

**Local Culture and Historical Fiction in the Era of Globalization:**

**Sofia Segovia's *El murmullo de las abejas***

**Sarah Anderson**

California State University, Chico

An eco-critical approach to Latin American literature can take many forms, but it must take into consideration the way literature registers both the intimate knowledge of place and global forces of change.  
—Laura Barbas-Rhoden

“Venvenvenven, ven rápido, ven rápido, corre”, murmur the bees in Sofía Segovia’s 2015 novel *El murmullo de las abejas*. However, the magical plea to come quickly and to run is, as the title of the novel suggests, an urgent cry to the Mexican nation: a call to action to recognize the imminent threat to both local culture and the environment of the northern borderlands of Mexico. In Segovia’s novel, nature and culture are intertwined and juxtaposed as a means to address questions such as the following: Are local cultures on the brink of extinction? How have globalization and political and historical instability contributed to the destruction of local culture and the environment? In her compelling study, *Ecological Imagination in Latin American Fiction* (2011), Laura Barbas-Rhoden explores the field of Latin American eco-criticism and postulates that “texts of ecological imagination use a rhetoric of nature to expose and critique human power structures during a moment of growing unease about the global

economy...their fictionalization of history and the natural world offers warnings about modernization and highlights paths of resistance to it” (Barbas-Rhoden 2011, 2).

With the integration of national economies into a global market and the homogenization of the global population into a single society unified by economic, technological, socio-cultural and political forces, local cultural traditions are threatened. At the same time, neoliberal policies challenge democracy and place power in the hands of foreign investors. As such, the protection and conservation of culture and nature are thwarted by a focus on economic prosperity, ensuring the destruction of ecosystems and living creatures as humble—but important—as the honeybee, a central character in *El murmullo de las abejas*.

Through a historical account of the northern borderlands, interspersed with magical realism, Segovia highlights the threat to local culture and nature and connects both to the current socio-political situation in Mexico. This study argues that Segovia’s text is a voice of protest and political agency, where the intersection of literary style, mode and devices—all of which lend themselves to the idea of resistance—converge to create a new revolutionary cry and call to action, which recalls the famous cry of the Mexican Revolution, “Tierra y libertad”. By reading *El murmullo de las abejas* through an eco-critical lens, it is clear that the novel weaves together Nuevo León’s historical past with a magical realist fictional tale in order to cast light on the crisis of culture in the current globalized moment.<sup>1</sup>

With the implementation of NAFTA in 1994 and after, the northern borderlands of Mexico were thrust into the globalized market economy, with (mostly) deleterious effects on the Mexican people. The borderlands experienced an explosion of *maquiladoras*—factories run by foreign investors in Mexico—which produce goods for the global market.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, small farms were replaced by large agri-

<sup>1</sup> As many critics have observed, magical realism in literature can be viewed as a subversive narrative technique. In *Ordinary Enchantments. Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*, Wendy Faris argues that “Magical Realism radically modifies and replenishes the dominant mode of realism...challenging its basis of representation from within. That destabilization of a dominant form means that it has served as a particularly effective decolonizing agent” (Faris 2004, 1).

<sup>2</sup> The *maquiladora* program, a method of assembling and packing for export, began in Ciudad Juárez (Nuevo León) in the mid 1960s. The program was created to develop the region and boost the national economy. Since 1970 the program has flourished in Ciudad Juárez, especially since the 1980s and after the implementation of NAFTA, reaching its most productive year in 2000, with 308 (or 9.7%) of the 3,166 maquiladora plants in Mexico employing 249,380 people, out of a total of 1,291,232 nationally (one in five). In recent years, the numbers have declined because of the competitive global labor market in places such as China. However, the *maquiladora* industry continues to completely dominate the economy of Ciudad Juárez, the transnational space of El Paso del Norte, and the state of Chihuahua (Cunninghame 2007).

