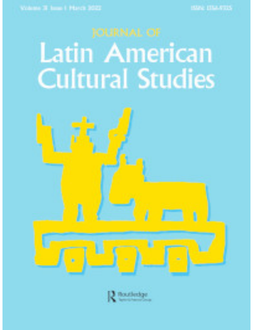

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# Latin American Environmental Research and Practice


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**Lisa Blackmore and Gisela Heffes**

# LATIN AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

*This dossier brings together four essays that show how recent scholarship, art, and design practice are shaping the emergent field of Latin American Environmental Humanities – a rapidly consolidating discipline that cross-fertilises methods and perspectives stemming from the social sciences, arts and humanities, natural sciences, and Indigenous thought, to critically interrogate environmental histories and confront contemporary challenges. Together, these review essays map a critical renewal of cultural studies that is currently unfolding through recent theoretical-analytical publications, ethnographic work, art practice, and site-specific art and design collaborations. We trace routes through a diverse corpus of emerging environmental scholarship, artistic and situated practice research, and public engagement activities, to show how they respond to the urgent challenge "to think in the presence of ongoing facts of destruction". The books, artworks, and collaborative fieldwork projects reviewed here problematise the culture/nature dichotomy as constitutive of the current ecological and climate crises, rethink the Western metaphysics of ontology and semiotics, and seed sympoetic experiments and alternate ways of knowing that reach across disciplinary divides.*

**Keywords:** Latin American Environmental Humanities; Indigenous epistemologies; plant thinking; arts practice research; ecocriticism

This dossier brings together four essays that show how recent scholarship, art, and design practice are shaping the emergent field of Latin American Environmental Humanities – a rapidly consolidating discipline that cross-fertilises methods and perspectives stemming from the social sciences, arts and humanities, natural sciences, and Indigenous thought, to critically interrogate environmental histories and confront contemporary challenges. Together, these review essays map a critical renewal of cultural studies that is currently unfolding through recent theoretical-analytical publications, ethnographic work, art practice, and site-specific art and design collaborations. We trace routes through a diverse corpus of emerging environmental scholarship, artistic and situated practice research, and public engagement activities, to show how they respond to the urgent challenge "to think in the presence of ongoing facts of destruction" (Stengers 2013, 186). The books, artworks, and collaborative fieldwork projects reviewed here problematise the culture/nature dichotomy as constitutive of the current ecological and climate crises, rethink the

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Western metaphysics of ontology and semiotics, and seed sympoetic experiments and alternate ways of knowing that reach across disciplinary divides. We also explore the dynamics of how scholarship/creative practice in Latin America reaches *beyond* academia to work in and with ecosocial worlds facing pressing challenges of extractivist logics, socioenvironmental injustice, the marginalisation of vulnerable groups and climate instability. The dossier thus aims to show how boundary-crossing explorations are contributing to an enlivening of academic debates around life in the Anthropocene by moving towards "ecologies of knowledge" (de Sousa Santos 2008, 186) while addressing – and, in some cases, directly intervening in – specific places and place-making.

*Treading Lightly on the Earth* charts new analytics that aid in approaching physical ecosystems from the point of view of existing and emerging corpuses of cultural production in literature and art, showing how scholars of and in Latin America are drawing on interdisciplinary debates, long environmental histories, and ancestral lifeworlds to explore dynamics of extractivism, ecosystem decline, human/non-human entanglements, and potential shifts in ways of being and acting in an increasingly fragile world. Reflecting the recent scholarly attention to discussions of cognitive empire and epistemicide (De Sousa Santos 2014), practices of *buen vivir* (Gudynas 2011) and designing pluriversal worlds (Escobar 2018) and Indigenous epistemologies (e.g. De la Cadena 2015; Rivera Cusicanqui 2015; Viveiros de Castro 1998), each essay in the dossier sets out how related critical debates in the social sciences and Indigenous thought and modes of being in relation to territory are influencing discussions in academic settings. These new directions, we argue, are broadening the field of study into new provinces of inquiry, enriching the existing wealth of Latin American environmental thought in evidence historically and today, such as Amerindian ontologies, popular-national telluric imaginings, syncretic Afro-Latin cultural practices, among others, all of which have genealogies that can be traced back to the pre-Columbian past (French and Heffes 2021, 3). Some of this critical and innovative scholarship includes, as Ponce de León's and Pinheiro Dias's essays in the dossier show, the vegetal turn, the emergence of critical plant studies, environmental thinking, and Indigenous epistemologies. Yet, as Pinheiro Dias underscores, there is nothing new in environmental thinking that comes from Indigenous perspectives where the notion of "turns" actually risks occluding the endurance of the imbrication of human and non-human ontologies in non-linear (i.e. non-Western) interactions.

Through the four essays' review of theoretical studies, cultural production, the semiotic work of non-human kin, and new entanglements of them all, *Treading Lightly on the Earth* asks a pressing question: what specific textures of the Anthropocene (and its variant nomenclatures of Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Necrocene, Chthulucene, and so forth) manifest themselves in Latin American environments? The urgency of posing this question has been manifested through the surge of collaborative efforts that have effectively been cultivating the field of Latin American Environmental Humanities and are exemplified by the increasing number of co-edited volumes and dossiers for academic journals, and of new digital platforms and networks of research groups focused on connecting and sharing ideas and works on environmental literature, art, and culture. This shift from

individual practices to collective endeavours, along with an increasing openness in the academy towards inter- and transdisciplinary research, has also stimulated, successfully, the emergence of concerted voices that interrogate and unearth the underlying premises of the current crisis. It aligns with what Noah Theriault and Simi Kang defined as a type of collaborative work that "decenters the authority of academic researchers and positions research as a form of community-led collective action" (2021, 6).[1] The shift to collaborative work also questions – tacitly or overtly – the underlying logics and symbolics of individualistic competition and territorial exploration inherent in the framing of research as "breaking new ground" instead of a collaborative "thinking-with-many" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2012, 200).

## Scholarly and creative practices

Contemporary environmental devastations across Latin America are shaped and modelled by histories of transhemispheric, transnational, and transregional resource appropriation and extractions that have accelerated under colonialism and global capitalism. As Heffes's essay demonstrates in the introduction to her review, the recent broad and rich production in the field of Latin American environmental inquiries has fostered a constellation of scholarship that expands and reconfigures the shape of the field from the original formulations during the first waves of ecocriticism to the present, opening new categories of critical and epistemological explorations and marking a turning point with regard to what has been so far published. Some – albeit non-exhaustive – examples are the works by Gagliano, Ryan, and Vieira (2017) and Wylie (2020) on both the intrinsic language and the anthropomorphism of plants, respectively. New directions have also emerged in the study of landscape vis-à-vis extractivism, Andean visions, and the notion of archive in approaches led by the works of Andermann, Blackmore, and Carrillo Morell (2018) as well as Briceño and Coronado (2019). Other perspectives introduce new readings through the lens of posthumanism ecology (e.g. Bollington and Merchant 2020; Fornoff and Heffes 2021), nation-state constructions (e.g. Martínez-Pinzón 2016), the reassessment of old tropes such as the Latin American canon (e.g. French and Heffes 2021), the rubber boom and/or the search for El Dorado (e.g. Smith 2021; Rogers 2019), decolonised science in recent art-science projects (e.g. Page 2021), mimesis, and developmentalism (e.g. Saramago 2021), as well as slow violence (e.g. Kressner, Mutis, and Pettinaroli 2020), just to name a few.

New cross-cutting initiatives have also emerged that follow in the paths of new materialism, Indigenous and postcolonial criticism, animal studies, and queer ecology. These recent works, which sometimes correlate with the emergence of new voices in the field of Latin American Studies, engage with fundamental questions that span from issues of aesthetic representations, temporalities, and spatialities to activism, indigeneity, monoculture, toxicity, and cultural and political resistance. Other questions address the relevance of the use of "environmental humanities" in the Latin American context – in contrast, for instance, to the more frequent use of political ecology [*ecología política*], an approach derived from the social sciences

that has triggered seminal publications such as those written by Eduardo Gudynas, Marisol de la Cadena, Arturo Escobar, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Deborah Danowski, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Eduardo Kohn, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, to name just a few. Following this distinctiveness in terminology, one may ask whether an "environmental humanities" reveals a different paradigm of analysis. An important task for Latin American scholarship is to inquire about other traditions of environmental thought that prevail in the region by asking how we define the ecologies of the Global South, and how distinct they are vis-à-vis the ecologies from the Global North. In this sense, it is key to have equitable and productive global conversations in the environmental humanities while taking into account the persistence of (post)colonial networks of knowledge and power. To a greater or lesser degree, these recent publications, which mark a second (or even third) wave of ecocritical endeavours, seek to identify the most urgent problems in Latin America from a political, cultural, and aesthetic perspective, while exploring the potential contributions to the larger project of imaging ecosystems that are both alternative and resilient, generative and fertile.

In addition to reviewing conventional scholarly formats, such as monographs and co-edited books, this dossier addresses the contributions that art and design practice makes to environmental thinking in scholarly settings and beyond. Alongside scholars, Latin American cultural producers have also been transforming praxis and inquiry of environmental thinking through what Mexican writer Rivera Garza has defined in *The Restless Dead* (2020) as "disappropiation" [*desapropiación*] and "communality" [*comunalidad*]: while disappropiation refers to a technique of assemblages that resist contemporary authorship (a reification of the notion of creative genius), communality consists of an ethical derivation of the former, one that exposes the collective work that underlies all writing. One recent example is *La compañía*, by Mexican visual artist and writer Verónica Gerber Bicecci, a book that rewrites Amparo Dávila's short story "El huésped", through a work of assembling and overlapping that serves as a matrix to tell a story of extraction and dispossession: a project engaged with visual art and ethnographic and archival material that yields a polyphonic narrative. The advent of these novel modalities, aimed at decentring, reconfiguring, and reassessing fixed hierarchies, consists of new attempts to contest the boundaries that have been assigning a particular role to individuals among themselves but also within nonhuman worlds.

Blackmore's and Pinheiro Dias's review essays approach art practice as a mode of research in itself and examine the generative ways that curatorial and transdisiciplinary projects produce both scholarly outputs and public engagement activities. The past decade has seen growing acceptance of the research value of these aspects of creative practice and their integration into formal academic frameworks. A systematic nomenclature now exists to refer to the ways that practice-led research and research-led practice "can result in research insights, such as those that arise out of making a creative work and/or in the documentation and theorisation of that work" (Smith and Dean 2009, 1–2). In the Latin American academy, peer-reviewed journals (such as *Cuadernos de música, artes visuales y escénicas* created in 2004) disseminate practice-led research, while higher-education courses (such as the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero's diploma in Humanidades Ambientales en el Cruce del Arte y la Tecnología) have embraced the

transdisciplinary spirit of the environmental humanities. Moreover, in attending to practice research, curatorial work, and public engagement activities, this dossier aligns with the broader recognition of the research value and social impact of such work exemplified by the recent decision by the editors of the field-leading journal *Environmental Humanities* to incentivise the publication of practice work (Jørgensen 2022).

The parallel rise of a renewed environmental focus in art practice and growing ecocritical approaches in scholarship and curatorial work in Latin America also attests to the relevance of creative practice in academic settings and public imaginaries. The solidarity of artists with environmental activism – from Francisco Toledo's protest works against transgenic maize in Mexico to Carolina Caycedo's ongoing collaborations with environmental leaders across the Americas, among a myriad of other examples – exemplifies the often-direct links between art and political ecology that are receiving increased scholarly attention (e.g. Merlinsky and Serafini 2020). The ecological focus of major art biennials in the region, such as *Incerteza viva* (Sao Paulo, 2016), the *Bienal del Bioceno: Cambiar el verde por azul* (Ecuador, 2022), and *Inaudito Magdalena* (Salón Nacional de Artistas de Colombia, 2022), as well as the ongoing work of site-specific projects such as *Bienal Saco* (Chile), demonstrate the centrality of the arts to advancing critical perspectives on ecological degradation and creating public platforms to imagine more just and sustainable ecosocial worlds. It follows that cultural studies and art historical scholars have turned to art practice to examine how it contributes to key topics in environmental thinking in the region, as demonstrated by recent studies focusing on human/non-human relations (Lozano 2016), landscape traditions, practices, and representations (Uribe 2016; Depetris Chauvin and Urzúa Opazo 2019), ecofeminism (Moñivas 2020), archipelagic thinking and liquid ecologies (Flores and Stephens 2017; Blackmore and Gómez 2020), and the decolonisation of science (Page 2021), to name just a few. Just as contemporary environmental artworks interact with earlier pictorial, performance, and land art traditions, so too are site-specific projects part of a constantly evolving lineage of projects (such as the roving expeditions and improvised architectures that inaugurated the Ciudad Abierta in Chile in 1970 through to the more recent environmentally focused work of Más Arte Más Acción in Colombia, to name just two initiatives) that intervene creatively and critically into the geopolitical and relational enmeshments of territory on a variety of scales.[2] Thus, by addressing site-specific art and design projects the dossier asks how the intersection of creative practice, transdisciplinary scholarship, and community collaboration is advancing modes of "thinking with care" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2012) in complex environments and making tangible contributions to life in them. In sum, by emphasising the contiguities of cultural production and scholarly work, the dossier seeks to dissolve the traditional hierarchy that separates the former as primary material for the latter, positioning practice, instead, as research in its own right and a mode of socioenvironmentally engaged work.

