

Rooting and *Cultura* in West Mexico

TREVOR STACK

University of Aberdeen, UK

Drawing on Kwame Appiah's discussion of the relationship between rooting and cosmopolitanism, I show that this concern was shared by many in west Mexico, where I conducted fieldwork among diverse groups of townspeople, villagers, weekend visitors from Guadalajara, and migrants working in Guadalajara and in California. All of those groups talked about belonging or rooting to specific places – villages, towns, cities, countries and so on. They also used the term *cultura* in a way that resonated more with Appiah's 'cosmopolitanism' than with his 'cultural particularities'. Although most people aspired to gain *cultura* without losing rooting, I found that many people judged themselves or others to fail in one or both respects. Migrants in California, in particular, were felt to have lost rooting without having become cosmopolitan. I focus throughout on how west Mexicans, including the novelist Juan Rulfo, used their knowledge of history as a way of claiming both rooting and *cultura*.

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In a much-quoted passage, the Princeton philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah (1997) asks, 'Where ... would all the diversity we cosmopolitans celebrate come from in a world in which there were only cosmopolitans?' His answer is that 'the cosmopolitan patriot can entertain the possibility of a world in which *everyone* is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of one's own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people' (618). People often live in other places, he recognises, sometimes by choice, as in the case of cultural tourism and of willing migrants, and sometimes by necessity, for economic or political reasons. Even so, Appiah concludes, 'people would accept the citizen's responsibility to nurture the culture and politics of their homes', both at home and as ambassadors to other places (619). He describes his adopted home, the USA, as a place where individuals are free to be 'cosmopolitan patriots'. He acknowledges that many citizens do not share much of the 'common culture' of the USA: 'They need America – they will defend it, especially, against foreigners who deplore its materialism or its vulgarity – but it is not at the heart of their dreams'. However, 'the cosmopolitan who is an American patriot' need not 'resent these fellow citizens for whom their country is a mere instrument, a means, not an end' (628).

Unlike Appiah and other scholars (e.g. Cheah and Robbins, 1998; Hannerz, 2004; Werbner, 2006), I do not try to decide in this article who is and who is not cosmopolitan. Instead, I simply argue that Appiah's concern with the relationship between rooting and cosmopolitanism was shared by many in neighbouring Mexico, where I conducted fieldwork between 1992 and 2005. My research focused on two west Mexican towns, Tapalpa and Atacco, south of Guadalajara in the west Mexican state of Jalisco. Tapalpa was a town of around 8,000 inhabitants and was the seat of the municipal district; Atacco was a smaller town of about 2,500, just two miles from Tapalpa (see Figs. 1 and 2).¹ I conducted fieldwork among diverse elite and non-elite groups within those towns, as well as groups beyond the towns, such as villagers, weekend visitors from Guadalajara, and migrants working in Guadalajara and in California.



Figure 1. View of Tapalpa's main street from the steps of the parish church towards the tower of the Municipal Presidency. (Photo by author)

1 I use the past tense for the period of my fieldwork because, following Fabian, I do not wish to imply that time stands still when we leave our field sites, leaving our subjects 'out of time' (Fabian, 1983; cf. Thomas, 1996). The past tense also pushes me to historicise the period of my fieldwork, in the sense of placing what people said and did in time and space, and in relation to wider social processes. I describe, for example, the failed attempt of an Atacco civic group to produce their town's history and, by contrast, the successful attempt of one Tapalpan, José Fajardo, to make a name for himself as Tapalpa's historian.



Figure 2. View of Atacco from the churchyard towards the primary school and central block of houses. (Photo by author)

All of those groups talked about belonging or rooting to specific places – villages, towns, cities, countries and so on. They also used the term *cultura* in a way that resonated more with Appiah’s ‘cosmopolitanism’ than with his ‘cultural particularities’. I have left the word *cultura* in Spanish to mark the difference. To begin with, *cultura* was something you could have more or less of. Those held to be lacking in *cultura* included peasants who sold their land for short-term gain, individuals who threw trash out of car windows, citizens who traded their vote for promised favours, and politicians who were corrupted by personal, familiar or partisan interests. In other words, *cultura* was the ability to apprehend that which lay beyond the immediate: to see value beyond short-term profit, to take account of environmental issues, to pursue the public interest and so on. Another sign of *cultura* was the ability to appreciate other *culturas* (in the plural). Guadalajaran weekenders, for example, showed their *cultura* by visiting out-of-the-way places like Tapalpa, rather than the usual beach resorts. This sounds like Appiah’s account of the ‘pleasure’ that cosmopolitans take in the ‘presence of other, different places’. Weekenders did this freely, too, just as Appiah’s ‘cultural tourists’ are free to come and go as they please. They enjoyed, in a sense, the freedom of not being trapped in the immediate. Moreover, I found that people in the region felt, like Appiah, that rooting was compatible with *cultura*. Just as Appiah writes of his Ghana-born father that ‘it was ... as an Asante that [he] recognized and admired Cicero’ (638), many in the region considered that people should retain their rooting – to town, nation

or whatever – even as they aspired to *cultura*. Crucially, though, to have *cultura* was to be part of a network of like-minded individuals, of people who ‘knew better’. Indeed, admiring Cicero would, for many in the region, count as *cultura*. I argue, likewise, that Appiah’s cosmopolitans, in respecting ‘cultural particularities’, were enrolling in a cosmopolitan fellowship of individuals who shared those admirable qualities.