businesses that brought fertilizers, pesticides, genetically modified crops and machinery. Local farmers, with their traditional seeds, crops, and farming techniques, could not compete with increasingly industrialized agricultural production for the global market. Indeed, many farmers abandoned their way of life entirely and looked for work in large metropolitan areas or emigrated north to the United States. The northern borderlands faced a new set of challenges when Felipe Calderón became Mexico's president in 2006 and began his war on drugs; a new exodus of people occurred in the wake of the (ongoing) violent war between drug cartels and the state—especially in light of how effective the cartels have been in destabilizing and controlling local governments and people through regimes of fear and terror. Over the course of some fifteen years the northern border zones have undergone a multitude of changes due to globalization and the lingering effects of the drug war. Understandably, many in the area have wondered: is this the death of the local culture of the borderlands?

In *El murmullo de las abejas*, Sofía Segovia clearly presents a case to protect and save local culture and, in a way, responds to recent scholarship that has challenged the concept of culture altogether, often viewing it as antiquated. In Shaheed Nick Mohammed's study on the globalization of culture, he ponders not whether culture is dead or who killed it, but rather if "culture is a valid concept anymore" (Mohammed 2011, xvi). For Mohammed, if a global society exists, then the notion of culture, which insinuates difference, becomes extinct. Sofía Segovia clearly rejects this position. Instead, her text becomes a way to remember and protect the concept of culture, and, in particular, the culture and tradition of the northern borderlands. As such, it re-visits the landscape of northern Mexico in the state of Nuevo León during and just after the Mexican Revolution. Situated within this historical context, Segovia narrates the tale of the Morales family, whose lives are altered by the Revolution, the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic and the Agrarian Land reforms of Post-Revolutionary Mexico. Nevertheless, although these historical events form the sociohistorical backdrop for the narration, it is the indigenous woman Reja and Simonopio, the deformed, abandoned baby—and the bees that cover him like a blanket and follow him through life—that change and transform the "history" of the family and the region.

Filled with a sense of nostalgia, *El murmullo de las abejas* ponders the slow death of traditional Mexico, with a strong message for a return to origins to save the rich cultural heritage and natural environment of the region. Segovia's historical tale is also

a re-writing of “official history,” weaving into the text the forgotten “others.” By incorporating forgotten histories and redirecting the gaze back to the local and away from the global, the text articulates a powerful message. For Segovia, “culture” is still a concept worthy of consideration and is central to the preservation of Nuevo León.

The preservation of culture, however, is not an easy task. According to Thomas Friedman, the threat to both culture and nature due to globalizing forces is undeniable: “...globalization as a culturally homogenizing and environment devouring force is coming on so fast, there is real danger that in just a few decades it will wipe out the ecological and cultural diversity that took millions of years of human and biological forces to produce” (in Redner 2004, 278). Harry Redner reiterates this belief in his study on conserving culture, explaining how nature and culture are intertwined, arguing that the loss of one will cripple the other, leading to forms of “monoculture” (Redner 2004, 19). Redner goes on to state that local cultures protect and promote difference and diversity whereas globalization produces uniformity (Redner 2004, 47).

To understand how Segovia weaves together nature and culture as a way to save and protect the diverse culture and environment of the borderlands, it is instructive to turn to the beginning of the novel and the character of Simonopio, the abandoned baby born with a cleft lip, and the magical, indigenous woman Reja. The narrative begins with the story of Reja’s origin and how she discovers Simonopio. Immediately, Segovia draws the reader into the local history of Linares, highlighting the two characters that represent marginalized others and who also symbolize origin in the text. As the only indigenous character, she is not a significant part of the narration, but she is structurally the backbone of the text and is important to the development and argument of the novel. She wanders into the town of Linares, carrying her deceased infant, and her story becomes part of the magical realist tale in the novel. The town doctor is the first to see her, an outsider, and immediately he takes her to the Morales house. After giving birth to a son, Señora Morales is dying from an infection and is unable to feed her baby. In a quick exchange, the doctor replaces Reja’s deceased infant with the Morales baby, who hungrily nurses from her breast. Her breast milk saves the infant. When the doctor informs the husband that he has found a wet nurse, his reaction and reply is “*Está muy negra*” (Segovia 2015, 17). Nevertheless, the doctor emphasizes, “*Pero la leche es blanca, como debe ser*” (Segovia 2015, 17). This reaction to the color of Reja’s skin highlights the inherent racial discrimination faced by the indigenous population in the region during the early twentieth century, and dating back to the colonial period. However, Segovia inverts her position from outsider or marginalized

other to one of power. Reja's maternal milk becomes synonymous with origin and a re-historicizing of the indigenous experience.