## New directions

Overall, the four essays attend to the reconfiguration of new concepts at the intersection of scholarly, cultural, and aesthetic productions, as well as structures and

perspectives that have arranged, classified, and systematised the study of Latin American and Caribbean culture. In "Submerged Strata and the Condition of Knowledge in Latin America", Gisela Heffes maps out the growing number of scholarly works that centre on environmental humanities, bearing in mind that the field of Latin American and Caribbean cultural studies has witnessed the growth of environmental criticism in tandem with the emergence of an important body of works that have catalysed new and important practices and approaches. Heffes reviews two outstanding contributions to the ongoing debates that are defining the theoretical and critical directions of Latin American and Caribbean cultural studies: *Things with a History: Transcultural Materialism and the Literatures of Extraction in Contemporary Latin America* (2019), by Héctor Hoyos, and *Allegories of the Anthropocene*, by Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2019). Both works attempt to contest the nature/culture binary – along with other Modern dichotomies – from very different positions and angles: while Hoyos calls for a de-allegorising (namely, a "literalization") of several important Latin American works, DeLoughrey, for her part, invites us to reconsider allegory as a way of symbolising the "perceived disjunction between humans and the planet, between our 'species' and a dynamic external 'nature'" (4). Heffes argues that these studies shift the epistemological direction of the field by forming new areas of studies and/or reformulating and reconfiguring old ones. If *Things with a History* twists the direction of what so far has been done by Latin American scholars working on World Literature, it expands by the same token the scope of environmental humanities within the broader field of Latin American studies by proposing an epistemological displacement vis-à-vis our understanding of narrative, storytelling, and words, a shift that allows us to revisit, as it does, both canonical and non-canonical Latin American cultural works. *Allegories of the Anthropocene*, on the other hand, amplifies the field of postcolonial studies focused on the Anthrpocene which has already been expanded by DeLoughrey herself in critical and collaborative works. Overall, they both line up with the emergence of some scholarly publications that look closely at different literary and artworks to propose a critical inquiry that seeks to unsettle the human and therefore de-centre the Anthropos.

In "The Botanical Turn in Latin America", Alejandro Ponce de León argues that in learning from plants "practitioners in the botanical turn are widening the analytical lenses in the humanities, so that new sensibilities and care practices for more-than-human lifeforms can be imagined". Through his analysis of Monica Gagliano, John Ryan, and Patrícia Vieira's co-edited volume *The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature* (2017), Theresa Miller's *Plant Kin: A Multispecies Ethnography in Indigenous Brazil* (2019), and Lesley Wylie's book *The Poetics of Plants in Spanish American Literature* (2020), Ponce de León maps theoretical provocations and methodological challenges pertaining to the recent rise of interest in plant studies in Latin Americanist scholarship. He argues that cross-fertilising academic platforms that intersect the natural and social sciences with the humanities is particularly generative terrain for imagining multispecies politics and ethics for the Anthropocene. The cultivation of those botanical imaginations, however, poses questions about the need for research methods that probe beyond the conventions of Western metaphysics, attuning to plant intelligence and expressiveness beyond their conventional

encodings in scientific taxonomies and the decorative arts, and seeing, feeling, knowing, and reconnecting with botanical forces to foster liveable worlds. Exploring sensory ethnography of Indigenous relationality in plant worlds through Miller's book and ecocritical analyses of the Latin American literary canon in Wylie's work offers some clues as to epistemological routes and research methods that circumvent the ocularcentric logics and scientific objectivity, into thinking and feeling otherwise with plants. Beyond plant studies per se, Ponce de León argues that these methodological openings are of value to scholars in disciplines in and beyond cultural studies.

Jamille Pinheiro Dias, in "Environmental Thinking and Indigenous Arts in Brazil Today", traces the impacts of the work of Brazilian Indigenous intellectuals Davi Kopenawa Yanomami and Ailton Krenak on scholarly debates and the generative role of art practice in contesting the commodification of life. By reviewing chapters in Stelio Marras et al.'s collective volume *Vozes vegetais: Diversidade resistência e histórias da floresta* (Plant Voices: Diversity, Resistance and Forest Histories, 2020) as well as Ailton Krenak's *A vida não é útil* (Life Is Not Useful, 2020), Pinheiro Dias explores intersections between environmental thinking, ethnography, poetry, noting the influence of Indigenous thought on recent scholarship that challenges extractivist paradigms and the hierarchisation of life forms. She goes on to argue that Indigenous art-making contributes with critical insights through a poetics of resistance to environmental debates in contemporary Brazil which are of regional relevance. Her analysis of Glicéria Tupinambá's powerful reclaiming of the Tupinambá cloak-making practice shows how art-making connects to inhabited ancestral lands and the custom by the Tupinambá people from Serra do Padeiro, located in the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory, in Southern Bahia. The essay concludes with the examination of provocative works by artist Denilson Baniwa, an Amazonian Indigenous artist from Mariuá, in the Rio Negro, whose practice critically engages with the history of museums and collecting as part of a colonial apparatus that ossifies other-than-modern lifeworlds. Her review of Indigenous thought and art practice alongside *Vozes vegetais* and *A vida não é útil* signals the important reclamation work being done in multiple spheres to mount vigorous resistance to the monoculture of Western thought that reduces "nature" to a resource, showing how Indigenous approaches to interspecies relationality offer reflections about how the hierarchisation of life forms takes part in a history of epistemic violence that is implicated across the spectrum of both capitalist monoculture and the coloniality inherent in the history of museums. As she remarks in the conclusion, these Indigenous forms of art-making do not give rise to the "resurrection" of an "authentic past" against coloniality, but to modes of decommodifying the very nexus between time and creativity – experiments in aesthetic reactivation that are not exclusive to the present or to the human – and in which the human might still feed the soil for ancestral and future arts to sprout.

In her essay "Cultivating Ongoingness through Site-Specific Arts Research" Lisa Blackmore reviews HAWAPI, Ensayos, and EnlaceArq, three decade-old transnational projects in Latin America that intersect sitework, academic research, creative practice, and transdisciplinary/community collaboration. The essay examines how the platforms' materialisations as exhibitions, events, and publications

contribute to regional and global debates about environmental challenges such as wetland conservation, urban rivers, and sustainable construction materials, considering how these projects plot critical cartographies of socioenvironmental conflicts that offer insights into the situated dynamics and structural inequalities of the types of "extractive zones" high on scholarly agendas in the environmental humanities (Gómez-Barris 2017). Blackmore reviews the three groups' approaches to relational dynamics with specific communities and sites through ephemeral residencies and long-term collaborations that work toward sustainable, autonomous solutions to socioenvironmental challenges. The analysis of HAWAPI's spatial practices demonstrates the critical dialogue with traditions of territorial exploration while circumventing the extractive formats of expeditions and mass tourism, and their related aesthetic encodings. The review of EnlaceArq's collaboration with the La Palomera barrio in Caracas, with whom architect and scholar Elisa Silva initiated a project to celebrate the community's history, solve a waste-collection problem, and create new communal spaces, assesses how engaged scholarly and cultural work incentivises the protection of biocultural rights through "critical design practice" that Arturo Escobar (2018) theorises as a reorientation of design to reinvigorate communal life and mitigate the social and territorial fractures of developmentalism. By evaluating the long-term collaboration between Ensayos' founder, Camila Marambio, with leaders from the Selk'nam Indigenous people in Tierra del Fuego, the review considers how curatorial strategies conjoin local territories and global cultural platforms to raise awareness of the intertwined biocultural rights of Indigenous communities and wetland environments. Ultimately, Blackmore argues that practice research stimulates engaged practices of "thinking with care" (Puig de la Bellacasa) that create dynamic spaces of negotiation and difference where tangible responses to conflictive terrains can emerge.

## Future steps: *Treading Lightly on the Earth*

Responding to the deep uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic and reflecting on its relation to the long-standing structural causes of environmental degradation and modern acceleration, Ailton Krenak advocates a mode of "treading lightly on the earth" to counter, as Pinheiro Dias argues in her essay, the greed and human exceptionalism of the "Earth Eaters" or the "people of merchandise" – the terms proposed by Yanomami activist Davi Kopenawa to name the anthropocentric greed that reduces plants, minerals, and interspecies lifeworlds to resources. The new directions in environmental research and practice surveyed and reviewed here are an invitation to reflect on the implications and nature of human/non-human engagements in daily life as in research methodologies. The deep thought given to historical environmental entanglements shaping cultural criticism, the intensified focus on the lives of plants and ecosystems, and the commitment to doing creative work with territory, all signal how these new and consolidating directions seek to move with tact, gently, engaging ethically and care-fully in the relational webbings of our situated and planetary lives in order to revoke the utilitarian will to control life. The enduring imprint that environmental scholarship and creative practice can make on communities, academic and beyond, will be a question for future inquiry

amid the ongoing socioenvironmental injustices that shape the contemporary world and the urgency of confronting them. In this sense, endeavours from and on Latin American are unique, distinct, and crucial contributions to the growing field of environmental humanities. Given its ground-breaking methodologies they catalyse both critical and practical aesthetic interventions that will have a long-lasting impact in the overarching scope of environmental studies, while departing, at the same time, from ossified traditions and shifting epistemological paradigms into unprecedented spheres.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

NOTES

1. While the context varies (Theriault and Kang are addressing “toxic research” specifically), there are similar attempts to understand social structures, cultural differences, and power dynamics that shape the production, distribution, conceptualisation, and embodiment of environmental catastrophes generated in the capitalist world system (2021, 6).
2. For the history and ongoing activities of Ciudad Abierta, see https://www.amareida.cl/Ciudad-Abierta. On Más Arte Más Acción, see https://www.masartemasaccion.org/.

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# Cultivating Ongoingness Through Site-Specific Arts Research and Public Engagement

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# CULTIVATING ONGOINGNESS THROUGH SITE-SPECIFIC ARTS RESEARCH AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

*In this article, I consider the contributions of projects in Latin America to the need "to think in the presence of ongoing facts of destruction", and to imagine and design forms of "ongoingness" amid socioenvironmental challenges and conflicts. I focus on HAWAPI, Ensayos and EnlaceArq, three initiatives that have consolidated a decade of site-specific, practice research that departs from the arts to devise methods that bridge the arts, sciences, and communities to confront socioenvironmental pressures and enduring injustices caused by colonial legacies and continued extractivism. How does site-specific practice research seed and cultivate inter- and transdisciplinary collaborations around pressing socioenvironmental concerns affecting Latin America? How do projects establish critical relationships regarding the circulation of knowledges related to these issues and engage with diverse types of publics? And, insofar as the projects reviewed here often operate on the fringes of academia, what strengths and challenges does this generate for their sustainability over time and their impact on scholarly research, public conversations and the lives of specific communities?*

**Keywords:** transdisciplinarity; site-specific research; arts research; curatorial practice; environmental humanities; Anthropocene

## Slowing the fall

In his 2020 essay *Ideas to Postpone the End of the World*, the Brazilian activist for socioenvironmental and Indigenous rights Ailton Krenak conjured the current socioecological impasse as a fall into an abyss rife with divisions. "The end of the world is never so close as when you have worlds on either side of a divide, each trying to guess what the other's doing", he wrote, before calling on his readers to embrace the sensation of falling and "put our creative and critical capacity to use making some colourful parachutes to slow the fall, [and] turn it into something exciting and edifying" (2020, 64). Far from a negation of the severity of the Anthropocene, Krenak's appeal was for a diversification of epistemologies and imaginative practices capable of rendering "the world in another register, another potency" (66). This, he suggested, would combat the entrenched alienation of the capitalist world system by creating opportunities for re-attachment to the multitudinous forms of life and for an openness to other ways of living and being in the world.

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Over the past decade, ecopolitical arts have consolidated as fertile terrains for critical inquiry into the structural causes and pressing challenges of the Anthropocene, as shown by major exhibitions such as *Incerteza viva* (Sao Paulo Biennale, 2016), *Bodies of Water* (Shanghai Biennale, 2021) and *Rīvus* (Sydney Biennale, 2022). Amid the increasing formal acceptance of practice research within the academy by virtue of its intrinsic scholarly value and capacity to engage public imaginations and traverse disciplinary divides (see Smith and Dean 2009), high-profile practice research platforms have emerged to grapple inventively with the environmental challenges signalled by Krenak, often moving in and out of academic milieux, into specific fieldwork sites, and inventing diverse formats for dissemination in public settings. Global networks such as *World of Matter* – a multimedia platform providing an open-access archive on the global ecologies of resource exploitation and circulation – and the cross-disciplinary exhibitions developed by the *Living in the Anthropocene* project led by Anna Tsing and Niels Bohr at Aarhus University are just two examples that bear out the research value of constellating creative methods and disciplinary dialogues that critique anthropocentric projects of human development and speculate about ways of living in temporality that Donna Haraway (2016) calls "ongoingness".[1]

These shifts in practice research parallel other broad, interconnected changes in the ways in which environmental challenges are being mapped across and beyond scholarly disciplines. Amid growing awareness of the ecological and climate emergency in public debates, there is increasing impetus in the academy for research projects that are interdisciplinary in their approach to environmental topics and public-facing in their dissemination strategies, and recognition of the scholarly value of public engagement work in the environmental humanities (Jørgensen 2022). Simultaneously, the creation of specialist journals, scholarly associations, and academic programmes in the field of the environmental humanities confirms the ground gained by this innovative and timely discipline predicated on traversing conventional divides separating the natural and social sciences and the humanities. All of this forms the backdrop to the rise of projects in Latin America that by learning "to think in the presence of ongoing facts of destruction" (Stengers 2013, 186) make valuable contributions to the environmental debates which have become more prevalent in Latin American cultural studies over recent years, as we contend in this dossier. These practice research projects depart from the arts to seed creative terrains that bridge the arts, sciences, communities, and institutions to confront socioenvironmental pressures caused by legacies of colonialism and extractivism, land-tenure conflicts affecting peasant, indigenous, and Afro-Latin American communities, post-conflict territories, and the rights of nature, among other issues. Many are informed by critical debates about decolonisation and the need for "ecologies of knowledge" that replace the monoculture of dominant Western thinking with diverse epistemologies that can inspire ethics of planetary belonging adapted to the present (de Sousa Santos 2008, 186).

