I discussed in chapter 1, Horizonte disagreed with Hidalgo’s prologue. The journal endorsed his position against hispanoamericanismo, but contested his prediction that the United States would soon annex Mexico and Central America. Turning to Huidobro, Horizonte’s commentary is significant because the journal took the opportunity to lambast de Torre and his accusations against the Chilean poet. Horizonte affirmed its appreciation for Huidobro’s notable contributions to Latin American poetry declaring that:
“[a] pesar de Guillermo de Torre, la América sabe lo que debe a Huidobro, el poeta puede estar seguro que la envidia de un europeo no hará nunca que se pierda su contribución al despertar de la pampa, que al fin, el pobre don Guillermo no es más que un periodiquero” (431). Moreover, Horizonte reduced de Torre’s accusations against Huidobro to: “envidia de un europeo.” In doing so, the Mexican journal implied that de Torre resented a Latin American's founding an aesthetic movement because it reversed the colonial power structure. Finally, this review defamed de Torre by calling him a “periodiquero,” which disqualified his opinion on poetry.

Despite Horizonte’s sociopolitical disagreement with Hidalgo, overall, the journal offered an enthusiastic review of the volume. The review did note that Hidalgo, Huidobro, and Borges selected more poets from Argentina, Peru, and Chile, but justified their choices noting that they were probably more familiar with poets from their respective countries. Following the same logic, Horizonte also pointed out that the anthology did not include Central American poets whose work deserves to be published, but remarks that Hidalgo was most likely unaware of these writers. The review mentioned that Mexican Estridentista poet Manuel Maples Arce had wanted to publish a similar anthology; but that he had renounced the task when he learned about Hidalgo, Huidobro, and Borges’s endeavor. However, asserting its role as a leading intellectual metropolis in Latin America, Horizonte stated that Mexico would organize the next anthology and include Central America. Finally, the review assessed the presence of Mexican poets in the tome and found that, in spite of a few absences, Mexico is well represented by Maples Arce, Luis Cardoza y Aragón (actually from Guatemala), Germán List Arzubide, Salvador Novo, Carlos Pellicer, Rubén J. Romero, and José Juan Tablada.

In February 1927, de Torre offered his own assessment of the Índice de la nueva poesía americana in Revista de Occidente. He deemed the volume is aptly entitled Índice because
it did not qualify as an anthology: “se reduce a una simple transcripción de poemas por orden alfabético de autores” (270). Moreover, calling it an “antología mancha,” de Torre pointed out that the anthology did not provide critical and biographical information about the poets, who, in addition, should have been classified according to their country of origin (270). Furthermore, Hidalgo’s, Huidobro’s, and Borges’s prologues did not offer a critical introduction. Hidalgo limited himself to describing “varias alusiones políticas, nada pertinentes, desplazadas” instead offering “aclaraciones literarias o estéticas” (270). Deeming his prologue a “pseudomanifiesto inexpresivo,” de Torre censured Huidobro’s attempt at an introduction saying that his writing was absolutely superfluous (270). And, while he conceded that Borges offered a more informative preface, de Torre found that the Argentine poet’s description of trends in Latin American poetry did not accurately represent the collection’s contents. In particular, de Torre countered Borges’s statement that “la verdad poética ya no está allende el mar, [sic]” affirming that most poets in the anthology “barajan temas universales de muy escasa referencia a su medio, y viven imantados por el stock de motivos sedicientes modernos, echados a volar desde Europa en los últimos años” (270-71). Assuming that Borges meant that Latin America’s “verdad poética” resided on its side of the Atlantic and resists European influence “allende el mar,” de Torre countered by stating that most of the poetry in the collection was very much indebted to European, cosmopolitan aesthetics. Yet, here de Torre misinterpreted Borges’s perspective. The Argentine poet had actually stated that “La verdad poetizable ya no está sólo allende el mar,” meaning that Latin American poets were no longer limiting themselves to European thematic and stylistic trends and were also inspired by their own distinctly Latin American surroundings (Índice 15). Echoing Borges’s description, as I will further discuss in chapter 4, in 1926 Mexican
poet Jaime Torres Bodet called for a Latin American aesthetic that was at once cosmopolitan and autochthonous.

Like *Horizonte*, de Torre underscored that the anthology was biased because it included a greater number of poets from Argentina, Chile, and Peru. However, unlike the Mexican journal, his position was not conciliatory. Moreover, despite the significant number of Argentine poets published, de Torre noted that Girondo’s absence was “a todas luces injusta e imperdonable,” especially since many poets that were included had obviously imitated his style (271). In addition, de Torre harshly critiqued the Chilean poets in the volume. Citing Pablo Neruda as an example, he said that Chilean poets “[d]escomponen, desintegran, pero no llegan a encontrar todavía la nueva ley armonizadora” (271). However, surprisingly, except for his prologue, de Torre did not censure Huidobro’s contributions. The Spanish poet and critic noted that Peru was also very well represented in the *Índice*, “como patria del compilador Hidalgo,” but found that Mexico was not (272). He underscored that Cardoza y Aragón was Guatemalan, not Mexican, and then lamented the exclusion of Xavier Villaurrutia, José Gorostiza, Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano, Luis Quintanilla, Enrique González Rojo, and Jaime Torres Bodet. De Torre also listed a long array of countries, including Uruguay, Colombia, Ecuador, and almost all of Central America, that were either missing or underrepresented in *Índice*, concluding that the tome was incomplete. However, despite its imperfections, de Torre acknowledged that the anthology was useful as an “atlas, quizá elemental, pero vivamente coloreado” for those that are interested in tracing how Europe’s “espíritu nuevo” had reached the Americas (273).

Perhaps responding to Mexico’s scarce representation in *Índice de la nueva poesía americana*, de Torre published “Nuevos poetas mexicanos” in Madrid’s *La Gaceta Literaria* on March 15, 1927. De Torre explained that although Mexican literary history included a long line
of poets whose works “han ido dejando una fructuosa estela epigónica,” he would limit himself to sketching a brief narrative on the “varias personalidades poéticas homogéneas” that comprised the “nueva generación mexicana” (32). Citing Mexican poet, critic, and novelist Xavier Villaurrutia, de Torre labeled the new generation of poets in Mexico a “grupo sin grupo” that shared many stylistic tendencies without subscribing to a specific poetic movement: “afiliados sin contraseña y libres camaradas sin doctrina, sin el guión, casi inconcebible, de un ismo funcional” (32). Their poetry was pure, “absolutamente poética” and un tarnished by “soflamas sociales” (32). From this group, de Torre discussed Salvador Novo, Carlos Pellicer, Enrique González Rojo, Jaime Torres Bodet, Xavier Villaurrutia, and José Gorostiza. He also considered Luis Quintanilla, who de Torre described as a “poeta al margen del grupo aludido” because he was more closely affiliated with the Estridentista movement (32). The “grupo sin grupo” would eventually become the Contemporáneos.

De Torre divided this new generation’s poetry into three categories. He deemed Novo and Quintanilla more experimental, while Villaurrutia’s and González Rojo’s poetry fell on the more conservative side of the spectrum. In between these “extremos disímiles,” was Torres Bodet: “sin duda, el poeta más formado de todos ellos” (32). While de Torre underscored that Torres Bodet’s style was aligned with symbolism and characterized Villaurrutia as a “filial tabladista,” for his work’s similarities with hai kai creator José Juan Tablada, he also highlighted how these poets employed the same “tono íntimo, confidencial” (32). Despite the article’s intention of describing a new generation of Mexican poets, de Torre emphasized Novo’s prose, which he considered superior to his poetry: “sus prosas, ligeras y burlonas, de oriundez periodística, tienen una especial sonrisa” (32). Notwithstanding his preference for his prose, de Torre commented that, like “todo poeta transmarino,” Novo’s poetry was brimming with French
influence; however, “el yanquismo” and “la sugestión maquinística” were most prevalent in his verses (32). De Torre’s observation that all Latin American poets shared a common affinity with French tendencies is notable because he seems to be portraying French influence as negative in this article while, in his review of Borges’s *Inquisiciones*, he praised Girondo and Güiraldes for adopting “afrancesamiento” in the process of creating their own style. Such conflicting views on French influence in Latin America are, as I have noted, remained inconsistent throughout de Torre’s critical writings during the 1920s.

Infuriated by de Torre’s “Nuevos poetas mexicanos,” on April 9, 1927, Mexican poet Jorge Cuesta responded with his “Carta al señor Guillermo de Torre” in Mexico’s *Revista de Revistas* on April 17, 1927. Cuesta affirmed that de Torre’s article inaccurately described Mexican poets. First, he underscored that de Torre contradicted himself when he stated that the new generation of Mexican poets was homogenous and then arbitrarily divided their styles into categories: “[u]sted los vuelve a agrupar a su manera, y después los separa a su manera, y a su manera los vuelve usted a agrupar por tercera vez” (*Contemporáneos: Prosa* 7). Moreover, according to Cuesta, de Torre’s analysis of each poet was careless. For instance, he incorrectly attributed a poem by Novo to Pellicer: “Carlos Pellicer … no presenta ‘una fisionomía pareja’ a la de Salvador Novo. Pero usted lo logra prestándole sus poemas; éste es un medio muy eficaz pero muy poco convincente” (9). In addition, Cuesta took issue with de Torre’s characterization of Novo’s prose as “de oriundez periodística,” arguing that the Spanish critic was unable to appreciate the Mexican poet’s pure form of satire (*Contemporáneos: Prosa* 8). Cuesta further critiqued de Torre’s description of Villaurrutia as a “filial tabladista,” asserting that his collection *Reflejos* did not resemble Mexican José Juan Tablada’s style. In sum, Cuesta found fault with de Torre’s entire article and indicted the Spanish poet and critic for deprecating all poetry except his
own: “la única poesía que quiere usted poner dentro de la hora presente, cuyos ejemplos clarísimos son sus propios poemas, y de la prosa de esdrújulos con que usted mismo escribe esta clase de artículos” (Contemporáneos: Prosa 9).

Concluding this cycle of altercations concerning Latin American poetry, de Torre briefly commented on Cuesta’s aggressive letter in “Tres antologías poéticas: EE.UU. México e Italia,” published in Síntesis (Buenos Aires), January 1929. De Torre reviewed Cuesta’s 1928 Antología de la poesía mexicana moderna that focused the “grupo sin grupo,” which he had examined in “Nuevos poetas mexicanos.” The Spanish poet and critic first belittled Cuesta for describing himself as “editor” of the anthology, disparaging his use of “terminología yanqui” (241). De Torre then alluded to Cuesta’s criticism in “Carta al señor Guillermo de Torre,” noting that he was dumfounded by the Mexican poet’s “inexplicable irritación,” which is why he didn’t respond. He further contended that there was no need for him to explain the opinions he expressed in his La Gaceta Literaria article since most of the poets he discussed were well aware of how much he esteemed them: “saben de sobra, privadamente, cuan atenta simpatía otorgo a su obra” (241). Moreover, they were also conscious that he was an avid reader of their journal Contemporáneos. Yet, despite the tensions between Cuesta and de Torre, and in contrast to his impression of Hidalgo’s, Huidobro’s, and Borges’s anthology, the Spanish critic favorably reviewed the Antología de la poesía mexicana moderna. Praising Cuesta’s selectivity in favoring quality over quantity, de Torre gave the anthology his blessing, calling it a “selección de selecciones” (241).

While the debates discussed in chapter 1 primarily concerned sociopolitical topics such as Reforma Universitaria and issues directly related to Spain and Latin America’s relationship such as understandings of hispano, ibero, and latino americanismo, the exchanges described in this
chapter can be summarized as a series of competitions over cultural capital. Further strengthening the ensuing transatlantic network, these debates also speak to tensions in Spain and Latin America’s relationship during the 1920s. Latin American countries had been politically independent from Spain for a century, but, as these exchanges reveal, cultural independence from the former empire was still in question. As Latin American intellectuals demanded recognition of an autonomous literary tradition, Spanish thinkers such as Cipriano Rivas Cherif contested the existence of a Latin American literature. In particular, Guillermo de Torre emerged as a polemical figure during the 1920s that, consistently inconsistent, wavered between a desire to establish an aesthetic dialogue with Latin American intellectuals and an inability to relinquish a patriarchal power structure. This trajectory informs his authorship of the controversial editorial that instigated the 1927 *polémica del meridiano intelectual*, which, as I examine in the next chapter, can be considered a climactic moment in the development of Spain and Latin America’s relationship during the 1920s. Topics addressed in the debates discussed in chapters 1 and 2, ranging from *hispanoamericanismo* to the existence of a separate Latin American literature, came to a head in the 1927 polemic that spread across Latin America and even reached Italy.
Chapter 3

Polémica del meridiano intelectual

“Elección de meridiano”

Pues bien mundo viejo y mundo novo,
pues bien mundo novo y mundo anciano,
tras de adherirme en Londres, París, Roma,
a Trafalgar, Vendome y Trajano,
ies mayúsculas, como una coma,
tras de oír cabalgar las cantimploras
por la América de blancas horas,
consumo mi elección de meridiano.
Prócer domo, acuarium suave,
Madrid, tu azul metropolitano
del Globo pez y el avión suave.
Mi itinerario hasta la muerte
no está aquí ni allí, sabed que está acá.
Yo quiero enhebrar mi suerte
por la Puerta de Alcalá.

(Ramón de Basterra, La Gaceta Literaria January 15, 1927)

When Ernesto Giménez Caballero’s La Gaceta Literaria sprang onto Madrid’s literary scene on January 1, 1927, the journal set forth two primary goals: first, “cuajar ese hueco ibérico e incorporarse a la tipicidad mundial europea” (“Salutación” 1) and second, as it states in its subtitle, to be “ibérica, americana e internacional.” Throughout its years of publication from 1927 to 1932, La Gaceta Literaria achieved these objectives by regularly publishing, reviewing and commenting upon European and Latin American literary affairs. La Gaceta Literaria’s recurring section, “Postales americanas,” surveyed the latest publications and events taking place in Latin American literary and artistic scenes and later became a more comprehensive Gaceta Americana, directed by Spanish novelist Benjamín Jarnés in Spain and by Spanish poet and critic Guillermo de Torre in Buenos Aires. Yet, despite La Gaceta Literaria’s desire to foster a transatlantic dialogue between Spain and Latin America, this relationship had a tumultuous

40 For further information on efforts to bring Spain into the European fold during the 1920s see Gayle Rogers’s Modernism and the New Spain: Britain, Cosmopolitanism, Europe and Literary History.
beginning when the Spanish journal published de Torre’s April 15, 1927 editorial entitled “Madrid, Meridiano intellectual de Hispanoamérica.” This article ignited a debate between Spain and Latin America that spanned multiple journals and countries and extended well into 1928. The article proposed that Madrid act as an intellectual meridian for Spanish and Latin American literature, a controversial notion that provoked heated responses from Latin American intellectuals in Argentina, Uruguay, Peru, Cuba, and Mexico. While de Torre’s editorial incited this extensive debate, known as the polémica del meridiano intelectual, the heated altercation was also the culmination of the tensions between Spain and Latin America that developed throughout the 1920s, which I have detailed in chapters 1 and 2.

Scholars who have evaluated the polémica del meridiano intelectual to date offer various interpretations as to the editorial’s underlying motivations. For instance, Leonor Londero and Matías Barchino Pérez trace the polemic to late nineteenth century Latin American debates concerning the development of national literatures, although they disagree as to how the polemic plays into a twentieth century trajectory of disputes between Spain and Latin America. In “Vanguardia y nacionalismo: la polémica del meridiano (Madrid-Buenos Aires, 1927),” Londero considers the polemic to be a conclusion to a longstanding struggle to assert cultural independence from Spain (Londero 4). Meanwhile, in “La polémica del meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica,” Barchino Pérez sees the controversial gesture as a new beginning, a Spanish effort to make amends and establish a new type of relationship with Latin America driven by “la necesidad de cambiar un estado de cosas dominado por la incomunicación y desatención mutua, y la instauración de un nuevo espíritu amistoso” (Barchino Pérez 103). Similarly, in “El meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica: Una polémica vista desde México,” Rosa García Gutiérrez suggests that de Torre’s editorial was an attempt at reconciliation between Spain and
Latin America: “Para Guillermo de Torre, pasada la ofuscación de la guerra y reconocida la autonomía literaria de Hispanoamérica, era el momento perfecto para la reconciliación” (García Gutiérrez 296). Yet, less optimistic than Barchino Pérez and García Gutiérrez, in “El meridiano cultural: Un meridiano polémico,” Leonor Fléming Figueroa maintains that the editorial reveals “el contradictorio sentimiento de superioridad e inseguridad del tutor que no se resigna a la independencia de su pupilo” (157). Coinciding with Fléming Figueroa, Londero disagrees with Barchino Pérez and García Gutiérrez’s more generous interpretations. They understand de Torre’s editorial to be a personal vendetta. Moreover, in La Polémica del meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica (1927): Estudios y textos, Carmen Alemany Bay argues the Spanish poet and critic sought “reinvindicación … sobre la paternidad de la vanguardia” (29). She contends that de Torre’s editorial hinges upon residual resentment over debates concerning Spanish and Argentine brands of ultraísmo, which I detail in chapter 2. In addition, Alemany Bay agrees with Barchino Pérez that de Torre’s call for Spanish cultural hegemony over Latin America was a means of underlining the role he had played in originating Hispanic vanguard activity. For example, as I discuss in chapter 2, de Torre insisted that ultraísmo was a Spanish movement and strongly disputed Argentine Jorge Luis Borges’s view that the movement had evolved in Buenos Aires. Therefore, as García Gutiérrez underscores, de Torre was also concerned with Spain’s intellectual prestige in the Western world (294).

While residual resentment from transatlantic aesthetic debates helped shape de Torre’s editorial, in The Spaces of Latin American Literature: Tradition, Globalization and Cultural Production Juan E. De Castro observes that “a desire to expand the market for Spanish cultural products” also factored into his understanding of hispanoamericanismo (37). Moreover, in “El idioma de los libros: antecedentes y proyecciones de la polémica Madrid, meridiano ‘editorial’
de Hispanoamérica,” Alejandrina Falcón highlights transatlantic book distribution between Spain and Latin America as one of the editorial’s motivating factors. She connects de Torre’s editorial in *La Gaceta Literaria* with the 1923 debate between Argentine Eduardo Schiaffino and Spanish journalist Andrenio (Eduardo Gómez de Barquero), which I discuss in chapter 1. In this episode, recounted in Maître Hippolyte’s (Hipólito Carambat) “Confraternidad intelectual Hispano-Americana” (*Martín Fierro* July 25, 1924), Schiaffino and Andrenio disputed the lack of transatlantic book distribution between Spain and Latin America. Falcón demonstrates that this earlier debate engaged the same topics that de Torre’s editorial incited in 1927: “desigualdad en los intercambios literarios, conflicto lingüístico, competencia editorial, universalismo, localismo,” proving that the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* was not an isolated incident (42). Despite the editorial’s discussion of culture in abstract terms, claiming that the *La Gaceta Literaria* wanted to establish a new type of relationship with Latin American intellectuals in order to strengthen Hispanic culture in opposition to French and Italian cultural dominance, I agree with Falcón that de Torre and *La Gaceta Literaria* had a more concrete agenda.

In this chapter, I will first discuss how the disputes between Spanish and Latin American intellectuals that I detail in chapters 1 and 2 come to a head in the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*. Reading the editorial as an attempt to gain control over cultural capital, most Latin Americans, primarily *martinfierristas* from Argentina, proclaimed that the proposal that Madrid act as an intellectual meridian for Hispanic culture threatened the former colonies’ cultural independence from Spain. Responses from Peru, Cuba, and Uruguay also embraced a postcolonial perspective, arguing in favor of Latin American autonomy. However, Mexican participation in the debate reveals that transnational tensions within Latin America were also at stake in the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*. Mexican intellectuals from the group
Contemporáneos contested Argentines’ negative reactions towards Spain, which they read as an attempt to position Buenos Aires as a more appropriate meridian than Madrid. Therefore, while this polemic underscores conflicts between Spain and Latin America in general, it also sheds light upon power struggles between Latin American nations. The latter part of this chapter will argue that the motivations behind de Torre’s editorial in *La Gaceta Literaria* were primarily economic. Adding to Falcón’s scholarship, I examine new evidence that corroborates and expands upon her theory that links the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* to the issue of transatlantic book distribution. More than an intellectual meridian, Spain wanted to be the nexus for Hispanic book distribution between Europe and Latin America, thereby controlling Latin America’s cultural products. Marcela Croce and Alemany Bay have anthologized most of the articles that comprise the polemic. Since Alemany Bay’s is most complete, I cite her compilation throughout this chapter. However, my discussion of the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* also builds upon my own archival research, broadening the scope of the debate.

**Kickoff: A Controversial Editorial Sets Off a Transatlantic Debate**

Given his contentious participation in transatlantic exchanges between Spain and Latin America during the 1920s, which we have already seen in chapter 2, it is not surprising that de Torre would initiate this debate. However, he did not take ownership from the outset. As De Castro explains, this anonymous editorial, appearing on the front page of *La Gaceta Literaria*’s eighth issue, could have been “meant to represent the point of view of the journal” (34). Moreover, as I have pointed out, de Torre was not one to shy away from confrontation. Therefore, I take the editorial to represent both de Torre’s and the journal’s perspective.

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41 De Torre revealed his authorship when he republished the article in *Repertorio Americano* in April 1927.
De Torre and La Gaceta Literaria’s argument in favor of Madrid’s acting as intellectual meridian between Spain and Latin America hinges on three main points: 1) a shared language and cultural affinity; 2) an opposition to French and Italian hegemonic aspirations; and 3) Spanish economic interests in Latin America’s literary market. The editorial opened by stating that Castilian’s hegemony over other peninsular languages (including Catalan, Galician and Basque) had been secured: “va precisándose nuestro criterio con referencia a Cataluña y a las demás lenguas peninsulares” (Alemany Bay 65). Therefore, having resolved internal divisions, Spain was ready to reach out to Latin America: “Afirmado ya nuestro iberismo, aludimos ahora a la América de lengua española, a Hispanoamérica, a los intereses intelectuales de aquella magna extensión continental” (AB 65). La Gaceta Literaria affirmed that, much as one Castilian “lengua española” had successfully brought Spain together, the same language bound Spain to Latin America (AB 65). Furthermore, this shared language implied a cultural affinity between Spain and Latin America that stemmed from an “origen étnico” (AB 65). Thus, echoing the argument de Torre had made in his 1925 “Carta abierta a Évar Méndez” in Buenos Aires’s Martín Fierro, the editorial declared that the term Latin America did not effectively reflect the region’s cultural and linguistic ties to Spain. Instead, La Gaceta Literaria proposed “Iberoamérica, Hispanoamérica o América española” as more fitting terminology (AB 65). However, citing language as the most significant link between Spain and Latin America: “los

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42 Throughout this chapter, unless otherwise noted, I cite the articles anthologized in Carmen Alemany Bay’s La Polémica del meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica (1927): Estudios y textos. Henceforth AB.

43 As De Castro rightly points out, “de Torre’s article evidences a clear abhorrence of any position that could be seen as undercutting the linguistic and literary hegemony of the Spanish (Castilian) areas of the Iberian Peninsula, in spite of the existence of independent linguistic and literary traditions in those regions. De Torre calls this common peninsular identity iberismo” (35).
vínculos más fuertes y persistentes no son los raciales, sino los idiomáticos,” the Spanish journal further affirmed that the “denominación exacta” would be “la América hispanoparlante” (AB 65). De Torre’s article further underscored that the term Latin America also alluded to French and Italian “turbias maniobras anexionistas” towards the region (AB 65). In contrast to Spain’s “fraternidad desinteresada” towards its former colonies, the editorial stated that France and Italy aspired to cultural dominance over Latin America (AB 66). Therefore, use of the term Latin America implied a concession to French and Italian control.

La Gaceta Literaria’s opposition to French and Italian cultural dominance, “latinismo intelectual,” was in part due to Spanish resentment towards these countries. The Spanish journal begrudged how Spain’s European neighbors left it “al margen o haciendo un papel muy borroso y secundario” (AB 66). Thus, in an effort to combat the “latinismo intelectual” that excluded Spain, de Torre’s editorial recruited Latin Americans, stressing that Spain and Latin America needed to capitalize on their cultural and linguistic commonalities and strengthen their ties in order to form a unified front: “Frente a los excesos y errores de latinismo, frente al monopolio galo, frente a la gran imantación que ejerce París cerca de los intelectuales hispanoparlantes tratemos de polarizar su atención, reafirmando la valía de España y el nuevo estado de espíritu que aquí empieza a cristalizar en un hispanoamericanismo extraoficial y eficaz” (AB 66). Again, de Torre had previously made this argument in his “Carta abierta a Évar Méndez” published in Martín Fierro in June and July 1925, where he endorsed Hispanic camaraderie as a means of challenging French cultural control in the Western World. Moreover, if in 1925 de Torre had emphasized that Spanish and Latin American unity would help ensure “dominio español” in the West, in his 1927 editorial he spoke of hispanoamericanismo as a way to affirm “la valía de España.” Thus in both instances, under the guise of fostering a relationship between Spain and
Latin America, de Torre intimated that his true intent was to extend Spain’s cultural influence. Further supporting his underlying objective, in the 1927 editorial de Torre added that a consolidated transatlantic Spanish American culture needed a center, and that Madrid would be the ideal intellectual meridian: “Frente a la imantación desviada de París, señalemos en nuestra geografía espiritual a Madrid como el más certero punto meridiano, como la más auténtica línea de intersección entre América y España. Madrid: punto convergente del hispanoamericanismo equilibrado” (AB 66). Underscoring the article’s implicit hegemonic intent, the proposal that Madrid act as a meridian for Hispanic culture merely replaces one center of cultural hegemony, Paris, with another, Madrid.44 Therefore, La Gaceta Literaria framed its openness to dialogue with Latin America from an unequal standpoint; Madrid needed to be the epicenter in order for cultural exchange to take place.

While proposing Madrid as an intellectual meridian discredited the editorial’s argument against French cultural dominance, de Torre’s own conflicting relationship with French culture further calls his argument into question. Despite his firm opposition to French dominance in “Madrid, Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica” and in “Carta abierta a Évar Méndez,” as I detail in chapter 2, throughout the 1920s, de Torre’s perspective on French culture was contradictory. For instance, in his March 1923 article “Visita de Interviewer Ignus al autor de Hélices,” published in the Galician journal Alfur, the Spanish poet had suggested expatriating ultraísmo to France, where he felt the poetic movement would be better received than in Spain. In addition, he paid close attention to French authors writing on poets such as Arthur Rimbaud, whom he proclaimed a precursor to modern vanguard poetics in his November 1923 “Esquema

44 Rosa García Gutiérrez notes that proposing Madrid as intellectual meridian between Spain and Latin America was a hegemonic overture. She explains that the editorial’s paternalistic tone, often addressing Latin Americans as misbehaving children, further supports the notion that the article had imperialist connotations (296).
sobre el ‘caso’ Rimbaud,” which he also published in Alfar. Moreover, de Torre’s Literaturas europeas de vanguardia (1925) traced the development of European vanguard aesthetics in the early twentieth century, centering on French and Italian innovation. Furthermore, de Torre was a frequent contributor to Spanish journals, such as Alfar and Revista de Occidente, that prominently featured French and Italian aesthetic currents. Therefore, de Torre’s anti-French position in “Madrid, Meridiano intelecual de Hispanoamérica” seems hypocritical since, in spite of his own wavering trajectory, the Spanish poet critic admonished Latin American intellectuals for flocking to Paris rather than to Madrid for artistic development. He claimed that, in doing so, Latin Americans risked their cultural identity, a hazard that could easily be avoided by replacing Paris with Madrid:

¿Qué vale más, qué prefieren los jóvenes espíritus de Hispanoamérica? ¿Ser absorbidos bajo el hechizo de una fácil captación francesa, que llega hasta anular y neutralizar sus mejores virtudes nativas, dejándoles al margen de la auténtica vida nacional, o sentirse identificados con la atmósfera vital de España, que no rebaja y anula su personalidad, sino que más bien la exalta y potencia en sus mejores expresiones? (AB 66)

According to de Torre, French culture posed a threat to Latin American identity, but Spanish culture provided a space for further development of a Hispanic identity. Moreover, de Torre described Paris as narrow and limited, a “reducto del ‘latinismo’ estrecho, parcial, desdeñoso de todo lo que no gire en torno a su eje,” as opposed to an open and welcoming Madrid (AB 66). However, as many Latin American intellectuals would pointed out in their responses to de Torre’s editorial, Spain’s political situation under dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera hindered
Madrid’s ability to act as a space for cultural exchange. Censorship plagued most Spanish publications, including *La Gaceta Literaria*.