Appiah believes that everyone is capable of rooted cosmopolitanism, but clearly feels that some people do not (yet) live up to this. Although most people in Tapalpa and Atacco aspired to gain *cultura* without losing rooting, I also found that people judged themselves and others to have failed in one or both respects. In contrast to Appiah’s ‘cultural tourists’, such as the Guadalajaran weekenders, migrants from Tapalpa and Atacco working in Appiah’s adopted homeland, the USA, had little claim to either rooting or to cosmopolitan *cultura*. Appiah himself makes no mention of the millions of Mexicans in the USA. He may object to illegal immigrants on the grounds that they flout constitutional order, which he makes a pillar of cosmopolitan liberalism: they were not even ‘fellow citizens for whom their country is a mere instrument’ (Appiah, 1997: 628). He may be aware, too, that Mexicans commonly ‘deplore [the] materialism’ of American life. But I argue that Mexican migrants also upset his vision of a world in which everyone is free to enjoy ‘other different places’ in a cosmopolitan way. Appiah suggests, wistfully, that fewer people migrate by necessity than ever before, but offers no evidence for this (618). Tapalpan employers and teachers were also reluctant to believe that migrants really needed to work in the USA, and complained that they lost rooting to place. Migrants felt, by contrast, that they did migrate out of necessity. They felt unable to live out even the rooted lives others would have them live. Still less could migrants live up to Appiah’s rooted cosmopolitanism: they travelled far from home, but outwith the networks of *cultura*.

Another west Mexican who looked down on migrants was the famous novelist Juan Rulfo. This is evident from a lecture that Rulfo gave in 1984 in the neighbouring state of Colima, at the University of Colima. Rulfo was known for a book of short stories, *El llano en llamas* (1953), and a novel, *Pedro Páramo* (1955), but his lecture was about Colima’s history. After his lecture, Rulfo was asked ‘what is the point of history?’, and he replied:

It’s what *arraiga* (roots) man to his land, it’s what makes man stay and have love for the place where he lives. It’s precisely the reason for which many have migrated to the US: the fact that they lack knowledge of their past and of the place where they live. The day that they know their ancestors, the day that they know that worthy men lived in those places where they live, the day that they know that this land has yielded fine examples of a living *cultura* (culture), man becomes more rooted, puts more trust in his work and has awareness of the place where he lives ... (Rulfo, 1986: 64)

Rulfo used the term *cultura* for the archaeological remains that he discussed in his lecture, but he did so in a way resonant with the use of *cultura* that I described above. What made those archaeological remains *cultura*, we infer, is that they had endured

over time, while becoming well known beyond the region. Clearly, Rulfo felt that those who left the region to work in the USA showed their ignorance and lack of appreciation of the *cultura* of the region's past.

However, Rulfo did not seem too impressed even by those who had stayed behind in the region. They might have rooting, but Rulfo seemed to doubt that they could aspire to *cultura*. By extension, Rulfo may have believed that residents of the region had acquired 'knowledge of their past', but he appeared to doubt their ability to produce a proper 'history' of the region. The 'knowledge of the past' that made for rooting might include anecdotal stories, memories of the elderly, or even the second-hand knowledge that comes from attending lectures. By contrast, Rulfo in his 'history' lecture made plentiful references to the archives and to archaeological expeditions, and he put forward his own bold argument, peppered with challenges to other scholarly historians, none of whom were from the region itself. This full-blown, authoritative 'history' was, I argue, a sign of *cultura* as opposed to just rooting. To produce this kind of knowledge meant, among other things, being wired into a network of fellow intellectuals who could ground argument and counter-argument in the appropriate canons of evidence. History was, in other words, cosmopolitan knowledge. Rulfo, for his part, was considered very much a man of *cultura*, but he seemed little inclined to recognise *cultura* in his contemporaries from the region. While Appiah believes everyone capable of not just rooting but also cosmopolitanism, Rulfo seemed to feel that rooting was about as much as the region's present inhabitants could hope for, and that this was reflected in the limits of their historical knowledge.

I focus in this article on how west Mexicans related the cosmopolitan knowledge of history to the values of rooting and *cultura*. During a total of five years in and around the region, I collected a variety of written texts that made mention of history, such as tourist pamphlets, town chronicles and academic histories, and I recorded many conversations in which something was said about history. I begin by describing the attempt of a civic group in Atacco to produce an authoritative 'history' of the kind that Rulfo had delivered. In other words, the civic group aspired to more than just rooting – they wanted to claim *cultura*, too. But I note that they found this difficult to achieve. Making history was not as easy as they had thought. In the second section, I note that weekenders from Guadalajara hoped to find some knowledge of the past in Tapalpa but, like Rulfo, did not expect to find fully-fledged history. In other words, like Rulfo, they expected Tapalpans to show some kind of rooting but not *cultura*. However, in the third section, I observe that, despite the growth of weekend tourism, many Tapalpans worked in California. They felt that this was necessary, but I note that Tapalpan elites, like Rulfo, denied that this was the case. They accused migrants of losing their rooting without picking up *cultura* along the way. As a result, they doubted migrants could make any contribution to a history of Tapalpa. By contrast, I note in the final section that some individuals did manage to claim both rooting and *cultura*. Rulfo was one example of this: he had left his hometown for the world of *cultura*, but he managed to retain some rooting. One way of doing this was by producing history, hence his lecture, but I argue, too, that some residents of the region were happy to claim Rulfo, and others like him, as *hijos ilustres* (enlightened sons), and so root them back to place.

Making *Cultura* At Home: A Failed Attempt

Most residents of both Tapalpa and Atacco found little to say about the history of their towns. They usually gave a brief account – a kind of potted history – and then suggested that I talk to someone else. The ‘potted history’ that most Tapalpans gave was that Atacco used to be the town, when Tapalpa was just a hacienda, but then, they would continue, people from Atacco began to work on that hacienda, building their shacks around its great house. So it was that Tapalpa became the town, they would conclude, even though Atacco was older. Tapalpans sometimes suggested that I talk to elderly residents of Atacco, since, as they kept saying, Atacco was older than Tapalpa. That was the only reason I ever heard to visit Atacco, which Tapalpans otherwise described as the most backward place on earth. Indeed, they found it hard to understand why the people of Atacco could possibly wish to remain there. Atacco was, for Tapalpans, rather like Luvina for the narrator of one of Rulfo’s short stories: a place beyond redemption (Rulfo, 1992: 102–112).