A wealth of artists in Latin America are advancing practice research into environmental aesthetics that contributes to the collective challenge of imagining ways of being in the world otherwise. A growing list of publications intersecting Latin American Cultural Studies and Environmental Humanities is placing a spotlight on

the nexus of art and the environment (e.g. Andermann 2018; Lozano 2016; Page 2021), while recent academic projects are using public programmes and exhibitions to bridge gaps between scholarly work and public debates (e.g. Solano and Serrano 2021). In this context, in this essay I review three collaborative initiatives in arts-led research that make significant contributions to academic discussions, public conversations, and community action on socioenvironmental conflicts and justice. Focusing on HAWAPI, Ensayos, and EnlaceArq, three decade-old platforms active in Latin America and beyond, I consider how their direct engagements with territory, pursuit of transdisciplinary methods in working across diverse terrains, disciplines, and media, and commitment to public engagement foster an "ecology of practices" – the term Isabelle Stengers uses to describe malleable and inventive modes of research, which think through the milieu (understood as both middle grounds of knowledge and physical surroundings) to consider emergent attachments to shared lifeworlds that relinquish nostalgia for fixed truths (2013, 187). While not exhaustive in scope, the projects selected are representative of the consolidation of arts-based inquiry in the region, the diversity of process-driven methods that animate such projects' pursuit of "response-ability" (Haraway 2016), and strategic approaches to interacting with academic contexts and cultural institutions that support autonomy and flexibility in working methods.[2] The discussion below asks: how does arts-led site-specific research seed and cultivate inter- and transdisciplinary collaborations around pressing socioenvironmental concerns affecting Latin America? How do projects establish critical relationships regarding the circulation of knowledges related to these issues and engage with diverse types of publics? And, insofar as the projects reviewed here often operate on the fringes of academia, what strengths and challenges does this generate for their sustainability over time and their impact on scholarly research, public conversations, and the lives of specific communities?

## *Accessing terrain*

Access to land in Latin America is historically contentious and violent, with spatial dynamics and encounters in its "extractive zones" often ensnared in "the colonial paradigm, worldview, and technologies that mark out regions of 'high biodiversity' in order to reduce life to capitalist resource conversion" (Gómez-Barris 2017, xvi). From colonial *reducciones* and *latifundia*, through to mining enclaves and transnational industrial complexes, land formations attest directly to processes of usurpation, slavery, and exploitation enacted by colonialism and capital. How land is represented is imbricated with these phenomena. In the region's territorial histories, colonial power, scientific surveys, and extractive enterprises converge to produce a complex and problematic visual culture (Bleichmar 2012). The expedition has been a key modus operandi in this setting, and one that directly involved artists in the production of taxonomies that instrumentalised nature-as-resource, and that cast Latin America's landscapes in sublime and romantic registers that euphemised the violent encounters (Manthorne 2015). These traditions made art complicit with colonial and extractive dynamics, a notable example of which is the

Botanical Expedition of New Granada (1760–1808), whose archive of illustrations remains in the Royal Botanical Garden in Madrid, Spain.

Confronting these territorial processes critically and evading the contemporary dynamics of both touristic and academic/cultural extractivism is a challenge common to site-specific projects that aim to engage territory directly, assembling – as the projects reviewed here do – groups of artists, curators, researchers, and community members to work together in the field. The complexity of access as a process for negotiation – rather than a right to be taken – is a central feature of the work of HAWAPI, a Lima-based independent cultural association that takes interdisciplinary artists to specific locations to conduct research and produce interventions in public space. HAWAPI was founded in 2012 by film producer Maxim Holland, running for its first two years under the name AFUERA. Since 2017, Holland has co-directed the project with curator and scholar Susie Quillinan, who also leads the platform's editorial work. HAWAPI unfolds annually in a three-phase structure, which starts with a site-specific residency (termed the *encuentro*, which translates as "encounter" or "meeting") of approximately ten participants who live together for one to two weeks. The residency is followed by curatorial work with the artists that results in an exhibition in an urban gallery held some months later, and a digital and print book, usually published a year after the initial *encuentro*. Participant artists are mainly Peruvian but also international; guest curators have also featured in the project since 2018. Residency sites have included the open pit and gold mining towns of Cerro del Pasco (2012) and Huepetuhe, Peru (2015), the desert border area between Peru, Chile, and Bolivia (2017), and the Territorial Area for Training and Reincorporation (Espacio Territorial de Capacitación y Reincorporación) Amaury Rodríguez in Pondores, La Guajira, Colombia (2018), among others. During the *encuentro*, participants interact with site and local residents in various ways, including intimate collaborations (such as the residency that took place on the lands of Máxima Acuña and her family in Cajamarca, in 2019) or more remote experiences (as in the 2014 edition when participants were stationed at an isolated base camp created at the receding Pariacaca glacier in Peru's Central Cordillera).

HAWAPI pivots on the intense, embodied, and relational experience the participants gain in the field. This experience is designed to instigate ephemeral artist responses to place that are informed by the complex configurations of territory they encounter. Rather than an exclusively environmental project, HAWAPI's curatorial approach is to select sites of social, economic, and political relevance that demonstrate processes of abandon, fracture, and ongoing transformation. Participants do not engage with territory by following the trajectory of the expedition (which tends to pit human bodies against an environment to be conquered). Rather, participants stay rooted in the socioeconomic and material textures of each *encuentro*'s locale. This strategy seeks to generate depth and intensity in encounters, rather than ape the often-triumphant rhetoric of historical expeditions and contemporary tourist excursions. In this sense, HAWAPI's conceptual framing is more akin to Robert Smithson's mid-twentieth century call to attend to the rich "rubble of logic" that can be unearthed in direct interaction with human-altered geologies of infrastructural and extractive landscapes (1996, 110).

**Figures 1 and 2. Linda Pongutá, *Ojos de tierra* (Earth Eyes), 2019. HAWAPI 2019 – Máxima Acuña. Photos: Maxim Holland.**

Indeed, in consistent dialogue with the tradition of Land Art, artist responses often emerge as temporary installations seen only by the artist and their immediate collaborators, emerging through direct engagement and collaboration with the community hosting the artists. This occurred in the 2019 edition when the Colombian artist Linda Pongutá sculpted a ring of earth around a large stone on the land belonging to Máxima Acuña and her family (Figures 1 and 2), noting that "This rock is a place that something or someone might inhabit, it is a source of fertility and is related to the remote, it is a mountain" (Quillinan 2020, 21).[3] To the artist's gesture of creating a microcosmic interplay of vulnerability, enclosure, and protection, Acuña's son, Daniel Chaupe, responded: "This stone is protected, which leads us to conclude that stones are also alive" (Quillinan 2020, 21). This slow process of hand-sculpting the earth reflected the dynamics of other participants who offered their labour to the everyday tasks of Máxima Acuña's land, demonstrating the ethical disposition of the project insofar as it recalls Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's assertion that: "Caring is more than an affective-ethical state: it involves material engagement in labours to sustain interdependent worlds, labours that are often associated with exploitation and domination" (2012, 198). A further

example of collaborative work occurred in the 2015 edition in Huepetuhue, when activities unfolded in a temporary cultural centre in the town's main plaza, which served as an open-air meeting point and venue for workshops, film screenings, and performances. There, Peruvian artist Philippe Gruenberg worked together with a local confectioner to create a vast cake depicting the extractive landscape which was exhibited and eaten by the community. Considered by curators Holland and Quillinan an exemplar of the HAWAPI ethos, the intervention created a literal opportunity to metabolise collectively (and playfully) the incursion of artists into the site and to digest how mining is transforming the local environment.[4]

What lasting impact such experiences leave on communities that host artist residencies is a question notoriously difficult to gauge in arts research since (to the frustration of funding bodies) it does not necessarily deliver immediate or quantifiable results. In HAWAPI's case, there is no pretension to enduring collaboration with site or community, and the curators are self-reflective and critical about the dangers posed both by contemporary art existing in a "bubble" and the "artificial hells" (Bishop 2013) that superficial participatory art can create (conversation with the author, 4 November 2021). Rather, the curatorial wager is better understood as the aspiration for what Holland terms a "ripple effect" ("Lima Conversations" 2016) generated by the temporary activation of communities engaged in intense debates and activities in specific sites, and the subsequent cultivation – in the latter phases of exhibition and book – of spaces for reflection, studio art practice, and the development and exchange of ideas. The protracted metabolism of each edition, as it moves from sitework to studio, and gallery to book, confronts publics in urban centres with the problematic terrains HAWAPI probes and then – through its open-access publications – offers these terrains up for further research and reflection around practice research, territory, climate, extractivism, and community.

One particularly significant research contribution that emerges from HAWAPI's decade-long practice is its cumulative cartography of regional territorial conflicts and the production of artworks and texts reflecting on them. Amid the commercialisation of Peru's local art scene (Borea 2021), HAWAPI has taken an alternative not-for-profit route that encourages artists to engage in site-specific practice away from the capital city. It thus fosters embodied methodologies in contemporary art research that cultivate "the art of paying attention" (Ingold 2017) to the dynamic factors and processes that shape contemporary landscapes of the Capitolocene. In a broader sense, this contributes to critical debates around landscape conceived not as an object for representation but as a dynamic "contact zone" (Pratt 1991) and site of "friction" (Tsing 2004) shaken by myriad economic, social, aesthetic, and material forces into states of "trance" (Andermann 2018). Ultimately, as HAWAPI brings remote territorial conflicts – from receding glaciers to campesino resistance – to cultural spaces in diverse cities (Lima, Bogota, Santiago, Cusco, Tacna, and Vaparaíso, to date) it contributes to raising public awareness of a range of socioenvironmental and politico-ecological problems and insists, to quote Timothy Morton, on the entangled nature of ecology where "[h]ere – is always *there* too" (2007, 200). In contemporary Peru, with its dependence on mining and tourism, and the fractious divide between urban centres and

rural communities, this insistence on the interconnectivity of territory can be understood as a political gesture that creates opportunities to think with the fractures of the nation's "imagined community" (Anderson 1983).

### Nomadic essaying

Much further down the Pacific coast from Lima, another collaborative platform that recently marked a decade of site-specific work is Ensayos, founded by the Chilean curator Camila Marambio in 2010 with its first iteration, Ensayo #1, held in Tierra del Fuego in 2011.[5] Ensayos is a collective research practice whose strands of inquiry are rooted in Chilean Patagonia but move nomadically across continents, convening collaborators of diverse nationalities, and manifesting themselves in various forms, including exhibitions, films, performances, publications, theatrical work, a web series, and even a perfume. The collective departs from a critical approach and sensory attunement to the physical and geopolitical conditions of territory, grounding its work in an ecofeminist, transdisciplinary ethos that seeks to contribute to existing biocultural preservation efforts, and to grapple with Tierra del Fuego's enframing as a land to be conquered, exploited, and commodified, whether through its historic role as a beaver-fur colony or its contemporary status as global tourist destination. The group confronts dynamics of place and expresses commitment to honouring the Indigenous Selk'nam, Yaghan, Kawéskar, and Haush peoples, the ancestral occupants of the lands and waters through which Ensayos moves. On the project website, Ensayos features an acknowledgement of the indigenous lands its research moves across, and of its decolonial perspectives and engagement with indigenous peoples and knowledges that inform its research.

The curatorial premise proposes that interdisciplinary collaboration and transdisciplinary methods can support biocultural preservation. To this end, it instigates the participation of artists as researchers in existing ecological and cultural conservation initiatives. Ensayos constellates *ensayistas* who feature scientists, curators, artists, members of indigenous groups hailing from Australia, Chile, Norway, and the United States, who collaborate on ongoing projects that involve periodic meetings and materialisations of research in different latitudes, including Patagonian cultural festivals, European exhibition spaces, and academic conferences.[6] Ensayo #1, the overarching structure and thematic strand that guides all the group's activities, emerged from site-specific conversations in the inaugural 10-day excursion co-organised with the Parque Karukinka Wildlife Conservation Society in 2011. There, artists, scientists, and locals came together to consider what ecopolitical work an artist residency might do, and what lines of ongoing inquiry could "transform the extractivist models of human interaction with Tierra del Fuego and other archipelagos" and inspire emergent forms of eco-cultural ethics ("Ensayo #1" n.d.). It thus set out to feed back to territory and community, rather than take from them.