As he had done in his “Carta abierta a Évar Méndez,” de Torre also stressed that once Spain and Latin America put residual antagonisms from the colonial era aside—“una vez desaparecidos los recelos nuestros, contenidas las indiscreciones americanas”—they could build a “fraternidad desinteresada” in Madrid (AB 66). Furthermore, he insisted that *La Gaceta Literaria*’s endorsement of *hispanoamericanismo* did not in any way connote “hegemonía política o intelectual de ninguna clase” (AB 66). Unlike French and Italian *latinismo* and United States’ *panamericanismo*, Spanish *hispanoamericanismo* was not tainted by hegemonic aspirations. Instead, de Torre’s editorial emphasized that *La Gaceta Literaria* considered Latin America an extension of Spain, which was not to be interpreted as entailing a “un propósito anexionista reprobable” (AB 66). *La Gaceta Literaria* merely hoped to erase boundaries and bring Latin American and Spanish intellectuals together, “anular diferencias valoradoras, juzgando con el mismo espíritu personas y obras de aquende y allende el Atlántico” (AB 67). Their overture was friendly, generous, and disinterested in attaining cultural or political gains over Latin America. Moreover, the editorial maintained that *La Gaceta Literaria*’s understanding of *hispanoamericanismo* was radically different from previous Spanish versions. As I discussed in chapter 1, Latin Americans rejected many of Spain’s futile efforts to establish a transatlantic cultural relationship, including events like “fiestas de la raza” (Celebrations of the Hispanic

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45 In *Polémicas intelectuales en América Latina: Del “meridiano intelectual” al caso Padilla (1927-1971)*, Marcela Croce points out that de Torre’s description of “la atmósfera vital de España” is a “desacertada descripción del contexto que provee la dictadura de Miguel Primo de Rivera” (11). In addition, in *Las vanguardias latinoamericanas: Textos programáticos y críticos* Jorge Schwartz also notes the irony imbedded in de Torre’s proposal, “la insólita propuesta de Guillermo de Torre, [appears] exactamente en el momento en que el dictador Primo de Rivera detenta el poder y en que la poesía española comienza su renovación con la llamada generación del veintisiete” (593).
Race). *La Gaceta Literaria* agreed with Latin Americans, calling such gestures “torpes excesos del hispanoamericanismo infausto” characterized by perfunctory displays of Hispanic camaraderie such as “[b]anquetes y cachupinadas, tremolar de banderas, fuegos de artificio retórico” and instead sought to establish a more authentic and profound intellectual exchange with Latin Americans (AB 67). Thus, in contrast to previous vacuous interpretations of the term, *La Gaceta Literaria*’s friendly and genuine overture towards Latin America wanted to solidify “la instauración de un nuevo espíritu amistoso entre dos mundos fraternos” (AB 67).

The editorial also claimed that *La Gaceta Literaria* was the first Spanish journal to pay meaningful attention to Latin American intellectual production, which, as my evaluation of debates and exchanges between Spanish and Latin American journals in chapters 1 and 2 proves, is false. Throughout the twenties, Spanish journals such as *La Pluma, Alfar,* and *Revista de Occidente* published and reviewed Latin American authors before *La Gaceta Literaria* appeared in 1927. Moreover, Latin American journals such as *Proa, Martín Fierro, Inicial,* and *Valoraciones,* from Argentina, and *La Antorcha, Horizonte,* and *Ulises,* from Mexico, reciprocated by publishing and engaging debates with Spanish intellectuals. Furthermore, as I detail in chapter 2, de Torre himself frequently incited debates with Latin American intellectuals that took place in Spanish and Latin American journals. Therefore, his claim that *La Gaceta Literaria* was the first Spanish journal to support “la producción intelectual hispanoamericana” is incongruous (AB 67).

Despite the editorial’s argument in favor of true camaraderie and intellectual exchange between Spain and Latin America as a means of 1) strengthening transatlantic bonds based on linguistic and cultural commonalities and 2) opposing French and Italian cultural dominance, its proposal that Madrid act as an intellectual meridian implied Spanish imperialist designs over
Latin America. As De Castro explains, “The assimilation of heterogeneous areas under identities that necessarily stress commonalities rather than differences can be taken as in itself a colonialist gesture” (35). Moreover, the editorial’s conclusion confirms its hegemonic intent when de Torre discussed the issue of transatlantic book distribution. He deplored that Latin American books were insufficiently sold in Spain, but was primarily concerned with limited sales of Spanish books in Latin America. De Torre maintained that Spain only exported small amounts of books and journals to Latin America because they could not compete with cheaper French and Italian books for sale in the Latin American market. Therefore, if throughout the editorial de Torre spoke of French and Italian cultural dominance in abstract terms, this conclusion clarifies that he equated economic gain with cultural dominance, an aspect of this debate that I will further discuss in the latter part of this chapter.

A Contentious Match: *Martín Fierro* Calls for a “Reality Check”

On July 10, 1927, under the provocative heading “Un llamado a la realidad,” Buenos Aires’s *Martín Fierro* published the first Argentine responses to “Madrid, Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica.” Featuring articles with inflammatory titles such as “Imperialismo baldío” (Vain Imperialism) and “A un meridiano encontrao en una fiambrera” (To a meridian found in a lunchbox), the Argentine journal unleashed a series of fiery replies to *La Gaceta Literaria*’s overture. Primarily a reaction to the editorial’s implied hegemonic intent towards Latin America, these passionate replies were also the culmination of the transatlantic tensions between Spain and its former colonies that I have been tracing in preceding chapters. On both sides of the Atlantic,

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46 The topic is discussed in María Fernández Moya’s “Editoriales españolas en América Latina. Un proceso de internacionalización secular” and Alejandrina Falcón’s “El idioma de los libros: antecedentes y proyecciones de la polemica ‘Madrid, meridiano ‘editorial’ de Hispanoamérica’”.

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conflicting perspectives on ideas such as _ibero_, _latino_, and _hispano-americanismo_ and their implications for defining Spain’s relationship with Latin America came to a head. While both sides championed an intellectual relationship, Latin Americans challenged Spain’s imperialist intentions and defended their independence and individual national identities. Thus this first phase of the polemic primarily debated Spanish imperialism and hegemonic aspirations in relation to the terms _latino_, _hispano_, and _ibero-americanismo_, language, race, and national identity.

_Mountainists_ Pablo Rojas Paz, Jorge Luis Borges, Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz, Lisardo Zía, Nicolás Olivari, Ricardo Molinari, Idelfonso Pereda Valdés, and Évar Méndez were among the first to reply. In “Imperialismo baldio” Rojas Paz interpreted de Torre’s editorial as a Spanish attempt to re-conquer Latin America and criticized Spain’s futile effort to recolonize “propiedad ya declarada,” lamenting that Latin America was still paying the price for having been “discovered” by Spain: “Sud América está pagando caro el pecado original de haber sido descubierta por España, de haber sido conquistada y colonizada por ella” (AB 68). In “Madrid, meridiano etc,” Pereda Valdés contended that the editorial idealized Spain’s relationship with its former colonies and further accused _La Gaceta Literaria_ of trying to reclaim hegemony: “Lo que Vds. llaman influencia intelectual, ibero-americanismo, maternidad protectora, es el espejismo de un señorío que ya no poseen” (AB 70). Echoing Rojas Paz and Pereda Valdés, on August 1, 1927 Alberto Zum Felde, director of Montevideo’s _La Pluma_, warned that, disguised as a congenial gesture, the editorial actually meant to restore a colonial power structure: “la vieja pretensión de una reconquista colonial” (AB 75). Moreover, as Pereda Valdés affirmed, one hundred years after independence, roles had changed, and Latin America was now conquering Spain: “El meridiano intelectual de América no es Madrid, es Buenos Aires. A Buenos Aires
acuden los escritores españoles a la conquista de un público, no a Madrid los argentinos” (AB 70). In addition, these denunciations were also brimming with sarcasm as Argentine and Uruguayan intellectuals also poked fun at the idea that a century into independence, Madrid could be a meridian for Hispanic culture. For instance, an anonymous article in Uruguay’s *Cruz del Sur* chidingly affirmed that Montevideo could be a “meridiano espiritual del mundo,” thereby surpassing Madrid’s lesser role as a meridian for Hispanic culture (AB 77).

As I discuss in chapter 1, during the 1920s, the terms *latino*, *hispano*, and *ibero-americanismo* were often used interchangeably within Latin America to emphasize the cultural, historical, and linguistic commonalities that Latin Americans shared. While definitions and understandings of these terms varied significantly, they were often employed to elicit Latin American solidarity. Proponents of *latino*, *hispano*, and *ibero-americanismo* argued that Latin Americans needed to capitalize on their shared culture by coming together to confront issues that superseded national boundaries such as *Reforma Universitaria*, United States’ imperialist aspirations, and political oppression. Yet, these terms were also divisive. If *ibero* and *hispano* deemed *americanos* to be part of the Iberian/Hispanic culture, the term *latino*, coined by French statesman Michel Chevalier in the 1830s, implied an alliance with French culture. Therefore, if use of these terms to emphasize cultural similarities promoted solidarity, the implication that *americanos* were linked to either France or Spain was controversial for its hegemonic implications, particularly as Latin American countries grappled with defining their independent national identities. As a result, de Torre’s editorial in *La Gaceta Literaria* incited heated arguments over the significance of ascribing to such terminology.

Responding to the editorial’s insistence that the term Latin America entailed an acceptance of French and Italian cultural hegemony, many Latin American intellectuals
contended that the term *Hispanoamérica* had similar implications because it alluded to Spanish imperialism. For instance, Rojas Paz noted that the prefixes *pan*, *latino*, and *hispano* equally alluded to hegemonic aspirations over Latin America: “Norteamérica inventa lo del panamericanismo. Francia descubre lo del latinoamericanismo. España crea lo del hispanoamericanismo. Cada uno de estos términos oculta bajo una mala actitud de concordia un afán no satisfecho de imperialismo” (AB 67-68). Therefore, Rojas Paz discredited de Torre’s argument favoring *hispanoamericanismo* over either *latinoamericanismo* or *panamericanismo*. However, Nicolás Olivari opposed Rojas Paz’s position that the term Latin America referred to French hegemony and instead argued that was related to race: “América Latina no es un nombre advenedizo, es nombre racial” (AB 70). However, he indicted de Torre’s editorial for misinterpreting the term since Latin Americans were racially different from Spaniards: “¡Cómo se ve que el lírico del manifiesto, no ha cruzado el charco y nos ha venido a ver las caras o a indagar en el apellido!” (AB 70).

De Torre’s argument that Castilian Spanish created an irrevocable cultural bond between Spain and Latin America also provoked boisterous responses from *martinfierristas* because national identity in Argentina was inextricably connected to dialectical variances. Argentine Spanish deviated from Castilian’s “pure” form as it employed the distinctive *vos eo*, a conjugation that replaced the Castilian *tú* form with *vos*.47 In addition, immigrant populations from Italy, Romania, and other European countries that converged in Buenos Aires spoke *lunfardo*, a distinct dialect that had little in common with Castilian Spanish. Therefore, proud of their unique linguistic identity, *martinfierristas* such as Scalabrini Ortiz and Rojas Paz vigorously refuted the notion that a homogeneous language linked Spain and Latin America. For

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47 For instance, “tú eres” becomes “vos sos.”
example, Rojas Paz postulated that Argentina’s linguistic variances represented a cultural emancipation from Spanish tutelage: “Nosotros estamos organizando un idioma para nosotros solos y de aquí nos vendrá la libertad. Es signo de potencia espiritual de un pueblo el de transformar el idioma heredado. El idioma es una riqueza como otra cualquiera a la que hay que dar vida convirtiéndola” (AB 68). Moreover, he reasoned that linguistic transformations in Argentina were comparable to Latin’s evolution into Romance languages such as French, Italian, and Spanish (AB 68). Stressing the same point, Jorge Luis Borges and Carlos Mastronardi mocked de Torre’s editorial by responding in lunfardo. Almost incomprehensible for a Spanish audience unfamiliar with Buenos Aires jargon, their jointly written article “A un meridiano encontrao en una fiambrera” emphasized the sharp cultural divisions between Spain and Argentina, thereby discrediting de Torre’s positon. Furthermore, as an affront to the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, they signed the article “Ortelli y Gasset.”

While Argentines and Uruguayans indicted the editorial’s underlying hegemonic intent and firmly acclaimed their cultural and national independence from Spain, they also insisted that the former empire had lost its luster and was unfit to dominate Latin America in any way. Thus a recurring argument against Spanish cultural imperialism asserted that Spain’s backwardness could not compete with Latin America’s youth and vitality. Comprised of multiple younger nations, Latin America was still in the process of self-discovery while Spain was entrenched in its old ways and, more importantly, controlled by a dictator. As Rojas Paz explained, younger nations “tienen la existencia más simple …. No se están buscando meridianos; y saben que el futuro es una tardanza y no un porvenir,” while older nations like Spain, “se complican la vida espiritual con problemas artificiosos que más parecen rompecabezas que rumbos ideológicos” (AB 68). Moreover, Rojas Paz insisted that as young nations, Latin American countries have the
right to claim their space as they forged their identities and could not succumb to “tutorías ultramarinas so pena de claudicar en el afán de creernos conscientes y pensantes” (AB 68).

Lisardo Zía took the discussion further contrasting Latin America’s openness to Spain’s narrow perspective: “El paisaje de España se reduce al de España misma: un pentágono. Cinco lados que encierran cinco perspectivas. El paisaje de América es, quizá, la suma de todos los horizontes” (AB 74). Furthermore, Zía asserted that, contrary to La Gaceta Literaria’s misguided impressions, Latin America did not need Spain. Instead, Spain depended on Latin America as “su única, su última posibilidad,” thus suggesting a power inversion between the former empire and its former colonies (AB 75). Desperate to recover past glory, Spain had not evolved and, as Ganduglia noted, maintained a “naturaleza pasatista” (AB 72). Thus as the former colonies modernized and developed, the deceased empire remained stagnant and, as Olivari declared, Latin America had nothing to gain from a relationship with Spain: “No tenemos interés ni por Madrid, ni por España. No hay allí ascensores, ni calefacción, ni tangos porteños. No hay interés. Si ellos quieren, si los colegas de la Gaceta mucho lo apuran, no tenemos inconveniente en reconocer que nosotros somos los conquistadores y ellos los conquistados” (AB 71). Moreover, Spain’s political situation under feeble dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera gravely hindered the country’s progress and rendered nonsensical La Gaceta Literaria’s proposal that Madrid serve as an intellectual meridian. As Olivari indicated, “Primo de Rivera es un cretino que está perdiendo el tiempo que la historia le concedió: ¡no sabe ni ser dictador!” (AB 71). In addition, Ricardo Molinari ridiculed Spain’s failed military endeavors in Morocco: “Madrid: ‘meridiano’ de trastornos marroquíes y las payasadas de Primo de ‘la costanera’” (AB 69).

If, as I mentioned in chapter 1, in 1925 Mexican poet Xavier Villaurrutia had observed that “Ningún americano de mediana cultura corre el riesgo de ser el Cristóbal Colón de tierras
españolas,” underscoring the uneven relationship between Spain and its former colonies, by 1927 martinfierristas claimed that Latin America had surpassed Spain and inverted the colonial order (Proa 10, May 1925: 5). Some Spanish intellectuals such as Ortega y Gasset, poet Rafael Cansinos Asséns, and vanguard writer Ramón Gómez de la Serna had even acknowledged the change. As I also mentioned in chapter 1, disappointed with Europe’s young intellectuals, these Spanish thinkers affirmed that Latin America’s proactive younger generation gave them hope and that they wrote with this transatlantic audience in mind. However, as La Gaceta Literaria’s editorial illustrates, Spanish intellectuals resisted the notion that Spain and Latin America’s relationship had shifted and still envisioned a world order in which Spain held the upper hand. As a result, in their reactions to the editorial, Argentine and Uruguayan intellectuals protested that Spain did not understand Latin America. For instance, citing Spain’s backwardness, Borges accused Spanish intellectuals of failing to comprehend that each Latin American country had its own distinct culture: “Madrid no nos entiende. Una ciudad cuyas orquestas no pueden intentar un tango sin desalmarlo … una ciudad cuyo Irigoyen es Primo de Rivera; una ciudad cuyos actores no distinguen a un mejicano de un oriental” (AB 71).

Furthermore, if a myopic worldview thwarted Spanish intellectuals’ ability to perceive Latin America’s cultural nuances, it also stifled their creativity, leading Spain to imitate France. Thus, redirecting the editorial’s accusation that Latin Americans mindlessly imitated French culture, Borges asserted that Spain’s “sola invención es el galicismo” (AB 71).

Molinari, Ganduglia, Olivari, and Zum Felde also attacked Spanish intellectuals’ inability to acknowledge Latin America’s cultural independence. If beginning with Nicaraguan Rubén Darío’s modernismo, Latin American literature had developed and affirmed its autonomy; lethargic Spanish literature had not progressed since the turn of the century. For instance,
indicating that Spanish literary prestige ended with the so-called generation of ’98, Olivari stated that, “Para nosotros, España intelectual se acaba con Baroja” (AB 70). In addition, Zum Felde pronounced that little had changed from one Spanish intellectual generation to the next: “¿De una generación a otra, nada se ha modificado, más que las metáforas ...?” (AB 76). He also condemned Spain’s Generation of ’27 for their ignorance regarding Latin America: “¿Los jóvenes ‘vanguardistas’ de 1927 siguen pensando, respecto a América, como los enfáticos vejestorios de ayer ... ?” (AB 76). Further insulting Spanish intellectuals, Ganduglia added that Latin Americans had not only stopped paying attention to Spanish literature, but had instead turned to France and Italy because these countries “renuevan constantemente nuestra atención intelectual,” which justified why books from these countries were more popular than Spanish books in Latin America: “De ahí que el libro español se venda menos que otros” (AB 72). Thus, with respect to foreign book sales in Latin America, France and Italy had properly earned their purported cultural dominance.

Second Half: La Gaceta Literaria on Offense

Playing with soccer terminology, under the heading “Un debate apasionado. Campeonato para un meridiano intelectual,” La Gaceta Literaria published a series of responses to Martín Fierro’s reaction on September 1, 1927.48 Likening the transatlantic debate to a soccer championship, La Gaceta Literaria’s title, with the subheading “La selección argentina Martín Fierro (Buenos Aires) reta a la española Gaceta Literaria (Madrid),” made light of martinfierristas’s aggressive reactions to “Madrid, Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica.” The subsequent series of articles engaged the following topics: 1) an unabashed and often

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48 Argentine Pablo Rojas Paz had written Ernesto Giménez Caballero a letter and invited Spanish responses to the debate.
insulting critique of *martinfierristas*; 2) imperialism; 3) language; 4) nationalism; and 5) the term *meridiano*. However, the Spanish team’s first move was to tackle *martinfierrista*’s character in order to discredit their responses.

*La Gaceta Literaria*’s founder and director Ernesto Giménez Caballero was the first to gain control of the ball for the Spanish team in an opening editorial. Disregarding *La Gaceta Literaria*’s role in inciting the debate, he accused *martinfierristas* of initiating the polemic. Moreover, calling the attacking team “amigos retrógados de Martín Fierro,” he accused *martinfierristas* of having interpreted the editorial from the perspective of a “campesino ofendido” (an offended peasant), thereby undermining their reaction (AB 82). Giménez Caballero passed the ball to Generation ’27 poet Antonio Espina, who chimed in calling *martinfierristas* “Horteras tan cascarrabias como anónimos” (AB 88). And, attempting the first goal, de Torre, who had yet to admit authoring the editorial, accused *martinfierristas* of misunderstanding the article and proclaimed that only a naïve interpretation of the text would derive hegemonic intent from the proposal: “Se necesita poseer una susceptibilidad juvenil—y, por tanto, exacerbada, propensa a la hipérbole—para tratar de descubrir una intención hegemónica e imperialista en aquel editorial incriminado de *La Gaceta Literaria*” (AB 83).49

Retrieving the ball from de Torre, novelist Francisco Ayala snubbed *martinfierristas* by portraying theirs as an underdeveloped culture: “Están revueltos los aborígenes. En Bolivia. En la Argentina. Tanto en un caso como en otro—esto es divertido siempre—mi deseo les

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49 Antonio Espina’s extremely derisive response is consistent with his staunch criticism of Latin American journals in his July 1927 review of Buenos Aires’s *Síntesis* in *Revista de Occidente*—“En España creemos, lo cree la intelectualidad española, que las revistas americanas adolecen del defecto general de la confusión de valores. Vemos en ellas una mezcla, una promiscuidad de elementos de positiva calificación con otros, realmente incalificables, que no sólo nos desorienta, sino que nos suele inhibir el impulso atento y fraterno. Y es mucha lástima porque los puntos de contacto deberían ser numerosos” (126-27).
acompaña en su insurrección” (AB 91). Thus dismissing Latin Americans as infantile and backward, Giménez Caballero's, Espina's, de Torre's, and Ayala’s condescending banter only proved *martinfierristas’* accusations that Spanish intellectuals felt superior to the nations Spain had once controlled.

In spite of their deprecatory remarks, Giménez Caballero and de Torre insisted that the editorial did not imply hegemonic aspirations. Proclaiming *martinfierristas* paranoid, Giménez Caballero attacked their interpretation of the editorial: “¡Tutelar! ¡Qué palabra de pánico colonial todavía … No, no. Jóvenes retrógrados de *Martín Fierro*, Madrid no pretende tutelar ni a ustedes ni a nadie” (AB82). And, despite having disparaged *martinfierristas* by calling them “retrógrados,” he further alleged that *La Gaceta Literaria* considered Latin Americans equals: “Pretende solamente entenderse con los que cree sus iguales” (AB 82). In a similar manner, de Torre, who had called *martinfierristas* juvenile, claimed that Spaniards did respect Latin American intellectual independence: “Nosotros amamos demasiado nuestra propia independencia intelectual para no respetar igualmente la independencia ajena: la legítima y alborante y admirable autonomía intelectual americana” (AB 83). Furthermore, he maintained that rather than imply Spanish hegemonic intent, the article actually meant to support Latin American cultural autonomy as “una cordial incitación hacia la absoluta independencia americana” (AB 83).

Contrasting with Giménez Caballero’s, Espina’s, de Torre’s, and Ayala’s belittling approach, Gómez de la Serna and Generation ’27 poet Gerardo Diego were more conciliatory. Having had a longstanding relationship with Argentine intellectuals and with *martinfierristas* in particular, Ramón opted to “no agravar la cuestión con respecto a esa revista en que he escrito de
buenas fe y con la sincera alegría de asomarme a aquella luz meridional” (AB 84). Likewise, having an upcoming trip to Buenos Aires, Diego also opted in favor of a more pragmatic response saying that he could not judge what he did not know: “Buenos Aires y la Argentina me parecen un pueblo admirable … Y como no me gusta hablar de lo que no conozco bien, me abstengo de emitir juicio sobre el valor de sus producciones artísticas y de su vitalidad” (AB 85). However, despite his placatory reply, Ramón did reveal that although he believed that Latin American nations were “Repúblicas de un corazón independiente” he also considered them part of “un fantástico espíritu español, que va desde la cabecera de Méjico hasta la Argentina” (AB 84).

Most Spanish intellectuals dismissed Argentine claims that linguistic variances in their Spanish signified a cultural separation from Spain. For example, Giménez Caballero declared that Spain did not consider Argentine Spanish a threat: “Ustedes creen que a nosotros nos asusta el idioma argentino …. ¡Qué gracia! Como si nosotros, junto al catalán, el portugués, el gallego, el valenciano y el vasco no nos diera lo mismo añadir el criollo!” (AB 82-3). While Benjamín Jarnés mocked Argentina’s “lamentable castellano,” he also expressed a genuine preoccupation that “por ganar un idioma, perdamos muchas obras maestras,” implying that works not written in Castilian would not be considered part of Spanish literature (AB 84). Ramón, who, as I mentioned in chapter 1, had called Argentine Spanish a “lenguaje bastardo” (Proa 2 September 1924), shared Jarnés’s concern that Argentine insistence on a distinct linguistic identity could lead to isolation: “no sólo se aislaran entonces de nosotros, sino de toda esa inmensa América española” (AB 84). However, offering a more critical perspective, art critic, and essayist Melchor Fernández Almagro’s position aligned with the martinfierrista argument. He disagreed

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50 Ramón was well regarded by Argentine intellectuals; Martín Fierro paid tribute to him in Martín Fierro 9, July 18, 1925.
with the idea that language was a source of cultural unification, seeing it instead as “un vehículo y, a su modo peculiar, un instrumento que cada país ha de tocar como quiera” (AB 87). Thus Fernández Almagro’s perspective coincided with Rojas Paz’s theory that a language evolved as a country defined its national identity.

Many Spanish responses questioned the editorial’s use of the term *meridiano*. For instance, journalist Melchor Fernández Almagro agreed with the *martinfierrista* opinion that Madrid as an intellectual meridian between Spain and Latin America was nonsensical. However, he also maintained that *martinfierristas* were wrong to reject any connection to Hispanic culture: “negar la casta, considerarse como nacidos esta mañana y libres hasta el capricho para escoger influencias” (AB 87). While artist Gabriel García Maroto questioned Madrid’s capacity to act as intellectual meridian, he also challenged the notion of a meridian. From his perspective, younger generations in Spain and Latin America were better served by establishing a relationship characterized by a “Juego de mutuo esfuerzo” (AB 89). Coinciding with García Maroto, vanguard prose writer César M. Arconada pointed out that “lo más simpático de la vanguardia está en sus entronques universales. Tenemos una red de caminos libres al tráfico de las ideas. Es absurdo impedir la circulación. Se corre el peligro de que la hierba—tapiz nacional—oculte los raíles, que son, después de todo, indicios de civilización y de vida” (AB 90). Thus, the idea that Madrid, or any other city, could function as an intellectual meridian contradicted the development of a cosmopolitan vanguard aesthetic.

Despite his insistence that the editorial did not imply Spanish hegemonic aspirations over Latin America, de Torre conceded that the term *meridiano* was inappropriate. Instead he proposed “vértice,” meaning a “punto de confluencia de la literatura en lengua española” as a more viable option (AB 83-84). Although he still thought that Madrid could effectively play the
role, he also noted that any other metropolis, such as Buenos Aires, could easily serve the same purpose. Gerardo Diego and art historian Enrique Lafuente also submitted alternate interpretations of the term *meridiano*. Diego offered the term “paralelo” and, echoing de Torre, suggested that Buenos Aires could also be a “paralelo” (AB 85). Meanwhile Lafuente recommended defining *meridiano* as “unidad y confluencia” (AB 87). However, despite their efforts to introduce a more democratic understanding of the editorial’s proposal, these suggestions only provided semantic distinctions. Whether a meridian, a vertex, or a parallel, such terminology still endorsed the idea that there should be a center for Hispanic culture, which implied hegemonic aspirations.