An Atacco civic group, which I followed closely from 1994 to 1999, put a different gloss on their town’s antiquity. They found it ironic that people would abandon such an old town. During a meeting of the group in 1997, an elderly man argued that:

I have always seen that this town [Atacco] is the oldest, to say it that way so that you understand me, the oldest of Tapalpa [*sic*] and of all these nearest towns here, it is the most founded town, but when we went there and made Tapalpa bigger and just abandoning this one, and our governments that have been are always leaving it behind, behind, behind, and always it remains in misery, it has no future when it is the most developed of all ...

Rulfo argued that people ‘abandon’ towns – to work in California for example – because they lack ‘knowledge of their past’ and ‘of the place where they live’ (Rulfo, 1986: 64). Tapalpans sent me to Atacco because they thought that someone there might have knowledge of the past, but Tapalpans had their doubts about this, and those doubts were shared in Atacco itself. On another occasion, the Atacco municipal deputy, Beto, quipped that ‘it’s those from elsewhere who know more than we do’ (Stack, 2006: 434, 438).

This helps to explain one of the civic group’s projects: to produce a well-grounded history of the town. The group’s leader, Federico, said that he had learned from his father that people used to come to Atacco from all over the region, and that the royal highway used to pass through Atacco. Federico seemed to feel, like Rulfo, that knowledge of the past might encourage people to stay rooted in Atacco, rather than abandoning the town. However, the group were not content with this kind of knowledge: stories told by the elderly about the way things were, once upon a time. They were clearly intent on producing proper evidence-based history, more of the kind offered by Rulfo. Federico had interviewed old people in Atacco, probing their memory of old times, in order to turn those old memories into proper history. His group had also collected some documents and clay figurines (Stack, 2006: 435). The archaeological

remains, oral testimonies and written documents were the ‘bases’ on which history was built. We will see that producing history also involved the knowledge of how to make something of those ‘bases’.²

What could Federico and his group get from the authoritative knowledge of history? Briefly, they could get authority from it. I have noted that, if mere knowledge of the past helped to root people in place, the full-blown knowledge of history was a sign of *cultura*. To begin with, history was all about the past that lay beyond the immediate present. It was something for which there was no immediate return: there was little talk of making money or political advantage out of history. *Cultura*, in turn, brought authority. In Tapalpa, I was often sent to Don Lupe, a former municipal president, for information on the town’s history. Don Lupe was said to have *cultura*, and was remembered as the best municipal president that Tapalpa had ever had (Stack, 2004: 58–61).

However, Federico was not just claiming *cultura* for his group: he wanted to make *cultura* at home in Atacco. Federico was working against the prevailing view in Tapalpa: that the people of Atacco remained there because they were stubbornly rooted. Tapalpans did not expect to find people with *cultura*. Federico sought to prove that there was *cultura* in Atacco by producing Atacco’s history. History was, for Federico as for Rulfo, a record of *cultura* in the past, hence his interest in pyramids, churches and so on, but history also showed that *cultura* was at home in the present. To produce fully-fledged history was, for Federico as for Rulfo, to exchange truth with others. Federico was trying to place himself, his civic group and Atacco in a wider world: a fellowship of people with *cultura* (Stack, 2006: 435–436).

This would help to establish Atacco as a proper town – a place in which *cultura* was at home. Tapalpans were reluctant to see Atacco as a proper town, and the municipal government usually treated Atacco as a rural community. Towns were, in a sense, cosmopolitan places: *cultura* was one of several criteria by which people distinguished towns from villages. This was reflected in attitudes towards historical knowledge. I found that people usually gave the history of towns rather than villages; towns, more obviously than villages, were places that had history. The historical remains also helped to show that the townspeople’s ancestors had been connected – through the royal highway for example – to major towns such as Colima and Guadalajara (Stack, 2006: 432, 435–436).

Some of these notions hark back to the colonial period. Angel Rama (1996: 16–28) has written about the *letrados* (literally, ‘lettered persons’) who formed a kind of priestly caste of distinguished administrators in the Spanish colonies. Because the *letrados* governed from the city over the countryside, Rama calls them the ‘lettered city’, but they were also linked into a Spain-centred world of letters, arguably representing an

2 Scholars have often stressed the difference between the oral and the written in relation to history, but I argue that this is only one of the ways in which history is distinguished from other kinds of knowledge. In fact, Federico noted in 1994 that the group had written some ‘brief essays’ but still lacked the ‘sufficient bases’ to produce proper history. It was important to Federico that Atacco’s history be ultimately written, but it was at least as important that the history be well-grounded (Stack, 2006: 435).

older cosmopolitan tradition. The Mexican state tried to nationalize the lettered city in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, recentring it on Mexico City. An example of this was the ‘cultural missions’ sent out during the twentieth century to rural areas of Mexico, including Atacco (Lainé, 1992). Many in twentieth-century Atacco did turn to the state’s literate ambassadors, from agrarian officials to schoolteachers. However, I argue that the state never managed to nationalise fully the lettered city, and I suggest that Federico’s civic group reclaimed elements of that older cosmopolitan tradition. This allowed them to carve out some room for manoeuvre beyond the reach of the state. Federico’s brother, for example, explained on one occasion that the group had chosen *cultura* as an alternative to *política* (party politics). *Cultura* gave them legitimacy – they were not dirtying their hands in the short-term interests of *política*. But it also gave them some distance from state institutions, linking them instead into a world of *cultura* beyond the state (Stack, 2006: 433).