This first Ensayo produced five further strands of research approaching topics of extinction, human geography, coastal health, repatriation, and peatland conservation. Each Ensayo features a different set of participants, rationale, aims, and

envisaged outcomes published on its host page on the digital platform. This links to a subsequent archive of posts that document and comment on the ongoing activities, enabling each Ensayo to unfold as an open-ended, iterative process, rather than follow an outcome-oriented logic. The global connections that Ensayos establishes through its web of fieldwork sites, participants, and venues for dissemination do critical work on two important fronts. First, they interrogate the ocean-crossing, settler colonialist dynamics of "capitalism-in-nature" by addressing territorial formations shaped by the long project of modernity (Moore 2015), such as through the historical revision of the 1940s project to turn Tierra del Fuego into a fur-producing beaver colony. Second, through ongoing dialogue and collaboration between international and local researchers and stakeholders, Ensayos' global connections eschew essentialist or nostalgic notions of place, identity, and nature criticised by scholars as politically reactionary and philosophically stunted (e.g. Morton 2007).

Framed as a series of ongoing "essays", Ensayos signals the importance of process – as opposed to the production of objects for the white cube gallery setting – in its wager for "the regenerative potential of open-ended, undisciplined, creative research that carefully assembles independent researchers with indigenous communities, local organizations, institutions, governing bodies, and more-than-human entities" ("Intro" n.d.). The groups' projects draw from philosophical debates around interspecies ecologies and ecofeminism but respond to actual sociolegal and biocultural problematics of contested lands. This strategy demonstrates curatorial commitment to intersecting academic and social realms through theoretically informed arts practice that bypasses conventional modes of knowledge circulation (such as academic papers) that are so often unavailable to non-specialist audiences. Many of Ensayos' projects embrace the ludic and inventive spirit of "speculative fabulation" (Haraway 2016) to open spaces to think otherwise. An example of this is a sub-project in Ensayo #2, which focuses on the introduction of Canadian beavers to Tierra del Fuego. This Ensayo, which began in 2011 and is ongoing, features a recording of the live performance *Asunto Castor* at the Festival Cielos del Infinito at the Museo Martín Gusinde in 2014 (Figure 3). There, artist Christy Gast and Marambio dressed in human-sized beaver suits to share with the public insights from the interdisciplinary work being done by Ensayos' researchers

**Figure 3.** **Video still from *Asunto Castor*, a performance by Camila Marambio and Christy Gast, presented on 22 February 2014, in Puerto Williams, Isla Navarino, Cabo de Hornos, as part of the Festival Cielos del Infinito at the Museo Martín Gusinde. Courtesy of Ensayos.**

through discussion, diagrams, and movement, and to encourage public contributions. They invited (initially awkward) audience members to become beaver by putting on the suit and sharing reflections on the impacts the animals make on the local ecology. This ludic mode of "making kin" with the beavers – considered by some to be an invasive pest – mobilised contemporary debates on interspecies collaboration in post-anthropocentric affective configurations of community that are not limited to human lives.

The collective's most recent project, *Pabellón Turba Tol Hol-Hol Tol* (part of Ensayo #6's research on peatbog ecosystems), addresses the urgency of peatland conservation and is in preparation in direct collaboration with environmental and indigenous organisations, such as Wildlife Conservation Society and Fundación Hach Saye, which defends Selk'nam culture in Tierra del Fuego. The project will represent Chile at the Venice Biennial in Spring 2022, before which the organisers are running a programme of outreach events about peatbogs with local communities and Chilean institutions. The curatorial text sets out the focus on an approach to socioenvironmental justice that demonstrates from the entanglement (rather than separation) of human and non-human lives:

> All over this increasingly hot and dry world, these wetlands are imperiled. Their conservation is intrinsically linked to the future wellbeing of humankind and, in Patagonia, to the rebirth of the Selk'nam people. Peat bogs are clamoring to be represented as a living body, as the Selk'nam people are also clamoring to be recognized as a living culture. ("About")

As well as indigenous cosmovisions, the recognition of peat bogs as *living bodies* resonates with new materialist theory (e.g. Bennett 2009) and non-representationalist theories of performativity (Barad 2003) that question the human/nature, subject/object binaries and seek conduits to attune to the vibrancy and "thingyness" of matter as "active participant in the world's becoming" (Barad 2003, 803). However, the most compelling and potentially generative aspect of the project is its emphasis on the mutual dependencies of the legal recognition of indigenous communities and the conservation of endangered peatlands as two lifeworlds made vulnerable by the historical and ongoing colonial-extractive dynamics.

Through its name "heart of peatlands" (from the Selk'nam words Tol, "heart", and Hol-Hol, peatland) its core assertion is the parallel between the vitality of the peat and that of the Selk'nam people, who inhabited this austral territory for 8,000 years before colonisation. The notion of heartland, in this sense, is more than a metaphor: it names a living, affective territory of decolonial resistance and responsiveness to climate change. The project website anticipates how this interconnection informs the project in the work shown in Venice through its section "*Rumores*" (Rumours), a sound channel that hosts recordings of human-and-non-human conversations (conversation with the author, 14 January 2022) which is broadcast online and can be downloaded in the form of experimental disciplinary-crossing texts that strive for a more-than-human agency in their environmental aesthetics. Each recording mixes territorial sounds and human voices, featuring different collaborators' conversations with and responses to the peatlands, along with the "voice" of bogs themselves, present through a series of squelching noises.[7] This

aspect indicates the aspiration that practice research and public engagement work can contribute concretely to the struggle for intertwined forms of socioenvironmental justice through legal recognition of the Selk'nam people and of the peatlands as a vital ecosystem for carbon capture and storage. This method of intersecting arts and science research, inter-institutional and community collaboration, and public imaginations and debates, all oriented to social justice, biocultural preservation, and climate emergency action, signals the consolidation of an effort of ten years ten years of an effort of ten yearsinventing and *essaying* a creative method that enables transdisciplinary work (conversation with the author, 13 January 2022). The production of articles co-written with Selk'nam community representative Herman'y Molina Vargas exemplifies the commitment to close collaboration (Molina Vargas, Marambio, and Lykke 2020) and intention to disseminate the project in scholarly arenas. At the same time, the question of whether a national pavilion at a global art biennial can effectively contribute to tangible juridical outcomes will be a future point for analysis and discussion.

### *Relational design*

As elsewhere in the Global South, throughout the twentieth century the developmentalist ideology of fast-paced industrialisation and urbanisation radically transformed Latin American territories. Contemporary urban and peri-urban landscapes attest to the asymmetries and inequities inherent in the imposition of this worldview, with the emergence of informal settlements that are blind spots of the modern landscape. In the false dichotomy of the formal/informal city, self-built homes and communities are still regularly left off official maps and out of centralised infrastructural and sanitation services, creating enduring dynamics of precarity and marginalisation. In *Designs for the Pluriverse* (2018), Arturo Escobar writes with optimism of the emergence of a field of critical design practice oriented to just transitions and a reinvigoration of communal life that would mitigate the social and territorial fractures of developmentalism. Set against a critique of the top-down design logic linked to extractive and industrial economies and speculative capitalism, he posits the urgency of asking:

> Can design's modernist tradition be reoriented from its dependence on the life-stifling dualist ontology of patriarchal capitalist modernity toward relational modes of knowing, being, and doing? Can it be creatively reappropriated by subaltern communities in support of their struggles to strengthen their autonomy and perform their life projects? (2018, xi).

Rejecting the top-down logic of modernist and formalist architecture, the Venezuelan design initiative Enlace works in the porosities of formal and informal spaces and ways of life, creating projects that respond to marginalised territories and communities through interdisciplinary research, design practice, and participatory dynamics, collaborating with other cultural organisations to raise awareness of spatial inequality in territories shaped by precarious urbanisation, environmental pressures, and socioeconomic

injustice. Since 2007, through Enlace Arquitectura and Enlace Foundation – partner initiatives founded in Caracas – the American-Venezuelan architect and scholar Elisa Silva has advocated a notion of "the complete city", critiquing discourses and practices of marginalisation and re-centring the *barrios* as integral to urban formations (Enlace Arquitectura 2015). Enlace's recent projects, presented at the Venice and Chicago architecture biennials in 2021, are rooted in specific locales shaped by tense socioeconomic relations, conflictive experiences of infrastructure, and complex relations to "nature". From the initiative's name (*enlace* means link), Silva signals the ethos of connecting communities through design, citing as inspiration the dynamics of artists' studio-based work, where responses to research questions and formal challenges emerge through process and negotiation (conversation with the author, 12 November 2021). Moving between stints teaching in the North American academy, site-work in Latin America, and curatorial projects in the United States and Europe, Silva practices a socially engaged, multi-disciplinary approach to architecture and design, eschewing a formalist approach by working closely with students, researchers from different academic fields, local activists, and members of community organisations. This approach researches and devises tangible design solutions to challenging climatic and urban conditions, informed by scholarship on the economic, social, and political features of the terrains where the projects are run and the lives of communities there.

In 2018, Silva began a project in Oaxaca, Mexico, which aims to connect the local mezcal industry to ecological health and environmentally friendly urbanisation, bearing in mind the economic disparities and northwards migration that shapes the region. In a studio taught in Landscape Architecture that year, Silva took students from Harvard University to Oaxaca, Mexico, to research the environmental effects of the growing mezcal production on the Central Valley. She used a second design studio with students from University of Toronto as a platform to design instruction booklets on the sustainable building material pioneered by Mexican architect Alejandro Montes, who produces adobe bricks using waste products from the mezcal industry, sequestering an acidic by-product of mezcal to prevent it from it going into the ground. Now, working in collaboration with the Instituto de la Naturaleza y de la Sociedad Oaxaqueña (INSO), the government programme Sembrando Vida, and other local stakeholders, the project has entered a third phase that is led by the Rethink Foundation (co-founded by Silva, and on whose board she serves) with support from a grant from the David Rockefeller Center at Harvard. The project is now pursuing reforestation work to enhance soil health and creating water catchment devices to feed water back into aquifers.

This is a method also applied in a project with the *barrio* La Palomera in Caracas which started in 2016. This collaboration with the Caracas-based civil association Ciudad Laboratorio included, among many other activities, four art projects celebrating the traditions and life of La Palomera, a spontaneous settlement established in 1937 but not acknowledged as part of the city.[8] Over 18 months, the project "organized multiple events and excuses for citizens to get to know La Palomera: walks, ball games, celebrations, dances, concerts, mapping exercises and an exhibition that seek to recognize La Palomera (and all the neighborhoods) for what they are, an active part of the city" ("La Palomera"). These included a procession to sing *décimas* written with the barrio in mind, a celebration of the barrio's founders,

**Figure 4. Before and after of the waste collection system in La Palomera. Photos: Courtesy Elisa Silva, EnlaceArq.**

and traditional commemorations of the Cruz de Mayo. Botanical research runs transversally through all Enlace's projects, and in this case the collective mapped La Palomera's green areas (led by Gabriel Nass and Ambar Armas), identifying 24 gardens in residents' houses, then compiled as a public tour attended by scientists, including the head botanist of Caracas's Botanical Garden. Research into the 260 species identified in the gardens was then collated into a publication entitled the *Diccionario etnobotánico de las plantas de los jardines de La Palomera* – a systematic typology of specimens that borrowed the extractive epistemology of economic botany to nurture the rootedness of La Palomera's community.[9]

The local knowledge and customs charted through the project were disseminated in an exhibition at a private art space in Caracas, where members of the *barrio* saw themselves reflected in a space usually reserved for contemporary art, and in the Venice and Chicago architecture biennials in 2021, which presented the community gardens, public spaces, and stairways connecting the barrio (Silva 2021). Now supported by a civil association set up as part of the project, La Palomera has benefitted from tangible impacts, including changes to how waste is collected from the barrio (Figure 4). Whereas household waste used to be taken by residents to the end of the road for collection by a rubbish truck, now door-to-door collection has been implemented and the former waste collection space and an adjacent abandoned structure have been recovered for community use, with permission to use the property granted by the municipal government for five years and plans under way to make it a centre for art, culture, and conversations about ecology. Enlace and Ciudad Laboratorio are supporting the community-led process, while designing methods for capturing rainwater from the building's roof for use in the community space (Figure 5).

Enlace's most recent project, started in 2020 in another collaboration with Ciudad Laboratorio, convenes a multidisciplinary group around the River Guaire, which flows through Caracas.[10] The project seeks to inspire *caraqueños* to rediscover the river that was the original reason for historical settlement of the valley of Caracas but now receives untreated sewage and solid waste in addition to rainwater along its course. Its digital platform departs from a manifesto that states this

**Figure 5. Participatory workshop on rainwater collection in La Palomera, organised in collaboration with Lata de Agua, Cauce A.C., and the French Embassy. Photo: Courtesy EnlaceArq.**

aim to recover the body of water, and serves as a dynamic hub for emerging articles about the river's history, present, and future, and documents of the eight walks the group carried out in 2021 to chart the course of the river. Again adapting the expeditionary method, the walks traced the Guaire along its easterly course, from its entry to the city, along its increasingly polluted banks, to its point of exit from the valley of Caracas at the eastern barrio of Petare. Project members took part in the walks, but these were also open to anybody who wanted to participate, serving to integrate other stakeholders and potential collaborators into the initiative.