Offering a more complex interpretation of *meridiano*, Spanish essayist Ángel Sánchez Rivero postulated that the term should signify an intellectual goal. Spaniards and Latin Americans alike should aspire to reaching *meridiano* status: “la imagen del meridiano no puede significar otra cosa que la aspiración, inherente a todo movimiento intelectual, de fijar vigorosamente la atención, marcando la hora de una actualidad plena. Todos debemos aspirar a ser meridianos” (AB 86). To illustrate his point, Sánchez Rivero offered Darío, Ortega y Gasset, and Generation of ’98 thinker Miguel de Unamuno as examples. In his estimation, these intellectuals were *meridianos*. For instance, Darío had attained *meridiano* status because he was Spanish, American, and cosmopolitan. But, most importantly, he had superseded national, political, and geographical boundaries. Therefore, judging by these standards, a figure like Mexican poet and diplomat Alfonso Reyes, who, as I discussed in chapter 2, was praised on both sides of the Atlantic for his equanimity, would also qualify for *meridiano* standing.

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51 In his 1928 article “En el país del arte deshumanizado” Argentine essayist Ernesto Palacio also deemed Ortega y Gasset a *meridiano* between Spain and Latin America.
In *La Gaceta Literaria’s* series of responses to *martinfierristas*, debates over the term *meridiano* were also related to Spanish intellectuals’ perspective on whether a separate Latin American literature existed. Echoing *La Pluma* editor Cipriano Rivas Cherif’s view in 1921 that Latin Americans’ literary production was part of Spanish literature (see chapter 2), vanguard novelist Francisco Ayala maintained that “La literatura americana vive supeditada a la nuestra. Se rige por el Meridiano de Madrid” (AB 91). Thus from Ayala’s perspective, *meridiano* meant an aesthetic standard set in Madrid that Latin American intellectuals needed to emulate. Like Rivas Cherif, Ayala dismissed the existence of a Latin American literature. Writing in *El Sol* on September 3, 1927, Cuban essayist Ricardo Baeza also ascribed to this belief in “¿Con Martín Fierro o con Don Quijote?” He claimed that, despite Darío’s success in creating a literary movement, Spanish literature was far superior to Latin American literary production: “Es indudable—y a todo espectador medianamente imparcial ha de parecerle así—que, entre toda la literatura pasada y presente del castellano, descuelga la española muy por encima de los otros sectores suramericanos” (AB 94). Furthermore, he stated that Spanish literature, having developed over centuries, enjoyed an extensive history that made it “una de las grandes literaturas del mundo,” a position that Latin American production was far from attaining (AB 94). Baeza further articulated this point in a subsequent article, “El meridiano literario de Hispanoamérica,” published in *El Sol* on September 17, 1927. He argued that although Darío was a remarkable figure, “el único de carácter realmente universal, capaz de influir en nuestra literatura, hasta el punto de renovar su lírica y de aparecer como el poeta más íntegro que hasta ahora haya tenido el castellano,” his achievements did not constitute an autonomous Latin American literature, “estas constelaciones aisladas … son insuficientes para constituir un sistema planetario importante y autónomo” (AB 102). At best, he noted, Latin American literature was in
a gestational phase. Baeza also claimed that Latin American literature was weak because there were few vocations and, more importantly, because Latin Americans insisted on separating from Spain, “en no tomar esta literatura española por meridiano” (AB 103).

This first match between *Martín Fierro* and *La Gaceta Literaria* illustrates how issues regarding Latin America’s cultural independence from Spain that Spanish and Latin American intellectuals had been disputing since the early 1920s came to a head in the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*. While they proclaimed otherwise, for the most part, Spanish intellectuals were unable to shed their paternalistic attitude towards Latin America. Therefore, their vision of cultural solidarity was based on the assumption that Latin America was homogeneous and similar to Spain, which incited *Martín Fierro*’s staunch defense of Argentina’s distinct national identity. As Évar Méndez wrote in *Martín Fierro* 43 (July-August 1927), “Todas las respuestas del *Martín Fierro* pueden condensarse así: ‘No necesitamos ni meridianos ni tutelajes intelectuales de España; América es América y debe buscarse en sí misma; hemos roto todo cordón umbilical con España; nuestro idioma no es ya el mismo ni lo será; España, intelectual, es de valor relativo’” (AB 75). Yet, if this first match demonstrates how tensions between Spain and Latin America that had been building up throughout the 1920s reached a climax, the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* also reveals that the uneven relationship between these parties remained unresolved.

**Second Match: A Field Brawl between *La Gaceta Literaria* and *Martín Fierro***

If in the first match of the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*, each team took its turn playing offense and defense, the second match turned into a field brawl in which both sides simultaneously shouted at each other. *Martín Fierro* responded to *La Gaceta Literaria*’s “Un
debate apasionado. Campeonato para un meridiano intelectual” from September 1, 1927 with “Asunto fundamental,” in an issue dated August 31- November 15, 1927. At the same time, La Gaceta Literaria published “La verbena del meridiano” on September 15, 1927. Both journals were attempting to close the polemic and have the last word. “Asunto fundamental” included an introduction by Martín Fierro director Évar Méndez and a series of brief articles by other martinfierristas, which reiterated many of the same points regarding Spanish hegemonic intent and Argentine cultural independence that the journal had initially argued. Méndez opened this new series of martinfierrista responses by proclaiming the “meridiano español” a “descarada confesión de ambicionada hegemonía por quienes no tienen condiciones para imponerla” (AB 119). Méndez also defended Martín Fierro’s response to La Gaceta Literaria’s editorial explaining that it was consistent with the position that the Argentine journal had always taken with respect to Spain. To prove his point, he cited issues prior to the polémica del meridiano intelectual that had maintained the same arguments, such as the manifesto written by Oliverio Girondo, which stated that “MARTÍN FIERRO cree en la importancia del aporte intelectual de América, previo tijeretazo a todo cordón umbilical” (AB 120). Méndez also discussed Maitre Hippolyte’s sarcastically titled “Confraternidad intelectual hispano-americana” (Martín Fierro July 25,1924), which, as I have already mentioned, recounted a 1923 debate concerning transatlantic book distribution between Argentine Eduardo Schiaffino and Spanish journalist for El Sol Andrenio (Eduardo Gómez Barquero). Finally, Méndez asserted that Martín Fierro had repeatedly affirmed its cultural independence from Spain and deemed hispanoamericanismo to be pointless: “zurda y huera política, puro sentimentalismo e inútil por carencia de actual base material” (AB 121).
Having underscored *Martín Fierro*’s position regarding Spain’s relationship with Latin America, Méndez explained that the journal had also made many attempts to establish a more productive relationship with Spanish intellectuals (for instance, by inviting Spanish artists and writers to contribute to the journal). However, some Spanish responses had confounded *martinfierristas*. For instance, in his reply to Méndez’s invitation, “Carta abierta a Évar Méndez” (1925), de Torre proposed a “dominio intelectual español en América,” which did not sit well with *martinfierristas* (AB 121). Thus Méndez did not reply to de Torre. Méndez noted that *Martín Fierro* had also invited Ramón to Buenos Aires and even honored him in an issue. Moreover, he claimed that *Martín Fierro* was the only journal in Latin America to offer a tribute to Spanish Golden Age poet Luis de Góngora on the 300th anniversary of his death. Therefore, he was appalled that, despite *Martín Fierro*’s many attempts to establish a relationship of equals with Spanish intellectuals, *La Gaceta Literaria* had published such a presumptuous editorial: “se enredaron en la desdichada metáfora del meridiano madrileño, la más zafia y tropezada de las metáforas del ultraísmo español” (AB 121). While Méndez once again refuted the idea that Madrid could be an intellectual meridian for Spain and Latin America, his comment defaming *ultraísmo* is more significant. He seems to have been attacking de Torre, who, as I detail in chapter 2, ardently vied for recognition as the poetic movement’s founder, and strongly disputed the idea that there was an Argentine *ultraísmo*. In addition, Méndez’s comment defamed Spanish participation in vanguard aesthetic practices. Finally, Méndez demanded that Spain revise its position towards Latin America as the colonial period was definitely over: “dejen de soñar en esas invasiones, conquistas o imperialismo intelectual, que nos encontrarán listos a la defensa y contraataque, o nos harán morir de risa” (AB 122).
Martinfierristas who contributed to this series of responses include Rojas Paz, Raúl González Tuñón, Scalabrini Ortiz, and González Lanuza. With titles such as “Despedida de un meridiano” (Scalabrini Ortiz) and “Liquidando un meridiano” (González Lanuza), *martinfierristas* attempted to have the last word on the debate, forcefully reaffirming the same arguments they had made in their initial replies. They once again underscored that the term *meridiano* implied Spanish hegemonic intent, defended Argentina’s distinct national identity, affirmed Latin America’s cultural independence from Spain. In “Carta a los españoles de *La Gaceta Literaria*,” for example, Rojas Paz, who further emphasized that linguistic evolution was a necessary consequence in the formation of a country’s national identity. Repudiating Spain’s imperialist views on language, he asserted that the former empire had no right to expect Argentines to continue speaking Castilian. Most *martinfierristas* also responded directly to the Spanish intellectuals who had published their position in *La Gaceta Literaria*. For instance, in “Estrangulemos al meridiano,” Olivari addressed how Giménez Caballero had insulted *martinfierristas*, calling them “retrógrados.” Discrediting Giménez Caballero's opinion by pointing out that the journal editor was a little-known figure, Olivari also asserted that Argentines were minimally connected to Spain: “[Lo] [c]onocemos a Vd. sólo porque dirige *La Gaceta Literaria*. No se nota la ausencia de sus libros en nuestro anaqueles. Le repetimos a Vd. que nada nos queda de español, ni las penas de haberlo sido alguna vez. ¿Retrógrados? ¡Bah!” (AB 129). In context, Olivari’s comment regarding “la ausencia de sus libros en nuestros anaqueles,” directly addressed Giménez Caballero’s less than remarkable publications. However, it also referred to the issue of transatlantic book distribution, which I interpret to be at the core of this polemic.
Employing *verbena* as a metaphor for the debate, *La Gaceta Literaria* attempted to gain the upper hand and shift the tone of the polemic in the essay “La verbena del meridiano” on September 15, 1927. The article claimed that “Madrid, Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica” had been intended to initiate a debate and that *La Gaceta Literaria* was pleased to have elicited the response it expected: “nosotros mismos, estamos un poco asombrados de nuestra puntería” (AB 100). Their goal had been to reshape the conversation concerning Spain’s relationship with Latin America and they were proud of their success: “Estábamos ya aburridos de ver cómo se deslizaba ese tema a través de mil protocolos y reverencias. Sabíamos que por debajo corría una vena espontánea que era preciso herir y hacer brotar. Nuestro venablo dio en el blanco” (AB 100). Moreover, *La Gaceta Literaria* proclaimed that the overarching result of the debate with *Martín Fierro* was to open lines of communication between Spain and Argentina, which made the gratuitous attacks from both sides worthwhile: “han entretejido entre Argentina y España un lazo de unión que significa una lucha. Un cuerpo a cuerpo” (AB 100). Yet, by publishing this article before *Martín Fierro* could respond to “Un debate apasionado. Campeonato para un meridiano intelectual,” *La Gaceta Literaria* negated the possibility of “una lucha. [u]n cuerpo a cuerpo,” Instead, the Spanish journal, content with the results of its provocation, took an imperious stance and wrapped up the debate.

**Other Competitions: El Sol and La fiera letteraria**

In addition to the main debate between *Martín Fierro* and *La Gaceta Literaria*, the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* also propelled three secondary disputes that extended the polemic in opposite directions. The first two altercations centered on Spanish regional enmity when Catalanian and Galician writers contested the editorial’s pronouncement of Castilian
hegemony within Spain. In a surprising Italian intervention, the third contest concerned Italy’s influence over Argentine culture. Although seemingly disparate, like the one involving *martinfierristas*, these competitions challenged the notion that Madrid should be an intellectual meridian.

The first controversial exchange took place in Madrid’s *El Sol* between two of the journal’s contributors, Ricardo Baeza and Catalan journalist Gaziel (Agustí Calvet Pascual). On August 31, 1927, Gaziel published “Los meridianos de hispanoamérica” in *El Sol*. While he characterized *Martín Fierro*’s responses as blasphemous diatribes and defended *La Gaceta Literaria*, which “ni en sus sueños se propusieron, con su apotegma ‘madridista’, empequeñecer y localizar el hispanoamericanismo,” he also offered a more nuanced evaluation of the debate (AB 80). Gaziel underscored that *La Gaceta Literaria*’s editorial would have elicited the same reaction from intellectuals in any other Latin American metropolis and even from Spanish provinces such as Galicia and Cataluña. He thus agreed with Latin American intellectuals that the proposal that Madrid function as intellectual meridian had imperialist connotations and described the idea as nonsensical, “una de dos: o es exagerar muchísimo la importancia, indudable o muy grande, que el meridiano de Madrid ha de tener en el conjunto de una armoniosa esfera, o es empequeñecer más todavía la grandeza de esta” (AB 80). Moreover, Gaziel stated that a country needed to earn cultural hegemony, not simply proclaim it: “estas cosas han de hacerse, mejor que decirse” (AB 80).

Baeza responded to Gaziel in “¿Con *Martín Fierro* o con *Don Quijote*?” in *El Sol* September 3, 1927. With this loaded title, Baeza placed the Argentine and Spanish literary traditions in opposition to one another. While *Martín Fierro* alluded to the journal engaged in the transatlantic altercation, it referred more precisely to the Argentine epic poem by José
Hernández, a symbol for Argentine national literature. *Don Quijote*, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra’s novel from Spain’s Golden Age, considered the most influential work in the Spanish literary canon, represented Castilian hegemony within Spain and in Latin America. While, as I mentioned earlier, in this article, Baeza maintained that there was only one Spanish literature, he also responded to Gaziel, arguing against the Catalan journalist’s idea that other regions in Spain would have had the same reaction as *martinfierristas*. Moreover, he defended *La Gaceta Literaria*’s perspective on language and culture, positing that all regions in Spain and Latin American countries that spoke Spanish comprised a “comunidad del lenguaje,” which also implied that Spain and Latin America “forman una unidad cultural” (AB 93). Gaziel replied to Baeza with “¿Imperio o Confederación?” in *El Sol* on September 13, 1927. Commenting on Baeza’s title, Gaziel noted that neither *Martín Fierro* nor *Don Quijote* were a viable option: “Si Martín Fierro peca de localismo, Don Quijote peca de intolerancia” (AB 98). While he found Argentine intellectuals' nationalism to be limiting, Castile’s inability to understand that it was no longer the center of an empire was equally nearsighted. Gaziel further insisted that Castile’s role within in Spain needed to be revised. He proposed a new political organization, a “Confederación imperial,” in which, akin to the United States’ configuration, all regions within Spain and Latin America would be equal participants (AB 98).

The debate between Baeza and Gaziel also provoked an altercation concerning Spanish regionalism between Baeza and Galician Villar Ponte, who wrote in *El Pueblo Gallego*. Baeza narrated the controversy in “La escuela de Don Quijote,” which he published in *El Sol* on September 24, 1927. Like Gaziel, Villar Ponte defended *martinfierristas*’ opposition to the idea that Madrid could act as an intellectual meridian. In addition, he offered a third option to Baeza’s

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52 Spanish historian and writer Salvador Madariaga also contributed an article in *El Sol* that commented on *La Gaceta Literaria*’s editorial on October 22, 1927.
Martín Fierro-Don Quijote dichotomy by suggesting that Amadís de Gaula, the knight-errant tale first published in Zaragoza in 1508, should also have a stake in the discussion. The Galician argued that Cervantes’s character, Alonso Quijano (Don Quijote) “ni conoció ni sintió a Galicia,” but that Amadís embodied the northern region’s soul (AB 110). In response, Baeza underscored that in the Golden Age novel Don Quijote’s favorite book was, precisely, Amadís de Gaula. However, refusing to engage Villar Ponte any further, Baeza dedicated the rest of his article to arguing against uncompromising regionalism. He contended that “toda interpretación del regionalismo que signifique exclusión y restricción del espíritu, acotamiento y delimitación inflexibles” was “viciosa” and “nociva” (AB 110). While Baeza maintained that he did not intend to discredit Villar Ponte, he found that the type of dispute that the Galician attempted to incite was pointless. Regionalism has its place, but shortsighted perspectives like Villar Ponte’s lead to controversies such as the polemic surrounding La Gaceta Literaria’s editorial. Furthermore, Baeza contended that in the editorial, Madrid represented Spain as a whole. As a result, regionalist tensions had no place in the exchange.

The polemic at this point made an unexpected geographical shift. Writing in Italy’s La fiera letteraria (1925-36, Milan and Rome), A.R. Ferrarin, in his article “Buenos Aires contro Madrid” (September 18, 1927), supported the martinfierrista position and declared that neither France nor Italy had hegemonic aspirations towards Latin America. However, he did highlight the importance of the large Italian immigrant population in Buenos Aires that had contributed to shaping Argentine culture. Ferrarin concluded that Argentina aspired to attain complete

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53 I base my understanding of Villar Ponte’s position on the excerpts Baeza cites in his article. Alemany Bay does not reproduce Villar Ponte’s article.

54 Don Quijote’s obsession with knight errant tales is the premise for the novel and he was primarily enthralled with Amadís de Gaula, upon which he based his entire code of honor. Thus, Villar Ponte’s proposal is not entirely convincing.
independence from Europe and would most likely succeed in this endeavor. Yet, taunting Spanish intellectuals, Ferrarin proclaimed that if Argentines were to follow a European model, it would be Rome, not Madrid: “abbiamo la certezza che essa dovrà guardare a Roma piuttosto che a Madrid” (AB 105). Ferrarin’s article prompted a response from Francisco Ayala in La Gaceta Literaria. In “En torno al ‘meridiano’. El minuterio de Italia” (October 1, 1927), Ayala contested the importance Ferrarin gave to Italian culture in Argentina. First, Ayala pointed out that Ferrarin did not take the linguistic commonalities between Spain and Argentina into account, which were much more significant than any cultural ties between Italy and Argentina. Moreover, Ayala argued that immigrants did not contribute to a country’s culture because they assimilated their new environment’s customs. Therefore, the notion that Italy had any stake in “la espiritualidad argentina” was unfounded (AB 117). Finally, Ayala suggested that martinfierrista’s volatile reaction to “Madrid, Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica” was consistent with Spanish culture, “el gesto de las malas horas españolas” (AB 117).55 Thus the main issue was not about the exercise of hegemony, but if it were, “no creemos que Italia tenga títulos ni posibilidad de influir culturalmente sobre la República Argentina” (AB 117).

The debate on Italian influence in Argentina precipitated a survey in the Buenos Aires journal Nosotros. Prefacing this poll, however, Nosotros had itself offered its assessment of the debate a few months earlier, in its November-December 1927 issue. In “Madrid, Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica” Argentine novelist Luis Pascarella primarily supported the martinfierrista perspective as he commented on some of the main issues discussed in the exchange between Martin Fierro and La Gaceta Literaria such as a Latin American literary

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55 In “La batalla de los meridianos” (El Sol October 22, 1927), Salvador Madariaga makes a similar comment, arguing that martinfierrista’s repudiation of any connection to Spain is a typical Spanish trait: “eso es precisamente el rasgo característico del español. El de querer serlo todo menos español” (AB 118).
tradition, language, and hispanoamericanismo. However, Pascarella’s position on hispano and latino americanismo was unlike any of the martinfierrista responses. He argued that hispanoamericano “no tiene hoy por hoy más que una dosis racial y valor fonético,” and he believed latino to be a more appropriate prefix (AB 141). However, Pascarella argued that europeo—americano was the most suitable term to describe Latin Americans because “en la formación de su mentalidad (por lo menos en la Argentina), participan en mayor o menor escala todos los pueblos de Europa” (AB 142). By maintaining that, unlike other Latin American countries, Argentina was more aligned with European cultures, Pascarella set his country apart, which suggested that he might consider Buenos Aires a more suitable meridian. Moreover, Pascarella’s Europeanist stance indicated why Nosotros would have been interested in engaging the topic of Italian influence in Argentina.

Nosotros’ survey on Italian influence in Argentina, published in two installments (February-March 1928 and April 1928), included responses from multiple generations of Argentine intellectuals such as modernista Leopoldo Lugones, Nosotros director Alfredo Bianchi, journalist Ricardo Rojas, poet Alfonsina Storni, literary critic Antonio Aita, and Martín Fierro’s Évar Méndez. Predictably, the responses were varied. While Lugones and Rojas commented that italianidad was not a relevant topic, Méndez focuses on repudiating Ferrarin’s assertion that Italian culture significantly influenced “la espiritualidad argentina.” Echoing Ayala’s position in La Gaceta Literaria, Méndez explained that Italian immigrants did not impose their own culture on Argentines because they quickly assimilated into Argentine society. Méndez credited Argentina’s strong culture for its dominance over other traditions that entered the country: “la ponderosa personalidad del país, el tremendo aparato digestivo de esta nación y su capacidad asimiladora, convierten en sustancia propia el material humano extranjero” (AB
However, he did acknowledge French culture’s significant impact on Argentine culture, which outweighed either Spanish or Italian influence. In addition, Méndez asserted that Spanish and Italian cultures were equally inconsequential in Argentina, with the exception of Ramón Gómez de la Serna. Furthermore, he affirmed that Spain had a long tradition of imitating French and Italian culture, a position that Aita also upheld in his response to the survey. Reflecting on La Gaceta Literaria’s editorial, Aita questioned Spain’s suggestion that it act as a meridian, if “la literatura española actual es un mosaico lleno de nombres franceses” (AB 159). He declared that a culture that had not found its own way could attempt to guide others.

Responding to the Nosotros survey and claiming the last word in the polémica del meridiano intelectual, La Gaceta Literaria published “No quiere pasar por Roma el meridiano” on May 15, 1928. This anonymous article, possibly penned by Giménez Caballero, dismissed Ferrarin’s view that Italian culture was influential in Argentina. Moreover, in a final section, the article turned to concluding the polémica del meridiano intelectual. Reflecting on the reactions that their use of the word meridiano had instigated, as it had previously stated in “La verbena del meridiano” in September 1927, La Gaceta Literaria proclaimed that “Madrid, Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica” had achieved the intended effect as intellectuals quickly began to engage the controversial notion. But, most importantly, the incendiary topic had fostered communication that was long overdue: “El Meridiano ha sido una malla que ha logrado a todos los ánimos—trasatlánticos y aquendeatlánticos—reunirnos seriamente, desde hace ya muchos años que no nos reuníamos” (AB 168). Even if many of the exchanges had been aggressive, passionate altercations were preferable to “los comportamientos aislados, las ausencias abismales” (AB 168). Finally, returning to the soccer championship metaphor for the transatlantic debate, La Gaceta Literaria declared the match tied: “Ha resultado higiénico y
enérgico. Nos encontramos hoy con ese foco alegre de los equipos que han empatado, bebiendo juntos las gaseosas, sin acordarse ya de las porterías” (AB 168).

Polémica del meridiano intelectual: A World Cup of Letters

While the pugnacious exchanges between Martín Fierro and La Gaceta Literaria framed the polémica del meridiano intelectual, intellectuals from other Latin American countries including Uruguay, Peru, Cuba, and Mexico also participated in this tournament, offering diverse perspectives and making it a World Cup of Letters. As I have mentioned, Uruguayan writing in La Pluma and Cruz del Sur, fully supported the martinierrista position in defense of Latin American cultural independence. In addition, Peruvian writers Angélica Palma and José Carlos Mariátegui also adopted a postcolonial stance in defense of Latin America. For instance, in her “Literaturas de América,” published in El Sol on December 7, 1927, Palma contended that the relationship between Spain and Latin America lacked reciprocity, noting that Spain invested little into strengthening transatlantic ties. She also contested Baeza’s claim in El Sol that Darío was the only Latin American writer worthy of note, proposing that he also consider Mexicans Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and Luis Urbina, not to mention her own father, Peruvian Ricardo Palma. Meanwhile Mariátegui spoke out in favor of Martín Fierro in “Batalla de Martín Fierro,” published in Lima’s Variedades on September 24, 1927. He praised Martín Fierro’s revolutionary role in “la vida literaria y artística de la Argentina, y en general de Hispanoamérica,” and underscored the importance of their strong reaction to la Gaceta Literaria’s editorial (AB 112). In addition, Mariátegui affirmed that, following martinierrista’s

56 In this article, Mariátegui confessed to not having seen eye to eye with Martín Fierro when it was first published, but supported their adamant opposition to Spain in this polemic. Moreover, their reaction to the polemic actually encouraged him to appreciate their role within Latin American letters.
example, Latin America’s new generation needed to come together in solidarity against “la tardía reivindicación española” (AB 113).

Cuban intellectuals similarly spoke out against the idea that Madrid should be an intellectual meridian for Spain and Latin America, but they also addressed themes that further expanded the scope of the polemic. For example, in “Sobre el meridiano intelectual de nuestra América,” which appeared in Diario de la Marina on September 12, 1927, novelist Alejo Carpentier examined the ways in which Latin American intellectual positions did not correspond with European perspectives. He noted that, while La Gaceta Literaria’s editorial may not have been ill-intentioned, it failed to take Latin America’s diversity into account. Each country, Carpentier insisted, was unique, facing its own intellectual and cultural challenges: “Las manifestaciones del espíritu latinoamericano son múltiples y los problemas planteados ante un intelectual mexicano y un argentino son tan diversos como los que pueden inquietar a este último comparados con los que se ofrecen a un intelectual español” (AB 96). Therefore, European aesthetic currents such as Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset’s dehumanization of art, which I will discuss in chapter 4, did not apply to Latin America, where artists are focused on generating autochthonous aesthetic forms. He therefore maintained that, if a meridian were necessary, Latin America needed to “buscar meridianos en sí misma,” but in the meantime, he proposed “una anulación de todo meridiano” (AB 96). Finally, Carpentier pointed out that, in spite of La Gaceta Literaria’s nearsighted understanding of Latin America, martinfierristas’ uncouth responses, which he deemed “de un lamentable mal gusto,” were uncalled for (AB 97).

Revista de Avance published “Sobre un meridiano intelectual” on September 13, 1927, arguing that the call for Madrid to act as an intellectual meridian constituted a step backwards in Spain’s relationship with Latin America. In Revista de Avance’s estimation, Darío’s modernismo
had been a counter conquest that had earned Latin America the right to be treated as equals by Spaniards: “Después de la contraconquista intelectual efectuada por el modernismo en tierra de España, parecía natural que nos creyésemos con derecho a un tratamiento de igual a igual” (AB 99). Therefore, naming Madrid the center of Hispanic culture would strip Latin Americans of the cultural independence they had attained. Furthermore, the Cuban journal also contended that the proposal seemed out of place in a publication like La Gaceta Literaria: “un periódico de gente nueva y liberal” (AB 99). However, coinciding with Carpentier, Revista de Avance also made a note of martinfierristas’ “innecesaria acritud” (AB 100).

*Orto* chimed in with “El torpedo en la pista” on September 30, 1927. The journal explained that it did not want to get involved in “esta lucha sembrada de intenciones tan poco generosas y de entusiasmos tan raros y baldíos” (AB 114), yet it nonetheless entered the debate vociferously, giving its article the same title as a recurring section in La Gaceta Literaria, “El torpedo en la pista,” and aggressively critiquing both sides involved in the altercation. Moreover, perhaps responding to Revista de Avance, *Orto* clarified that Darío did not bring a Latin American literature to Spain; he had merely translated French stylistic tendencies into Spanish. Thus diagnosing the idea of an intellectual meridian, *Orto* calls for a “Meridiano servil de la traducción” (AB 114). In addition, *Orto* asserts that Spain’s attempt to “implantar una hegemonía intelectual” was unjustified (AB 114).