Federico’s group found it harder than expected to produce their town’s history, which did not help their claim to *cultura*. They lacked access to the evidence – especially to distant archives – as well as the know-how to make history of what they had. They had obtained copies of one old document, for example, but they were not sure what to make of its references to Charles V, Pedro de Alvarado and many others, as well as the various dates that cropped up: 1530, 1710, 1867, and so on. As a result, Federico’s group found it difficult to change Tapalpa perceptions of Atacco’s inhabitants. This was reflected in an issue of a magazine edited in Tapalpa: it carried an article about Tapalpa’s history, based on an interview with Don Lupe, and another about Atacco’s history, based on an interview with Federico. The magazine editor credited Don Lupe as the author of the article on Tapalpa’s history, but credited Federico only as an informant on Atacco’s history (Nava López, 2002; Un rincón en la Sierra Tapalpa, 2002).

Tapalpans also referred me to authorities like Don Lupe, as I have mentioned, after giving me a potted history of the town. Even so, they were more confident that Tapalpa was a town of which and in which (fully-fledged) history was known. Many spoke of a book of Tapalpa’s history, although I never found such a book. Tapalpans also seemed to feel that there was *cultura* in Tapalpa – that at least some Tapalpans had *cultura*. I argue in the next section, however, that not everyone saw Tapalpa in that light.

Weekenders’ Views of Tapalpans: Rooting, not *Cultura*

Weekenders from Guadalajara did hope to find some kind of knowledge of the past in Tapalpa, but did not expect to find fully-fledged history. In other words, like Rulfo, they expected Tapalpans to show some kind of rooting, but not *cultura*. I note that Tapalpans played up to this role – partly by producing idiosyncratic accounts of the past – although some found it difficult to live even the rooted lives expected of them. Meanwhile, some Guadalajarans tried to claim rooting in Tapalpa, while also claiming more *cultura* than other weekenders.

Tapalpa was visited by thousands of weekenders, mainly from Guadalajara, attracted in part by its image as a *pueblo típico* or typical small town. Many city

residents across Mexico, especially the bourgeois, like to 'escape' to small towns at weekends, as well as to the beach resorts of Puerto Vallarta and Manzanillo. The term *típico* was used more generally for 'customs' viewed as quaintly backward and home-made products such as cheeses and alcoholic punches. Tapalpa was also enjoyed for its cobbled streets, red-tiled roofs and whitewashed walls, many of locally produced adobe brick (see Fig. 1). The Tapalpa Country Club manager, Enrique, said in a conversation with the municipal tourism official, that Tapalpa was one of the best-preserved *pueblos* in Mexico. It was 'like being in the nineteenth century', he said. There were, indeed, features on Tapalpa in the national magazine of cultural tourism, *México desconocido* [Unknown Mexico].

History was not a priority for weekenders. During my fieldwork, I asked dozens of weekenders, as well as tourism employers and employees, about this. One hotel owner, Elena, said in 2004 that weekenders did sometimes ask about Tapalpa's history as well as about the history of the hotel itself. However, the receptionist in her hotel said that weekenders asked much more often about places to visit and to eat and drink. Most others in the tourist industry confirmed that only rarely did weekenders ask for Tapalpa's history. I argue that this was in part because of Tapalpa's tourist image. Weekenders came to Tapalpa for many reasons, but on the whole they came to relax. It was not a colonial city in the style of Guadalajara or Guanajuato, which weekenders visited with a list of sights to be seen. When I asked, some weekenders said that history was important, but few expressed much interest. Tapalpa, *pueblo típico*, where urbanites spent weekends in the country, was not really about history. This is also reflected in an article written for American retirees in nearby Lake Chapala: the author has to remind readers that 'Tapalpa ... has a rich and lengthy history one should be aware of while sipping the local beverages and inhaling nothing but fragrant wood smoke from local kitchens and chimeneas' (Tschida, 1991).

Perhaps this was just as well, because few residents felt confident enough to tell much history. I have noted that Tapalpans were fairly sure that Tapalpa had its history and that someone such as Don Lupe knew that history, but they themselves usually only offered a potted version of it. Several felt that they should know more than they did, in case they were asked by weekenders. Weekenders did not often stop in Atacco, but the deputy Beto had still memorised the one-page 'History of Tapalpa' that I had written for weekenders. Elena was also concerned to learn more about Tapalpa's history and the history of her hotel. Many Tapalpans wanted to learn dates and names, absent from the stories they had heard from their grandparents.

Actually, I found that when weekenders did ask for history, they were seldom looking for dates and names or for the kind of history that they might find in Guadalajara. Their favourite historian was the *cantinero* Don Chilo, who specialised in larger-than-life stories that lacked *cultura* but had plenty of *arraigo* (although he also showed off a collection of photos taken by Rulfo of Tapalpan streets). Don Chilo's histories were of ghostly apparitions and mysterious legends, as well as of stubborn caciques and recalcitrant rebels. This was a far cry from the formal, public talks of municipal chroniclers. During an event at the Hilton Hotel in Guadalajara, in which four books on Tapalpa were officially launched, Don Chilo was awarded a shield by the Tapalpan tourism association, although he was not himself able to afford the trip (see Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Presentation of books on Tapalpa in the Hilton Hotel, Guadalajara. Note the contrast between the Tapalpan on the screen – taken from one of the books – and the suits on the stage. The books were published by the Guadalajara newspaper *El Informador*, which was owned by Don Carlos, who also owned a hotel on Tapalpa's plaza. (Photo by author)

Some other Tapalpans also played up to this tourist image. They were aware, for example, that truth was less of an issue for weekenders. In a 1998 meeting of the tourism association, one local businessman proposed that they take weekenders around the town square and tell them 'the pious lies about the church', although he added that he could think of little else to tell. The *Guía verdi*, a guide produced locally for weekenders, included narratives lifted from a book on Mexican legends. My own 'History of Tapalpa' sheet for tourists told of how Atacco was cursed after two missionaries were killed there. I added that a priest had returned recently to bless the town, which was beginning to prosper again. You made that up, said the Atacco deputy, Beto, laughing, and I had to admit that I did.