The first baby that Reja saves is Guillermo Morales, who years later returns to Linares and moves his wife and family to the hacienda La Amistad, outside of Linares. Not only does she nurse Guillermo, but also other babies in the town that are malnourished or are orphans, including (years later) Guillermo's children. Reja is developed as a mythical character whose age is impossible due to the multiple generations she outlives as well as the multitude of children she nurses. One of these children is Francisco, who, upon the death of his father, inherits the hacienda La Amistad, along with Reja, who has grown old and sits on the porch of the family home in her rocking chair. As such, her milk symbolically represents the origin of the patriarchs of La Amistad. Reja does not narrate the story but her milk allows the chronological history of the Morales family and Linares to develop and unfold, shifting the position of power from the patriarchs to this giver of life, an indigenous woman. This empowerment is significant, as Sandra Shumm observes in the context of the maternal: "...valuing the maternal is the first step in revalorizing females and equalizing society" (Shumm 2015, 260).

Reja also saves another baby who becomes a savior in the text: Simonopio. Resting in her rocker, she hears the cry of a baby and goes in search of him. The first lines of the novel describe the setting where the baby is found: "En esa madrugada de octubre el llanto del bebé se mezclaba con el ruido del viento fresco circulando entre los árboles, el canto de los pájaros y la despedida de los insectos de la noche. Salía flotando de la espesura del monte, pero se apagaba a unos cuantos metros de su origen.." (Segovia 2015, 9). In a similar style to a biblical creation story, Segovia narrates the idyllic sounds of nature where Reja discovers Simonopio under a bridge, covered and protected by a swarm of bees. Instantly, Simonopio is tied to nature and the land. These are two unlikely heroes: Reja, the indigenous woman, who saves infants with her milk, and Simonopio, born with a cleft lip, which frightens many of the people of Linares. Nevertheless, he becomes a beloved part of the Morales family and in the end, saves the family and their land.

The fundamental link between culture and nature is symbolized in Segovia's text through the bees and the beehive's relationship with Simonopio. Simonopio's intimate knowledge of the bees contrasts with the possible extinction of, and current crisis surrounding, the honeybee: "Aun cuando volaban en enjambre, de bebé aprendió a distinguirlos individualmente, a verlas abandonar el panal temprano y a esperar su

regreso puntual en la tarde. Aprendió a regir su vida en torno al horario de las abejas...llegaría el día en que las seguiría más allá de los límites del jardín y más allá de los cerros que veía” (Segovia 2015, 50). Simonopio’s rhythm is tied to the natural cycle of the bees and their workings. His knowledge of each bee highlights their importance and underscores the necessary task of saving the bees in this moment of ecological crisis. From a larger perspective, in recent years scientists have suggested that the mass extinction and mysterious colony collapses that have plagued the global honeybee population are some of the most concerning issues for the human species. Multiple theories abound regarding the large number of dying bees, but many studies link Monsanto, Dow, Bayer and other large chemical manufacturers—especially with respect to their widespread use of their genetically modified insecticides and herbicides—to the global collapse of the honeybee population (Hagopian 2014). As such, Simonopio, who is difficult to understand because of his cleft lip, wishes he could tell others about his bees and hopes that they would also listen to the bees: “Le habría gustado hablar sobre sus abejas y preguntarle a cualquiera por qué tú no las escuchas si también to hablan, como a mí” (Segovia 2015, 52). Through Simonopio, Segovia draws attention to this ecological crisis that directly affects the landscape and agricultural practices of the northern borderlands.