If Carpentier and Revista de Avance were uncomfortable with the brash tone deployed by the martinfierristas’ s, Mexican responses, which were authored by members of the group Contemporáneos, also critiqued martinfierristas. *Ulises*, directed by Salvador Novo and Xavier Villaurrutia, published “Madrid, Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica,” in October 1927, which was most likely written by Villaurrutia. In addition, Jaime Torres Bodet penned “La
geografía intelectual de América, Un meridiano de modestia,” which appeared in Costa Rica’s Repertorio Americano on December 3, 1927. As Rosa García Gutiérrez notes, the Contemporáneos’s surprising antagonism towards martinfierristas was connected to their position on national aesthetic debates taking place in Mexico at the time. However, these articles also reveal an underlying rivalry between Mexico and Argentina in which both countries seemed to be positioning themselves as competing meridians. Thus the Contemporáneos were less concerned with opposing the former colonial master than with marking their own place in battles for cultural predominance within the continent.

Unlike previous interventions in the debate, Ulises was not threatened by La Gaceta Literaria’s suggestion that Madrid act as an intellectual meridian for Hispanic culture. Calling La Gaceta Literaria’s proposition an “inocente utopía,” the Mexican journal supported Spanish intellectuals by indicting martinfierristas (AB 115). Disapproving of their “agrio tono” and crude humor, Ulises denounced martinfierristas for unabashedly criticizing Spain (AB 115). For instance, referring to Olivari’s pronouncement that Spanish literature had not meaningfully developed since the generation of ’98, Ulises reprimanded the Argentine for not recognizing “el valor de la España actual” (AB 115). In addition, the Mexican journal cited Olivari’s statement that Argentines had no interest in Spain: “No tenemos interés por Madrid ni por España. No hay allí ni ascensores, ni calefacción, ni tangos porteños,” noting that such a preposterous comment did not merit a response (AB 115). Moreover, Ulises disagreed with Borges’s pronouncement that Madrid “no nos entiende” (AB 115). Further dismissing Molinari’s and Scalabrini Ortiz’s commentary against Spain, the article concluded that, “descontando a Rojas Paz y Lisardo Zía,

57 Torres Bodet’s article was initially published in Excelsior and later reprinted in Costa Rica’s Repertorio Americano on December 3, 1927. I cite from the Repertorio Americano publication of the article because Excelsior microfilm proved difficult to read. I found this article thanks to Celina Manzoni’s reference “La polemica del meridiano intelectual”.

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los demás escritores han contestado … con más prisa que inteligencia, con más amor a Buenos Aires que justicia a España” (AB 115). Therefore, if Ulises claimed to be denouncing martinfierristas for their unjust attitude towards Spain, this conclusion also suggests that the journal more fundamentally resented their “amor a Buenos Aires.”

In “La geografía intelectual de América, Un meridiano de modestia,” Torres Bodet similarly critiqued Martín Fierro’s reaction to La Gaceta Literaria’s editorial. However, his discussion also responded to the editorial itself. Like many martinfierristas, the Mexican poet rejected hispanoamericanismo, but not because it implied that Latin Americans were part of a Hispanic culture. Rather, Torres Bodet considered the term a superficial political tool: “esta fe en la posibilidad de establecer una base política inmediata sobre los productos todavía indecisos de una tradición” (335). The term assumed that because all Latin American countries shared a common heritage, unity and solidarity were possible, but Torres Bodet considered this view idealistic. In order to achieve political solidarity with other Latin American nations, each country would first have to define its national identity. Only then could Latin American countries attempt to overcome their differences in order for hispanoamericanismo to be possible. However, Torres Bodet explained that Latin American countries had not been independent from Spain long enough to have already defined their independent identities, which made hispanoamericanismo a utopian political concept with no basis in reality.

Torres Bodet asserted that the polémica del meridiano intelectual further confirmed his skepticism regarding hispanoamericanismo and, agreeing with martinfierristas, condemned the underlying hegemonic intent in La Gaceta Literaria’s definition of the term. For Torres Bodet, the term’s political implications overshadowed the editorial’s claim that La Gaceta Literaria endorsed hispanoamericanismo as a means of bridging cultures. Having achieved independence
from Spain in 1820, Latin America would have no desire to “seguir siendo una colonia suya—por el espíritu—en 1927” (335). Moreover, Torres Bodet also argued that La Gaceta Literaria’s proposal that Madrid act as intellectual meridian for Spain and Latin America was counterintuitive for Spain as well. Stressing that Spain was geographically connected to Europe, not Latin America, Torres Bodet affirmed that its focus on Latin America undermined its position within Europe: “el interés excesivo que demuestra por ser la primera nación de América la pone en riesgo de no ambicionar un lugar semejante en Europa, y en estos años de trasguerra en que el espíritu europeo mismo está en peligro … volverse a América es, en cierto modo, desertar” (335-36).

While Torres Bodet agreed with the martinfierrista position that La Gaceta Literaria’s proposal implied hegemonic aspirations, he also strongly denounced the Argentines’ approach. Like Ulises, Torres Bodet repudiated their insolent tone, calling it “impetuosa” and “irreflexiva” (336). In addition, he shared the journal’s opinion that martinfierristas’ responses had less to do with the editorial than with an “extraviado orgullo,” which stemmed from a desire that the meridian traverse Buenos Aires (336). As a result, blinded by national pride, martinfierristas chose to “romper lanzas de ingratitude contra lo español de América” (336). Moreover, Torres Bodet made fun of martinfierristas’ argument regarding language and national identity, saying that their claim to speaking “argentino” and not “español” was laughable, “prueba dudosa de humorismo” (336). And, again echoing Ulises, Torres Bodet maintained that he was primarily dismayed by martinfierristas’ “desdén absurdo del espíritu mismo de España” (336).

According to Torres Bodet, had martinfierristas wanted to truly defend “el presente intelectual de América,” their discussion would not have been limited to Argentina, and would have considered prominent figures from multiple Latin American countries (336). Instead,
Martin Fierro’s defense of a “patria intelectual” only cited Argentine culture: “la melancolía undosa de los tangos … el pintoresco vestido de los gauchos” and “la amargura rural del mate” (336). Thus, for Torres Bodet, Martin Fierro’s simplistic use of Argentine cultural referents as an argument in favor of Latin American cultural independence exemplified why hispanoamericanismo was a useless concept: “Para los que—por excesivo y cierto amor a América—desconfiamos del hispanoamericanismo que sólo cristaliza en los discursos oficiales y brilla en las condecoraciones de los diplomáticos, esta manera de no defender de América sino lo propio, este silencio de lo que no es exclusivamente NACIONAL, aclaran muchas dudas” (336). Torres Bodet also pointed out that, throughout the debate, martinfierristas did not identify as hispanoamericanos: “Hispanoamérica parece ser, para estos lectores de las últimas NOVEDADES de París, algo tan distante como Pekín o Beluchistán. Les interesa acaso, como público,” further proof for the Mexican writer that hispanoamericanismo is a vacuous notion (336). Moreover, Torres Bodet concluded that, in the event that an intellectual meridian were necessary, in light of Martin Fierro’s behavior, Latin America would be better served by Madrid: “aceptaríamos de mejor grado el meridiano de Madrid, símbolo de una mentalidad organizada—con la que la nuestra tiene las mejores coincidencias—al del sólo Buenos Aires, acaso de espléndido porvenir, pero de realización menos efectiva hasta ahora” (336).

The Contemporáneos’s perspective in the Polémica del meridiano intelectual was also connected to national aesthetic debates in post revolutionary Mexico, such as one focused on the purported “afeminamiento de la literatura,” which took place from December 1924 until August 1925. As Víctor Díaz Arciniega points out in Querella por la cultura “revolucionaria” (1925), the dispute centered on Mariano Azuela’s novel Los de abajo as a model for a virile Mexican revolutionary literature, which contrasted with cosmopolitan aesthetic practices championed by
groups such as the *Contemporáneos*. While, as I will demonstrate in chapter 4, *Contemporáneos* such as Jaime Torres Bodet did argue in favor of a Mexican aesthetic that was also cosmopolitan, the group was chastised for not emphasizing themes directly related to the Mexican revolution and their style was deemed effeminate. In addition, *Contemporáneos*’ defense of Mexican culture’s Hispanic heritage also opposed national movements, such as muralism, that underscored the country’s indigenous heritage and considered “lo hispánico como elemento colonial y, por tanto, no mexicano” (García Gutiérrez 294). Thus, *Contemporáneos*’ understanding of an aesthetic that was at once Mexican and cosmopolitan stood against two dominant discourses in post revolutionary Mexico: 1) a virile and masculine literature that promoted revolutionary ideals and 2) indigenous heritage. As a result, having clearly defined their aesthetic vision amidst strong antagonism, *Contemporáneos* disapproved of what they considered to be *martinfierristas*’ superficial vanguard expression (García Gutiérrez 297).

The *Contemporáneos*’ position regarding Hispanic heritage in Mexican culture also indicates why they would object to *martinfierristas*’ indictment of everything Spanish. If in Mexico, this particular group endorsed Hispanic heritage in opposition to the spurious promotion of autochthonous indigenous culture, they also felt that a cultural connection to Spain entitled

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58 The *Contemporáneos*’ views on superficial promotions of indigenous heritage in Mexico also informed *Ulises*’ response to Idelfonso Pereda Valdés’s comment in “Madrid, meridiano etc” where he maintained that: “Estamos construyendo nuestro arte propio: Azteca, inkaiko o criollo puro, y nos violentan los gestos protectores de los que pretenden llamarse tutores nuestros” (AB 70). In context, Pereda Valdés meant to contest *La Gaceta Literaria*’s assumption that Latin American cultures were homogeneous and also similar to Spanish culture. However, *Ulises* insisted that Mexicans no longer created Aztec art: “Eso está hecho ya, y muy bien hecho hace muchos años, y cualquier Historia del Arte que caiga, por descuido, a manos de Pereda Valdés, puede ilustrarlo” (AB 115).
them to participation in an international aesthetic dialogue.\(^{59}\) Moreover, *Contemporáneos* maintained that Latin American literary production was equal to, but also distinct from, Spanish literature: “España, la literatura española, ya no es una imposición que desvirtúa la identidad colonizada, y México—cualquier país de Hispanoamérica—ya no realiza una literatura inferior, subordinada a Occidente y réplica de ella, sino paralela” (García Gutiérrez 299-300). From a practical perspective, the group saw a relationship with Spain as a means by which they could participate in the international literary market. Guillermo de Torre, along with *La Gaceta Literaria*, could help them attain this goal: “los Contemporáneos … intentaban en 1927 promocionarse en Europa vía España y veían en Guillermo de Torre un instrumento humano y en la *Gaceta literaria* un instrumento editorial y propagandístico para llevarlo a cabo” (García Gutiérrez 296).\(^{60}\) Therefore, Ulises’ and Torres Bodet’s defense of Spain was not only ideological; maintaining a good relationship with Spanish intellectuals would allow *Contemporáneos* to publish their books in Spain, a first step towards putting Mexican literature on the world map.

*Ulises* and Torres Bodet’s interventions in the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*, however, demonstrate that tensions between *martinfierristas* and *Contemporáneos* were also due to rivalry, as both groups were positioning their countries for meridian status. Both articles exhibit the *Contemporáneos’* resentment over *martinfierristas’* excessive “amor” for Buenos Aires.

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\(^{59}\) García Gutiérrez specifies that *Contemporáneos’* understanding of “lo hispánico” (Hispanic heritage) was based on an opposition to “la cerrazón nacionalista, al indigenismo, o al popularismo convertidos artificiosamente en esencia de lo mexicano” within their national context (300).

\(^{60}\) In 1928, *La Gaceta Literaria* published *Guía de los poetas nuevos de México*, an anthology of *Contemporáneos’* poetry, which included works by Villaurrutia, Novo, and Torres Bodet. An image of the book’s cover is available at: http://issuu.com/cnl-inba/docs/82_11_08_pdf_completo_opr?e=2787637/3154369

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Aires. For instance, Torres Bodet’s argument that *martinfierristas*’ behavior was proof that *hispanoamericanismo* was meaningless attempted to discredit the competition’s candidacy for meridian status. He implied that, more interested in their tangos and pampa, Argentines were too disconnected from Latin America to merit the role. Therefore, when Torres Bodet suggested that a meridian in Madrid would be preferable to one in Buenos Aires, he was trying to level the playing field in Latin America. From a Mexican standpoint, a meridian in Buenos Aires would be far more threatening than one in Madrid.

**Madrid: An Economic Meridian**

Criticism on the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* has, understandably, focused on the intriguing rhetorical debates that stemmed from de Torre’s provocative editorial. Few scholars have emphasized the more practical issue of transatlantic book distribution, which I consider the primary motivation behind *La Gaceta Literaria*’s and de Torre’s controversial proposal. As I noted earlier, de Torre addressed this topic in his editorial’s conclusion. If the Spanish poet and critic centered his discussion on an abstract ideal of *hispanoamericanismo* and professed a new fraternal relationship between Spain and Latin America, I believe he was more interested in creating a system for transatlantic book distribution in which Spain had control of the Latin American book market:

¿de qué ha servido tamaño estruendo verbalista, cuál ha sido, en el orden práctico, su utilidad inmediata, si nuestra exportación de libros y revistas a América es muy escasa, en

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61 Connecting the *Polémica del meridiano intelectual* with the 1923 debate between Andrenio and Schiaffino, Falcón illustrates that the 1927 conflict was also related Spain’s desire to have control over the Latin American literary market. Her study focuses on antecedents to the 1927 debate; I expand upon her analysis here by examining a series of articles published between 1927 and 1928 that corroborate her theory. Juan E. De Castro also connects Spain’s economic interests in Latin America with the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*. 
Participants in the main debate between *La Gaceta Literaria* and *Martín Fierro* suggested that Spanish hegemonic aspirations over Latin America were indeed economic. Along with *martinfierristas* Santiago Ganduglia, Eduardo González Lanuza, and Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz, Spanish writer Miguel de Unamuno—writing in *Martín Fierro*—affirmed that the proposal that Madrid act as intellectual meridian was linked to Spain’s economic interests in Latin America.

For instance, in “Buenos Aires Metrópoli,” included in *Martín Fierro*’s initial reply to *La Gaceta Literaria*’s editorial (July 10, 1927), Santiago Ganduglia suggested that Spain’s “naciente interés por los países de este lado del Atlántico no proviene … de un arranque de simpatía intelectual, que … hubiera sido explicable dada la importancia de nuestro actual movimiento literario y artístico, sino por las posibilidades que esos países ofrecen como mercados para el libro español” (AB 72). Sharing this perspective, in “Liquidando un meridiano,” part of *Martín Fierro*’s second series of responses to the debate (August 31- November 15, 1927), Eduardo González Lanuza noted that “detrás de *La Gaceta Literaria* de Madrid, hai [sic] una empresa financiera editora, que es la que indiscutiblemente ha prohijado [sic] la idea del meridiano madrileño, con el objeto de ejercer un predominio decisivo en el mercado del libro en Buenos Aires” (AB 125). Even the Spanish writer Miguel de Unamuno, in the article “Opinión autorizada” (part of *Martín Fierro*’s second intervention in the polemic asserted that “Todo parte de una confusión y es que el que estampó lo de ‘Madrid meridiano intelectual’ quiso decir meridiano ‘editorial’ y que no se
trataba de nada de arte sino de economía” (AB 128). In addition, Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz supported this comment in “Despedida de un meridiano” where he also stated categorically that “se trata de un meridiano económico” (AB 125).

In this section I will discuss contributions to the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* that engage the topic of transatlantic book distribution and have received little attention from scholarship on the debate. For instance, the Buenos Aires journal *Síntesis*, founded by Galician emigrant Xavier Bóveda, published a series of articles between July and November 1927 that addressed the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* and proposed that transatlantic book distribution was at the heart of the controversy. In addition, *La Gaceta Literaria* itself published a brief editorial on September 1, 1927 affirming that the main issue driving the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* was book distribution. In addition, as the polemic began to unwind in 1928, *La Gaceta Literaria* sponsored an “Exposición del libro argentino-uruguayo en Madrid.” This event, which I take to be a direct consequence of the *polémica*, was also part of the Spanish journal’s broader initiative to connect peripheral Peninsular and Latin American cultures in order to produce (the image of) an Iberian cultural union; it included an “Exposición del libro catalán,” and an “Exposición del libro portugués.” The timely occurrence of the “Exposición del libro argentino-uruguayo en Madrid,” in the direct wake of the *polémica*, suggests that one of *La Gaceta Literaria*’s goals in publishing such a provocative editorial was to establish a network for transatlantic book distribution between Spain and Latin America, and a series of articles penned by de Torre in the Spanish journal further support this theory.

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62 In *Ernesto Giménez Caballero y La Gaceta Literaria*, Lucy Tandy explains that these book fairs sponsored by *La Gaceta Literaria* were part of Giménez Caballero’s vision, which stemmed from “el deseo de una amistad y un mutuo entendimiento y cooperación hacia un fin: La unidad ibérica” (41).
In *Síntesis*, July 1927, Xavier Bóveda published the brief article “Hispanoamericanismo retórico e Hispanoamericanismo práctico.”63 Bóveda explains that he derived the article’s title from “labios de algunos próceres de la política y de la alta banca” (116). If there had been one rhetorical *hispanoamericanismo* in the past, now that Spain had lent Argentina a considerable sum of money, the banking industry had begun to speak of a practical *hispanoamericanismo*. However, Bóveda disputes both descriptions of *hispanoamericanismo*, insisting that there was only one “idea hispanoamericana” (117). Recalling de Torre’s dismissal of “[b]anquetes y cachupinadas” in his editorial, Bóveda explained that superficial expressions of cultural reciprocity between Spain and Latin America were not *hispanoamericanismo*. For Bóveda, *hispanoamericanismo* was a racial ideology bound by language and tradition that brings an entire continent together (117).

Directly after/below Bóveda’s article, *Síntesis* published “La prodigiosa y díscola ciudad del idioma común” by Argentine poet Arturo Capdevila, which had previously appeared in Buenos Aires’ *La Prensa* in May 1927. In a brief introduction to Capdevila’s article, Bóveda explained that *Síntesis* deemed the points the poet made to be particularly relevant at a time when “se habla de señalar a Madrid como meridiano intelectual de América” (118). Capdevila discussed the unequal reciprocity in book distribution between Spain and Argentina, which de Torre had also alluded to in his editorial. He noted that Argentine publications were highly esteemed in France, England, Germany, and every other European country except for Spain. Although some Spanish intellectuals, such as poet Rafael Cansinos, paid attention to Argentine writers, “hay cien que moran en lo inaccessible de la indiferencia, del desprecio y del orgullo”

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63 From this point on I discuss articles that pertain to the *Polémica del meridiano intelectual*, but that have not been included in any of the published anthologies of the polemic; I have compiled these articles from my archival research.
In addition, on a visit to a library in Madrid, he observed that a book by an important Argentine author was conspicuously untouched. Therefore, Capdevila maintained that sending books to Spain was pointless because Spaniards were uninterested in Argentina’s literary production.

To further support his point, Capdevila cited the 1923 debate between Argentine Eduardo Schiaffino and Spanish journalist Andrenio (Eduardo Gómez de Barquero). While Andrenio claimed Latin Americans were at fault, Schiaffino argued that Spanish booksellers rarely carried Latin American books because they feared that it would hinder their sales of national literature. Thus Capdevila noted that little had changed since the 1923 altercation and concluded by citing Schiaffino who had written that “Se desconoce en España el verdadero espíritu argentino … en modo alguno existe algo que ni de cerca ni de lejos se parezca a una verdadera reciprocidad intelectual” (118). Síntesis’ decision, then, to publish Capdevila’s commentary on uneven book distribution between Spain and Latin America as its first contribution to the polémica del meridiano intelectual underscores this topic’s importance in the debate. Moreover, despite Bóveda’s argument against “hispanoamericanismo retórico e hispanoamericanismo práctico,” by placing this discussion as a preface to Capdevila’s article, Síntesis seemed to suggest that the issue of transatlantic book distribution was a “practical” ramification of a “rhetorical” debate.

Soon after publishing “Hispanoamericanismo retórico e Hispanoamericanismo práctico,” Bóveda traveled to Madrid to procure Spanish contributions and to promote the Argentine journal. Reporting on his visit, La Gaceta Literaria also responded to his remarks on hispanoamericanismo on August 1, 1927. First, the Spanish journal affirmed that Bóveda’s visit acknowledged that Spain and Latin America were developing a new relationship, “un nuevo estado de espíritu en las auténticas relaciones espirituales en América y España” (91). Thus, La
*Gaceta Literaria* postulated that a visit from “un director de una gran revista argentina … para obtener aportaciones de escritores españoles” proved the point that de Torre had tried to make in “Madrid, Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica” in April 1927 (91). An “hispanoamericanismo intelectual auténtico” was emerging and replacing “la débil tendencia latinoamericanista—con todas sus falsas captaciones y asimilaciones francesas” (91). Moreover, according to *La Gaceta Literaria*, this nascent *hispanoamericanismo* was not purely rhetorical; it was practical, “en el mejor sentido de esta última expresión” (91).

Further upholding *La Gaceta Literaria*’s position on practical *hispanoamericanismo*, on September 1, 1927, placed at the top and in the center of the first page of the same issue that published “Campeonato para un meridiano intelectual,” the Spanish journal published an anonymous article entitled “El verdadero meridiano de Hispanoamérica: La traducción.” 64 Mocking both sides of the polemic, the article maintained that neither Spanish nor Argentine intellectuals addressed the core issue at stake: transatlantic book distribution. The article’s location suggests that 1) *La Gaceta Literaria* wanted to feature the polemic to attract readership and 2) the article was meant to headline Spanish intellectuals’ responses to *Martín Fierro*. Referencing the soccer metaphor, this article deemed the ensuing debate a “torneo de mutuas vanidades” and proposed that both teams refocus their attention on “las librerías de Madrid y de Buenos Aires” (99). According to the article, close inspection of book distribution revealed deficiencies on both sides of the Atlantic. First, Latin American books were hard to find in Spanish bookstores: “No hay un escaparate español de librería donde el libro americano luche con los demás. Se diría que no existe” (99). The article explained that Argentine booksellers lacked the necessary financial means to export their merchandise and compete in an international

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64 Surprisingly, neither Croce nor Alemany Bay includes this article in their compilations.
market. However, \textit{La Gaceta Literaria} also blamed Argentines for their weak attempts to enter the Spanish literary market. Moreover, the article imputed Spain’s lack of initiative in establishing reciprocal book distribution with Latin America. In addition, \textit{La Gaceta Literaria} noted that a larger problem within Spain was that national books were not promoted. Instead of publicizing Spanish books, publishing houses in Spain more often featured German, French, and Anglophone literature, often in translation. Therefore, rather than endorse the national product, bookstores in Spain more prominently featured foreign books. In addition, publishing houses in Spain also distributed these foreign texts to Latin America, which undermined Spanish cultural influence across the Atlantic. In broad strokes, then, the article argued that the Spanish book industry was promulgating other cultures instead of their own both at home and abroad. \textit{La Gaceta Literaria} thus affirmed that Spain had no right to call for an intellectual meridian in Madrid: “Por tanto, queridos españoles: ¿por qué chillar tanto sobre el Meridiano de Madrid? El auténtico y triste Meridiano actual de Hispanoamérica es el servil de la traducción (99).

Two months later, in November 1927, \textit{Síntesis} further asserted its position that the \textit{polémica del meridiano intelectual} hinged on transatlantic book distribution in “Las disputas literarias.” According to \textit{Síntesis}, the altercation was due to Spain’s and Latin America’s lack of knowledge of each other, a problem that could be resolved with a “política literaria” (387) based on “el mayor conocimiento de la producción artística” (388). Since books were “el único elemento de comunicación espiritual,” \textit{Síntesis} maintained that the conflict over an intellectual meridian came down to “una cuestión de librería,” transatlantic book distribution (388). The article explained that while Italian, French, and Spanish books had already entered the Argentine market; Argentine books were not well distributed internationally. Thus, Argentina needed to remedy this handicap and consider organizing “una sociedad argentina que tomará a su cargo la
difusión de nuestro libro en otros países” (388). Moreover, Síntesis proposed that Argentina take advantage of Spain’s and Italy’s offers to foster book distribution because they had shown “buena voluntad comentando y anunciando el mayor número posible de obras argentinas” (388). A sign of that “buena voluntad” was the initial Gaceta Literaria editorial itself, which had only suggested that the Spanish capital function as a “centro y foco de atracción de toda la producción literaria,” a temporary role, “hasta que otra ciudad demuestre estar mejor dotada para el comercio del libro hispanoamericano” (388). Thus Síntesis urged Argentines to set rhetorical debates charged with useless diatribes and name-calling aside and instead focus on the practical side of the polemic, which could lead to significant economic gain and international exposure.

La Gaceta Literaria’s “Exposición del libro argentino-uruguayo en Madrid”

In 1928 La Gaceta Literaria and Guillermo de Torre put the controversial editorial’s rhetoric into practice when they organized the “Exposición del libro argentino-uruguayo en Madrid”. While the event itself confirmed that “Madrid, Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica” referred to a meridian for transatlantic book distribution, de Torre also published a series of articles surrounding that further sustain this interpretation. For instance, in May 1928 he published “Ante la próxima exposición del libro argentino en Madrid” in Síntesis. Addressing the polémica del meridiano intelectual, de Torre opened his article proclaiming victory. According to de Torre, the upcoming “Exposición del libro argentino en Madrid” was an important step towards resolving the debate’s central conflict: “Al fin y a la postre, tantas discusiones enfebrecidas en torno a la supuesta hegemonía intelectual hispánica; tantas quejas y reticencias, entreveradas no obstante de gestos cordiales; [sic] surgidas desde este lado del Atlántico; [sic] tal cúmulo de proyectos e intentonas encaminadas a ampliar el area difusora del
libro argentino, van a alcanzar una meta triunfal” (123). De Torre asserted that, despite their animosity, the heated disputes over intellectual hegemony masked a desire for transatlantic collaboration, which literary exchange between Spain and Argentina could fulfill. If, in the controversial editorial, de Torre had called for a “nuevo espíritu amistoso entre dos mundos fraternos,” in this article he maintained that, as Argentine literary production was flourishing, ready to venture into the international market, Spain would offer its “orilla fraterna” (124). Therefore, as if attempting to dissipate any residual enmity from the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*, de Torre insisted that the “Exposición del libro argentino en Madrid” evidenced “la curiosidad bien intencionada que existe hoy día en la capital hispánica con relación a la cultura y a las letras de nacionalidades afines” (124). Moreover, sponsored by *La Gaceta Literaria*, this event proved that the journal was acting upon its intent to foster a stronger, more productive relationship between Spain and Latin America.

On August 1, 1928, de Torre published “Ante la exposición del libro argentino y uruguayo en Madrid” in *La Gaceta Literaria*, in which he offered his most articulate response to the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*. He affirmed that the debate’s core issue was transatlantic book distribution: “todo este pleito inevitable y salutífero entraña más bien un problema editorial y librero que una cuestión literaria” (243). Referring specifically to Spain and Argentina, he maintained that when Argentine publishers were able to work together and break into the Spanish literary market, transatlantic intellectual understanding would be possible. Therefore, in order to understand why such “conocimiento intelectual hispanoamericano” had yet to be attained, de Torre responded to key points of contention in the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* (243). He was primarily concerned with *martinfierristas’* accusations that Spanish

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65 Alejandrina Falcón also points to this article as evidence that the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* hinged on transatlantic book distribution.
intellectuals did not understand Latin America. Even if their claims were true, de Torre argued that Spain was not entirely liable; Latin Americans had a responsibility to make their literature and their cultures known to Spain.