However, this kind of history was not thought to give anyone *cultura*. Guadalajarans saw Tapalpa in a way similar to that in which Tapalpans saw Atacco: as a rural place in which they might find, at best, quirky stories, nostalgic memories and other such idiosyncratic, anecdotal accounts of past times.³ Of course, Atacco for Tapalpans was

3 Tapalpans saw Atacco as a kind of *pueblo indio* [Indian town] but without the traditional heritage. Quetzil Castañeda (1996: 91) has argued that Pisté, Yucatán was similarly regarded as a place of 'zero-degree culture' in which people were 'both too untraditional (culture loss) and too modern (not yet civilized)'. Tapalpa, by contrast, was for Guadalajarans a town in which traditions had been conserved, to some extent, together with its architecture.

ugly and its people were rooted out of stubbornness, while Tapalpa for Guadalajarans was pretty and its people were rooted in a quaintly idiosyncratic way. Even so, few Guadalajarans expected Tapalpa to have a proper history of the kind that they might find in Guadalajara. Neither did they expect to find a historian of the town – of the kind that they might find in Guadalajara.

How does this compare with Rulfo's take on 'this land'? On the one hand, Rulfo emphasised that 'worthy men' had lived in the region, and that it had 'yielded fine examples of a living *cultura*'. He was referring to the ceramics, pyramids and ancient tombs that he had just discussed in his lecture – these were found across the region. On the other hand, Rulfo noted that no one, in the present, knew who had produced those magnificent ceramics (1986: 70). In a similar vein, he complained of neighbouring Michoacán that the Tarascans lacked knowledge of their past, and therefore could not be considered a powerful culture (48–50). His best hope for the present was, it seems, not *cultura*, but rooting. Rulfo, too, seemed to see the towns of the region as rural places that were bereft of *cultura*, rather than places in which *cultura* was at home – and history might be known.

One group of Guadalajarans claimed both *cultura* and a measure of rooting. For example, my friend Martha had lived in Tapalpa for a year, and owned a country house in an exclusive development outside Tapalpa. Martha complained about the drunken antics of many weekenders which showed that they lacked *cultura* – they did not appreciate Tapalpa in the right way. But she also complained about being ignored by the municipal government, especially by the municipal president, who refused to attend to people not 'from here'. Enrique said, too, that he had experienced resistance from locals, after living in the town for a year. I argue that history offered them a way of claiming some rooting as well as *cultura*. Martha had conducted research into Tapalpa's history and folklore, including for a postgraduate degree. She sometimes used the locals' ignorance to set in relief her own knowledge. On one trip to an outlying village, Martha and a visiting doctor made much of Rulfo's association with the region (cf. Zárate Hernández, 1997: 37–39). She also told us that she had once asked a woman for 'pre-Hispanic ruins' in the area and the woman had replied: 'telephonic ruins?' For Martha, this summed up the lack of interest shown by locals in their history.

Meanwhile, some residents found it difficult to live the quaint rooting expected of them. I have said that only some Tapalpans delivered the kind of history expected of them. The Country Club manager Enrique also complained to me that Tapalpan residents spoiled the *pueblo típico* image of the town with their baseball caps and vulgar music. The four books on Tapalpa presented in the Hilton Hotel included only carefully-staged photos of residents who fitted the bill (see Fig. 3). The *Rough Guide to Mexico* notes: 'Though there's a village feel around the plaza, with its eighteenth-century wooden portals and two impressive churches, this is actually a fair-sized place, and messy development on the outskirts reflects rapid growth'. This 'messy development on the outskirts' was due, at least in part, to residents being forced out of the town centre, where weekenders had bought more than half the houses. Weekenders and tourism employers also criticised the new houses, especially those that lacked whitewash and tiled roofs. Residents returned the compliment: for example, they criticised the Guadalupe hotel owner, Don Carlos, for using steel girders to build a new floor to his hotel (see Fig. 1).

While some residents were pushed to the outskirts of Tapalpa, many others left to work in California, as well as in Guadalajara. They felt that this was necessary, but I note in the next section that Tapalpan elites, like Appiah and Rulfo, were not so sure.

Migrants in California: Neither Rooting nor *Cultura*

I have said that Tapalpan residents doubted that the ‘Indians’ of Atacco could come up with a full-blown history of their own town, and that Guadalajarans had similar doubts about Tapalpans. However, Tapalpan residents, like Rulfo, also doubted that the hundreds of migrants in California could do any better. At the same time, some felt that migrants were losing their rooting – to their hometown and also to the Mexican nation.

People had been leaving Tapalpa for many years to work, to study and often to live elsewhere. This was shown by a survey that I conducted of 200 households in Tapalpa and 100 households in Atacco. Mexico’s second city, Guadalajara – a fairly prosperous metropolis – was only three hours away even by second-class bus. Some Tapalpans returned every weekend, while others returned less often, especially when their children were born in the city. For example, my landlady was one of twelve surviving siblings, of whom (unusually) six were still in Tapalpa and six were in Guadalajara, two with families there, while two nephews lived in California. Those in Guadalajara continued to visit Tapalpa at weekends and during the holidays, but those in California returned less often. Several family members had studied for university degrees in Guadalajara, and were working as professionals there. This was true of many other Tapalpans.