The use of the beehive as a literary symbol of political unity can also be observed in Segovia’s text. Although the bees are, in truth, a dying species, metaphorically they come to represent the Mexican nation-state as a united front, protecting its culture and heritage from the vacuum of free-trade markets, greedy multinational corporations, and mono-culture that threaten to unravel local cultures. The metaphor of the bees as the nation-state protecting itself unfolds in the relationship and bond that is formed between Simonopio and the younger Francisco (known as “Francisco chico”). It is a deep friendship tied together by adventures roaming the countryside and speaking their common language. The only person who understands Simonopio is Francisco chico, the lone son born to Francisco and Beatriz. The bond between the two saves Francisco chico when—due to Simonopio’s uncanny ability to predict and feel danger—he arrives with his swarm of bees to confront Anselmo Espiricueta, the greedy, self-centered worker who is jealous of the Morales family and their landownership. Anselmo makes good on his longtime promise to himself that he would one day have what the Morales family does—and he shoots and kills the elder Francisco. However, Simonopio’s united bees attack vehemently: “Jamás las había visto volar a esa velocidad ni con esa intensidad: era de una sola voluntad y de una sola idea:

matar” (Segovia 2015, 398). As Simonopio watches the bees chase Espiricueta up the hill and disappear from view, he rests assured that the bees would find him because as he states, bees never forget: “las abejas nunca olvidan: así fracasaran ese día, así les tomara años y varias generaciones, Espiricueta y su hijo eran hombres muertos, aunque todavía no lo supieran” (Segovia 2015, 399). In this magical realist scene of the bees chasing the evil man, and with the realization that it might take generations to push him out, Segovia underscores the symbolism of the beehive as nation. The united nation-state can push out or withstand neoliberalism to save the cultural heritage of the nation.

Alongside Segovia’s use of the bees to represent the current threat to nature and culture, she astutely weaves in Mexico’s historic past to further address the present crisis. In his study on the genre of the historical novel, Jerome De Groot argues that historical fiction is frequently utilized to challenge the mainstream. He emphasizes that it has the power to “advocate ideological positions, mourn a lost history or...make a clear contemporary political intervention” (De Groot 2010, 140). Furthermore, De Groot suggests that novelists troubled by the marginalization and oppression of certain communities implement this style of writing to give voice to the marginalized, reiterating and adding “political urgency” to their work (De Groot 2010, 149). It is clear in *El murmullo de las abejas* that the pair of unlikely heroes, Reja and Simonopio, challenge the mainstream and bring to the forefront of Segovia’s novel the integration of the forgotten “others” into “official” history. Moreover, the pair, alongside Simonopio’s bees, functions metaphorically as the link between culture and nature as the novel grapples with the sustainability of both. We are reminded of Redner’s proposition that if either culture or nature is lost, it will lead to the crippling of the other.

The notion of political urgency or resistance can be seen in the work of scholars who have contributed to the theoretical body of eco-criticism. In short, the study of the natural world is the basis for the principal ideas of eco-criticism, which is an interdisciplinary study of literature and the environment. In some cases, nature is viewed as an agent of resistance. That is to say, nature becomes a platform to protest a multitude of issues that affect nations and communities. Thus, it is not surprising that in Latin America, eco-critics argue that the effects of globalization have led to a newfound interest in fictional writing about nature and the environment. According to Timothy Clark, it is in the developing world that “environmental disputes are at their most intense, most fraught with political, ethical and religious overtones and even violence” (Clark 2011, 120). Therefore, in *El murmullo de las abejas*, Simonopio and his bees can be viewed as agents of resistance or a platform upon which the challenges of

the northern borderlands can be negotiated. As such, reading Segovia's text through an eco-critical lens does not signify only a focus on the natural world, but also how the natural world collides with the political and ideological climate of the nation.