De Torre then revised his rhetorical argument in favor of an intellectual meridian in Madrid arguing that his proposal was practical. First, he claimed that Spanish intellectuals had a broader understanding of Latin America as a whole than most Latin Americans had of each other: “España no conocerá con presición detallista las obras y valores de cada país, pero sí posee una vision continental más amplia que la que suelen tener las nacionalidades americanas de cada una de sus vecinas en el espacio” (243). Transatlantic travel was easier than traveling within Latin America. Therefore, Spanish intellectuals had come into contact with Latin Americans from different nationalities that more often ventured across the Atlantic than visited other Latin American countries. As a result, Spaniards, paradoxically, had a more continental vision of Latin America than most Latin Americans. Therefore, given its geographical advantages, de Torre proposed that Latin Americans from different countries use Spain as a meeting point, where they could get to know each other since “transcurrirá mucho tiempo todavía antes de que el conocimiento interamericano puede efectuarse directamente” (243). As a result, Spain’s geographical location could also facilitate transatlantic book distribution: “contrariando un axioma geométrico, la línea quebrada resultará más corta que la línea recta para trazar una red de la expansión librera hispano o interamericana” (243). While, as he had previously mentioned in Síntesis, Argentine publishers were ready to introduce their products into the international market, Buenos Aires was not a “centro editorial capaz de irradiar por su cuenta” (243). Madrid, however, could easily provide “un punto común de partida” for “esa mercancía intelectual” (243). Yet, de Torre insisted that his suggestion had no hegemonic
implications: “Aclaremos de una vez para siempre—a fin de precavernos contra toda maligna suspicacia—que el hecho de fijar en España el centro expansivo de la producción bibliográfica Americana, no implica sometimiento a hegemonía de ninguna clase” (243). He was merely offering a reasonable recommendation, “una medida de interés cultural y de eficacia económica, dadas las mejores condiciones en que España se encuentra para esa labor difusora” (243). The “Exposición del libro argentino y uruguayo en Madrid” promised to be a crucial first step in this process. Finally, perhaps responding to Capdevila’s complaint that Argentine books were untouched in Spanish libraries, de Torre noted that if the Spanish capital were to be the hub for Latin American book distribution, he envisioned a day “en que Madrid verá desembocar en las salas de la Biblioteca Nacional un sorprendente reguero de libros argentinos” (243).

In order to promote La Gaceta Literaria’s 1928 “Exposición del libro argentino-uruguayo en Madrid,” de Torre also published multiple articles where he interviewed Argentine publishers seeking their opinion on transatlantic book distribution. For instance, on August 15, 1928, Samuel Glusberg told de Torre that, economically, entering the Spanish book market, was not lucrative for his Editorial Babel. Yet, de Torre recounted that “sin pestañear,” Glusberg maintained that his interest in selling his books in Spain stemmed from “razones de conquista espiritual,” insinuating that the battle over “meridian status” was far from over (249). While unresolved, the polémica del meridiano intelectual did increase communication between Spain and Latin America and, in doing so, strengthened and helped further develop a post colonial intellectual relationship in the 1920s. Moreover, this polemic was part of a larger effort to

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66 La Gaceta Literaria also published interviews with Manuel Gleizer, Pedro García, and Juan Roldán through January 1929.
increase transatlantic book distribution, which Spanish booksellers did achieve during the 1920s.\footnote{For detailed statistical information on transatlantic book distribution between Spain and Latin America during the 1920s see María Fernández Moya “Editoriales españolas en América Latina. Un proceso de internacionalización secular”. She points out that Mexico, Argentina, and Cuba were “los principales destinos de exportación del libro español” (68). In addition, Pura Fernández describes how Spanish book publishers had taken an interest in Latin America since the late nineteenth century in “Redes trasatlánticas: el espacio editorial en castellano en el campo cultural contemporáneo”.
}
Chapter 4

From Journal Debate to Novelistic Form: The Case of *Margarita de niebla*

Desde el río Grande hasta el Estrecho de Magallanes, es muy difícil que un artista joven piense seriamente en hacer arte puro o arte deshumanizado. (Alejo Carpentier *Diario de la Marina*, September 12, 1927)

On October 1, 1927, as the *Polémica del meridiano intelectual* was unfolding, the Spanish literary critic Esteban Salazar y Chapela wrote a condescending review of Mexican author Jaime Torres Bodet’s novel *Margarita de niebla* (1927) for Madrid’s daily newspaper *El Sol* (1917-39). In a bout of nationalist pride and, perhaps, intellectual colonialism, Salazar y Chapela cast the young novelist as a disciple of the Spanish writer Benjamín Jarnés, affirming that *Margarita de niebla* was an imitation of Jarnés’s *El profesor inútil* (1926). This interpretation spawned an acrimonious debate across the Atlantic when the Mexican literary journal *Ulises* (1927-28) published “*Margarita de niebla* y Benjamín Jarnés” in November 1927, a wry response to Salazar y Chapela’s claim. Repudiating the Spaniard’s presumptuous opinion, the Mexican journal insisted that Jarnés did not influence Torres Bodet: “¿Jaime Torres Bodet, discípulo de Jarnés? Ni siquiera en último extremo. Benjamín Jarnés, escritor joven de innegable mérito … no es aún, dichosamente para él, maestro de nadie, ni de sí mismo” (208). In Spain, for instance, Pedro Salinas and Antonio Espina, like Benjamín Jarnés, had adopted techniques—fragmented narrative, emphasis on stylization, loose plot—that echoed those of Marcel Proust, Jean Giraudoux, and James Joyce. Instead, *Ulises* attributed their novels’ similarities to an “epochal” shift that affected modern Europe and Latin America equally: “El tono de esta manera de prosa lo pide y lo da una porción de la época” (208). Furthermore, *Ulises* cited the results of “La pesca y la flecha,” a guessing game in which readers were asked to identify the authors of a series of prose fragments from Spanish and Mexican vanguard novels, published in its second
issue (June 1927). Responders were unable to differentiate between Mexican and Spanish novelists, which, according to Ulises, illustrated “la semejanza en el estilo de los nuevos escritores de una prosa castellana” (209). Therefore, these transatlantic stylistic similarities proved that “el género literario y el género próximo los señala la época” (209).

As I noted in chapter 3, Ulises's intervention in the Polémica del meridiano intelectual, published one month before this response to Salazar y Chapela, denounced Argentine martinfierristas’ reactions to Spanish poet and critic Guillermo de Torre’s April 15, 1927 proposal in La Gaceta Literaria—that Madrid act as intellectual meridian between Spain and Latin America—were unjustified. Deeming La Gaceta Literaria’s proposal an “inocente utopía,” Ulises refuted the martinfierristas’ contention that La Gaceta’s proposal implied Spanish hegemonic aspirations. Rather, the Mexican periodical attributed the Argentine journal's indignation to “más amor a Buenos Aires que justicia a España” (173). However, Ulises's position vis-à-vis Spain was less conciliatory in its reply Salazar y Chapela. While Ulises maintained that Spanish and Mexican novelists, as “escritores de prosa castellana,” were revolutionizing prose in a similar manner because they shared a disdain for “una prosa muerta,” the journal also defended a Mexican literary tradition against Salazar y Chapela’s accusation: “Entre nosotros y como una imperiosa necesidad, se ha cultivado esa prosa nueva” (209). Underscoring a “nosotros” (us), Ulises maintained that although Mexican writers were part of a cosmopolitan “World Republic of Letters,” they were also devising a Mexican aesthetic. Thus, the controversy over aesthetic hegemony extended into the realm of national identities Mexican
and Spanish, “us” versus “you.” *Ulises* argued that Mexico had its own tradition and did not need to imitate Spanish writers.⁶８

Throughout his analysis of the Hispanic vanguard novel, *Idle Fictions: The Hispanic Vanguard Novel, 1926-1934*, Gustavo Pérez Firmat draws on many articles and reviews published in Spanish and Latin American journals, magazines, and newspapers in order to construct his definition of the genre. Arguing that the vanguard aesthetic style emerged almost simultaneously in Spain and Latin America, his study underscores the importance of transatlantic exchanges in the development of the Hispanic vanguard novel.⁶⁹ Pérez Firmat states that *Ulises*’s reply to Salazar y Chapela “is noteworthy because of the way it situates generic questions. By insisting on their impersonality and their epochal dimension, it fixes with precision the mode of existence of generic concepts” (17). He further explains that, despite *Ulises*’s contentious tone, the review affirms the existence of “a new kind of fiction, cultivated in Spain and Spanish America” (18). However, I believe (and as I argue in chapters one, two, and three) that the nationalist tensions in this altercation also speak to Latin America’s struggle to establish its cultural independence from Spain during the 1920s. *Ulises*’s position illustrates that Mexican writers considered themselves equal to their Spanish counterparts as participants in an international aesthetic dialogue. At the same time, they felt that they were developing a distinctly Mexican aesthetic. Thus the apparent contradiction between *Ulises*’s insistence on the

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⁶８The allusion to Gilberto Owen’s experimentation with the novel could refer to *La llama fría* published in 1925.

⁶⁹Pérez Firmat’s study is particularly significant for understanding the Hispanic Vanguard Novel as a transatlantic genre. However, he primarily discusses Peninsular novels. In addition, he credits *Revista de Occidente*’s Nova Novorum series, beginning with Pedro Salinas *La vispera del gozo* in 1926, with initiating the genre. However, in Latin America, Macedonio Fernández in Argentina and Arqueles Vela in Mexico, experimented with this genre as early as 1923 when Vela first published *La Srta. Etc.* in Mexico’s *El Universal Ilustrado*. 
similarities between Mexican and Spanish vanguard prose, and its simultaneous affirmation of a separate Mexican tradition, actually defines a clear aesthetic: one that is cosmopolitan and also distinctly Mexican. As a result, I propose that, while Mexican novelists did contribute to the development of a transatlantic genre, their interpretation of this aesthetic form was uniquely Mexican.

In the first three chapters I discussed a series of debates between Spanish and Latin American intellectuals that illustrate how Spain and Latin America struggled to define their postcolonial relationship during the 1920s. In this chapter, I will explore these conflicts’ impact on aesthetics. I will especially concentrate on debates concerning Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset’s ideas in *La deshumanización del arte* (1925) and *Ideas sobre la novela* (1925), which informed the development of Hispanic Vanguard prose. The first sections in this chapter detail Mexican and Argentine responses to Ortega’s aesthetic ideas in these texts. Contrasting Argentina’s “Nueva Generación,” who in the early twenties enthusiastically adopted Ortega’s philosophies (see chapter 1), Mexican and Argentine intellectuals were resistant to his aesthetic theories in *La deshumanización del arte* and *Ideas sobre la novela*. If, during the early twenties, Ortega’s ideas on generations from *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (1923) coincided with young Mexican and Argentine intellectuals’ desire break with past traditions in order to create new aesthetic styles and reform society, by the latter half of the decade, they found that his theories did not apply to a Latin American reality. This chapter’s final section focuses on Torres Bodet’s *Margarita de niebla*, which incorporates metafictional references to the author’s debate with Jarnés over Ortega’s *La deshumanización del arte*. Far from imitating Jarnés, as Salazar y Chapela contended, Torres Bodet’s novel exemplifies the cosmopolitan, yet distinctly Mexican aesthetic to which *Ulises* alluded in its response to the Spanish literary critic. As such, I also
suggest that *Margarita de niebla* responds to Jarnés’s novel *El profesor inútil* by proposing a Mexican version of this aesthetic style.

**José Ortega y Gasset: *The Dehumanization of Art and Notes on the Novel***

As I discussed in chapter 1, Ortega y Gasset’s ideas on culture, society, and art significantly influenced Mexican and Argentine intellectuals during the 1920s. He gained popularity with texts such as *España invertebrada* (1921), *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (1923), *La deshumanización del arte, Ideas sobre la novela*, and his journal *Revista de Occidente* (Madrid 1923-36). Before they were published as books, Ortega y Gasset’s essays appeared in Madrid’s *El Sol*, which also circulated in Latin America. Furthermore, the Spanish philosopher’s many contributions to *La Nación* (Buenos Aires 1870-present) and *El Universal* (México 1916-present) helped disseminate his philosophies across the Atlantic. As a result, Ortega’s ideas were widely discussed and debated in Mexican and Argentine journals. In particular, his ideas concerning a new sensibility in the early twentieth century and relationships between present and past generations reverberated among Mexico’s and Argentina’s young intellectuals. In post-revolutionary Mexico, the younger generation struggled to define its role in the process of reconstructing a Mexican identity, *mexicanidad*. Meanwhile, in Argentina, the 1918 student revolt in Córdoba instigated a broader *Reforma Universitaria* that spread throughout Latin America. However, events such as the “Semana Trágica,” when President Yrigoyen suppressed a workers strike in Buenos Aires with military force, curtailed social progress. In chapter 1 I focused the ways in which Ortega’s ideas on generations from *El tema de nuestro tiempo*.

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70 Noted by Patricia Artundo in “La flecha en el blanco: José Ortega y Gasset y la deshumanización del arte.” *The Dehumanization of Art* was published in *El Sol* from January 1, 1924 to February 1, 1924 and *Notes on the Novel* appeared in *El Sol* from December 10, 1924 to January 1, 1925.
instigated a series of exchanges between the philosopher and Argentina’s young generation of intellectuals. Here I consider Argentine and Mexican reactions to Ortega’s aesthetic theories in *The Dehumanization of Art* and *Notes on the Novel*.

**The Dehumanization of Art**

In *The Dehumanization of Art* Ortega summarized new aesthetic practices that emerged in Europe during the early twentieth century. He employed the term dehumanization to describe a shift in artists’ focus from the object depicted in a work of art to the means of artistic representation. Ortega illustrated this phenomenon with his now classic “windowpane/garden” metaphor. If one looks through a windowpane to see a garden, one does not pay attention to the windowpane. Conversely, if focus is shifted away from the garden onto the windowpane, one loses sight of the garden. This metaphor articulated the ways in which new art emphasized style, technique, and medium—the windowpane—rather than the reality—the garden—depicted. Visual art that attempted to replicate reality, Ortega argued, elicited empathy because observers were able to recognize, and therefore directly relate to, what they perceived; resulting in what he termed “human” art. He also proposed that in focusing on style and technique, new aesthetic practices employed metaphor to transform reality: “to paint a man that resembles a man as little as possible; a house that preserves of a house exactly what is needed to reveal the metamorphosis” (22-23). Such representations forced the viewer to decipher and interpret the text or painting, which impeded an empathetic connection with the work. Therefore, according to Ortega, instead of eliciting emotion, modern art challenged the observer to think critically about both the artwork and its modes of reception. As a result, this type of art was dehumanized, less
human than art that evoked empathy, because the viewer needed to form ideas rather than react emotionally.

As Vicky Unruh points out in *Latin American Vanguards: The Art of Contentious Encounters*, despite Ortega’s popularity, his concept of dehumanization proved controversial in Latin America. Unruh notes that Latin American vanguard movements employed “artistic strategies that Ortega characterized as ‘dehumanized’,” however, a key component of Latin American vanguardism was “an active reengagement between art and experience,” a “rehumanization of art” (21). Unruh explains that negative reactions to the idea of dehumanization were often due to “an adverse reaction” to the term (23). Furthermore, Latin American vanguard movements also contended that “[a]rt, … even in its most modern forms, had everything to do with experience, and the words *human* and *humanized* became veritable buzzwords in Latin American vanguardist discourse” (23). Unruh cites two direct responses to Ortega’s essay that disputed the notion/practice of artistic dehumanization—Jaime Torres Bodet’s “La deshumanización del arte” and Peruvian essayist José Carlos Mariátegui’s “Arte, revolución y decadencia.” According to Unruh, Mariátegui called attention to the misunderstandings that Ortega’s essay perpetuated about modern art: “The concept of dehumanization, Mariátegui argued, responded primarily to modern art’s detached spirit (decadent, he called it) but failed to recognize its simultaneously engaging and even revolutionary qualities” (25). Meanwhile, Unruh explains that Torres Bodet contested Ortega’s notion that creating art required a “triumph over the human” (25). The Mexican poet and novelist claimed that “[a]rt … should always make contact in some way with the ‘disorderly humanity’ that Ortega believed modernity had exiled from the work of art” (25). As a result, Unruh maintains that, although they were aware of European artistic currents, “Latin American writers
often sought to reshape and redefine, with various purposes in mind, what Ortega had identified as the dehumanized quality of modern art,” creating a Latin American aesthetic (26).

Consistent with Unruh’s account, aesthetic practices in Argentina corresponded with the stylistic tendencies Ortega delineated in The Dehumanization of Art. Yet, intellectuals often disputed the Spanish philosopher’s understanding of the new art forms. Patricia Artundo traces the “Nueva Generación’s” reaction the concept of dehumanization, noting that, since El Sol was widely read in Argentina, many of Ortega's ideas became part of Argentine intellectuals’ aesthetic vocabulary even before the book was published in 1925. Artundo gives examples of writers, such as Roberto A. Ortelli in Inicial (Buenos Aires), and Ricardo Güiraldes in Proa (Buenos Aires), who appropriated Ortegaean terminology when they reviewed works of modern art. Moreover, Homero M. Guglielmini, one of the founders of La Plata's Valoraciones who often wrote on Ortega, employed “conceptos tales como el de idea e irrealidad, derivados de las ideas expuestas por Ortega y Gasset” when assessing Fray Guillermo Butler’s exhibit sponsored by Buenos Aires’s Asociación Amigos del Arte (86). However, Artundo affirms that Ortega’s influence is most palpable in Oliverio Girondo’s “Manifiesto Martín Fierro” (Martín Fierro May 15, 1924), where the Argentine poet affirms allegiance to the Spanish philosopher’s idea of a new aesthetic sensibility (88-89). Furthermore, Artundo notes that “a partir del Manifiesto Martín Fierro, la expresión ‘nueva sensibilidad’, se convirtió en sinónimo de ‘nueva generación’” (91). Consequently, Artundo concludes that, despite its not having been received with the same fervor as El tema de nuestro tiempo, The Dehumanization of Art left its mark on young Argentine intellectuals.

However, citing the 1927 polémica del meridiano intelectual, Artundo points out that Argentine intellectuals developed “una postura critica con respecto a España” by the end of the
1920s (93). Substantiating Artundo’s conclusion, essayist and historian Ernesto Palacio’s six-part article, “En el país del arte deshumanizado,” published in Buenos Aires’s Catholic journal *Criterio* from September to November 1928, contested Ortega’s theory. Palacio argued that Ortega’s understanding of new artistic tendencies hinged on an erroneous and confusing interpretation of reality and humanity and their relationship to art: “[n]ada más arbitrario que ese rebajamiento de lo ‘humano’, de la ‘vida’, intentado por Ortega y Gasset para explicar el arte nuevo … nada que introduzca mayor confusión sobre el sentido de la realidad” (331). Moreover, he deemed nonsensical Ortega’s attempt to characterize art as dehumanized and detached from human experiences and sensations. He considered implausible Ortega’s notion that an artist could be devoid of emotion when creating art, an “especie de monstruo moral indiferente a los sentimientos humanos” (331).

Palacio intimated that his resistance to dehumanization extended beyond theoretical matters. He characterized Ortega’s popularity in Argentina as owing to the Spanish philosopher’s “fórmulas felices.” In addition, Palacio suggested that young intellectuals were bewitched by "las fórmulas, especialmente, [sic] cuando éstas se presentan aderezadas con el estilo magnífico de don José Ortega y Gasset” (267). Palacio thus parodies young Argentine and Spanish intellectuals’ eager appropriations of a “nueva sensibilidad” and the “deshumanización del arte” (297). While Palacio did emphasize Ortega’s importance as a model for young intellectuals, especially in offering them alternatives to “la adhesión incondicional de la última receta francesa,” his satirical tone suggests that he disagreed with the new generation's blindly following the philosopher’s teachings: “[n]ada más humano, pues, que el entusiasmo por la ‘deshumanización del arte’ que se ha apoderado de los noveles escritores de España” (267). Thus
Palacio’s critical evaluation of Ortega’s ideas can be read as an effort to demystify the Spanish philosopher’s standing among enthusiastic and undiscerning young thinkers.\(^{71}\)

In Mexico, as Víctor Díaz Arciniega points out in *Querella por la cultura* “revolucionaria” (1925), Ortega’s theories were important to the debate over “el afeminamiento de la literatura,” in which intellectuals argued over nationalism and cosmopolitanism in an effort to define a post-revolutionary Mexican literature (21). The polemic over the feminization of literature took place from December 1924 until August 1925 in Mexican journals *La Antorcha*, *El Universal*, *El Universal Ilustrado*, *Excélsior*, and *Revista de Revistas* (*Excélsior’s* literary supplement).\(^{72}\) As Díaz Arciniega explains, on the surface, the dispute centered on Mariano Azuela’s novel *Los de abajo*, deemed a model for a virile Mexican revolutionary literature, but other factors led to, and intensified this intellectual quarrel. First, the end of the Mexican Revolution signaled a need to define a Mexican identity that adhered to revolutionary ideals. At the same time, a generational shift was taking place. Like Argentina’s “Nueva Generación,” which I discussed in chapter 1, Ortega’s ideas in *El tema de nuestro tiempo* and *The Dehumanization of Art* influenced young Mexican intellectuals as they struggled to define their

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\(^{71}\) Palacio, however, offers a disclaimer in a footnote in which he asserts that he esteems Ortega. Referencing the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*, Palacio echoes Spanish essayist Ángel Sánchez Rivero’s statement in *La Gaceta Literaria*’s “Un debate apasionado. Campeonato para un meridiano intelectual” (September 1, 1927), which I discussed in chapter 3. While the polemic primarily hinged on the controversial proposal that Madrid should be intellectual meridian for Spain and Latin America, Sánchez Rivero had suggested that accomplished intellectuals, not cities, were meridians and that all should aspire to this status. According to Sánchez Rivero, Spanish intellectuals Miguel de Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset, Ramón Gómez de la Serna were meridians. From Latin America, only Nicaraguan Rubén Darío could be considered in the same category. Writing one year later, Palacios also proposed that Ortega y Gasset was a meridian: “para quien sabe ver bien las cosas, no es más que un pseudónimo admirativo de don José Ortega y Gasset. El [sic] es el meridiano de los literatos noveles de España” (267).

\(^{72}\) For a more comprehensive evaluation of this debate see Víctor Díaz Arciniega, Luis Mario Schneider, and Pedro Ángel Palou’s discussions on the topic.
aesthetic and sociopolitical positions. Meanwhile, former ateneístas (members of the Ateneo de la Juventud founded in 1909 with the intent to reform art and culture in Mexico), such as Secretary of Education José Vasconcelos, wanted to continue the efforts to regenerate Mexican culture they had initiated before the revolution. Julio Jiménez Rueda initiated the polemic with his article “El afeminamiento de la literatura mexicana,” published in El Universal on December 21, 1924. There he contrasted twentieth-century writers, whom he considered effeminate, with more valiant nineteenth-century intellectuals (Díaz Arciniega 58). This article instigated a dispute that posited virile revolutionary literature against decadent effeminate literature. Yet, as Díaz Arciniega points out, the term revolutionary was never clearly defined in the discussion (92). However, in broad terms, it appears that effeminate literature referred to cosmopolitan aesthetic tendencies, while “virile” literature addressed the Mexican Revolution.

The debate over “el afeminamiento de la literatura” was not resolved, but the intergenerational exchanges that took place during this polemic helped delineate major concerns in the confrontation between nationalism and cosmopolitanism in post-revolutionary Mexico. These issues centered primarily on negotiating a Mexican identity while simultaneously engaging cosmopolitan aesthetic developments. As Guillermo Sheridan explains in Los Contemporáneos ayer, “Lo paradójico es que todas las tendencias insinuadas en la polémica salieron reforzadas de ella, sobre todo la noción de una literatura y un arte alineados en los intereses de la historia, expresivos de la nacionalidad y el sentir populares, abocados a rescatar, interpretar y expresar lo que se suponía que era un arte nacional. El nacionalismo continuaba su larga, compleja batalla” (259). Moreover, this dispute helps explain the eventual schism that developed between the two leading groups of young intellectuals—the Estridentistas and the

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73 See Mariátegui’s understanding of “decadent” art in, “Arte, revolución y decadencia,” first published in Amauta in November 1926.
Contemporáneos. Members of both groups had originally supported many of the same ideas in the early 1920s—the incorporation of modern aesthetic practices into Mexican art and literature. However, they disagreed on how Mexican aesthetics should engage an international dialogue. For instance, in his poem *Urbe* (1924), Estridentista Manuel Maples Arce advocated cosmopolitanism predicated on politics rather than aesthetics, which the Contemporáneos endorsed: “Los pulmones de Rusia / soplan hacia nosotros/ el viento de la revolución social” (np). And, referring to them as “Los asalta braguetas literarios,” Maples Arce contended that the Contemporáneos “nada comprenderán / de esta nueva belleza / sudorosa del siglo” (np). In making such a homophobic statement, Maples Arce connected the Contemporáneos aesthetic views with their sexuality, much like Jiménez Rueda had done in the article that initiated the debate. Furthermore, as Sheridan explains, a direct result of the 1925 debate was that the Contemporáneos were considered effeminate, “los afeminados,” like the literature they promoted, and, pointing to the irony of a gendered aesthetics, he notes that “mientras el nacionalismo y la voluntad social poseen un sexo definido y orgullosamente erecto, los ‘otros’ titubean en una definición ideológica que, por metonimia, lo es también sexual” (259). Thus, a nationalist literature was virile and masculine, while cosmopolitan trends were considered effeminate.

As Vicky Unruh has emphasized, when reflecting on his own notions of art in post-revolutionary Mexico, Contemporáneos member Jaime Torres Bodet found Ortega y Gasset’s theory of dehumanization incongruent with his experience and responded in “La deshumanización del arte.” Most likely published in either Mexico’s *El Universal* or *Excélsior* first, this article appeared in two Argentine journals, *Nosotros* (Buenos Aires 1907-34) and

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74 Elissa J. Rashkin discusses Maples Arce’s intent in “La poesía estridentista: vanguardismo y compromiso social”.

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Valoraciones (La Plata 1923-27) in March 1926. Yet, despite its presence in Argentine journals, Patricia Artundo underscores that, grounded in a Mexican context, Torres Bodet’s essay did not represent an Argentine perspective on Ortega’s theory. Torres Bodet later republished “La deshumanización del arte” in his collection of essays entitled Contemporáneos (1928). While Unruh cites the version published as part of the book Contemporáneos, I refer to the same article published in Buenos Aires’s Nosotros and La Plata’s Valoraciones because it provoked a response from Spanish novelist Benjamín Jarnés in 1926. I cite the Valoraciones version because, as I detail in chapter 1, this journal had a history of transatlantic exchanges (1925-1926) with Madrid’s El Estudiante, where Jarnés published his reply. University students published both journals and their relationship ensued when Valoraciones ardently supported El Estudiante’s call for solidarity between Spanish and Latin American young intellectuals. In addition, Valoraciones based much of its platform on Ortega’s theories from El tema de nuestro tiempo and had engaged in a dialogue (1923-24) with the Spanish philosopher, who responded from his “pulpit” at Buenos Aires’s La Nación. Thus the journal’s publication of an article that contested Ortega is significant, suggesting that Valoraciones’s views on the Spanish thinker might have evolved.