I found Tapalpan residents willing to believe that some Tapalpans living in Guadalajara might know Tapalpa’s history. In fact, two of the people said to know Tapalpa’s history had lived much of their lives in Guadalajara. One was a successful lawyer, Alberto Arámbula, who returned to Tapalpa at weekends to attend to his hotel, and the other was a priest, Father Méndez, who had written on Tapalpa’s history. Both had left Tapalpa to study and work in Guadalajara, but both returned periodically until their deaths in the 1990s. They had both given talks on Tapalpa’s history, and the priest had published on the subject. Another Tapalpan, José Fajardo, had worked for years as a teacher in Guadalajara, but was named municipal chronicler in 1987 and had published regularly in Guadalajara newspapers.

By contrast, many residents were amused that I went to California in 1998 to ask migrants there for Tapalpa’s history. Like Rulfo, some residents accused the migrants in California of lacking not just *cultura*, but even rooting. Teachers complained that Tapalpan children were just waiting to finish secondary or high school to leave to work in California. I do not know of any Tapalpan who went to California, unlike Guadalajara, just to study. It seemed to teachers a waste of an education to work in construction or in gardening. Teachers were often anti-American, and they regretted that their pupils would leave Mexico to work in a nation that was considered materialistic and thus bereft of *cultura*. They noted, too, that migrants lived a life of vice in California, and they were sure that their young pupils would succumb to this. Most migrants in California were young or middle-aged males, unlike in Guadalajara,

although there was also an older generation in San Francisco. Employers were another group that often voiced complaints. They grumbled about their workers leaving, and also complained that migrants who returned were reluctant to work for Mexican wages. Employers insisted that there was plenty of work in Tapalpa, and that people left for the North because ‘they did not how to work’. Parents and grandparents were often dependent on the money sent back from California, and did express their appreciation of the ‘sacrifice’ made by their sons and daughters, but they sometimes grumbled, too. One old lady complained of Tapalpan youths that ‘all they know is the North’ and added: ‘Before, it was a forgotten North’.

During a month of fieldwork in 1998 in Concord, California, I found that migrants themselves were surprised that I would go to Concord to ask about Tapalpa’s history. I was sent to talk to older migrants, including some who had lived in San Francisco for decades. They talked patiently – and sometimes passionately – about their memories of Tapalpa, as well as about their experiences in California, but some were puzzled about why I was asking them, rather than the old people still living in the town. One concluded, eventually, that I was asking for his personal ‘biography’ rather than the town’s ‘history’. At the same time, I found that the younger migrants in Concord were anxious for knowledge of Tapalpa’s history and self-conscious of their ignorance. They wanted me to tell them about Tapalpa’s history, which seemed much more interesting and important to them from afar. For example, I was taken on a Saturday night to an apartment nicknamed La Coahuila after the notorious Tijuana avenue. Several young men sat around, drinking beer and exchanging banter, while they watched a video of the religious festival in Tapalpa (see Fig. 4). ‘Ask him about your families and your



Figure 4. Tapalpans chatting and watching a video of the Tapalpan festival in ‘La Coahuila’ apartment, Concord, California. (Photo by author)

homes', said one of them, 'he knows Tapalpa better than any of you'. Not only did I know their families, but I had never had such an attentive audience for my account of Tapalpa's history. For much of the evening they fired questions at me, while finding it ironic that 'those from elsewhere know more than we do'.

I also asked these migrants about Concord's history, but I found that few were interested or could readily tell it. I argue that interest in Concord's history would have suggested rooting in California. This was resisted by most Tapalpans – rooting was to Tapalpa. When I probed them, I found that some had learned something of Concord's history, in spite of themselves. The head of the household where I stayed in Concord, Ramiro, made a point of denying any interest in Concord's history, but turned out to have learned its history from his employer. Another said he knew nothing, but then said that Concord was settled first by Indians and later became a hacienda. Migrants often added that California had belonged to Mexico anyway – surely a way of dismissing the Anglos' claims to history.

One could, then, resist rooting. This bears out a critical point of this article – rooting was not as simple as it might seem. I have already shown that not everyone had rooting. Federico's group was concerned about people abandoning Atacco, Tapalpan teachers and employers about migration to the USA, and this was Rulfo's worry about the region as a whole. I have also presented different notions of rooting. For example, Tapalpans viewed Atacco's residents as stubbornly rooted, while Guadalajarans viewed Tapalpans as quaintly rooted. People could be rooted to several places, although this was not always easy to achieve. Martha had an easy claim to Guadalajara, but she had more trouble combining this with a claim to Tapalpa.

I have hinted at a second point: people were rooted to nations as well as to towns. This explains why residents had different expectations of migrants in Guadalajara and in the USA.

Thirdly, I have said that *cultura* was understood as a way of transcending the immediate, both in time and space, but it was a very particular way of doing so. This is another critical point of the article. Migrants could travel thousands of miles without laying a claim to *cultura*, while Don Lupe and others could claim *cultura* while living in their hometowns. That raises a final question: did people who had *cultura* still need rooting?

Hijos Ilustres: Rooting Cultura Back to Place

I argue in this final section that rooting was still an issue for individuals who had *cultura*. Rulfo was himself an example: he had left his hometown for the world of *cultura*, but was still concerned to show some kind of rooting. Other examples were the Tapalpan lawyer Arámbula, the priest Father Méndez, and the municipal chronicler Fajardo. By showing interest in the history of their hometowns or regions, they could claim rooting while showing off their *cultura*. Some residents were happy to go along with this: to make claims on those who had made their mark in the world of *cultura*.