The project remains in progress and as well as commissioning research articles that reflect on the river's past, present, and future, it has educational and outreach components. From October to December 2021, Silva convened the online lecture series *Confluir con ríos* organised with the Universidad Simón Bolívar and the Universidad Central de Venezuela, which featured representatives of river-related art and design projects working across Latin America ("Confluir con ríos" 2021). The team has also led activities with local schools, taking into classrooms a board game designed together with two participating artists (Malu Valerio and Gerardo Rojas) which creates a speculative setting for children to play at defeating the evils that have befallen the Guaire and to strategise how to alleviate its contaminated state (conversation with the author, 2 November 2021). Through archival work tracing how the river was impacted by urbanisation and through public-facing activities oriented to enabling alternative riverine futures, the project intersects with a broader move to reignite public imaginations and connections to bodies of water.[11] In this sense, the Río Guaire project contributes to critical debates around the instrumentalisation of bodies of water as infrastructure for waste removal, the technoscientific invisibilisation of water through hydroengineering, and the loss of a symbiotic relationship between human and non-human bodies of water that has

proved detrimental to water cultures the world over, joining ongoing discussions of the "hydrocommons" (e.g. Neimanis 2009; Blackmore and Gómez 2020).

For Arturo Escobar, a reconception of design in critical terms might do theoretical and political work in re-imagining relationality on a planet fraught with long-standing socioenvironmental conflicts and injustice. In this sense, it is significant that rather than just receiving international attention in cultural settings, Enlace's work is generating concrete outcomes *with* and *for* local communities, and it is catalysing the formation of autonomous civil associations responsible for the "ongoingness" of the design-led community relations incentivised through its collaborative work. Enlace's work in Venezuela is just one of a series of initiatives increasingly supported in their long-term sustainability by the creation of independent, local associations that oversee ongoing work, exemplified by Silva's foundation of a civil association in La Palomera. It is this aspiration for sustained and community-led work that aligns Enlace's modus operandi to the values of autonomy and social justice that Escobar identifies as the core of the pluriverse.

## *Sustainability in practice: strengths and challenges*

In *The Life of Plants* (2019) philosopher Emanuele Coccia notes that botanical existence can help us rethink the epistemologies best suited to the ecological present. Reflecting critically on the modern compartmentalisation of academic disciplines and the subsequent channelisation of specialist knowledge, he posits immersion and porosity as generative alternatives that can be learned from the dynamics of vegetal life. His assertion that "[t]he structure of universal circulation is fluid, the place where everything comes into contact with everything else and comes to mix with it without losing its form and its own substance" signals the affordances (and challenges) of generating transdisciplinary, collaborative research methods which cultivate common forms of expression that are *trans*-versal to all (human and non-human) parties involved yet allow, critically, for difference and divergence (Coccia 2019, 27).

The three projects reviewed here generate dynamics of mixture that respond to fractures and conflicts in specific sites by seeding encounters for diverse knowledges, inventing adaptable, organic forms for collaborative work, and nursing the relationships that sustain it. The value of practice research is evident in the projects' contributions to imaginative, transdisciplinary, and publicly engaged conversations about, and responses to, socioenvironmental justice, a success also borne out by their endurance over time and growing international exposure. At its strongest, practice research does not just put *into practice* ideas that are now common currency in the critical-theoretical bibliography that informs much environmental humanities research. Its transdisciplinary and collaborative ways of working in and with specific terrains itself models and enacts modes of "thinking-with-many" and "thinking with care" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2012, 200) in relational worlds. These projects, then, are encouraging signs of bridges between academic scholarship, art practice, and ecosocial worlds, whose conjunctions can create tangible responses to

socioenvironmental conflicts by engaging proactively with the situatedness of knowledge, while generating food for thought about broader global processes.

It is worth noting that these projects' strengths also come from the strategic way they maintain connections with the academy without becoming subsumed by its infrastructure. This tangential, flexible relationship is a strategic choice on the part of Marambio (conversation with the author, 14 January 2022), who notes that academic affiliations (through research and teaching) can be an asset when seeking collaboration with other institutions and obtaining external funding that should not be underestimated. This safeguards against the often-siloed infrastructure of academia and the continued emphasis on knowledge economies (rather than knowledge ecologies) which continues to privilege papers and peer-reviewed articles and often requires them as corollaries to creative practice even as the research value of the latter is increasingly recognised.

Within the resilience and resourcefulness of independent projects, however, challenges remain. Initiatives like those discussed here ultimately rely on funding to operate over time. While culture ministries, national and international institutions, and philanthropic organisations are sources of grants, the lack of secure, ongoing support can test the sustainability of small teams. Moreover, the digital infrastructure required to ensure access to publications and provide visibility to projects also comes at a cost and exposes projects to vulnerabilities in terms of the lasting impact they might make on audiences that engage with projects on site or online. In the latest edition of the journal *Environmental Humanities*, its editors recognised the importance of artistic interventions and public engagement work to the field, the time and energy demanded to cultivate "community connections and on-the-ground programming", and the need "to actively cultivate scholarship of this type" (Jørgensen 2022). Practice research makes valuable contributions to environmental debates, producing insights into specific terrains, developing environmental aesthetics that shed critical light on extractive approaches to "nature" and envisage more just and sustainable relations to territory, and seeking to facilitate long-term positive solutions to local socioenvironmental challenges. The recognition of the value of practice research within Latin American Cultural Studies opens a route for reciprocal relationships which, in lending support and drawing attention to interdisciplinary research from the arts, can also positively contribute to the sustainability of its creative terrains and the role they can play in cultivating ongoingness in wider communities in the region.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes

1. World of Matter comprises visual practitioners and theorists conducting long-term research on material geographies, whose core group includes Mabe Bethonico, Ursula

Biemann, Uwe H. Martin and Frauke Huber, Helge Mooshammer and Peter Mörtenböck, Emily E. Scott, Paulo Tavares, Lonnie van Brummelen, and Siebren de Haan; see http://worldofmatter.net/. Based at a former coal mining site in Denmark, the *Living in the Anthropocene* project is part of AURA: Aarhus University Research on the Anthropocene, which forges trans-disciplinary fields of research, producing exhibitions, online research environments, and scholarly texts. See https://anthropocene.au.dk/profile.

2. Numerous existing and emerging projects across Latin America engage in site-specific collaborative work, territory-based arts research, and public-facing curatorial, educational, and editorial projects. It is not feasible to include an extensive list here, but some examples are: Más Arte Más Acción (Colombia, founded 2011), https://www.masartemasaccion.org/; Liquenlab (Chile) https://liquenlab.cl; entre—ríos (UK–Latin America, founded 2018), http://entre-rios.net; and Centro de Estudios del Agua (Chile, founded 2019), https://centroestudiosdelagua.org. The recent turn to ecopolitical art is evident in artist residency projects and major exhibitions in Latin America, including, among many others, *Magallanes y las geografías de lo (des)conocido* (curated by Rodrigo Andaur, 2020–21), *Bienal del Bioceno. Cambiar verde por azul* (curated by Blanca de la Torre, 2022), *Inaudito Magdalena 46 Salón Nacional de Artistas* (curated by Jaime Cerón Silva, Ximena Gama Chirolla, Yolanda Chois Rivera), *Polygonal Forest* (curated by Maya Errázuriz for Fundación Mar Adentro, 2021).
3. For photographs see, Susie Quillinan, ed., *HAWAPI 2019 – Máxima Acuña* (Lima: HAWAPI, 2020). https://www.hawapi.org/hw2019-m%C3%A1xima-acu%C3%B1a.
4. For a record of this, see *HAWAPI 2015 – Huepetuhe*, available at: https://www.hawapi.org/hw2015-huepetuhe. The curators expressed this stance in an interview with the author in November 2021.
5. See *Ensayos*, https://ensayostierradelfuego.net/.
6. “Intro”, https://ensayostierradelfuego.net/ensayos/intro/.
7. The project is curated by Marambio, in collaboration with Carla Machiavello, Ariel Bustamente, Alfredo Thiermann and Dominga Sotomayor, and Juan Pablo Vergara. See https://turbatol.org.
8. On the project process and outcomes, see https://en.lapalomera.org/. On the collaborators Ciudad Laboratorio, see https://ciudlab.com/.
9. This is a critical strategy that also informs the work of the Colombian collective *echando lápiz* (sic), which has run botanical expeditions and participatory drawing workshops in informal settlements since 2000, when it was founded by artists and educators Graciela Duarte and Manuel Santana.
10. See https://www.rioguaire.org/.
11. In the region, a shift in public policy has seen cities like Bogota and Sao Paulo undergo official clean-up plans that aim to restore ecological health to the urban rivers. A host of arts- and design-led projects in Latin America are leading attempts to reignite public connections to contaminated and often forgotten rivers, an example of which is the Ecoducto Río de la Piedad lineal park in Mexico City – a public walkway over a piped river that began with the citizen initiative “Picnic on the River”.

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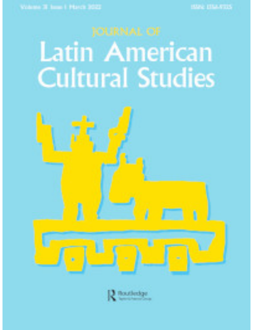

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**Gisela Heffes**

# SUBMERGED STRATA AND THE CONDITION OF KNOWLEDGE IN LATIN AMERICA

*The objective of this essay is to map the growing number of works that focus on the environmental humanities and to review two important contributions to the ongoing debates that are defining the direction of Latin American and Caribbean cultural studies. In 2019, Héctor Hoyos published* Things with a History: Transcultural Materialism and the Literatures of Extraction in Contemporary Latin America, *as Elizabeth DeLoughrey published* Allegories of the Anthropocene. *While the scope of these two works varies in terms of the regional and/or national geographies they cover, as well as the authors and artists they analyse, both books attempt to contest the nature/culture binary – along with other Modern dichotomies – from very different (perhaps even opposite) positions and angles: while Hoyos calls for a de-allegorisation (namely, a "literalisation") of several important Latin American works, DeLoughrey, on the other hand, invites us to reconsider allegory as a way of symbolising the "perceived disjunction between humans and the planet, between our 'species' and a dynamic external 'nature'".*

**Keywords:** Latin American and Caribbean cultural studies; environmental humanities; allegory; new materialism; postcoloniality

> The way in which different historical moments articulate the tension between processes of naming, describing and knowing, and anonymity as a primal condition constitutes a submerged strata of the condition of knowledge.
>
> Matthew Fuller, "Anonimity" (2018, 42)

In recent years there has been an upsurge of publications (academic and non-academic books, essays, articles) as well as artworks (performances, exhibitions and installations, media interventions, films and documentaries) that sit at the intersections of Latin American cultural studies and the Environmental Humanities. The rise of the latter as a rapidly evolving field is not exclusive to Latin America, of course, but a growing phenomenon that reverberates in other parts of the globe. This is not surprising though, since the rapid environmental changes and the anthropogenic transformations humans are experiencing pervade "every word that we write, the food that we eat, and the air that we breathe", as art historian Susan Ballard notes (2021, 2). While the sweeping impact of the crisis affects every single person in the world, the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on

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people of colour or the most vulnerable has been at foreground of environmental justice claims.[1] These struggles are certainly not exclusive to the Global North, for there have always been "myriad forms of environmental consciousness, practice, and mobilisation" throughout much of the world, despite not having always been familiar to Western eyes (Carruthers 2008, 1). For these communities, sometimes on the verge of extinction, the ability to connect and to have access to a healthy land allows them to thrive while concurrently granting them continuity. A well-known example is the more than 15,000-strong Amazonian Cofán people living on the borders of Ecuador and Colombia, where 18.5 billion gallons of oil spilled by Texaco and hundreds of other spills caused by PetroEcuador reduced the population "to only a few hundred today" (Anderson 2021, 210).

The field of Latin American and Caribbean cultural studies has witnessed not only the growth of environmental criticism but also the emergence of a constellation of works that catalysed new practices and approaches. Each of them in its own method and technique relies on different theoretical and critical frameworks, shifting the epistemological direction of the field by forming new areas of studies and/or reformulating and reconfiguring old ones. These critical and theoretical approaches have also been marked by several "turns" (from the affect turn, the spatial turn, the post-hegemonic turn, to the ontological turn, the Indigenous Studies turn, the material turn, and so forth). Some of this scholarship includes the vegetal turn and the emergence of critical plant studies (Gagliano, Ryan, and Vieira 2017; Wylie 2020), studies on the intersections of landscape, extractivism, and the legacy of colonisation (Andermann, Blackmore, and Carrillo Morell 2018), work on the notions of heterogeneous landscape (Briceño and Coronado 2019), the decolonisation of science, knowledge, and nature (Page 2021), posthumanism and the limits of the human (Bollington and Merchant 2020; Fornoff and Heffes 2021), imaginary geographies and nation-state constructions vis-à-vis the tropics (Martínez-Pinzón 2016), reconfigurations of the Latin American canon (French and Heffes 2021), the interplay between texts and contexts of the developmentalism period (Saramago 2021), literary counter-readings of the Amazon (Smith 2021), extractivism and the search for El Dorado (Rogers 2019), transcultural materialism (Hoyos 2019), liquid ecologies (Blackmore and Gómez 2020), "tidalectics" (DeLoughrey 2019; DeLoughrey and Flores, 2020), and slow violence (Kressner, Mutis, and Pettinaroli (2020). New cross-cutting initiatives have also emerged that follow in the paths of new materialism, Indigenous and postcolonial criticism, animal studies, and queer ecology.