Torres Bodet primarily disputes Ortega’s Eurocentrism. From the outset, much as Palacio had done in Buenos Aires’s Criterio, the Mexican poet demystified Ortega’s persona by pointing to contradictions between the philosopher’s writing and his actions: “Hay en Ortega y Gasset un

75 Torres Bodet first published most of the articles that he later compiled in Contemporáneos (1928) in Mexico’s El Universal. I am therefore, almost certain that “La deshumanización del arte” was also published in El Universal before it was reproduced in Argentine journals (most likely through Alfonso Reyes). However, I have not been able to verify this theory. The versions published in Nosotros and Valoraciones are identical.

76 Patricia Artundo, “La flecha en el blanco: José Ortega y Gasset y la deshumanización del arte”.
orador político que la severidad de la cátedra no ha logrado enfriar completamente. Su dialéctica … se tiñe a cada instante de esa misma desordenada humanidad que desearía desterrar ahora de la obra de arte” (245). While Torres Bodet conceded that Ortega’s observations on current artistic trends possessed a “rara atención inteligente,” he also maintains that the philosopher’s ideas on dehumanization are flawed: “Sería injusto conceder a La deshumanización del arte importancia original excesiva … por sus méritos pero sería más injusto por sus defectos” (246).

As Unruh has noted, the Mexican writer centered his aesthetic disagreement with Ortega on the philosopher’s concept of “a triumph over the human” (25). Torres Bodet staunchly disapproved of the idea that stylization limited human intervention in art and, as Palacio would also argue in 1928, posited that art and humanity constantly interact, that art could not exist without a human element: “no hay arte sin materia humana que estilizar” (248).

Unruh further pointed out that the Mexican poet disagreed fundamentally with the Spanish philosopher because his Eurocentric vision did not correspond with a Latin American understanding of new aesthetic practices. For example, he affirmed that Latin Americans considered the dehumanization of art to be the least interesting theory of many: “No sólo no creemos que este procedimiento de deshumanización sea el único, sino que lo estimamos el menos interesante” (248). In addition, given the complex debates occurring in Mexico, I would add that Torres Bodet was actually less concerned with discrediting the idea of dehumanization than in taking a nationalist stance. Ortega’s exclusion of Latin America from his theoretical scope incensed the Mexican poet and critic: “¿y América? ¿Por qué olvidar las posibilidades de arte nuevo, las reservas de ingenuidad que esconde nuestra América?” (246). Moreover, Torres Bodet emphasized that Ortega’s Eurocentrism recreated a hegemonic order in which Europe imposed its ideas on Latin America. Therefore, Torres Bodet deemed The Dehumanization of Art
incongruent because the Spanish thinker framed his discussion of vanguard art within an 
outdated socio-political context: “El libro de Ortega y Gasset debe verse como una serie de 
notas—insuficientes por desgracia—para una sociología del arte en nuestra época” (247).

However, Torres Bodet also critiqued Latin America’s young intellectuals for 
unadvisedly believing in Ortega’s “orientación más retórica que filosófica,” and appropriating 
concepts that did not address their reality” (247). Deeming *The Dehumanization of Art* a “libro 
europeo, con datos europeos, escrito para europeos,” Torres Bodet underscored that Ortega’s 
theory inhibited Latin Americans from imagining their own autochthonous aesthetic, one that 
took their own cultures into account (246). However, consistent with the position he would take 
in the *polémica del meridiano intelectual* a few months later, Torres Bodet emphasized that his 
opposition to Ortega’s essay was not based on hostility towards the former empire: “No tenemos 
rebeldías para España. A partir de las luchas de independencia hemos convenido en la estupidez 
que oculta todo propósito de segregación en el alma de la raza” (247). Asserting that resentments 
owing to a colonial legacy had ended when Latin American countries earned their independence 
from Spain, Torres Bodet further affirmed that racial ties superseded political animosity. 
However, the Mexican critic also made clear that a shared cultural heritage did not categorically 
bind Latin America to Spain. Perhaps alluding to Spain’s political situation under Miguel Primo 
de Rivera and to Europe’s devastation after World War 1, Torres Bodet asserted that Latin 
America did not need to participate in European decline: “si España hace causa común con la 
decadencia de Europa no es ya obligación nuestra seguirla en un declinar que la antigüedad 
heroica de su pueblo explica, pero que resultaría ilógico en el nuestro” (247). Therefore, Torres 
Bodet argued that, rather than reconstruct European modes in order to fit their reality, Latin 
Americans needed to develop their own artistic trends. He thus proposed a Latin American
aesthetic that was at once modern and autochthonous: “exigiremos al arte nuevo modalidades autóctonas y no postizas actitudes como las que ahora assume” (247). Clearly linked to the polemic over “el afeminamiento de la literatura” in Mexico, Torres Bodet’s views also coincide with Unruh’s description of Latin American vanguard aesthetics, which were “quite often critically engaged with what was regarded as specifically Latin American experience” (23).

Writing in Madrid’s *El Estudiante*, Benjamín Jarnés replied to Torres Bodet’s *Valoraciones* article in “La deshumanización del arte: Carta al poeta Torres Bodet” in May 1926. Calling Torres Bodet a “leal camarada de un equipo opuesto,” from the outset, Jarnés pronounced his disagreement with the Mexican writer’s article (10). The Spanish novelist painstakingly rearticulated Ortega’s main points and condescendingly explained them to his Mexican counterpart. Addressing Torres Bodet’s opposition to the idea of “el triunfo sobre lo humano,” Jarnés stated that Ortega's aesthetics did not eliminate the human element. Instead, he explained, the philosopher merely described art’s new relationship with the human element as an emancipation from reality: “es una fuga de lo humano. Una evasión de lo real” (10). Yet, Jarnés did concur with Torres Bodet that art could not exist without “materia humana” and asserted that “[s]i el arte nuevo estuviese totalmente evadido de lo humano, no sería la suya una actividad dinámica, sino de reposo, y en el arte no vale descansar” (10). He further supported Torres Bodet’s understanding that art was defined by its constant struggle with the human element and would, therefore, cease to exist if the human element were to be eliminated. Moreover, Jarnés underscored that Ortega was not referring to a finite struggle, but to a “constante lucha” between “lo humano” and its representation in art. Thus, Jarnés avered, “el triunfo sobre lo humano” was not “un triunfo definitivo, sino un constante vencimiento” (11).
Despite conceding Torres Bodet’s point that art could not exist without “materia humana,” Jarnés indicated that the Mexican novelist contradicted himself by first disputing Ortega’s notion of dehumanization and then pronouncing that “no hay arte sin materia humana que estilizar” because “[e]stilizar implica deshumanizar” (10). If Torres Bodet acknowledged that art stylized the human element, he could not oppose dehumanization since the term referred precisely to new modes of artistic stylization. As a result, Jarnés rebuked Torres Bodet for either misunderstanding Ortega or reading his essay carelessly: “si es difícil hallar conclusiones más diáfanas, también lo es hallar otras tan turbiantemente comprendidas. Quiero creer en las lecturas precipitadas. Ver la diferencia entre realidad humana y realidad artística, es algo de que no puede eximirse ninguna mirada sincera de hoy” (10). Thus deeming his view a misinterpretation, Jarnés dismissed Torres Bodet’s perspective without engaging the Mexican writer’s main argument that Ortega’s theory did not take Latin America into account.

Torres Bodet’s negative reaction to The Dehumanization of Art, however, was not an isolated incident. His position exemplified the Contemporáneos’ overall perspective on Ortega’s essay. As Sheridan explains, the group opposed the idea that stylization required erasing the human element from art; they could not accept Ortega’s suggestion that “el anti-representacionismo en pintura, la atonalidad en música, el verso libre en poesía o el monólogo interior en prosa, llevaran a la pérdida de los elementos humanos del realismo romántico o del naturalismo” (247). The Contemporáneos’ rejection of Ortega’s notions was such that, as Sheridan indicates, the group assumed an uncharacteristically pugnacious stance when they organized a “comida de literatos” where they boisterously disqualified Ortega’s ideas (247). Further articulating the Contemporáneos’ resistance to Ortega’s aesthetic perspective, poet Jorge Cuesta elaborated upon Torres Bodet’s argument when he reviewed *Margarita de niebla* in
Judging Ortega’s *The Dehumanization of Art* an “ensayo lleno de errores,” Cuesta, like Torres Bodet, rejected the proposal that modern art “se deshumaniza cuando se hace más artístico,” or as Jarnés had put it, that “[e]stilizar implica deshumanizar” (165). The poet explained that art might stylize, deform, and even reduce reality, but this process did not mean that a work of art did not engage reality: “[l]a estiliza, la deforma; lo que quiere decir que la reduce, pero no que deja de vivirla” (165). Therefore, Cuesta contended that Ortega’s terminology was incorrect: [n]o es deshumanizar, sino desromantizar la realidad; es decir: humanizarla dándole un interés, una utilidad” (165). Rather than dehumanize reality, according to Cuesta, the new art attempted to reconfigure and humanize it. If Ortega believed that modern aesthetics aspired to dehumanize reality and encourage a sense of detachment between the viewer and the work, Cuesta claimed that the opposite was true. For Cuesta, converting reality into art was very human and required an active engagement between the human element and the artistic medium. Therefore, stylization could not be dehumanization. As a result, Cuesta proposed that Ortega’s mistake rested in his terminology, suggesting that the philosopher might have intended to say “desromantizar,” which implied a less idealistic vision of reality, but not the removal of the human element from artistic creation.

*Notes on the Novel*

Ortega published his essay *Notes on the Novel* in the same volume as *The Dehumanization of Art*. Yet, in contrast to *The Dehumanization of Art*, where Ortega limited himself to describing new aesthetic tendencies, in *Notes on the Novel* he is prescriptive. Ortega’s

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77 Immediately following Cuesta’s article, in the recurring section “El curioso impertinente,” *Ulises* published its response to the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*. 

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assessment of the novel centers on his conviction that the genre is in a state of decline. He attributed this situation to “a finite number of possible themes for a novel” explaining that the genre’s subsistence did not depend on talented writers, “[t]he material is independent of individual gifts; and when it is lacking genius and skill are of no avail” (58). In addition to this shortage of material, Ortega also pointed out that readers had become “subtler and more fastidious,” having higher expectations for the genre (59). Therefore, Ortega contended that the novel had reached its “last phase” (60). Thus, in order to compensate for the scant supply of themes, writers needed focus on “other elements that comprised the body of the novel” (60). For instance, novelists needed to prioritize characterization, especially because readers wanted to delve into character’s “inner life” and become “immersed in their inner world or atmosphere” (61-62). As a result, the genre had moved “[f]rom being narrative and indirect” to being “direct and descriptive” (62). Such changes rendered the genre “presentative;” like an impressionistic painter, the novelist had to arm the reader with the necessary tools to construct the character for him or herself, rather than offer a finished product (64). Thus, echoing his theory of dehumanization, much like the viewer was required to decipher and interpret a painting, the novel demands active participation from the reader, which kept the text in the present tense. Moreover, as characterization moved to the forefront, action “becomes a mere pretext” because “[o]ur interest [as readers] has shifted from the plot to the figures, from actions to persons” (67). Therefore, the novel’s appeal relied on its form (the windowpane), not its plot or subject matter (the garden) as “the structure forms the properly artistic part of the work” (76).

Notes on the Novel was also criticized in Mexico and Argentina. For instance, writing in Valoraciones, frequent contributor to the journal Eduardo Ripa scrutinized Ortega’s notions
regarding the state of the novel. Responding to a section of Notes on the Novel entitled “La novela como ‘vida provinciana’” (The Novel as Provincial life)—first published in El Sol on January 8, 1925 and republished in Buenos Aires’s La Nación on March 9, 1925 as “Reflexiones sobre la novela”—Ripa published “Ortega y Gasset y la novela” in Valoraciones in June of 1925. Yet, despite his desire to discredit Ortega’s account of the novel, Ripa’s understanding of the genre does not appear to differ greatly from the Spanish philosopher’s theory. Both suggested that the artistry of the modern novel lies in its narrative style and not in particular subjects or grandiose plots. However, the Spanish philosopher’s theories met with the most resistance in Mexico, primarily from the Contemporáneos. And, once again, Torres Bodet, who became the group’s leader, most emphatically debated Ortega’s theories.

Along with “La deshumanización del arte,” Torres Bodet published his essay “Reflexiones sobre la novela” in his collection Contemporáneos: Notas de crítica in 1928. Like “La deshumanización del arte,” which he had previously published in journals and newspapers, “Reflexiones” is a composite of three articles that appeared in Mexico’s El Universal between March and April 1926.79 “El problema de la novela” from March 20, 1926, engages with

79 Scholars such as Vicky Unruh and Gustavo Pérez Firmat have thus far only noted the essay published as part of Contemporáneos: Notas de crítica (1928). However, Torres Bodet’s “Reflexiones sobre la novela” was first published as three articles in Mexico’s El Universal: “El problema de la novela” (March 20, 1926), “Realidad y memoria” (March 27, 1926), and “Los caminos de la novela contemporánea” (April 16, 1926). Writing in La Gaceta Literaria on March 1, 1928, Spanish writer César M. Arconada critiqued Torres Bodet for having compiled his articles into one book: “Torres Bodet—un fino escritor de América—ha hecho también—su libro de recopilaciones. Su libro de retazos, de muestras. (Pero un libro no debiera ser eso. El libro debiera comenzar allí donde termina la revista. No es cosa de holgura. Es, más bien, cosa de diferencia. Aquello que exige un libro es distinto de lo que exige una revista. En el libro, mayor. En la revista, menor. En el libro, una exigencia más dura, más rigurosa. En la revista, en cambio, una exigencia más leve, más amplia—ensayo, recreo, laboratorio—)” (179). In addition, most essays included in Contemporáneos: notas de critica were previously published in either El Universal or El Universal Ilustrado and are not all included in Carlos Rubio Pacho’s Un infinito dédalo de espejos: Bibliografía de y sobre Jaime Torres Bodet.
“Decline of the Novel,” the first section in Notes on the Novel. It disputed Ortega’s assessment that the novel was in a state of decline: “No es un problema de decadencia como afirma Ortega” (3). Again disagreeing with Ortega’s terminology, Torres Bodet deemed the Spanish thinker’s use of the word “decline” to be gratuitous and mocked him for appropriating Oswald Spengler’s title Decadencia de occidente (The Decline of the West) for his own purposes. The Mexican poet pointed out that Ortega had used occidente to name his journal, Revista de Occidente and then applied decadencia to the novel: “divide esta receta … en dos facciones … funda con la segunda mitad la Revista de Occidente en tanto que aprovecha la primera en redactar una serie de notas sobre la ‘ decadencia’ de la novela” (3). He further asserted that this overused Spenglerian term fell short when addressing the complexity of the novel’s condition, especially since works like James Joyce’s Ulysses clearly challenged the notion that the genre was in a state of decline: “habrá que buscar otra solución capaz de no explicarlo todo por la decadencia. Una solución más interesada en investigar que en negar, la única realmente digna de descubrir la porción de verdad estética que los ensayos de hoy contienen” (3). Despite his objections to Ortega’s terminology, Torres Bodet acknowledged that the novel was evolving, as it should, but suggested that the genre had merely entered a new phase, not its last: “¿Por qué todo ha de ser una decadencia? ¿Es acaso que la novela había alcanzado tal punto de madurez? … Lo que, en el tránsito pintoresco de las estaciones es cierto para una manzana, no debe aplicarse a la obra de arte. La madurez, último período de la vida botánica, no es sino una pausa en la historia de la literatura” (3, 5).

Torres Bodet also countered the idea that there is a scarcity of themes: “Ninguna obra de arte vive del tema que expresa. Afirmar que el mérito de la novela está en razón directa de la novedad de su asunto es suponer que las palabras ‘mérito’ y ‘éxito’ se enriquecen con un significado común” (3). He stressed that a novel’s quality was not contingent upon its theme;
therefore, a lack of material was not a problem for the genre. However, Torres Bodet concurred with Ortega’s understanding of the modern novel when he stated that contemporary writers got into, “los fondos más sutiles de la conciencia, mediante una serie de escenas insistentes—de experiencias de memoria—en que el artista enfoca el campo de las expresiones inferiores, el mundo de los actos pequeños y encuentra ahí … la flor de la intención oculta en que la acción y el pensamiento se resuelven” (3). Thus, this description of the modern novel coincided with Ortega’s idea that characterization should make readers privy to a character’s “inner life,” and become immersed in his or her “inner world or atmosphere.”

Torres Bodet published “Realidad y memoria: El itinerario de la novela” in *El Universal* on March 27, 1926. Here, for the most part, the Mexican novelist’s views coincided with Ortega’s understanding of the modern novel. Like the Spanish philosopher, Torres Bodet proclaimed the novel to be descriptive. He further agreed with Ortega’s notion that the novel needed to submerge its readers into an “inner world or atmosphere.” According to the Mexican novelist, “Una novela … [o] se vive en ella o no existe para nosotros. Una novela perfecta sería aquella que nos hiciera morir por asfixia de la realidad, por sustitución de su atmósfera a la nuestra” (np). However, Torres Bodet offered a unique perspective on the novel’s style, which he described as constantly in flux: “en la novela, el problema del estilo[,] si no cesa—no puede cesar nunca en arte—cambia de centro. De una forma de expresión que era, se vuelve una forma de exploración. En la poesía, el estilo es una frontera; en la novela, un camino” (np). Therefore, further countering Ortega’s opinion that the novel was an “exhausted” genre, Torres Bodet proposes that it is an active art form that incessantly evolved and continuously created new paths for novelists and readers to explore. In “Los caminos de la novela contemporánea” (*El Universal*, April 16, 1926), Torres Bodet expanded upon his metaphor that stylization in the novel was a
“camino.” He explained that contemporary writers were uninterested in plot, which they found limiting; instead they employed stylistic devices that connected apparently dissimilar things and separated “ideas que el lugar común ha unido,” making unexpected associations between images 
(3). Yet, in contrast to his previous two articles on the novel in *El Universal*, Torres Bodet’s tone in this text was expository rather than combative; he did not appear to be denouncing Ortega. 
Moreover, his view that novelists “se contentan con tallar hasta la transparencia la figura que reciben de la realidad o de la literatura” echoed Ortega’s notion that stylization was dehumanization 
(3).

In the three *El Universal* articles that later became “Reflexiones sobre la novela,” Torres Bodet seemed to have three goals: 1) to refute Ortega’s *Notes on the Novel*, 2) to describe the evolution of the novel, and 3) to define the characteristics of the modern novel. This ambitious goal, compounded with contrived and often confusing language, as Gustavo Pérez Firmat points out, produced an essay “beset by inconsistencies” (4). Moreover, Pérez Firmat’s analysis of “Reflexiones sobre la novela” concludes that “[a]s a general rule “Reflexiones” tended to undermine its own discussion, rendering it equivocal and incoherent” (96). However, Pérez Firmat considers the contradictions in Torres Bodet’s essay to be representative of “Hispanic discourse about the novel during this time” (6). In addition, he maintains that Torres Bodet’s essay posits the modern novel as a “battlefield,” an unstable genre in transition, which validates Ortega’s position that “the novel has entered a state of crisis” (5). Pérez Firmat rightly asserts that Torres Bodet discredits his efforts to contradict Ortega throughout his essay because the Mexican writer seems to share many of Ortega’s perspectives on the novel. Moreover, while I have also noted similarities between Ortega’s and Torres Bodet’s perspectives on the novel, I believe that Torres Bodet’s understanding of the novel is fundamentally different from Ortega’s.
The Spanish philosopher’s Spenglerian assessment of the novel judges it to be in its final stages, while Torres Bodet’s estimation reveals a much more optimistic view of a genre that consistently shifts and evolves, constantly changing its course.

Torres Bodet’s understanding of the novel is consistent with Vicky Unruh’s view that Latin American vanguardism was a “form of activity” (9) that “sought an active reengagement between art and experience” (21). Therefore, I would argue that the discrepancies between Ortega’s and Torres Bodet’s understanding of the novel hinge upon the differences between a European and a Latin American perspective on aesthetics, which were also tied to historical circumstances. Writing from Spain, a country that had recently lost its transatlantic empire, had further been embarrassed in the Moroccan war, and was under Primo de Rivera’s, albeit weak, dictatorship, Ortega’s pessimistic view seems warranted. Meanwhile, despite its internal struggles and debates, post-revolutionary Mexico was more optimistic as the country looked forward to affirming a newfound mexicanidad. Thus, Ortega’s and Torres Bodet’s divergent theories suggest that although transatlantic exchanges reveal comparable aesthetic tendencies in Spain and Latin America, perspectives on art were also different. As a result, while I do not disagree that with Pérez Firmat’s assertion that the Hispanic vanguard novel is a transatlantic genre that developed almost simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic, I propose that there are significant differences between the Latin American and Spanish interpretations of the genre. As I will demonstrate in my discussion of Torres Bodet’s Margarita de niebla and Jarnés’s El profesor inútil, Latin American vanguard prose engaged and responded to Spanish versions of the new novel.
A Metafictional Transatlantic Dialogue: Margarita de niebla Responds to The Dehumanization of Art and El profesor inútil

El profesor inútil (1926) and Margarita de niebla (1927) were Jarnés and Torres Bodet’s first experiments with vanguard prose. At the time of publication, as I have noted, these novels’ similarities led critics such as Salazar y Chapela to state that Torres Bodet had imitated Jarnés. However, in this section I illustrate that, rather than copy Jarnés, in Margarita de niebla, Torres Bodet engaged a dialogue with the Spanish novelist. As Pérez Firmat points out, when Jarnés published El profesor inútil, critics’ “consensus was that Jarnés was putting into practice or working out the theses of Ideas sobre la novela and La deshumanización del arte” (12). In turn, I believe that Margarita de niebla is a response to El profesor inútil and ultimately to Ortega's aesthetics. Stylistically and thematically, both novels coincide with many of Ortega’s theories from The Dehumanization of Art and Notes on the Novel. However, Torres Bodet’s novel also offers a metafictional commentary on these aesthetic tenets. Thus I will demonstrate that Margarita de niebla is at once a metafictional continuation of the debate between Torres Bodet and Jarnés concerning The Dehumanization of Art that I have discussed, and also a response to El profesor inútil, in which the Mexican novelist proposes a Latin American interpretation of the new novel.

While El profesor inútil and Margarita de niebla are both loosely plotted, Torres Bodet’s plotline is more cohesive than that of El profesor inútil. Both novels narrate the lives of professors on vacation for the summer. These male protagonist/narrators devote this leisure time to women; Margarita de niebla’s Carlos Borja focuses on Margarita and her friend Paloma, while Jarnés’s useless professor has encounters with several women—Ruth, Susana, and Carlota. Thus Jarnés’s novel is divided into a series of three vignettes titled “Mañana de vacación,” “El
ría fiel,” and “Una papeleta.” Each section focuses on the narrator’s encounter with a different woman. Since the pretext for these encounters is the protagonist/narrator’s role as an educator, only his academic profession binds these independent episodes together. He tutors Ruth’s brother in “Mañana de vacación;” Carlota is his pupil in “El río fiel,” and, in “Una papeleta,” he lusts over Susana while writing at the library. In contrast, Margarita de niebla’s more linear plotline centers on Carlos Borja’s relationship with his student Margarita Millers, whom he decided to pursue when he noticed her during an end-of-the-year examination. Even though Paloma, Margarita’s best friend and polar opposite, diverts his attention, in the end, he decides to marry Margarita and go to Europe with her and her family. While some scenes, which unfold in Margarita’s parents’ home, the movie theatre, the park, and in Margarita’s uncle’s home, could be read independently from the main plot, the presence of the same characters and Borja’s evolution throughout, connect the narrative.

Consistent with Ortega’s notion that dehumanized art prioritizes form and technique; both El profesor inútil and Margarita de niebla accentuate narrative style. Subverting action, the protagonist/narrator's inner musings and descriptions drive these narratives. Thus both novels illustrate Ortega’s observation in Notes on the Novel that, in order to make up for a lack of themes, authors must emphasize “other elements [such as characterization] that compose the body of the novel.” Moreover, in both novels, readers must rely on the protagonist/narrators’ inner monologue to “construct” the narrative. For instance, Jarnés announces his novel’s loose plot in “Mañana de vacación” when the professor enthusiastically contemplates his newfound freedom as the school year concludes: “[h]oy celebro la transmutación de todos mis valores cotidianos. Hoy cambio de casillero todos los conceptos de las cosas. No tengo hoy alumnos. Soy profesor de mí mismo. El alumno de mí mismo. El conejillo de Indias de mí mismo” (Jarnés
Thus, the reader surmises that free to retreat into himself, the professor will set off on a boundless self-exploratory journey, which will constitute the novel’s plot. From this point on, the reader will join the professor in exploring a “serie de momentos fenomenológicos, el fluir de conciencia del protagonista, una conciencia preocupada con su propia existencia que empieza o acaba con la observación de una mujer” (La mujer y la invención Johnson 103). In each of these “momentos fenomenológicos,” the reader will uncover a new aspect of the protagonist with which to piece together his carácter. Moreover, as Carlos Mainer notes, in each of these phenomenological instances, the protagonist/narrator becomes a “meditador de la realidad que pulula a su alrededor,” which provides the reader further access into the main character (72). For example, from the professor’s observations on Spain’s Ebro river, the reader learns that just as the river bisects Spain, the professor is torn by inner conflict: “Este río fue siempre límite de dos porciones de humanidad. Ahora ya no divide a Iberia en dos sectores, pero al menos yo me siento aquí partido en dos hombres” (Jarnés Elogio 47). Jarnés was interested in depicting how objects surrounding the professor resonate with him, what they mean to him, rather than what they are, and he employs a metaphorical narrative style to achieve this effect.  

Albeit less introspective, Carlos Borja of Margarita de niebla embarks on a similar expedition. No longer restricted by a school schedule during the summer, leisure time provides him the opportunity to explore his city: “Acostumbro a salir a pie durante estas semanas de vacaciones …. Escojo siempre una calle distinta para no dar al placer que disfruto el aspecto endurecido de la costumbre. A veces, la ruta elegida me transporta a través de algunos ángulos inéditos de la ciudad y, entonces, descubro una sorpresa mezclada … de deleite y de rubor”

As J. S. Bernstein notes, “Jarnés’ reader must enter the book to make coherent sense out of the characters’ poetic perceptions, but not to complete a logical plot action, or to supply from evidence pieced together the basis for a character’s motivations” (Bernstein 49).
(Torres Bodet, *Margarita* 11). If Jarnés’s professor learns about himself from his surroundings, Borja is primarily concerned with exploring his environment. Moreover, the “useless professor” seems to wander aimlessly from one experience to the next, welcoming every sensation: “Todo me hace feliz, porque lo puedo contemplar serenamente, porque puedo medirlo todo, hallar sus raíces, seguirlo hasta sus últimos frutos. Todo me hace vibrar muy hondo, porque puedo desprenderme de su música fácil, alegre, parlanchina” (Jarnés *Elogio* 15), but Borja is fixated on one goal, Margarita. His thoughts either recall delightful moments spent in her presence or anxiously envision their next encounter: “Desde la esquina de la calle de las Moras, adivino el Buen Retiro. Me intereso por que la inteligencia o la memoria no intervengan en nada en esta sensación de su proximidad” (Torres Bodet *Margarita* 12). Privy to his obsession, the reader becomes engrossed in Borja’s inner monologue, understanding his surroundings, only as they relate to Margarita. Thus, the reader must rely on Borja’s fragmented musings in order to construct Margarita and Borja himself.