To understand the juxtaposition of the political, cultural and environmental climate in the novel, we look to the year of Simonopio's birth, 1910. Simonopio's birth coincides with one of the most important political moments of the Mexican nation—the Mexican Revolution—and as such, Simonopio comes to reflect a revolutionary ideology. The idea that he is a revolutionary character coincides with the idea of his character functioning as an agent of resistance, insofar as revolutionaries create resistance to dominant thought and ideology. Although the battle cry of the Mexican Revolution was “Tierra y Libertad”, the Morales family, which became the orphaned Simonopio's adopted family, was already a large landowner. They did not join the revolutionary movement; in fact, the patriarch, Francisco Morales, lived in fear of losing his land to the Revolution and the subsequent Agrarian Reform. Therefore, Simonopio's revolution in the novel is not to gain access to more land or be part of a land reform movement. Instead, he comes to symbolize the need to protect the land, particularly that of the northern borderlands, and keep it in the hands of local farmers. As such, the allegory of Simonopio as “Revolution” is born. He represents the battle to protect the local, as represented by the land—an organic substance that gives life and origin to cultures. Throughout the novel, Simonopio roams the land, convening with nature and with his bees, as a reminder of his connection to the land: “Caminó incansable entre las hileras de árboles, de ida y vuelta en compañía de las abejas, que se negaban a abandonarlo a pesar de que el día, el sol y las flores las llamaban a irse libremente a disfrutar las promesas de su labor” (Segovia 2015, 302). Simonopio is also deeply connected to the Morales family and is the thread that saves them from death, as we saw with the attack on Anselmo Espiricueta.

The chronological history of the text—spanning the Revolution, the Spanish flu pandemic, the Cristero war, and even the Agrarian Reforms of Lázaro Cárdenas—represents the death of the Mexican people. In Linares, it is the same: death permeates and threatens the Morales family. When the Spanish flu hits, Simonopio has a premonition and reaches Beatriz, Francisco's wife, just before she is going to meet with a woman who will shortly die and be the town's first victim of the flu (which killed many people in Mexico between 1918 and 1919). In the novel, the Morales family spends months closed off from the world, protected from influenza because of Simonopio's actions.



Simonopio also saves the land of La Amistad. The crops being planted were not generating income and Francisco was fearful of losing his land. Simonopio brings him a gift—the flowers of an orange tree—from an orchard far from their land. This small flower changes the course of La Amistad. In the early 20th century, citrus fruit production thrived in Nuevo León. Many of the private landowners utilized sophisticated technical advances and expertise in growing oranges, to the point that the fruit became one of the principal agricultural crops of the time. Again, Segovia mixes historical fact with fiction, drawing the readers back into the local culture of the region, when she writes, “Un día se fue a California, para regresar con varios vagones llenos de naranjos...sin importarle que lo llamaran gringo loco y extravagante por no querer plantar caña de azúcar, maíz de trigo, como lo habían hecho ahí los hombres desde que tenía memoria” (Segovia 2015, 248). Francisco travels to California by train to purchase citrus trees and turns his land into orange groves; he therefore becomes part of the movement that transformed the region from one of wheat and sugar cane to citrus production. However, the land, the crops, and the tradition that all form the backdrop of the novel change after the death of the elder Francisco.

Another narrative shift occurs after his death. Although Segovia develops the character of Simonopio as a hero over the course of the novel, she momentarily pauses this narrative arc after the murder of Francisco, the father. With his death, Francisco chico becomes the male patriarch of the family, the one who will continue the family tradition and heritage of La Amistad. However, his mother Beatriz decides to abandon the land and move to the capital, Monterrey, leaving behind their life and land. Although she intends to take everyone with her, Simonopio and Reja do not leave. On moving day, they are gone. Therein, the Morales family leaves behind the two protagonists that gave them life and saved them and their land, and who represent their origin and, metaphorically, their culture.