Rulfo's stance towards historical knowledge was similar to Federico's and that of many others in west Mexico. To begin with, Rulfo insisted on a fully-fledged

cosmopolitan kind of history, and was keen to show off his credentials. He stressed that historians should work from archives, especially the National Archive in Mexico City, and he also mentioned research done by the National University (46, 59–60). He himself had worked for many years in Mexico City as an editor of anthropology texts for the National Indigenist Institute. Rulfo showed, in other words, that he could produce the kind of history that would pass in the world of *cultura*, even though he qualified his history of Colima as a ‘hypothesis’, explaining that he had not yet conducted enough research (27–28).

Rulfo claimed not just *cultura* but also rooting in his lecture, although his claim to rooting was a complex one. He identified, at different points of the lecture, with southern Jalisco, west Mexico and even the Mexican nation. Rulfo considered it important that someone should research and write Colima’s history, because there was much to write about, and because it would help Colima’s inhabitants to appreciate the places where they lived (48). He lamented the fact that so little history had been written of Colima, although he admitted that Jalisco’s history was not much more advanced (59–60). Rulfo also stressed that this history of Colima should be produced by people from that region. He made it clear why it was dangerous to leave others to write one’s history: much of his lecture was a tirade against historians from the neighbouring state, Michoacán, who had claimed that Colima and southern Jalisco were subject to Michoacán in pre-Hispanic times, and that its art was influenced by Michoacáns (37–38, 48–49). Although Rulfo’s lecture was ostensibly about Colima’s history, he kept repeating that Colima’s history should really be written by the Coliman historians in his audience. He himself seemed more interested in the history of southern Jalisco, where he was born and spent his childhood, and where his family still had some connections, although he did not refer to the town where he was born or to the town in which he had lived as a child, before his father was killed and his mother died.⁴ Rulfo did make some reference to Guadalajara, the city where he spent his teenage years in an orphanage and where much of his extended family continued to live. He was also keen to defend west Mexico as a whole, like many regional intellectuals, against Mexico City historians who played down its archaeology and history (60) (cf. Muriá, 2003). For example, Rulfo compared ancient Coliman art to that of central Mexico in its splendour, but he also made it clear that it was not derived from central Mexican art (45, 50–51). However, he ended by insisting that ‘Mexicans are, as a general rule, a nationalist and rooted people’ (65), although clearly he regarded migrants to the USA as exceptions.

Rulfo was far from the only west Mexican with *cultura* for whom rooting was still an issue. Many individuals with a fair claim to *cultura* had, like Rulfo, left their hometowns. Like other migrants, they needed to make an effort if they wanted to maintain their rooting. I have described the effort put into producing Tapalpa’s history by Arámbula, Méndez and Fajardo. Fajardo, although born and raised in Tapalpa, had

4 Although he does not mention it in the lecture or discussion, it seems that Rulfo kept in touch with intellectuals from southern Jalisco, such as the writer Juan José Arreola.

spent many years in Guadalajara, and was largely unknown in the town when I began fieldwork in 1992, but by 2005, he had become well known for his knowledge of the town's history, and something of a public figure.

Some of these individuals were fêted by residents of their hometowns and regions, who were delighted to root them back to place. Arámbula and Fajardo had not made quite enough of a mark, but Father Méndez was listed as an *hijo ilustre* (illustrious son) in the *Monograph of Tapalpa* penned in 1985 by Don Lupe and the library staff. They also included a poet who had left Tapalpa, but who had written a poem or two about the town (Nava López, Nava Aguilar, Hernández de Huerta, Sánchez Vázquez and Huerta Rodríguez, 1985: 7–11). This allowed residents of the towns to bask in reflected glory, as it made their towns or regions look like cradles for *cultura*. Federico Munguía Cárdenas, the chronicler of nearby Sayula, describes as a 'man of great culture' a nineteenth-century Sayulan lawyer, Joaquín Camberos, who had left to study and practise law in Guadalajara. Munguía adds that Camberos 'used to narrate episodes of Universal History in which he was quite knowledgeable'. Camberos was offered a government position in Mexico City, but refused, because he did not wish to leave his 'native land' (1976: 149). Camberos's 'native land' was obviously the state of Jalisco, but Munguía's description still betrays the mix of *cultura* and rooting that made for an *hijo ilustre*. Munguía Cárdenas (1987) has also traced the history of Rulfo's family in the region, as well as his bibliography. I suspect that Munguía, who is sometimes cited by academics and has had three editions of his local history book published by the state government, may himself end up on the list of *hijos ilustres* of his town.

By hailing them as *hijos ilustres*, residents could also make claims on living individuals who, like Rulfo, had made their mark. Muriá (2003) writes of the 'brain drain' from Jalisco:

There have been many émigrés who have not remembered their fellow-countrymen except when receiving some award from them, or when agreeing to take some public post there if the powers-that-be have requested this. But there have been some who have not cut the umbilical cord and who, even when outside their homeland, continue to take an interest in the knowledge and expression of their land. (108)

Rulfo's hosts at the University of Colima were obviously aware of his connections in Guadalajara and in Mexico City, and keen to claim him as a kind of *hijo ilustre*. One of the academics in the audience proposed, for example, that Rulfo 'be the godfather' of their own efforts to produce Colima's history (Rulfo, 1986: 59). In Tapalpa, I heard of people making claims on Arámbula but especially on Luis Enrique Bracamontes, who had been Sub-Secretary of Public Works in the federal government in the period 1958–1964. Not everyone agreed that Bracamontes had been faithful to his town and others felt he was too much of a politician, but he was still on the list of *hijos ilustres* in the *Monograph*, and the Tapalpan library, founded in 1983, was named after him (Nava López, Nava Aguilar, Hernández de Huerta, Sánchez Vázquez and Huerta Rodríguez, 1985: 7).