Following a dehumanized aesthetic, Jarnés and Torres Bodet both employ metaphor to create their character’s “inner life” and captivate the reader. For example, Borja narrates his apprehension upon arriving at Margarita’s home for the first time: “Más que alegría, lo que siento …. Es la inquietud de haberme equivocado de número. Al deseo inconfesado de que este temor se realice, se enreda enseguida el de no resignarme a partir …. En un principio no analizo estas impresiones. Las recibo en desorden mezcladas tan deliciosamente al ruido metálico de la

81 In “*El profesor inútil* and the Ethical Aesthetics of Benjamín Jarnés,” Francis Lough has argued that the professor was not actually useless. The vacation time that the professor used for self-reflection was actually productive: “Teachers, intellectuals, and books all share the same social and didactic functions which can only be realized if time for quiet reflection is available for the process of teaching and learning to take place” (475). He further notes that “[i]ntellectuals, for Jarnés, are ‘hombres de la calle’ who periodically have to take a holiday from the routine and haste of daily life . . . for moments of quiet contemplation leading to self-awareness” (476).
Illustrating that these novels are about art, their figurative language references other mediums such as film and painting, translating brush strokes, and camera shots into text. For instance, in Margarita de niebla, Borja describes the many students that had preceded Margarita during final examinations: “Habían desfilado antes de aquél [sic] tantos rostros morenos, inexactos, que su blancura y su precisión enfriaron la tarde como la aparición de un paisaje de invierno en el color artificial de un cinematógrafo” (Torres Bodet Margarita 3). Recalling Cubism, Jarnés’s professor perceives the city as a space where geometric shapes intersect: “Aquí las calles se lanzan a frenéticos juegos bizantinos. Tan pronto se quiebran dibujando esos romboides y trapezoides que mis alumnos recargan en el encerado de hileras de puntos auxiliares” (Jarnés, Elogio 35). Moreover, in “El río fiel,” the professor humorously envisions his student Carlota through a cubist lens in an attempt to suppress his erotic desire for her. In order to stop undressing her with his eyes, the professor first resolves to imagine her skeleton. However, as his willpower weakens, he redresses her with flesh, conveniently lacking clothing: “Ya tengo de nuevo a mi discípula vestida de su piel, cada vez más sugerente. Pero, en la prisa, me olvidé de todo otro vestido, y es preciso hacer inofensiva tan espléndida desnudez” (Jarnés Elogio 42). Thus he seeks another means of restraining his lust and, inspired by the geometry book that they are using, he turns to Cubism:
A las fórmulas ascéticas, prefiero las fórmulas cubistas. A Valdés Leal, Picasso, el humorista. Rápidamente los brazos de Carlota se me truecan en cilindros; los senos en pequeñas pirámides, mejor que en casquetes esféricos de curva peligrosa; los muslos en troncos de cono, invertidos […] Traslado al cuerpo de Carlota todo arsenal de figuras del texto. Todo en ella es ya un conjunto de problemas espaciales …. Es pura geometría, lo más cercana posible a una pura estatua. (Jarnés, Elogio 42-43)

In deconstructing and reconstructing reality according to its basic geometrical building blocks, Cubism attempts to capture the full perceptual experience, not just the unreflective, momentary sensorial impact of Impressionism. By reconstructing Carlota’s body with geometric shapes, the professor projects an impersonal, “dehumanized” perception of her, creating a work of art, albeit in a humorous and haphazard manner. Thus this description replicates and parodies the new artistic process as Jarnés playfully pokes fun at his own artistic creation.

In Margarita de niebla, Borja’s interest in Margarita is primarily visual and his tone is that of an artist who interprets his subject in terms of its shape, which stands out from the space and lighting that surround it. For example, in the following scene, he examines every angle of Margarita’s physical being in its various positions and in relation to its surroundings:

prefiere liberarse de los bultos que, al inmovilizarla, hacen más definida la línea graciosa de su cuerpo sobre la reja del jardín. Ya sin ellos, recobra la elasticidad que admiré en su porte durante el examen. De pie, resulta más esbelta aún que sentada. No sé si el tono de luz amarillenta en esta hora—, el sombrero claro o la sola sorpresa de sentirse descubierta la han hecho palidecer hasta la demacración. (Torres Bodet Margarita 14)

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82 As Pérez Firmat notes of Carlos Borja, “[h]is comparisons will frequently[provide] a reference to literature or art, and particularly to the visual . . . arts. Thus a person or a thing is not likened to another person or thing, but to a painting, engraving, photograph, illustration, sculpture of another person or thing” (91).
As the novel progresses, the idea of Margarita as art object is accentuated when Borja notices that she changes according to her surroundings. Within the context of her home on Thursdays, Margarita is the sweet, warm daughter of German parents who are obsessed with music, while on Saturdays she is transformed. The tram ride to the city center and the movie theatre where she and Borja meet, radically alter Margarita and, upon seeing her, Borja is profoundly disappointed. He seems to prefer the young pupil/obedient daughter version of Margarita to the indifferent figure that traverses Mexico City. Thus her beauty is contingent upon her environment, as though she were a blank canvas, capable of depicting different types of art. Gustavo Nanclares attributes Margarita’s multiplicity to the art of film. He suggests that, like an image on a movie screen, the perception of Margarita depends on the camera’s position and the visual effects of lighting and shadows that render an infinite number of “Margaritas” (148).

Borja’s grave and almost scientific descriptions of Margarita contrast with the professor’s amusing depiction of Carlota as a cubist painting in *El profesor inútil*. However, in both texts, female characters lack agency, as the reader is privy only to the protagonist/narrators' interpretations. Like Margarita, the professor’s women—Carlota, Ruth, and Susana—are objects that elicit the male character’s reflections on life and art. In *El profesor inútil*, these reflections seem as fleeting as the professor’s multiple conquests. Jarnés’s novel is purely experimental, a game in which he tries out new artistic forms. Yet, in *Margarita de niebla*, Torres Bodet’s more cohesive plotline parallels a definite aesthetic position, which, as I discuss in the next section, becomes clear by the end of the novel. In writing a narrative that employs the aesthetic tendencies Ortega outlined in *The Dehumanization of Art* and *Notes on the Novel*, Torres Bodet engages in a metafictional dialogue with *El profesor inútil*. However, since his

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83 As Roberta Johnson has noted, in *El profesor inútil*, “[l]a forma femenina suele ser objeto de observación del sujeto masculino y nunca llega a tener una subjetividad propia” (102).
novel advocates a cosmopolitan aesthetic that is distinctly Mexican, Torres Bodet also addresses his debate with Ortega and Jarnés.

Vicky Unruh has noted that “Latin American writers often sought to reshape and redefine … what Ortega had identified as the dehumanized quality of modern art,” which Torres Bodet does in Margarita de niebla (26). The novel includes two scenes that define the Mexican novelist’s position on dehumanization. In the first scene, Borja shaves in front of a mirror and describes the reflected images he sees: “Por el hueco de la ventana abierta se instala junto a mi rostro, en el fondo del espejo al que me aproximo, un paisaje todavía frágil, embalado por la niebla. Sólo la sombra de mi barba, crecida durante la noche, rompe la claridad de esta acuarela” (Torres Bodet, Margarita 55). Unruh suggests that Torres Bodet directly addresses Ortega’s windowpane metaphor in this scene and maintains that he further compounds the metaphor by incorporating the mirror’s multiple reflections. While Borja shaves and looks at himself in the mirror, he simultaneously sees the window and the landscape behind him reflected by the mirror. Furthermore, Unruh notes that, as the sun rises, the new lighting continuously changes Borja’s perception of the landscape. As a result, if Ortega’s original metaphor suggests that focusing on the windowpane rather than on the garden illustrates dehumanized art, Unruh argues that Torres Bodet complicates the metaphor as Borja “focuses on the interaction between the framing process and its raw material, that is, between art and life, as well as on the position and activity of the human subject who constructs the interaction” (72). Therefore, Borja engages with art both as an observer and as an image within the artistic representation. Torres Bodet thus proposes that art can represent the tension between art and humanity as a work of art in itself.

Another scene that directly engages dehumanization is a dialogue on music between Borja and Margarita’s mother, Señora Millers, who considers Wagner more of an artist and
Beethoven more “human.” She asks Borja, “¿Se ha enterado usted de la teoría que algunos formulian, según la cual Beethoven podría ser considerado como el primero de los músicos puros, es decir como el primero de los músicos deshumanizados?” (Torres Bodet, Margarita 22). Borja responds by entirely dismissing her question on the concept of dehumanization, “no podemos seguir siendo devotos de una música que corresponde a una manera espiritual que ya no es nuestra, a la sensibilidad de un mundo desaparecido” (Torres Bodet, Margarita 22). Here Borja’s words echo Torres Bodet’s insistence that Latin America, and more precisely its youth, could no longer blindly follow European tendencies that do not account for a Latin American reality. Whether or not a dehumanized aesthetic was valid was not at stake for Torres Bodet in this scene. His primary concern was to advocate the conscious creation of an aesthetic that was nuestra, whether Mexican or Latin American.

Opposing Margarita and her best friend, Paloma, Torres Bodet’s novel addresses a defense of a Latin American versus a European modern aesthetic. While Margarita’s role in the novel is similar to the professor’s women in El profesor inútil, Paloma stands in stark contrast to these “pneumatic” characters. If, throughout the novel, Margarita serves as a blank canvas for Borja’s artistic experimentation, Paloma emerges as a stronger character that baffles the narrator: “Frente a Paloma soy todo edad y torpeza” (Torres Bodet, Margarita 75). Paloma is very different from Margarita; if Margarita is amorphous, her friend is precise, “[e]n contra de lo que esperaba, es más alta que Margarita. Sus cabellos, cortados a la Bob, no tienen esa facilidad sentimental que deshace—fatiga anticipada—las trenzas de su amiga” (Torres Bodet, Margarita 84).

84 In Idle Fictions: The Hispanic Vanguard Novel, 1926-1934, Gustavo Pérez Firmat coined the term “pneumatic” in his effort to define the Hispanic Vanguard Novel. For Pérez Firmat, pneumatic refers to the “weightless” effect that the use of metaphors, “stylistic fluidity,” and “incoherence of mental experience” convey to readers. Characters in these novels are “imprecise” and “abstract.”
Margarita is from a wealthy German family (Margarita’s German roots are not a coincidence as Ortega y Gasset was a well known Germanophile), Paloma is Mexican and from a small town from the “interior” (Torres Bodet, Margarita 41). Paloma is an athletic, stylish, modern, educated Mexican woman who supports herself as a French teacher in the capital, while Margarita is still a student, bound by her parents’ decisions and a more traditional demeanor (Borja describes Margarita’s classic attire at length when she is at her parents’ home as well as her domestic activities, such as baking, when preparing for his visits). Moreover, in contrast to his wavering feelings towards Margarita, Borja’s reactions to Paloma are definite: “Paloma me comprendería mejor que nadie porque, inteligente y buena, el don de perder ha adquirido en ella las proporciones especiales, la técnica de una sabiduría” (Torres Bodet, Margarita 73).

Despite Paloma’s minor role (as compared to Margarita's), the novel’s conclusion reveals her significance when Borja admits that he made a mistake in deciding to marry Margarita. Borja’s dilemma over modern Paloma versus traditional Margarita came to a head when Margarita’s parents announced that they were moving back to Germany. When he learned of her imminent departure, Borja hastily decided to marry Margarita and leave Mexico with her and her family: “Porque ahora sí la deseo. El temor súbito de perderla … me revela—de pronto—la finalidad de todas las inquietudes” (Torres Bodet, Margarita 73). However, Borja belatedly regretted his decision, after having embarked on the ship and begun sailing to Europe. While breakfasting with Margarita and her family, Borja noticed that the Mexican family sitting next to them was also comprised of parents and newlyweds: “una familia mexicana nos reproduce en moreno como la copia de un espejo inteligente que no tomará de la realidad sino los elementos esenciales” (Torres Bodet, Margarita 99). (Note again the allusion to a mirror and multiple reflections of reality.) Borja had much in common with the groom: “Él, como yo, es un criollo de
rasgos insignificantes y de hablar contenido y pretencioso” (Torres Bodet, *Margarita* 99), but the bride resembled Paloma, not Margarita: “Ella se parece a Paloma tan visiblemente que Margarita se cree en el caso de tener que darle la espalda” (Torres Bodet, *Margarita* 99). Thus the vision of this family awoke Borja to the realization of his mistaken marriage to a foreigner:

> al comparar este grupo con el nuestro, la copia me parece superior al original. Es posible que el padre de la desconocida no tenga el hábil criterio comercial del señor Millers. Es seguro que la madre no interprete a Beethoven…Pero ¡con qué delicadeza se han hecho a un lado de la vida de sus hijos! ¡Cómo se advierten esas virtudes de silencio y de inteligente modestia que son las de mi raza, las de Paloma, acaso también las mías!

(Torres Bodet, *Margarita* 100)

An independent woman, Paloma, both cosmopolitan and Mexican, can be understood as representative of Torres Bodet’s ideal aesthetic, which is modern and distinctly Latin American.

Echoing his essay “La deshumanización del arte,” Torres Bodet’s novel emphasizes also that, like Paloma, the best Latin American response to Ortega’s dehumanization is a modern Latin American artistic tradition that is independent in its own right. Moreover, if Paloma presents a contrast to Margarita, she also opposes Jarnés’s female characters and is therefore a response to *El profesor inútil*. Torres Bodet suggests that ephemeral games with new artistic forms, such as those found in *El profesor inútil*, proved insufficient for the construction of a Latin American art. Inmersed in debates concerning the definition of a Mexican identity, Torres Bodet also believed that art (and in this case novels) needed to depict a clear aesthetic stance.  

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85 I would also argue that, through Paloma, Torres Bodet questions the chauvinist depiction of female characters in the genre as a whole. Hispanic vanguard novels in Spain, Mexico, and Argentina consistently depict “pneumatic” characters like Margarita, Susana, Ruth, and Carlota. Torres Bodet offers an alternative in Paloma.
Moreover, as autonomous countries, Latin America needed to engage a cosmopolitan aesthetic dialogue, actively contribute to the creation of new Western artistic tendencies and affirm its place in the Post-Colonial world order, which, he believed, required the development of a modern Latin American aesthetic. Thus Torres Bodet put the theory he pronounced in his essay into practice in his novel *Margarita de niebla*; a modern text that employed self-reflexive dehumanized artistic tendencies and was also Mexican.
Conclusion

This dissertation has examined the triangular network of often contentious debates that developed between writers and intellectuals across three countries and two continents. These symbolic confrontations demonstrate an evolution in Spain and Latin America’s relationship, which impacted cultural and literary production during the 1920s. One hundred years after independence, many Spanish intellectuals still viewed Latin American countries as less-developed and as an extension of Spain—a conservative perspective that fueled the debates discussed in this thesis. As Latin American intellectuals claimed their right to intervene in the international literary field, they demanded that their Spanish counterparts recognize their cultural independence. Thus a recurring theme in these debates was Spain’s lack of understanding of Latin America’s distinctness, and of the real transformations changing the continent. Moreover, filled with anxiety about the deteriorating status of Spain’s culture, many Spanish intellectuals still contended that Latin American literature was part of a Spanish tradition. Latin American intellectuals, however, insisted upon their cultural autonomy. Despite a shared language and cultural heritage, Spanish and Latin American perspectives on literary and artistic aesthetic styles were quite different. As Torres Bodet argued, Latin America’s (and within Latin America each independent nation’s) reality was very different from Spain’s, resulting in fundamentally different views on the purposes and goals of art and literature. Although Latin America shared a Hispanic tradition and language with Spain, the newly minted nations’ geography, history, and indigenous cultures were now a very rich source of inspiration that would inform the new national imaginaries of each country and propel them to surpass European culture. In fact, the Guatemalan poet Luis Cardoza y Aragón would note this new cultural inversion when he stated that “Los griegos son los mayas de Europa” (8).
The exchanges I have examined also reveal complex transnational relationships between Latin American countries. Latin American intellectuals often invoked *ibero, hispano, and latinoamericanismo* in order to promote cultural and political solidarity among Latin American nations. Stressing that Latin Americans shared a cultural heritage that surpassed national divisions, intellectuals employed these terms as a means of encouraging Latin Americans to come together in order to solve social challenges, such as educational reform and political oppression, that affected all Latin Americans. Yet, at the same time, rivalries between Latin American nations further complicated the transatlantic disputes that took place between the Old and New worlds during the 1920s.

Looking back on this period in the 1940s, Alfonso Reyes reflected upon Latin America’s role in the international community in two lectures—“América y los *Cuadernos Americanos*” (1941) and “Posición de América” (1942). In the first lecture, he argued that, for Latin American culture, one of the unexpected benefits of having been a colony was universalism: “El hecho mismo de haber sido convidados algo tarde al simposio de la cultura, de haber sido un orbe colonial y de haber nacido a la autonomía al tiempo mismo en que ya se ponía el sol en los dominios de la lengua ibérica, nos ha adiestrado en la operación de asomarnos a otras lenguas, a otras tradiciones, a otras ventanas” (34). Thus, echoing many Latin American contributions to the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*, Reyes maintained that, in contrast to “pueblos magistrales,” such as older European nations, Latin American cultures were open to outside influences and willing to grow and develop, which made them more universal. Reyes further developed this theory in “Posición de América,” in which he explained that “[e]l ciudadano de las grandes naciones creadoras de cultura casi no tiene necesidad de salir de sus fronteras lingüísticas para completar su imagen del mundo. El ciudadano de la antigua colonia tiene que ir
a la vida internacional para completar tal imagen” (60). In addition to having a more universal perspective, as the exchanges I have examined reveal, Reyes explained that Latin American nations shared a unique transnational relationship: “los pueblos de América, por el impulso de su formación histórica semejante, son menos extranjeros entre sí que las naciones del Viejo Mundo,” which had allowed them to develop “cierta labor armoniosa y continuada de conversación internacional, sostenida por más de medio siglo” and was “sorprendente si se considera la magnitud del territorio que cubre y el semillero de pueblos que abarca” (61). Thus Latin American intellectuals were more adept at transnational negotiations and, despite their differences, were able to come together in solidarity when necessary. As a result, applying Reyes’s perspective to the debates between Spanish and Latin American intellectuals during the 1920s reveals that their disputes transcended tensions owing to a colonial legacy. A century after independence, as Torres Bodet had insisted, Latin American intellectuals viewed the world very differently from their Spanish counterparts.

Despite their contentious nature, the exchanges between Spanish, Mexican, and Argentine intellectuals that took place in literary journals and magazines during the 1920s effectively created a triangular transatlantic network of communication. As El Estudiante’s example demonstrated, not all of these interactions were negative. In many instances, Latin American and Spanish intellectuals were able to find common ground and support each other in solidarity. Moreover, these exchanges contributed to the development of transatlantic genres such as Hispanic vanguard prose. While his views significantly opposed Jarnés’s and Ortega’s views on art, as I have argued in chapter 4, Torres Bodet's metafictional response to the Spanish thinkers in Margarita de niebla contributed to the development of this novelistic form.
By the mid 1930s, however, in addition to feeling the effects of the stock market crash of 1929, political circumstances in Mexico, Argentina, and Spain significantly stymied the growth of the transnational and transnational network that had ensued during the 1920s. In Mexico, then-president Plutarco Elías Calles became increasingly authoritarian and, although he was not officially in power during the 1930s, proclaiming himself the Jefe máximo, he ran the country from the sidelines until 1934. During this period known as the Maximato, intellectuals reignited the debate over what constituted a Mexican literature. In the 1932 polémica nacionalista, Contemporáneos such as Xavier Villaurrutia and Salvador Novo advocated a cosmopolitan Mexican literature that was in tune with Western modernity, while journalists Emilio Abreu Gómez and Héctor Pérez Martínez insisted that Mexican literature should be limited to depicting Mexico’s reality. Meanwhile, in Argentina, General José Félix Uriburu’s 1930 coup d’état ended the period of liberal democracy under presidents Hipólito Yrigoyen and Marcelo T. Alvear and initiated the Década infame (1930-43), in which a series of authoritarian, fraudulent, and weak governments ran the country. As in Mexico, intellectuals in Argentina turned towards national concerns. For example, a direct response to Uriburu’s coup, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada published Radiografía de la pampa 1933, an examination of Argentine history, society, and culture. Four years later Eduardo Mallesa’s Historia de una pasión argentina (1937) aired the same topics.

In Spain, liberal Republicans overthrew Miguel Primo de Rivera in 1930 and established the Second Republic (1931-39), in which the 1931 Constitution implemented social progress such as women’s suffrage and freedom of speech. However, this democratic period ended when the armed forces, including General Francisco Franco, led a military uprising against the Republican government, initiating the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). Spanish political turmoil during the 1930s also led intellectuals to question their 1920s avant-garde experimentation and
Generation of ’27 poets, such as Rafael Alberti, became deeply involved in politics. Meanwhile, *La Gaceta Literaria* director Ernesto Giménez Caballero turned towards fascism. While the Spanish Civil War all but paralyzed cultural reciprocity between Spain and Latin America, the triangular network that intellectuals from both sides of the Atlantic had established during the 1920s enabled Spanish exiles’ emigration to Mexico and Argentina during the 1930s and 1940s. Moreover, the system of transatlantic book distribution that Spanish publishing houses had managed to develop in Latin America during the 1920s ensured their survival, during and after the Civil War. For example, Espasa-Calpe, which opened its subsidiary in Buenos Aires in 1936, first published its popular “Colección Austral” in Argentina in 1939. Espasa-Calpe was also well established in Mexico, where collaboration between Spanish and Mexican intellectuals developed cultural centers including the Casa de España, which would eventually become the Colegio de México.

Despite the political hardships that Spain, Mexico, and Argentina endured during the 1930s, the triangular transatlantic network that intellectuals from these countries had developed during the 1920s did transcend the decade. For instance, between 1929 and the outbreak of World War II, Jaime Torres Bodet held diplomatic positions in Madrid. During the early 30s he contributed frequently to *Revista de Occidente* and further developed a relationship with Benjamín Jarnés. Moreover, Espasa-Calpe published his novels *La educación sentimental* (1929), *Proserpina rescatada* (1931), and *Estrella de día* (1933). Literatura, also in Madrid, published *Pímero de enero* (1935). Jarnés spent his years in exile in Mexico City, where he published *Ariel Disperso* (1946), a collection of the many reviews of Latin American writers and artists he had published in Spanish and Latin American journals during the 1920s. José Vasconcelos wrote the prologue. Meanwhile, Guillermo de Torre had moved to Buenos Aires in
1927 to marry Norah Borges. There he published “La Gaceta Americana” for *La Gaceta Literaria*. The couple later settled in Madrid between 1932 and 1936. After a brief sojourn in Paris at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, however, they returned to Buenos Aires where de Torre would become an important participant in Editorial Losada. However, Ortega y Gasset’s relationship with Argentina soured when he published two essays: “La Pampa promesas” and “El hombre a la defensiva,” which he included in *El Espectador VII* in 1929. If his enthusiasm for Argentina during the early 1920s had led to a productive dialogue with the “Nueva Generación,” his significantly more critical assessment of Argentines in these essays was met with widespread scorn from writers such as Jorge Luis Borges and Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz. Yet, in the end, the heated debate that ensued strengthened Ortega’s relationship with Argentine intellectuals.

The Hispanic triangle of exchange that emerged during the 1920s also set the stage for the publication of journals such as Alfonso Reyes’s *Monterrey: Correo literario* (Río de Janeiro 1930-37) and Argentine Victoria Ocampo’s *Sur* (Buenos Aires 1931-92). Akin to a modern day blog, *Monterrey* is the product of the connections that the even-tempered Reyes had established with Spanish and Latin American intellectuals during the 1920s. Stationed in Brazil in the early 1930s, the Mexican diplomat published his substantial correspondence with Spanish and Latin American thinkers in order to nurture the dialogue they had initiated during the previous decade and bring others into the conversation. Modeled after the well-established literary journals *Nouvelle Revue Française* (Paris 1909-Present) and Ortega y Gasset’s *Revista de Occidente*, Ocampo’s *Sur* also broadened the scope of the 1920s dialogue. For instance, Ocampo’s relationship with novelist and historian Waldo Frank nurtured new intellectual connections between Latin America and the United States. In addition, she inserted a feminist discourse into the male-dominated patriarchal transnational and transatlantic discussion. Furthermore, *Sur*
eventually eclipsed *Revista de Occidente*’s importance in Latin America. Thus in a sense, Ocampo was able to achieve the meridian status that *martinfierristas* had pursued. As a result, more than a series of isolated disputes, the cultural exchanges discussed in this dissertation illustrate that Spanish and Latin American intellectuals engaged in the development of a modern Hispanic Republic of letters, spanning two continents and three burgeoning metropolises.
Appendix

Spanish, Argentine, and Mexican Journals

Spanish Journals

La Pluma (Madrid, 1920-1924)

Writer, politician, and president of the Second Republic (1936-39) Manuel Azaña, together with playwright Cipriano Rivas Cherif, founded La Pluma with the intent of providing “un refugio donde la vocación literaria pueda vivir en la plenitud de su independencia, sin transigir con el ambiente” (La Pluma June 1920, 2). Opposing movements such as ultraísmo, La Pluma was meant to be a more inclusive space for publication open to writers who, while not affiliated with any group or movement, came together around an “hostilidad a los agentes de corrupción del gusto y propenden a encontrarse dentro del mismo giro del pensamiento contemporáneo” (La Pluma June 1920, 2). Yet, despite its aversion to ultraísmo, which Rivas Cherif considered a weak imitation of other European vanguard movements, La Pluma was in fact open to many literary genres, including Ramón’s vanguard prose, and Ramón del Valle Inclán’s experimental theatre, which he called esperpento. La Pluma published prose, poetry, and theatre, and it included two recurring columns—“El paseante en corte” and “La dame de coeur”—that focused on life in Madrid. Most issues also concluded with a final section entitled “Gacetilla,” a list of isolated comments on heterogeneous subjects.

During its four years of publication, La Pluma made a significant effort to include literature from other European countries and Latin America. For example, sections such as “Letras Francesas,” “Letras Portuguesas,” “Letras Alemanas,” “Letras Inglesas,” and “Letras

86 Cipriano Rivas Cherif wrote a scathing review of Guillermo de Torre’s ultraísmo in December 1920.
Italianas” appeared with increasing frequency. An intergenerational publication, *La Pluma* published writers from the Generation of ’98 including Miguel de Unamuno and Antonio Machado, Latin American *modernistas* such as Rubén Darío (Nicaragua) and Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera (Mexico), and Generation of ’14 writers such as Ramón Pérez de Ayala. The journal also provided a space for younger Generation of ’27 writers such as Federico García Lorca, Antonio Espina, Pedro Salinas and Jorge Guillén. In spite of its professed openness to multiple genres and writers from different nationalities, *La Pluma* did engage in controversial transatlantic debates, such as an exchange over *modernismo* between Rivas Cherif and Mexican *ateneísta*, writer and diplomat Alfonso Reyes.