The storyline that Segovia creates with this family crisis runs parallel to the outcome of the Mexican debt crisis of the 1980s. The Morales family abandons their land following the intervention of the greedy Anselmo Espiricueta. After the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailed out the country with new loans in the 80s, Mexico was forced to function as a puppet of the IMF. The IMF’s conditions for these loans included many neoliberal policy elements, including the liberalization of foreign trade and investment. The implementation of these policies had devastating outcomes, particularly for small, local farmers who were confronted with competition from large agri-business. As subsequent trade liberalization occurred following the implementation

of NAFTA, this difficult situation for local farmers became near impossible. As a result, mass migrations occurred: small farmers left behind centuries of agricultural practices and land ownership and moved to the cities or left the country as a way to survive. Genetically modified crops and pesticides replaced traditional crops, farming, and a rural culture, which slowly ceded to multi-national corporations whose only goal was profit. We see a similar dynamic unfold in the novel. Anselmo's greed and actions force the Morales family to abandon their land, mirroring subsequent international neoliberal invasions. As such, the element of nostalgia and a desire to recuperate lost histories and the loss of this local, rural culture, provokes a shift in this narrative trajectory.

As a grown man, Francisco chico is unable to forget Simonopio, and his nostalgia haunts him. His past is tied to his childhood friend: "Sin Simonopio como protagonista de la historia de mi vida, sólo quedaban hilos sueltos sin anudar ni afianzar. Hablar de Linares era hablar de Simonopio" (Segovia 2015, 453). With this simple sentence, Segovia juxtaposes nature and culture by tying Linares to Simonopio. This desire to return to the local landscape and culture does not occur, however, until Francisco is a grandfather. At this pivotal juncture, it is revealed that all of the chapters he has narrated throughout the novel are told to a taxi driver who is taking him back to his hometown. In the end, Francisco asks the taxi driver to tell his family the story because, as the narrator explains, "[Francisco] quiere llegar rápido a su destino. Al destino de los azahares, al de Simonopio, al propio, al suyo... porque una vez ahí tomará con su mano pequeña—ya sin venas aparentes, sin manchas y sin líneas—la mano joven de su hermano" (Segovia 2015, 477). Francisco returns to his place of origin, to Simonopio, and to the land.

What has motivated Francisco to return? He has heard the murmur of the bees and now he understands what they mean when they say "venvenvenven, ven rápido, ven rápido, corre" (Segovia 2015, 475). Francisco knows that Simonopio has sent the bees with this powerful message, which leads Francisco back to his land. At this decisive intersection in the text, we are reminded of the fragility of both culture and nature. As was noted previously, Thomas Friedman warns of the inherent danger of wiping out "ecological and cultural diversity" due to the "devouring force" of globalization. As such, the endangered bees plea to Francisco chico to "come, come quick...run" before it is too late, for them and for the environment and people of northern Mexico. In this regard, *El murmullo de las abejas* aligns with the texts analyzed in Barbas-Rhoden's study *Ecological Imaginations in Latin American Fiction*—such as *Tierra del fuego* (1998), *Un piano en Bahía Desolación* (1994) and *Fordlandia* (1997). All of these works, she observes, "counter

the production and dissemination of ‘global design’” because they “focus attention on specific local knowledge systems and their connection to landscape and ecosystems...the texts articulate the need to retreat from modernization altogether or to challenge modernizing processes with a Latin American ingenuity that comes from dwelling deeply in place” (Barbas-Rhoden 2011, 5). Francisco chico’s return to his land and to his place in the local landscape of Nuevo León suggests that he has turned his back on the modern globalized world. The powerful language of the bees has called him back and, in true magical realist style, Segovia articulates a return to origin in an attempt to salvage a cultural and historical past before it is lost in the web of globalization.