Before concluding, I should add that Rulfo did not want his fiction to be read in the way that he wanted his history to be read. I have said that he pitched his history as both of and from the region in which he spent his childhood (although with due reference to Mexico City archives). By contrast, he always resisted attempts by literary critics and others to read his fiction in terms of the world in which he spent his childhood.⁵ He admitted, at times, that his fiction may have derived from certain experiences or stories he had heard, although at other times he denied this: 'Unfortunately I had no one to tell me stories, in our town the people are closed, yes, completely, one is a stranger there' (1992: 383). In any case, Rulfo insisted that his 'imagination' had transformed these experiences, and also that his writing owed a heavy debt to foreign writers such as Faulkner and Joyce. He criticised journalists who visited the region in search of Rulfian landscapes and faces: 'Haven't you noticed that the people in my fiction do not have faces?' (1998 [1977]). He did not even seem to consider his fiction to be particularly Mexican. Ironically, the editors of his posthumously-published lecture added a prologue by the Coliman poet Miguel Romero Solís, who linked Rulfo's history to his fiction. Rulfo was killed by the murmurs, wrote the poet, echoing Rulfo's novel, *Pedro Páramo*: 'Perhaps, that of which he spoke to us that night, was one of those murmurs, beyond the Revolution, the Reform ... the waxed dogs and the extraordinary ceramics ...' (1986: 21–22). However, Rulfo himself made no reference to his fiction in the lecture on Colima's history, nor did he attempt to draw on that extraordinary narrative ability.⁶

Good Citizens? Rooting, *Cultura*, and those Found Wanting

I have argued that Appiah's 'rooted cosmopolitanism' is resonant with west Mexican notions of rooting and *cultura*. This is not surprising, since they are both drawing on time-honoured understandings of what makes for good citizens. Good citizens have long been expected to make their mark in the world, while retaining their commitment to a place they call home. This tension has always been at the heart of citizenship – it is part of what citizenship is all about (Gordon and Stack, 2007). Merchants, for example, were important to early modern towns and cities, and yet linked into wider commercial networks (Herzog, 2007). Rama has stressed the importance of the 'lettered

5 Claude Fell argued in 1992 that most critics had focused on the paradox of 'the universality of a writer deeply rooted in a local reality ... the use of popular language in a writer who was a master of the most modern and audacious techniques of the cosmopolitan literature of the twentieth century' (Rulfo, 1992: xxv; e.g. Vogt, 1992; Rowe and Schelling, 1993: 47–49). Liza Bakewell makes a similar observation about the Mexican art world, but she does not regard this as a paradox: Mexican art has drawn on popular motifs and materials, but it has distinguished itself from the popular by setting these popular motifs within a modernist frame (Bakewell, 1995).

6 There were, however, some connections between what Rulfo said that night in Colima and what he wrote in his fiction. His short story, 'Paso del norte', also ironises the decision of migrants: the aspiring migrant fails to cross the border and returns, only to find his wife has taken off with another man (1992: 120–127).

city' in Latin America, as I have mentioned, but he noted that people questioned the patriotism of that lettered elite (1996: 57).

Citizenship is not just national: people can also be citizens of towns and cities, as they were in early modern Europe (Stack, 2003). I have noted that people did link rooting and *cultura* to the Mexican nation, and I suggest that good Mexican citizens were expected to show these qualities, but I have stressed in this article that people also linked rooting and *cultura* to towns and cities. Interestingly, Appiah ends his essay with an Asante proverb that he translates as 'In a single *polis* there is no wisdom', but admits in a footnote that the Asante term was usually translated as town (1997: 639). In any case, I have noted that towns and cities were, unlike villages, considered cosmopolitan. Scholars have written of 'cosmopolitan citizenship', but all citizenship is cosmopolitan, in the sense that good citizens are to be as cosmopolitan as they are rooted (e.g. Linklater, 1998).

Who can live up to this? Appiah is arguing that everyone has the potential to be rooted cosmopolitans, and thus good citizens. Rulfo is less ambitious – he feels that citizens should at least be rooted. Critically, both imply that people who fall short have only themselves to blame, and are lesser citizens for it. Appiah and Rulfo end up dismissing the millions who cannot live up to Rulfo's standards, much less those of Appiah.

Labour migrants have, historically, been victims of citizenship – citizenship has found them wanting both in rooting and in cosmopolitanism. However, Pnina Werbner (2006: 496) has suggested that 'boundary-crossing demotic migrations' *can* in fact be compared to the 'globe trotting travel, sophisticated cultural knowledge and moral world-view of deracinated intellectuals'. She proposes, to begin with, that people can be rooted to a single place and still show 'openness and reflexivity' (498). She also argues that there are cosmopolitan traditions other than the one that harks back to Cicero, so dear to Appiah's father. On the strength of this, Werbner argues for the 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' of a Pakistani construction worker whom she studied in the Gulf, and she gives other examples, including Senegalese migrants in Italy and Kallanga elites in Botswana (497–498). This is a generous gesture, but I am still unsure how exactly to measure the 'openness' of other people; for example, what to make of the Tapalpan who disavowed knowledge of Concord's history, yet had evidently picked it up.⁷ More critically, I am concerned about those who fail our ethnographic test of good citizenship. Werbner suggests that vernacular cosmopolitanisms appear among 'the elites of such cosmopolitan cities' as Alexandria and Thessalonica (498). Rama's 'lettered city' would surely count as an example, and I imagine that Rulfo, in his home from home in Mexico City, would qualify as a vernacular cosmopolitan. I am sure that Werbner would also try to include Mexican migrants in California, but I wonder how she would go about this, and what she would think of them if they fell short.

7 Beyond citizenship, Tony Blair predicted recently a deepening divide between 'modern, open' societies and 'closed, traditional' ones (Wintour, 2006). This makes me still more anxious about our ethnographic attempts to distinguish between people who are open and people who are not, even if we agree to broaden our category of openness, as Werbner does.

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