*Alfar (La Coruña 1923-27)*

While *La Pluma* made a concerted attempt to be a transnational and transatlantic journal, *Alfar*, an elegant literary journal from Galicia, was even more determined to establish a dialogue between Spanish and Latin American intellectuals. Emerging from the chrysalis of some earlier ventures, and existing under different names from 1920 through 1922), in 1923 *Alfar* finally became the official name of Casa América Galicia’s publication. In contrast to other Galician journals, which were published either in Galician or in Galician and Spanish, *Alfar* was published entirely in Spanish. It was directed by Uruguayan diplomat in Galicia Julio J. Casal, who had previously worked on the literary journal *Vida* (La Coruña 1920). 87 *Alfar*’s sponsorship by Casa América Galicia added an economic dimension absent in *Vida*, but both journals

87 In “*Alfar*: Historia de dos revistas literarias,” Víctor G. de la Concha, details the continuity between *Vida* and *Alfar* given Julio J. Casal’s salient presence in both publications. As described by de la Concha, *Vida* was a spirited literary journal that aimed at illustrating the aesthetic and social preoccupations of its editors. It published a broad variety of topics such as art criticism, theatre, prose fiction along with essays on science, medicine, local criticism and music (de la Concha 501).
displayed Casal’s efforts to create a publication in which various forms of aesthetic expression by authors from different generations and nationalities could coexist.\textsuperscript{88} *Alfar* therefore combined Casal’s penchant for fostering connections and exchanges between artists and genres with Casa América Galicia’s goals of strengthening political and economic ties between Spain and Latin America. As a result, journal issues mentioned economic updates or topics related to trade between Latin America and Galicia, while publishing visual arts (art criticism, illustrations, and music criticism) and literature (prose, poetry, and literary criticism) from Spain, Europe, and Latin America. Principally preoccupied with vanguard aesthetic movements, *Alfar* published essays, art criticism, and reproductions of paintings by painters such as Uruguayan Rafael Barradas and Spanish Surrealist Salvador Dalí. Spanish vanguard prose novelist Benjamín Jarnés frequently appeared in *Alfar*, as did Ramón. Moreover, Generation ’27 poets such as Rafael Alberti and Gerardo Diego were often featured in the Galician journal. As compared to contributions from other Latin American nationalities, Argentine intellectuals such as *ultraísmos* Jorge Luis Borges and Eduardo González Lanuza frequently appeared in *Alfar*. However, Latin Americans from other countries such as Mexican Alfonso Reyes, Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro, and Peruvian poet César Vallejo also published their work in *Alfar*. Spanish critic and poet Guillermo de Torre, who often reviewed Latin American writers, was a frequent contributor. In chapter 2, I discuss a debate on the origins of *ultraísmo* he engaged with Vicente Huidobro.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{88} César Antonio Molina’s fifth chapter in *La revista literaria Alfar y la prensa literaria de su época (1920-1930)* provides a more thorough description of this topic.

\textsuperscript{89} *Alfar*’s last issue was published in 1927, but the journal’s most successful period only lasted until 1926 when it was published in La Coruña. The journal’s quality and consistency suffered greatly when Julio J. Casal transferred it to Uruguay.
Revista de Occidente (1923-36)

The most important Spanish literary journal of the 1920s was José Ortega y Gasset’s Revista de Occidente appearing in the culturally rich period between World War I and the Spanish Civil War. Ortega had a very clear vision for his publication, which he had outlined in the first issue in “Propósitos” (RDO July 1923). Revista de Occidente was to be a cultural journal that published philosophical, scientific, and literary texts of the highest quality. In order to further enrich cosmopolitanism in the Western world, Revista de Occidente fostered transnational and transatlantic exchanges by accepting contributions from a variety of authors (RDO “Propósitos” July 1923, 3). Ortega’s journal published Spanish, Latin American, French, American, German, and British intellectuals (the latter four in Spanish translation). Among foreign contributors, however, French and German intellectuals were most often featured in Revista de Occidente. Unlike many journals at the time that were often published irregularly, there were no lapses in Revista de Occidente’s monthly issues between 1923 and 1936. Given its consistency and superb caliber, Revista de Occidente was widely read in Latin America, where Ortega y Gasset had gained much popularity among young intellectuals with España invertebrada (1921), El tema de nuestro tiempo (1923), and La deshumanización del arte (1925). Although Ortega y Gasset’s ties to Argentina were the strongest (he visited the country twice), his ideas reverberated among Mexican intellectuals as well. I discuss Ortega’s exchanges with Argentine intellectuals in chapter 1. In chapter 4 I examine a debate between Mexican poet

90 Evelyn López Campillo offers a detailed account of foreign contributions to Revista de Occidente in Revista de Occidente y la formación de minorías.

91 Before being published as books, Ortega y Gasset published many of his essays in Madrid’s El Sol, which were often reproduced in Mexico’s El Universal and Buenos Aires’s La Nación. Ortega also published regularly in La Nación.
Jaime Torres Bodet and Spanish novelist Benjamín Jarnés concerning Ortega’s *La deshumanización del arte*.

*Plural* (Madrid 1925)

*Plural* was a “little magazines” that also appeared in Spain during the 1920s. Novelists Benjamín Jarnés and Valentín Andrés Álvarez, along with Guillermo de Torre, created *Plural* in 1925. Their journal was to be “el punto de fusión o convergencia de varios escritores jóvenes … que, habiendo partido, en su mayor parte, del mismo foco, después de ramificarse en surcos individuales, vuelven a encontrarse en un punto meridiano de cruce común” (*Plural* January 1925, 1). Publishing prose, poetry and reviews, *Plural* did not promote a particular aesthetic movement, although it was aligned with European vanguard aesthetics. In addition to Spanish contributors, *Plural’s* two issues included French and Latin American articles on literature, visual arts, and music. Yet, like most vanguard journals during the 1920s, *Plural’s* international scope privileged French intellectuals. Despite its brief period of publication, *Plural* is significant for its efforts to engage in a transatlantic dialogue with Latin American intellectuals, especially from Argentina. In chapter 2 I discuss *Plural’s* participation in a debate between Borges and de Torre concerning *ultraísmo*.

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92 The term “little magazines” generally refers to noncommercial journals that published experimental texts, in many cases, by lesser known artists and writers.

93 *Plural* does not list its directors, but in *Revistas de la vanguardia española* Rafael Osuna cites Francisco Arias Solís, who affirmed that Benjamín Jarnés, Guillermo de Torre and Valentín Andrés Álvarez founded *Plural* (262).
El Estudiante (Salamanca and Madrid 1925-26)

A group of students from the University of Salamanca first published El Estudiante: Semanario de la juventud escolar española (1925-26) in May 1925. Their goal was to initiate a student movement that would counter Spain’s cultural decay. As students of the University of Salamanca, an institution that represented Spain’s past, they wanted to be the first to revise their country’s educational system in order to achieve more substantial political reform, which implied a resistance to Miguel Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship. While sociopolitical and educational reforms were its primary focus, El Estudiante also published literary criticism and novel fragments. For instance, the journal printed lengthy selections from Tirano Banderas by Ramón del Valle-Inclán in multiple issues, a novel set in a Latin American country that strongly resembles Mexico. Transnational and transatlantic in its scope, El Estudiante published contributions from French and Latin American intellectuals. While this journal has received little critical attention, its participation in establishing a triangular network between Spain, Mexico, and Argentina during the 1920s was significant because it reversed the usual patronizing role Spanish intellectuals took vis-à-vis Latin America. As I detail in chapter 1, El Estudiante emulated and sought solidarity with Mexican and Argentine intellectuals.

Gaceta Literaria (Madrid 1927-32)

Perhaps most proactive in establishing a network of intellectual exchange between Spain and Latin America was Ernesto Giménez Caballero’s La Gaceta Literaria, first published in January 1927. La Gaceta Literaria picked up where Alfar left off in 1926 when the latter’s

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94 The main character in Valle-Inclán’s novels, Tirano Banderas, also seems to represent Porfirio Díaz.
director, Julio J. Casal, moved the journal to Uruguay. However, Giménez Caballero’s vision was broader than Julio J. Casals’s. Professing to be “Ibérica, Americana e Internacional,” *La Gaceta Literaria* published European, Latin American, Russian, and North American contributions. Formatted like a newspaper and in the same category as the French *Les Nouvelles Litteraires* and the Italian *La Fiera Letteraria*, *La Gaceta Literaria* published essays, reviews, poetry, prose, and criticism. Moreover, this apolitical journal also paid close attention to art, film, and architecture. In order to bring “peripheral” literatures to the Spanish capital, *La Gaceta Literaria* sponsored book fairs (Catalan, Portuguese, and Argentine). Catalan, Latin American, and Portuguese literature and art were regularly reviewed and published in *La Gaceta Literaria* from its inception and would eventually earn their own supplemental “gacetas,” such as *La Gaceta Americana* edited by Benjamín Jarnés in Madrid and Guillermo de Torre in Buenos Aires. As I detail in chapter 3, *La Gaceta Literaria* instigated one of the most significant 1920s disputes between Spanish and Latin American intellectuals when Guillermo de Torre wrote his editorial “Madrid: Meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica” in April 1927. Spanish, Argentine, Uruguayan, Mexican, Cuban, Peruvian, and Italian intellectuals participated in this debate known as the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*, which lasted through 1929.

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95 In *La Gaceta Literaria (1927-1932): Biografía y valoración*, Miguel Ángel Hernando cites Ortega y Gasset’s “Sobre un periódico de letras” (*LGL* 1 January 1927) and notes that the philosopher most likely considered *La Gaceta Literaria* to be in a different category from *Alfar.*

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In September 1923, the University of La Plata’s “Grupo Renovación” published Valoraciones, directed by Carlos Américo Amaya. Valoraciones participated in the Reforma universitaria, but it played host to a plurality of concerns in each issue. Affirming that elevating culture could attain social change, the journal maintained that art, literature, and sociopolitical issues were inextricably linked. Combining politics, history, philosophy, and the arts, this sophisticated journal aimed to “provocar batalla en el campo de las ideas” in order to precipitate reform (Valoraciones 1 September 1923). “Grupo Renovación” stood for university reform, opposing archaic values, and arguing that universities had a vital social role. Affirming that the university had become a degenerated institution, they believed that, by elevating culture, their journal could inspire students to participate in reconfiguring higher education. Moreover, “Grupo Renovación” proposed that politics, history, philosophy, and aesthetics needed to converge in order to attain reform. A transatlantic and transnational journal, Valoraciones paid close attention to Argentine intellectuals but also attempted to cover the broadest range of national and foreign events, publishing contributions from French, German, Spanish, and Mexican thinkers. As I discuss in chapter 1, Valoraciones achieved its purpose when it inspired the students from the University of Salamanca to publish El Estudiante. Valoraciones, and its contemporary journal Sagitario (La Plata, 1925-27), quickly responded to the Spanish students’ call for solidarity around the issue of university reform, establishing an unprecedented transatlantic relationship between Spain and Latin America.
Inicial (Buenos Aires 1923-27)

Brandán Caraffa, Homero Guglielmini, Roberto Smith, and Roberto A. Ortelli first published *Inicial: Revista de la nueva generación* in October 1923. Firmly entrenched in the *Reforma Universitaria* movement, this boisterous, aggressive journal stood for radical sociopolitical changes and published the latest aesthetic tendencies. In its first issue (October 1923), *Inicial* affirmed its intent to provide a space where the world’s problems could be openly discussed. The journal welcomed “esa juventud dispersa que vagabundeá por las publicaciones y revistas más o menos desteñidas de nuestro ambiente, sin encontrar donde pueda elevar el tono de su acento a la altura de sus propias convicciones” (47). *Inicial* primarily discussed philosophy, politics, nationalism, Latin Americanism, and educational reform. However, articles pertaining to aesthetics—poetry, art, dance, and theatre—were included within *Inicial*’s agenda to promote social change within Argentina and across Latin America. *Inicial* also published French, Spanish, Russian, and Latin American intellectuals and engaged transnational and transatlantic discussions. For instance, as I detail in chapter 1, *Inicial* initiated a dialogue with Ortega y Gasset, who responded from his column in the Buenos Aires daily newspaper *La Nación*. In each issue, *Inicial* published introductory essays that addressed the journal’s vision for the “Nueva Generación,” and its right to break with past generations’ sociopolitical and aesthetic perspectives. Finally, the recurring section “Protestamos” lists various cultural and political matters that the journal’s editors adamantly rejected, such as governmental infringements upon

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96 I reference Fernando Diego Rodríguez’s introduction to the facsimile version of *Inicial* published by the Universidad Nacional de Quilmes.

workers’ rights. This section’s combative tone is in keeping with *Inicial*’s overall aggressive stance.

*Proa* (Buenos Aires 1924-26)

Resulting from a rift between Brandán Caraffa and *Inicial* collaborators Homero Guglielmini, Roberto Smith, and Vicente Ruiz de Gallarreta, “cuatro escritores jóvenes formados en distintos ambientes”—Jorge Luis Borges, Brandán Caraffa, Ricardo Güiraldes and Pablo Rojas Paz—first published *Proa* in August 1925 (3). 98 This small, journal, adorned with brightly colored covers, echoed some of *Inicial*’s perspectives in its first issue. *Proa* announced that, having witnessed World War I and having participated in university reform, Argentina’s new generation was ready to create a journal that was at once cosmopolitan and distinctly Argentinean: “Jamás nuestro país ha vivido tan intensamente como ahora la vida del espíritu. La alta cultura que hasta hoy había sido patrimonio exclusivo de Europa y de los pocos americanos que habían bebido en ella, empieza a trasuntarse … como producto esencial de nuestra civilización (3). Unlike *Inicial* and *Valoraciones*, however, *Proa* did not engage sociopolitical topics. Instead, the journal features prose, poetry, literary criticism, art, and art criticism. While Argentine writers’ and artists’ presence in *Proa* far surpassed that of intellectuals from other nationalities, *Proa* also attempted to maintain an international scope. Contributions from French writers and artists are the most notable, along with significant publications on or by Latin American poets and writers. In addition, *Proa* also published Austrian Symbolist painter Gustav Klimt, Irish Modernist James Joyce, Indian thinker Rabindranath Tagore, and Persian

98 For further information about the rift in *Inicial* that led to the creation of *Proa*, see Patricia Artundo’s “Punto de convergencia: *Inicial* y *Proa* en 1924,” in *Bibliografía y antología crítica de las vanguardias literarias: Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay*. 229
philosopher Omar Khayyam within its spectrum of international contributions. Moreover, *Proa* maintained a dialogue with Spanish intellectuals. For instance, as I discuss in chapter 2, Guillermo de Torre’s and Borges’s altercation concerning *ultraísmo* took place in *Proa* and Madrid’s *Plural*. Moreover, similarities between *Proa* and *Plural* suggest that the Spanish journal may have been modeled after its Argentine predecessor.

*Martín Fierro* (Buenos Aires 1924-1927)

*Martín Fierro* appeared in February 1924, championing international vanguard aesthetics while harnessing the distinctly Argentinean symbol, *Martín Fierro*, José Hernández’s late nineteenth-century epic poem about a gaucho. Seeking reform in Buenos Aires’s cultural scene and, breaking with *modernista* aesthetics, Évar Méndez and Samuel Glusberg published the first issue of the vanguard literary magazine *Martín Fierro* in February 1924. Sardonically outlining the explosive journal’s positions, the “Manifiesto *Martín Fierro*,” penned by Oliverio Girondo, appeared in the fourth issue (May 1924). Girondo’s text emulated other vanguard manifestoes such as Mexican Maples Arce’s *Actual I* and Marinetti’s Futurist Manifesto. However, the “Manifiesto *Martín Fierro*” mocked the need for self-definition and the expectation among Argentine intellectuals, that the journal take a position on nationalism.

Regular contributors to *Martín Fierro*, referred to as *martinierristas*, included avant-garde poet Oliverio Girondo, essayist and poet Pablo Rojas Paz, historian Ernesto Palacio, journalist Conrado Nalé Roxlo, writer Luis Franco, and poet Córdova Iturburu. Formatted like

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99 Sarlo, Beatriz. “Vanguardia y criollismo: La Aventura de *Martín Fierro*” in *Ensayos argentinos: De Sarmiento a la vanguardia*.

100 For a detailed account on the creation of *Martín Fierro* see La Fleur, Provenzano and Alonzo, *Las revistas literarias argentinas (1893-1967)*.
a newspaper, Martín Fierro’s bi-weekly, eight-to-twelve-page issues published Argentine vanguard writers including Borges, Girondo, Rojas Paz, experimental novelists Macedonio Fernández, Ricardo Güiraldes, Eduardo Mallea, and artists Norah Borges, Emilio Petorutti, Pedro Figari, and Alberto Prebisch. The journal’s international scope included French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Brazilian, and Latin American contributions, although the French presence in Martín Fierro was the most significant. This satirical and consciously disruptive vanguard publication featured poetry, prose, theatre, and criticism (literary and artistic). Often adorned with humorous caricatures, Martín Fierro merged cutting edge vanguard aesthetics with issues concerning the “Nueva Generación,” effectively bridging nationalism and cosmopolitanism. However, the journal’s haphazard format was meant to provide just a glimpse into issues more thoroughly addressed in Proa, Inicial, and Valoraciones.101

Síntesis (Buenos Aires 1927-30)

In June of 1927, the same year that Martín Fierro ceased publication, the more elegant and formal Síntesis appeared. Akin to Ortega y Gasset’s Revista de Occidente in form and issue length (over 100 pages each), Síntesis laid out simple goals: “Aspiramos a resumir a través de nuestras columnas, y en forma sintética, toda manifestación artística, intelectual y científica, [sic] de los pueblos de habla castellana” (5). Furthermore, affirming its support of hispanoamericanismo (the idea that Spain and Latin America were bound by one Hispanic culture and heritage), Síntesis also set out to promote “una cultura hispano-americana,” and to “[u]nificar la curiosidad científica e intelectual, de los pueblos de progiene hispánica” (5).

101 As noted by La Fleur, Provenzano and Alonzo in Las revistas literarias argentinas (1893-1967), Martín Fierro provoked a “revuelo” in the Argentine capital’s “mundillo literario,” but lacked the transcendence of a journal like Proa (La Fleur, Provenzano, Alonzo 102).
Directed by Galician immigrant Xavier Bóveda, the editorial board also featured Borges and Argentine poet Arturo Capdevila, and would eventually welcome Spanish poet and critic Guillermo de Torre upon his arrival in Buenos Aires in 1928. Purely a literary journal, Síntesis promoted “una cultura hispano-americana” by publishing primarily Argentine and Spanish writers and intellectuals. Like Revista de Occidente, Síntesis published lengthier texts, such as entire novel chapters. In addition, essays on social issues, such as education, philosophy, art, and literary criticism regularly appeared in Síntesis. Moreover, Síntesis included an extensive bibliographic section with detailed reviews of books, other journals, and current events taking place in the literary world. For instance, as I discuss in chapter 3, writing in this section, Bóveda engaged Síntesis in the polémica del meridiano intelectual in 1927.

Mexican Journals

La Antorcha (Mexico 1924-25)

José Vasconcelos’s journal La Antorcha, subtitled Letras, Arte, Ciencia, Industria: Semanario de José Vasconcelos, is a cross between a newspaper and a literary supplement, that offers insight into Mexico’s cultural and sociopolitical climate during the 1920s. Aspiring to be “un órgano de pensamiento libre” (La Antorcha 1 October 4, 1924, 35), La Antorcha engaged a variety of topics such as economics, agriculture, politics, science, literature, art, film, theatre, music, education, health, folklore, sports, fashion, humor, and even surveys on the readership’s favorite car. Moreover, Vasconcelos’s journal included a vast array of international contributions from Latin America, Europe, the United States, and Asia. Each weekly issue included an editorial introduction by José Vasconcelos that either addressed a theme that loosely framed the issue or commented on an important current event, most often relating to either Mexico or Latin
America. For instance, in the first issue, published on October 4, 1924, Vasconcelos affirmed that his journal would strive to make sense of Mexico’s current “época caótica” (1). Moreover, a forum for Mexican intellectual activity, La Antorcha participated in the 1925 debate now referred to as “la polémica del afeminamiento de la literatura.”

Estridentista Journals

Irradiador (Mexico 1923)

Manuel Maples Arce and Fermin Revueltas published the first estridentista journal, Irradiador: Revista de vanguardia, proyector internacional de nueva estética in September 1923. Reminiscent of Spanish ultraísta journals, every aspect of Irradiador’s content, structure, and format was designed to represent an estridentista aesthetic. Bright, bold colors, and vanguard illustrations that recall Cubist and Futurist designs adorn the journal’s front and back covers. Each of Irradiador’s three issues illustrated estridentismo’s primary goals: 1) avant-garde artistic and poetic forms that embraced modernity and technology and 2) a concern with social movements. For instance, Revueltas’s “El Restorán,” which appeared in the first issue, is a black and white cubist drawing, while muralist Diego Rivera’s “Los mineros” (October 1923) is a more realist representation of mine workers. Each issue of Irradiador published art, poetry, and articles on current events. Artists such as Jean Charlot, Guillermo Ruiz, and Leopoldo Méndez illustrated the journal alongside poems by Germán List Arzubide, Salvador Gallardo, and Kyn Taniya. Notably, José Juan Tablada, originally a modernista also published avant-garde poetry in Irradiador. A “Proyector Internacional, ” Irradiador also published Swiss poet Gestón Dinner, Spanish poet Humberto Rivas, and Argentine Jorge Luis Borges. Borges’s presence in Irradiador, as Rose Corral has noted, confirms a connection between ultraísmo and
estridentismo within Latin America since Borges also reviewed Manuel Maples Arce in Proa, deeming him an ultraista.102

Horizonte (Xalapa 1926-27)

Three years later, Germán List Arzubide published Horizonte, the second estridentista journal. Like Irradiador, Horizonte’s front covers were printed in color, featuring estridentista paintings by Ramón Alva de la Canal and Leopoldo Méndez. While some covers were abstract works of art, other paintings illustrated workers, peasants, and indigenous figures. Subtitled “Revista mensual de actividad contemporánea,” Horizonte published prose, poetry, art, photography, and literary criticism, as well as essays on politics (most often concerning Xalapa, Veracruz), education, science, agriculture, and technology. As the front covers indicate, Horizonte also paid close attention to the labor movement and workers rights. Echoing Vasconcelos’s assertion that La Antorcha would strive to make sense of Mexico’s chaotic times, Horizonte set out to guide Mexico through its time of crisis (“Propósito” April 1926, 1). A space where modern political, social, philosophical, and aesthetic thought could converge, Horizonte aimed to broaden its readership’s “horizons.” For example, Horizonte called on Mexico’s young intellectuals to become leaders in making revolutionary ideals a reality. In “Se necesita juventud” (April 1926, 4) Horizonte proclaimed that Argentine intellectuals had already managed to effect change in their country and that Mexicans needed to do the same. Horizonte also participated in continental social and political movements such as the Reforma Universitaria. In chapter 1, I discuss Horizonte’s position on hispanoamericanismo, a much-debated topic throughout Latin

102 Rose Corral explains the connections between Mexican estridentismo and Argentine ultraísmo in “Un poema de Borges en la revista estridentista ‘Irradiador’ (1923)”.

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American during the 1920s. In addition, the *estridentista* journal published and reviewed Latin American, Spanish, Russian, French, and American writers and thinkers.

**Contemporáneos’ Journals**

In contrast to the *estridentistas*, the group of Mexican novelists, poets, and chroniclers, including Jorge Cuesta, Jaime Torres Bodet, Carlos Pellicer, Salvador Novo, and Xavier Villaurrutia, that identified themselves as the *Contemporáneos* did not create a specific aesthetic movement nor were they politically engaged in the same manner. Yet, the *Contemporáneos* were equally invested in reforming Mexico’s cultural scene. Famously called a “grupo sin grupo” by poet and novelist Xavier Villaurrutia, the *Contemporáneos* came together because they shared a similar vision for Mexican aesthetics, one that was at once Mexican and cosmopolitan. However, despite their shared values, diverging views within the group were evident in their literary journals: *La Falange* (1922-1923), *Ulises* (1927-1928), and *Contemporáneos* (1928-1931). *La Falange* and *Contemporáneos*, directed by Torres Bodet and Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano, are more sober than Novo and Villaurrutia’s more daring *Ulises*. Yet, as compared to *estridentista* publications, *Contemporáneos’* journals rarely addressed sociopolitical issues.

*La Falange* (Mexico 1922-23)

Jaime Torres Bodet and Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano, first published *La Falange* on December 1, 1922, a journal intended to promote Latin American and Mexican culture. Despite its claims to be apolitical, *La Falange*’s cover, by Mexican painter Adolfo Best, depicts three naked, longhaired warriors, each of whom has a shield that covers his nudity stand alongside each other facing the same direction. The first is holding a red lightning bolt, the second a red
sun, and the third a red rose. They are walking single file holding one long red spear and the backdrop is gray and black. The title of the journal is also red. Such images and colors clearly suggest a combative and violent stance. *La Falange* was published consecutively once a month from December 1922 to February 1923 and the structure of these first three issues is consistent. Each journal opens with a literature section that published poetry and varying forms of fictional prose such as stories and even plays. A recurring section entitled “Poesía de América” follows, publishing mostly Mexican authors, but making an honest effort to include other Latin American authors. *La Falange* also includes a section that celebrates popular culture, “A.B.C.” followed by a literary review section entitled “Glosario,” organized by Jaime Torres Bodet. This section includes essays on literary, artistic and cultural topics, such as contests, fiction excerpts and book reviews. However, two other sections are more specifically focused on book reviews, “Libros” and “Letras Francesas”. “Kodak” subtitled “instantáneas, sección de humor” published informal commentary on topics usually related to city life. The final section of *La Falange* is “Índice”, where the editors publish either general statements regarding the journal’s purpose or views on articles/authors published in the issue. Following a five-month hiatus, *La Falange* reappeared in July 1923 with slight modifications. A Mexican artist now illustrated the cover for each issue,. July 1923 was commissioned to Manuel Rodríguez Lozano, August 1923 to Abraham Ángel and September 1923 was illustrated by Roberto Montenegro. The last issue, presumably October although the date is not on the issue, was dedicated to Carlos E. González’s work.

*Ulises* (Mexico 1927-28)

As its title proclaims, *Ulises* embarked upon countless journeys to satisfy its “curiosidad,” which often entailed participating in contentious debates such as the *polémica del*
*meridiano intelectual*, which I describe in chapter 3.\(^{103}\) Directed by Xavier Villaurrutia and Salvador Novo, *Ulises*’s adventures also included poetry, philosophy, essays, art, and vanguard prose. Mexican philosopher Antonio Caso was often featured in *Ulises*. Members of the *Contemporáneos*, such as Jorge Cuesta and Gilberto Owen authored most of the prose and poetry published in *Ulises*, although the journal did feature French poets such as Max Jacob, Italian writers such as Massimo Bontempelli. *Ulises* also paid close attention to Spanish intellectuals, commenting regularly on vanguard prose writers such as Antonio Espina and Benjamín Jarnés, whose novels were part of *Revista de Occidente*’s “Nova novorum” series. More sober than *La Falange*, *Ulises* layout was simple and the journal’s cover only included its name and issue number, depicted in large bold colored print. Moreover, *Ulises* is not divided into as many sections as *La Falange*. Similar to *Revista de Occidente*, the journal published prose, poetry, and essays, followed by a closing section entitled “Notas”. “Notas” was often divided into smaller sections, including the recurring “El curioso impertinente,” where the journal published some of its more polemical pieces, such as its contribution to the *polémica del meridiano intelectual*.

*Contemporáneos* (Mexico 1928-31)

Jaime Torres Bodet and Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano first published *Contemporáneos* in Mexico City in June 1928. Modeled after *Revista de Occidente* and the *Nouvelle Revue Française* (Paris 1909- Present), the journal’s format was consistent throughout its duration from 1928-1931. On each cover, the issue number appears above the journal’s title, which is outlined in bold green letters bunched together. A perpendicular rectangle below the name of the journal is divided into four boxes. The largest occupies the right side and contains the “Sumario”. Next

\(^{103}\) See Guillermo Sheridan *Los Contemporáneos ayer*, 280-81.
to the “Sumario” is a small cubist illustration in shades of green, brown, black, beige, and blue. The bottom left corner of the perpendicular box has another small cubist sketch, outlining a mask with the same color combination. To its right, in large bold letters, are the month, year, and place of publication. Like Ulises, the journal opens to a section of articles, poetry, prose, and essays. Bearing the same name and style as a section in Revista de Occidente, each issue of Contemporáneos closes with a section of commentary and reviews entitled “Motivos”. In addition, Contemporáneos published art—photographs, sketches, paintings—by artists such as Mexican Diego Rivera and Spaniard Gabriel García Maroto.
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