The reconfiguration of key concepts as well as structures and perspectives that have arranged, classified, and systematised the study of Latin American and Caribbean culture expanded, in the same vein, what we understand as a literary text, an artwork, or a film. These reconfigurations will determine, therefore, not only how we understand a specific or new literary/cultural production but also how can we revisit or re-read traditional texts and/or works of art in pursuing new understandings.

## De-centring the Anthropos

As a scholar in the field of Latin American studies, I've been drawing on the vital terms and debates that are currently structuring the most important research in

and across environmental studies, including the environmental humanities, in order to examine how the term "environment" fosters a questioning of the "relations of power, agency, and responsibility to human and nonhuman environments" (Harcourt and Escobar 2005, cit. in Harcourt 2016, 161). The anthropogenic crisis demands a review of the role that extractive politics, economies, and cultures have played vis-à-vis current ecosystems. It urges an innovative reflection capable of seizing the geological changes provoked by the scale and magnitude of human actions, especially those in the hands of the few. For a long time, the geopolitical region of Latin America has offered an ancestral repository of ways of life and an experimental platform to contest and to challenge dominant Western thought ontologies and epistemologies. By this I refer to the different "strains of Latin American environmental thought in evidence today", such as Amerindian ontologies, popular-national telluric imaginings, syncretic Afro-Latin cultural practices, among others, which all have genealogies that can be mapped back to the pre-Columbian past (French and Heffes 2021, 3). Two recent examples are the political emergence of Indigeneity, which, according to Peruvian anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena, "challenges the separation of nature and culture that underpins the prevalent notion of politics and the social contract on which it is predicated" (French and Heffes 2021, 13), and the consideration by Eduardo Gudynas and others, Indigenous and non-Indigenous intellectuals alike, of assigning nature intrinsic value along with the possibility of a broader recognition of Nature as a bearer of rights – namely, a subject of rights – prompted by the incorporation of the rights of nature within the Ecuadoran constitution (French and Heffes 2021, 13).

By shifting the attention to current emergencies, understood in its twofold semantic senses of emergency and latency, Latin American and Caribbean cultural studies has opened a productive space of cultural critique that draws from new theoretical frames such as environmentalist and ecocritical thought – the study of the relationship between literatures, art, and cultural works, and the physical environment –, new materialism (or neo materialism) – the critique of the humanist ideal of "Man" as the universal representative of the human – and post-anthropocentrism – a critique of species hierarchy to advance bio-centred egalitarianism and to push forward new ways of knowledge and understandings of embodied knowledge and its relation with being in the world (Fornoff and Heffes 2021). However, as Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova provocatively suggest, "the awareness of a collective sense of ecological, social and affective responsibility" may (or may not) enhance necessarily "ethical agency and political consciousness" (2018, 4). I do acknowledge the controversies behind the use of the term Anthropos and, by extension, the Anthropocene; so much has been said so far about the inadequacy of the latter. The illuminating 2014 Roundtable "Anthropologists Are Talking – About the Anthropocene" in Aarhus, where Haraway et al. discussed the still (then) embryonic concept of the Anthropocene, captured therefore several of these insights: "Does the Anthropocene entail an important call for a new kind of politics and understanding or is it a political buzzword? Does Anthropocene scholarship signal the prospect of genuine cross-disciplinary collaboration, or does it sustain conventional hierarchies of knowledge and power? What, in short, are the pitfalls and possibilities of the Anthropocene?" (Haraway et al. 2016).

Of particular interest has been the emergence of some scholarly publications that look closely at different literary and art works with the aim of re-examining conventional readings. Some of these approaches propose a reading that seeks to unsettle the human and therefore de-centre the Anthropos. In other words, they "demand a radical redefinition of the relationship between human beings and nature" (Emmett and Nye 2017, 140). These approaches, through similar or different methods, engage with what David Naguib Pellow defined as the "largely unexamined question of the expendability of human and nonhuman populations" confronting cultural and socioecological threats "from states, industries, and other political economic forces" (2018, 14).

In light of this broad context, the objective of this essay is to review two important contributions to the ongoing debates that are defining the direction of Latin American and Caribbean culture studies in tandem with the growing number of works that focus on environmental humanities. Héctor Hoyos's *Things with a History: Transcultural Materialism and the Literatures of Extraction in Contemporary Latin America* and Elizabeth DeLoughrey's *Allegories of the Anthropocene* were both published in 2019. While the scope of these two works varies in terms of the regional and/or national geographies they cover, as well as the authors and artists they analyse, both books attempt to contest the nature/culture binary – along with other Modern dichotomies – from very different (perhaps even opposite) positions and angles: while Hoyos calls for a de-allegorisation (namely, a "literalisation" of several important Latin American works), DeLoughrey, on the other hand, invites us to reconsider allegory as a way of symbolising the "perceived disjunction between humans and the planet, between our 'species' and a dynamic external 'nature'" (4).

## Things with a History

Hoyos's book is about language grappling with material transformations. It attempts to demonstrate that contemporary Latin American fiction not only reflects this material transformation but that it also "enriches our understanding of it and challenges the status quo that underwrites it" (2). By contemporary, he refers to Latin America after 1989, a historical period that has witnessed a "seismic" transformation in our relation to objects (1). Because of Latin America's literary and cultural capacity to question globalisation, this site is, according to Hoyos, the privileged one for the theorisation of our "unstable" time. Hence the book develops a notion of "transcultural materialism", a phenomenon that is not exclusive to Latin America but has taken shape at the intersections of its intellectual and literary history. As happens with other materialisms, transcultural materialism is body-oriented, focused not only on the tangible but to some extent in pragmatism for, as it claims, "all materialisms oppose idealism" (3).

As to the definition of transcultural, the book argues that it is an "intellectual praxis" rather than a "philosophical doctrine", whose existential justification is the critique of extractivism, understood as the exploitation of both "nature and labor" (3). Given the characteristics of extractivism, primarily in Latin America, as a historical and structural procedure between the Global North and Global South, connected to "commercial

imbalances with effects on the environment, and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time" (French and Heffes 2021, 336), Hoyos's use of the term stretches across spaces and spheres (nature and urban; economics and politics; literature and culture). It lines up with Macarena Gómez-Barris in understanding extractivism as a "theft" against Indigenous and Afro-descendant territories (2017, xviii). What's more, *Things with a History* examines a corpus of literary works that operate against extractivism by articulating natural and human history in both invigorating and stimulating ways. It contends that works analysed throughout this book intervene, mainly, in language and narrative not only as a way of composing the effects of extractivism but more importantly, and perhaps more ingeniously, as a "site for ecological-political action" (Hoyos 2019, 3). The prefix "trans-" is employed here to denote that the stories examined across this study often involve communities in conflict; it also designates a conceptual vehicle that extends beyond culture by comprising its alleged "other": notably nature (Hoyos 2019, 3). Notwithstanding the fact that both culture and nature are comprised in the notion of transcultural as an ensemble – and not as the oppositional binary inherited from Western thought – culture is also considered more specifically as a "concrete" affair, in other words, as merely matter. To prove his argument Hoyos resorts to an example that evokes the association between culture and its etymological palpable root. From Latin cultura "growing, cultivation" (noun), the verb derives from obsolete French culturer or medieval Latin culturare, which are both based on Latin colere "tend, cultivate" (*Oxford Dictionary*).[2] It is not coincidental then that Hoyos draws on food and nourishment to press his argument about the role of literary language to redress the frayed bond between humans/nonhumans. bond. And if this operation has political ramifications in a "traditional" way, it now extends within the reach of politics to nonhumans. *Things with a History* seeks to make the case for the pertinence of new materialism in Latin America through a "triangulation" that, as a third leg, incorporates World Literature. This point can be made because, as one would expect, "a rich corpus and its *tangible* referents sustain it" (6; my emphasis). The tangibility of language is at the foreground of this study: language is material, Hoyos reminds us, drawing from Water Benjamin, Hayden White, Fernando Ortiz, and Antonio José Ponte, among others. Ortiz's seminal *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (1940), notably, serves as a paradigmatic precedent for the re-examination of contemporary Latin American literature at the crossroads of historical materialism and new materialisms.[3] Transcultural materialism manifests itself in Ortiz's celebrated study through a narrative modality where both counter-fetishism "of the commodity" and "longue durée accounts of the agency of objects" converge (13). The entire point of revisiting *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y del azúcar* is the assertion that both crops cannot just be "reduced to allegories about socialism or capitalism, or to being the representatives of two cultures whose de-essentialised union Ortiz supposedly dedicated himself to celebrating" (59). Unlike previous understandings of Ortiz's work, Hoyos's critical discussion engages with the idea of de-allegorisation, specifically, a "literalisation" of this fundamental study, which is, according to this scheme, about plants "that are also goods" (10).

By examining these organisms *in their becoming* across "disciplinary and epistemological boundaries" Ortiz joins the rank of "precursor" of new materialism (10). But more importantly for this discussion is the understanding that figures of speech such as

metaphor, metonymy, allegory, and literary devices in general come to operate as a "supplement", for both "deduction and inference" of what we have a hard time confronting will force us to re-evaluate the place we occupy within the material world entirely. Drawing from the work of Jane Bennett and Bruno Latour on science, politics, and vibrant matter, to name two of Hoyos's key interlocutors, to prove this argument he takes examples from a wide range of contemporary narratives and authors, such as José Lezama Lima (Cuba), Ariel Magnus and César Aira (Argentina), Blanca Wiethüchter (Bolivia), Roberto Bolaño and Alejandro Zambra (Chile), and Karl Ove Knausgård (Norway). The latter serves to demonstrate that a critique of neo-extractivism originates in Latin America but has World Literary implications and ramifications. By addressing how the contemporary material turn in recent Latin American cultural production is represented through "reappropriations of raw stuff, hyperfetishism, digital ideology critique, object-centered literary historiography, and geologism" the book seeks to show how these different threads contest several traits of a worldwide economic system that spans from extraction to consumption.[4] This reappropriation showcases the continuum between nonhuman and human agents, including narrative, an assemblage that resonates with Stacy Alaimo's notion of trans-corporeality (oddly absent in this study), an ethical and political possibility that emerges from the literal contact zone between human corporeality and more-than-human nature, in which the "human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world", underlining the extent to which the "substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from 'the environment'" (2010, 2). By coining this process "estranged extractivism", *Things with a History* aims to bring certain externalities such as inorganic lives that are always ingrained in everyday transactions (biological and economic) into the convergence of "an engaged literary politics of the inorganic at a global scale" (Hoyos 2019, 36). Perhaps the novelty of this study is that, unlike Bennet or Latour, *Things with a History* emphasises the need to embrace historical materialism by articulating a cross-fertilisation of materialism that reformulates the traditional one while endorsing the newer one.

## Allegories of the Anthropocene

While Hoyos's book departs from Latour's "amodern" proposal that we have never been modern, and thus, in the light of this theoretical framework, examines hybrid narratives that challenge the modern separation of nature and culture, DeLoughrey's *Allegories of the Anthropocene* takes a different route. Allegory has been "revitalized and reinvented" to represent a set of apparent disconnections that confronts humans vis-à-vis the planet, and species with an alleged, external nature (4.) It is an apparent rupture that operates at both the spatial and temporal level for engaging with the Anthropocene means to reflect on the "deep geological time of the planet" as well as "the futurity of the human as a species" (4). Following this reasoning, allegory proves adequate, rather than as a rhetorical trope, as the "animation of universalizing figures such as planet, species, nature, and the human into narrative—and thereby into space and time" (5). This explains, for DeLoughrey, the recent emergence of allegorical representation in literature, film,

and visual arts: allegory "stages other worlds to draw parallels and disjunctions between the present and an often dystopic future" (5).[5]

The emergence of allegories is not fortuitous. They are, above other forms, effective literary devices to embody both "historical and scalar relations," in a moment of planetary crisis (5). But perhaps this should not be a surprise since, as DeLoughrey suggests, allegory is known for its "embeddedness in history (time), its construction of a world system (space), and its signification practices in which the particular figures for the general and the local for the global" (5) Instead of "we have never been modern", as Hoyos embraces following Latour's celebrated dictum, DeLoughrey's postcolonial position leads her into Joni Adamson and other Indigenous studies scholars' pronouncement that, as a matter of fact, we have never been Anthropos. To be sure, this assertion circles back to the discussion about our role in the pressing and messy current situation, and, more importantly, about which terms are more adequate to provide, as Stephanie Malin, following Kyle Powys Whyte notes, clear reminders that "colonialism, then capitalism and industrialisation, then neoliberalism – all these variations on settler colonialism and forcible removal of Indigenous, African, and native peoples from ancestral lands and lifeways have paved the way for the ultimate dystopia, one that some groups have been facing in various forms for centuries" (2021, 6). It is undeniable that the notion of Anthropocene fails to sufficiently capture a reality in which it's not humanity that can be blamed with a "broad brush"; on the contrary, it is the way that certain "human-created systems (like the capitalist economy, like fossil fuel industries and technologies, like rampant production of plastics and chemicals) have been allowed to take on lives of their own" (Malin 2021, 15). Yet the endless debate about the term that adequately conveys the uneven distribution of, basically, accountabilities – from Anthropocece (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000), to Capitalocene (Moore 2016), Plantationocene (Haraway 2015), Econocene (Norgaard 2013), Technocene (Hornborg 2015), Anthrobscene (Parikka 2015; Ernstson and Swyngedouw 2019), Manthropocene (Raworth 2014; Di Chiro 2017), and Wasteocene (Armiero and De Angelis 2017) – becomes a legitimate concern although it is difficult to assess to what extent they provide a method to ward off a potentially catastrophic ending. DeLoughrey is right to insist that the "synecdochical" condition of "anthropogenic" climate change is grasped in those "expressions that seem to be oblivious to the fact that the crisis results from the activities of a powerful minority" (2019, 15).