In the end, Francisco chico returns to the elements/characters in the text that fall within the realm of the magical or mythical. Throughout the novel, Segovia contrasts “official” history with these “destabilizing” magical elements, which are primarily related to the natural world: the bees, Simonopio—who becomes synonymous with the land—and Reja, the indigenous woman. Returning to Barbas-Rhoden, she emphasizes that the texts studied in her book “make explicit connections between specific historical processes begun centuries ago and the violence that persists today against the natural world and the human (particularly Indians...and other marginalized peoples) who inhabit it” (Barbas-Rhoden 2011, 4). Therefore, all three elements in the text that fall within the domain of the magical are also integral components of a text deemed as eco-critical. The magical stands apart from the chronological “official” history in the text, but, as was noted previously, historical fiction can be utilized to challenge the mainstream. This aligns with Wendy Faris’s argument that magical realism can also challenge history, “addressing historical issues critically and thereby attempting to heal historical wounds” (Faris 2004, 138). Segovia’s text, therefore, juxtaposes the literary style and devices of eco-criticism, magical realism, and the historical genre to undermine and challenge the current mainstream narrative of the Mexican nation. Like the magical bodies in the text, these characters become agents of resistance as they attempt to voice their revolutionary cry.

Finally, the death that permeates the text is tied to the realism of the novel, as manifest in the Revolution, the Spanish Flu Pandemic and the Cristero War. And while Mexico survived, the nation currently faces a new revolution: a global battle to subsume the national into the international—to transform the local into the global—and the crisis of the longstanding drug war that has taken its toll on the country. As such, the “death” that threatens the nation, the people, the local culture and the natural landscape

is real. Is this path a sustainable one for the future of Mexico? In every sense of the word, Sofía Segovia is concerned about the sustainability of the local culture and landscape of her beloved Nuevo León. At the end of the novel she offers a glimpse of hope as the mythical discourse and characters are to be reunited with the character of Francisco chico, opening a space for the emergence of a potential cultural revival: “Doy la media vuelta y un paso vacilante. Luego otro...sigo a las abejas, cada vez más hábil y más rápido, con el horizonte antiguo a mis espaldas. Caminamos sin mirar atrás, porque en este viaje lo único que nos importa es nuestro destino” (Segovia 2015, 477). By not looking back and following the bees towards his destiny, Francisco symbolically opens the door to a new destiny for the Mexican nation.

Segovia’s 2015 revolutionary cry echoes the 1910 Revolution—“Tierra y Libertad”—but the contemporary call cry is different in one regard: Segovia’s is a plea to return to local culture and to free the country from the unifying wave of monoculture and environmental abuses that are tied to globalization in Mexico. With this novel, she contributes to a new corpus of contemporary Mexican women writers as her text extends beyond the borders of women’s rights and marginalization to tackle the cultural and environmental issues that plague the country. Although the text engages the reader with an entertaining tale, Segovia’s message is clear. *El murmullo de las abejas* creates and opens a new space for a dialogue about sustainable cultural and environmental practices in Mexico. As such, just as the bees attacked the selfish Anselmo Espiricueta, Segovia challenges the members of the Mexican nation-state to join together to question and protest the current globalized practices that threaten local culture and the environment. The murmur of the bees is quiet but powerful; Francisco chico finally hears their call. Sofía Segovia hopes that the other sons and daughters of the nation will also listen, hear and react.

### Works Cited

- Barbas-Rhoden, Laura. *Ecological Imaginations in Latin American Fiction*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011.
- Clark, Timothy. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Cuninghame, Patrick Gun. 2007. “Globalization, Maquiladoras and Transnational Identities at the US-Mexico Border: The Case of Ciudad Juárez-El Paso.”

*Interventions/Economiques* (35). Online.

De Groot, Jerome. *The Historical Novel*. London and New York: Routledge, 2010.

Faris, Wendy B. *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004.

Hagopian, Joachim. "Death and Extinction of the Bees." *Global Research*. March 28, 2014.

Mohammed, Shaheed Nick. *Communication and the Globalization of Culture*. Plymouth (UK): Lexington Books, 2011.

Redner, Harry. *Conserving Cultures*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004.

Segovia, Sofía. *El murmullo de las abejas*. New York: Vintage Español, 2015.

Schumm, Sandra. "Female Revalorization in Twenty-First Century Spanish Novels." *Letras femeninas* 40.1 (2015): 246-264.

Weldt-Basson, Helene Carol. *Redefining Latin American Historical Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.