*Allegories* addresses literary and visual cultures of the Caribbean and Pacific Islands through "five constellations" that are "thought to either originate or encapsulate global climate change", simply put, the plantation (agriculture), radiation (militarism), waste (globalisation), ocean (sea-level rise), and island (world) (8). Building on Walter Benjamin's notion of allegory, she proposes that Anthropocene scholarship also resorts to the notion of "decline" as represented by ruins. Both Benjamin's theorising and Anthropocene discourse highlight a "disjuncture between humans (history) and the planet (nature)", which are jointly expected to decline and, as such, both provide allegorical speculations on the future (6). To recognise this apparently new disjuncture means, for DeLoughrey, to identify the crisis of ecological modernity in which allegory appears as one of its "primary narrative records" (6). Allegory, as a "part-for-whole", serves as a scheme whose dynamics rest on the antithesis between the global and the local, the Earth and the island, totality and fragment. Hence, the trope of the island

proves effective as a "powerful constellation for thinking allegorically" (6). It is in these dynamics, namely the interstices unleashed by the contrasts between the whole and the part, that the allegories of the Anthropocene emerge. Indeed, we can grasp the contours of these crevices by examining the history of "small-scale climate systems such as islands" as reflected in contemporary "postcolonial island texts and contexts", and as a means of tying the intangible discourse of the Anthropocene to specific histories and places (7). According to DeLoughrey, "narrativizing the relationship between human and more-than-human nature" is at the centre of bringing the "theoretical discourse of the global north into dialogue with communities that both are at the forefront of present climate change and its historical survivors" (6). Organised around these moments of rupture, *Allegories* follows Benjamin's notion of constellations as they mark planetary watersheds that simultaneously shape the structure of the book. A distinctive aspect of *Allegories* is its methodological capacity to explore different critical frames of allegoresis as a figure that enables a fluid thinking about regimes of violence while contesting colonial discourses located within the boundaries of teleological narratives that have defined both modern space and time: allegories, then, as a means of interrogating dialectically through a method that "foregrounds rupture as an analytic to explore a constellation of different allegorical forms that comment on this perceived human disjunction from our earthly place" (9), but also as a way to structure the book, which relies on the use of allegorical techniques of disjunction within and between chapters, challenging "telos or narrative development" (9).

## Epistemological displacement, persistence, and recurrence

Like *Things with a History*, *Allegories* is mainly focused on the Global South. Through different methodologies and perspectives, one calls to de-allegorise, another to re-allegorise. Hoyos focuses entirely on a "more capacious account of the facts of literature on a global scale" (109), DeLoughrey on "embodied place and community memory" (176). The discussion about the Anthropocene is deliberately absent in Hoyos's work; DeLoughrey, instead, turns it into one of the main examinations in her study. However, she draws a clear distinction between discourses of the Anthropocene and of global climate change, suggesting they may be even mutually unintelligible. In correlation with the disjuncture between humans/history and the planet/nature, one "speaks of the salinisation of staple crops and water supplies, migration, culture, the land, the ancestors, and children" while the other "speaks of species, history, temporality, modernity, and the west"; in a broad sense, while climate change discourse is concerned with place and community, Anthropocene discourse attends to the modalities of time and abstract space (DeLoughrey 2019, 176). That's why from the outset she calls, echoing Dipesh Chakrabarty, for provincialising the "universalizing discourse of Europe" (2). *Things with a History*, on the other hand, is not about disjuncture and rupture but about continuums. Turning back to *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, the book "should be read as if in the presence of sugarcane and tobacco plants" (10). Ortiz's notion of "transculturación" is thus reexamined not only as a "narrative praxis rather than an abstract notion" but, most importantly, as a material basis for

culture: in other words, sugar and tobacco "are part of nature, as they are part of the economy, and one can follow the ways in which they seemingly go in and out of culture, that purportedly separate realm" or one can acknowledge the continuum, as Ortiz does, and resort to narrative to pinpoint their "becoming" throughout the perimeters that divide disciplines and epistemologies. What's more, this continuum harkens back to Hoyos's contention that besides "historicizing with things" the book is fundamentally about Latin American and World Literary historiography (32). Interestingly enough, Hoyos embarks on a journey that departs from the most inner particles of matter (via quantum theory) to map out continuities across nations and continents; in contrast, DeLoughrey sets out *Allegories* from the abstract notion of the Anthropocene (as the title attests) to trace local allegories such as the allegory of the soil, where Wilson Harris, among other Caribbean writers, "excavates the local for a model of literary form that he feels more accurately reflects the complexity of Caribbean roots" (45).

Albeit in disparate ways, it is clear that both works are in some sort of conversation. Perhaps more urgent and pressing for this essay is the question of to what extent these new perspectives shape the emergence of new concepts while providing a theoretical framework for Latin American, Caribbean, and/or Latinx Studies and, more generally, environmental humanities. I would argue that these studies shift the field in different directions by engaging in interdisciplinary conversations and dialogues that, at the same time, remain somehow faithful to their fields of origin. *Things with a History* twists the direction of what so far has been done by Latin American scholars working on World Literature, such as Mariano Siskind, Gesine Müller, Ignacio Sánchez Prado, Jorge Locane, and Benjamin Loy. Yet, it expands the scope of environmental humanities within the broader field of Latin American studies. It proposes an epistemological displacement vis-à-vis our understanding of narrative, storytelling, and words, a shift that allows us to revisit, as it does, both canonical and non-canonical Latin American cultural works. It lines up with other recent publications that mobilise notions of new forms of subjectivity, as proposed by Bollington and Merchant (2020) and French and Heffes (2021), and contributes to the scarce field of new materialism in Latin American cultural studies. In sum, a remarkable aspect of *Things with a History* is its capacity to articulate a new materialist theory of literature that intersects and connects diverse scholarship, such as eco-materialism and environmental humanities, redefining it.

For its part, *Allegories of the Anthropocene* amplifies the field of postcolonial studies and studies on the Anthropocene which has already been expanded by DeLoughrey herself in critical and collaborative works, including *Caribbean Literature and the Environment* (edited with Gosson and Handley 2005), *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (edited with Handley 2011), *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches* (edited with Carrigan, Didur, and DeLoughrey 2015), and her monograph *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (2007). In a recent article authored with Flores (2020), DeLoughrey draws on the concept of "tidalectics", a term borrowed from the poet Kamau Brathwaite, as a method that engages a wide range of experiences and representations of the submerged body by considering that the ocean can be understood as simultaneously planetary and local. Building upon postcolonial and Caribbean studies scholarship, it

engages with works on environmental humanities, material ecocriticism, and "liquid ecologies", as introduced by Blackmore and Gómez (2020).

## By way of conclusion

A crucial question that traverses this essay grapples with whether (or not) the scholarship reviewed here can alter already established – sometimes dated – epistemologies. Both works I have discussed address knowledge as different embodiments. In DeLoughrey, for instance, it is a production expressed in a "phenomenological rooting of the human in an active landscape, a dialogue with nonhuman nature (and therefore space/time)" (46). Hoyos, on the other hand, conjures up Latour's apprehension about "the inability to think together the human and the nonhuman, or to articulate global and local concerns" and suggests that in view of the contemporary ecological crisis, "we need to repair the fracture between 'knowledge of things' and 'power and human politics'" (23). However, neither author/book directly addresses questions related to the impact research could potentially make beyond academic/cultural institutions. In other words, if the latter operate as hubs of knowledge production and lack, quite often, real engagements with public spheres, how do we move beyond the realm of "culture" and redistribute power hierarchies in a way that refrains from replicating those same structural mechanisms that are being disputed?

In a short piece on "anonymity", published in the *Posthuman Glossary* edited by Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova, Matthew Fuller addresses this condition as "primal" insofar as it constitutes a "submerged strata of the condition of knowledge" (2018, 42). Whether it is a tiny particle within the inner matter of a rock or the minuscule "but measurable amounts of artificial radionuclides", as described by Jan Zalasiewicz, Mark Williams, Will Steffen, and Paul Crutzen, these anonymous specks may have an effect on our lives, bodies, and environments (DeLoughrey 2019, 69). The latter, for instance, are the by-product of the "global and atmospheric impact of nuclear weapons testing" whose impact has been measured geologically, biologically, and socially as a tiny but "often devastating change to all bodies and spaces of the planet—from the poles to the deepest ocean", analysed by DeLoughrey in connection to militarism, nuclear weapons, and the rise of the discipline of ecology (69). Anonymity could also inform "moments of articulation in which immanent material properties are emplotted or codified through language", as Hoyos suggests (223). Anonymity matters because it encapsulates the submerged strata of anonymous matter, one that defines a condition of knowledge indissociable from its potential scope. For Fuller, it is also the "space in which much of life takes place and which, historically speaking, it has unfolded", hence, the space of evolution and the "coming into being of life amidst the interactions of millions of unnamed entities" (2018, 42). While it may seem paradoxical, within the frames of spatiality and temporality, anonymity may epitomise conceptually a counter-discourse to Morton's hyperobjects, for it renders visible the invisibility of the "unnamed entities". And this is precisely what these two studies attain. They grasp the ungraspable. In the same vein, they both attend to the natureculture assembly, understanding this concept as a synthesis of nature and culture that recognises their

"inseparability in ecological relationships that are both biophysically and socially formed" (Haraway 2003, cit. in Malone and Ovenden 2016). As a scholarly interrogation of dualisms deeply embedded within the intellectual traditions of the sciences and humanities (e.g. human/animal; nature/culture), we still need to see a further engagement that seeks to restructure knowledge and a "deeper shift in the organisation of knowledge practices", as Emmett and Nye (2017) suggest. Furthermore, an epistemological displacement must stir institutional frameworks and foundations by shifting many of the premises still embedded in the configurations of scholarly works: a displacement that thrives in the "we" and less in the "I", with capital, and where anonymity equals community efforts and initiatives that destabilise notions of individuality, masculinity, and patriarchy. Then, perhaps, there will be real change.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

### NOTES

1. Joan Martinez Alier's *Environmentalism of the Poor* (2002) is concerned with the majority of humankind, those who occupy relatively little environmental space, who have managed sustainable agroforestal and agricultural systems, who make prudent use of carbon sinks and reservoirs, whose livelihoods are threatened by mines, oil wells, dams, deforestation, and tree plantations to feed the increasing throughput of energy and materials of the economy within or outside their own countries.
2. Interestingly, in late Middle English the sense of the term was "cultivation of the soil" and from this point on (early sixteenth century) arose cultivation (of the mind, faculties, or manners); "culture" in the latter sense dates from the early nineteenth century (*Oxford Dictionary*).
3. While one "puts the human species first; the other, precisely, seeks to decenter it" (Hoyos 2019, 4).
4. While the body of works is extensive, some examples are the novels *Muñecas* (2008) by Ariel Magnus, and Wiethüchter's *El jardín de Nora* (1998).
5. According to DeLoughrey, this is evident in the spike in climate apocalypse films that employ allegory, such as *The Day after Tomorrow* and *2012* (Roland Emmerich), *Noah* (Darren Aronofsky), and *Snowpiercer* (Bong Joon-ho).

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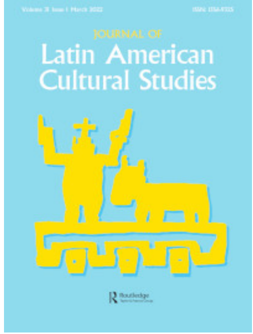

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# Latin America and The Botanical Turn

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# LATIN AMERICA AND THE BOTANICAL TURN

*In this essay, I discuss the turn to plant and vegetal life that has recently taken place in Latin American cultural studies. I do so by considering three recently published books on this matter: Monica Gagliano, John Ryan, and Patrícia Vieira's edited volume* The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature*, Theresa Miller's* Plant Kin: A Multispecies Ethnography in Indigenous Brazil*, and Lesley Wylie's* The Poetics of Plants in Spanish American Literature*. I sketch the contributions and possibilities within the broader botanical turn and expand on how Latin American scholarship offers novel tools to explore the entangled relations between humans and plants. Thinking through Latin American botanical scholarship, I suggest, opens new possibilities to move conversations on the botanical turn into unexpected territories characterised by hybridisations and multiplicities.*

**Keywords:** multispecies studies; environmental humanities; posthumanism; Anthropocene studies; critical plant studies; botanical turn

Plants comprise most of the Earth's biomass (Bar-On, Phillips, and Milo 2018). They are an essential form of life to humankind, as it is through their active participation in our ecosystems that these are kept balanced and sustained. Within modern knowledge practices, however, plants appear as what Jane Bennett calls "dull matter" (2010, viii): presences parcelled out of our lifeworlds that have been naturalised into objects to be exploited, consumed, or managed by humans (Aloi 2018; Moore 2016). This instrumental approach to botanical life has created perplexing environmental conundrums amid the Anthropocene. Consider, for example, the Brazilian government's participation in the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (COP26). After facing two years of global backlash over the dramatic increase in deforestation rates in the Amazon, Bolsonaro's government committed to cutting emissions by 50% and achieving climate neutrality by the year 2050. During his official speech, Joaquim Leite, the Brazilian minister of the environment, recognised that the country faces significant environmental challenges. Recent studies have shown that the Amazon emits more carbon dioxide than it absorbs, and that this transformation is related to agroindustrial deforestation in the region (Gatti et al. 2021). In Leite's speech, nonetheless, the minister claimed that the country would fight these challenges while remaining a top agricultural powerhouse. "Where there is a lot of forest", the minister said, "there is also a lot of poverty" – a statement which resonates with Bolsonaro's ongoing call to

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terraform the Amazon into an agricultural frontier. While it is unclear how this process will unfold, the intervention shows how even urgent ecological discussions operate through a radical disconnection between the violence committed against the botanical world we depend on and the global environmental effects of this form of violence that compromise our existence.

Critical scholars have long studied how and through what logics does the instrumentalisation of plant-beings take shape (see Smith 2008). In modern Western cultures, plants tend to be narrated in neutral collective terms such as forests, landscapes, crops, or agriculture, signalling how their existence matters culturally in relation to human use or consumption. Yet this phenomenon has recently become a central point of contention among cultural studies researchers interested in shedding light on the anthropogenic forces operating in the processes of global environmental devastation. As Gagliano, Ryan, and Vieira (2017) suggest, modern plant-blindness has become a problem beyond underrepresentation and logo-centrism. It reflects a cultural difficulty in understanding human embeddedness in the vegetal world, and in caring for the fragile presences through which we humans exist. Thinking amidst the politics of the Anthropocene, researchers have also started to question these dispositions in order to open new dialogues and imaginative spaces where ecologies of survival and interdependence can emerge, be nurtured, and sustained (Haraway 2016; Lyons 2020; Seymour 2020; Alaimo 2010). Paraphrasing anthropologist Natasha Myers, Anthropocene logics cannot offer a way out of its anthropocenic violence; thus, "it's time to cast another spell, to call other worlds into being, to conjure other worlds within this world" (Myers 2021). Committed to radical disruption and experimentation, this recent turn to plant and vegetal life in cultural studies is an invitation to see, feel, know, and reconnect with botanical forces beyond the narrow parameters of modernity in order to imagine, grow, and foster liveable worlds.

In this essay, I review three works that explore resilient, caring, and more-than-modern ways of relating between humans and their plant kin. While this analytical turn to plant life has gained traction primarily in Anglo-American academic contexts, here I also want to signal the possibilities and contributions of thinking through botanical worlds in Latin America. Drawing on legacies of Amerindian cosmologies, postcolonial thinking, and studies on mixture and hybridity, Latin American cultural studies may be a fertile ground for dialogues about divergent visions of progress, selfhood, ecology, and society. Latin America can also offer important lessons on experiencing and countering environmental depletion. I will begin situating this broad scholarly conversation by reading Monica Gagliano, John Ryan, and Patrícia Vieira's field-defining volume, *The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature* (2017). I will then review two recent works that attend to the active participation of plants in worldmaking practices in Latin America. In *Plant Kin: A Multispecies Ethnography in Indigenous Brazil* (2019), Theresa Miller attends to the care and love practices that enable kin relations between people and plants in Brazil. Similarly, Lesley Wylie's book *The Poetics of Plants in Spanish American Literature* (2020) explores how vegetal imaginaries have been fundamental to articulating dissent in political discourses throughout Latin American history. By slowly yet carefully attending to how botanical entanglements enable different modes of

affection, thinking, and meaning-making in their immediate ecosocial milieus, these works offer plenty of food for thought for scholars interested in imagining multi-species politics and ethics for the Anthropocene.

## Botanical languages

What I have been calling the botanical turn in cultural studies – at times referred to as the "turn to plant life" and others as "critical plant studies" – is a subterranean conversation amongst researchers in the humanities and social sciences that has taken place for the past two decades. This conversation has happened in the global north, but in recent years it has attracted a younger generation of interdisciplinary researchers across Latin America (Rosa 2019; Lyons 2020; Hernández and Rueda 2020). The provocation followed by its participants has not necessarily been to think *about* plants but to think *with* or *amidst* plants. To do so, researchers in the botanical turn have rearticulated a set of discussions in post-humanism thinking, ecocriticism, multispecies ethnography, feminist geography, and queer ecology while pushing them forward beyond their habitual academic boundaries (Kohn 2014; Tsing et al. 2017; Aloi 2018). Essential imports come from contemporary cultural anthropology, such as practices that co-produce the conditions of possibility through which interlocutors may reveal themselves on their terms (de la Cadena 2021). Similarly, participants in the botanical turn draw from groundbreaking correspondences between philosophers and phytologists around conceptions of vegetal being, intentionality, intelligence, and ecosocial behaviour in order to open up human-centred conceptualisations to the participation of more-than-human lifeforms (Hall 2021; Marder 2013; Coccia 2018; Gagliano 2018). Lastly, the botanical turn reflects the possibilities of life and death in the Anthropocene by critically assessing the thinning line that divides "environmental" and "human" forms, and which animates the logics of consumption and care for botanical presences in our times (Myers 2021).

Monica Gagliano, John Ryan, and Patrícia Vieira's edited volume *The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature* (2017) illustrates the extent and contours of this conversation. As such, the volume results from a set of academic conferences in which its participants tried to listen –and thought about the practices that this mode of listening would entail – to what plants have to say about themselves. At a conceptual level, the volume proposes decolonising Western common sense by letting plants redefine what we mean by the human-centric notions of sensitivity, sentience, communication, and knowledge. As such, the book is part of a broader conversation in post-human and multispecies studies that tries to decentre the figure of the human in theory, and to experiment with emergent epistemologies that are attuned to non-human agentive expression (Ogden, Hall, and Tanita 2013; Meijer 2019). In this volume, more specifically, the provocation raises several generative questions on non-human communication such as those about the dimensions and textures of language, the possibility of multispecies translation, or the relation between intelligence and intentionality. These questions resonate with those offered by Eduardo Kohn's *How Forests Think* (2014), as both projects argue that

thinking about non-human expression can have profound implications in conceptualising the politics and ethics of our human worlds. Doing so, the editors of this volume suggest, "entails thinking outside the totalizing categories of Western metaphysics and, therefore, paves the way for a more open-ended, less instrumental, approach not only to social relations but also to the environment" (Gagliano, Ryan, and Vieira 2017, xv).

*The Language of Plants* includes essays by prominent figures in the botanical turn. In this capacity, it is a field-defining volume that articulates a cohesive research agenda on botanical expression while bringing into a conversation knowledge practices from diverse corners of academia. To note points of convergence amongst various fields, the editors offer in their introduction a robust map that follows diverse investigative trajectories on the language of plants within scientific, philosophical, and literary research. This tripartite field-demarcation reflects the wide-angled perspective through which the editorial themes are explored, and gives a narrative structure to the volume. Thus, while the book is divided into three sections – science, philosophy, and literature – there is a sense of dialogue and continuity in the ideas explored throughout the chapters. For example, Richard Karban's opening essay offers a comprehensive overview of how plants respond to stimuli, such as light or chemical resources, in order to remember, predict, and relate to their immediate contexts. These modes of conceptualising botanical communication are later expanded in Christian Nansen's piece on radiometric signals as well as in Robert Raguso and Andre Kessler's study on botanical chemical exchanges, yet they are reframed through Monica Gagliano's articulation of science studies on plant cognition.

As mentioned earlier, the volume's chief contribution is to critically assess the underlying arguments regarding human exceptionalism in theories of language production and use. To do so, the authors challenge ways of *languaging* plants, here offered as the ontoepistemic practices that obscure or distort the capacity of plant life to express itself in its own terms. Through the editors' analytical lenses, plant expression is presented as a form of dwelling and worldmaking. It is interesting to note how several authors in the volume resort to phenomenological approaches to language which, diverging from French semiotics and Peircean theory of signs, conceptualise language through embodied pragmatics. Thinking amid the Anthropocene, it may be productive to propose a dialogue with the larger tradition of Latin American thinkers who have long explored questions on enunciation and silence through somatic expression and bodily performance in contexts of armed violence and terror (Taylor 2006; Parpart 2013). Throughout the chapters, bodily expression is read as a manifestation of experience, memory, sensibility, agency, and capacity: a methodological approach that productively resonates with works such as that of Kimberly Theidon (2012) in rural Peru. Through botanic lenses, these are also modes of expression that resist misrepresentation and challenge anthropocentric narratives that depict silence as an expression of being rhetorically passive. Isabel Kranz's piece on the language of flowers and Patricia Vieira's on literature as plant writing are compelling examples of studies on how communication compartmentalises humans and plants into separate spheres of existence, and on how plant life tends to break this compartmentalisation apart through their bodies.

In this regard, the essays presented in this volume also offer tools to think about the multiple and complex ways through which ordinary language "captures" certain forms of life as agentless while signalling the radical differences and similarities in expression that keep lifeforms apart.

*The Language of Plants* is a book that articulates a multiplicity of investigative engagements on plant expression while giving conceptual grounding to some of the most thought-provoking questions in this emerging site. While the volume does not have a specific regional scope nor considers plants in Latin America as its object of analysis, it does open a window of possibility to imagine how research on plant expression may resonate with contemporary concerns in Latin American scholarship. The editors of the volume propose to learn to listen to what plants are saying and, in the process, learn how to build inclusive and resilient worlds. Decolonial and subaltern studies as explorations on the logics of colonial violence and representation, for example, will find essential tools to read historical archives beyond the figure of the human. In the same way, the editors offer a relational and material mode of understanding communication as co-production in non-human lifeforms – what Haraway (2016) calls *sympoiesis*. This mode of conceptualising language also offers food for thought to future explorations in communication studies, which could revitalise discussions on mediation, transculturalisation, and hybridity (García Canclini 1989; Martín-Barbero 1993), and could further stimulate ongoing discussions about non-human political expression (de la Cadena 2015; Meijer 2019). Lastly, the volume shows how productive horizontal and transdisciplinary academic exchanges can be in order to challenge assumptions and habitual frameworks in Western modernity. In multiple capacities, *The Language of Plants* serves as a blueprint to future engagements on thinking and growing through collective action, in the botanical turn and cultural studies alike.

As a field-defining volume, however, there are angles of participation that could be further expanded. Two, in particular, would be productive to explore as they reflect the general limits of this academic conversation. First, the volume tends to set its analytical boundaries to thinkers and lineages to the global north – continental Europe, England, and the United States. While developing an integrated cross-cultural framework on plant languages would be idealistic – to say the least –, to think around Western modernity is also to think about dialogues, margins, and porosity. In Latin American cultural studies, border thinking has long insisted on the cross-fertilisation of Indigenous, Black, and Western cosmologies (Mignolo 1999). Thinking specifically about plant languaging, this would have been exceptionally productive as it is through socioecological contact in the Greater Caribbean that much of the language of contemporary Western botany was composed. Second, while there is a strong emphasis on the relational nature of botanical expression, there could have been more reflection on the contributors' contextual or experiential engagements with plants and their languages – especially on the eve of multispecies cultural studies. Ethnographical or phenomenological approaches, which are cornerstones to much of what we know as Latin American cultural studies, could have raised interesting questions on the actual participation of plants in our everyday lives. In this same direction, there is also an important tradition of ethnobotanical research in Latin America interested in ecological

interaction which, articulated with the questions of the botanical turn, could offer important insights into how our lifeworlds have historically been co-produced by human and non-human actors (Andel et al. 2013; Bush et al. 2015; Clement et al. 2015).

## Botanical expression in Latin America

In Latin America, the botanical turn is emerging as a site to think transdisciplinarily around the region's specificity. Participants speculate through a vast array of practices that attend to, disrupt, and recompose humans and non-human entanglements. These practices include artistic engagements with non-human subjectivities (Manuela Infante's *Estado vegetal* or Ana Laura Cantera's *Cartografías invisibles*, for example), ethnographical conceptualisations on plant communication (Lyons 2020), and explorations on literary works that push back botanical reduction (Rosa 2019). To some capacity, the Latin American botanical turn could be characterised by its conceptual and practical experimentation around the specificity of living and dying in this regional context. By doing so, it is recomposing some of the central ideas mobilised by scholars in the global north and taking the research agenda into more politically complex social milieus. Two recent books on Latin American plant languages and expression illuminate this trajectory. Thinking amidst the vibrancy of the Amazon, Theresa Miller's *Plant Kin* (2019) is the result of a richly informed ethnographic study on the practices through which plants and people come to sense, know, and affect one another. Lesley Wylie's *The Poetics of Plants in Spanish American Literature* (2020) studies vegetal expression in literary and artistic practices throughout Latin America. In what follows, I will review these works and note how they contribute conceptually and practically to the agenda of the botanical turn by exploring divergent visions of ecology, society, humanity, and environmental depletion in Latin America.

Theresa Miller's work focuses explicitly on this last process. Her book *Plant Kin* is an ethnographic study on an Indigenous and multispecies community making a collective life in a territory surrounded by anthropogenic depletion: the Brazilian *cerrado*. Throughout the book, Miller focuses on sensorial communication amongst human and non-human Canela people, and argues that tactile practices foster multispecies well-being and resilience to environmental transformations. Even more, Miller argues that attending to the sensory relational pathways between human community members and plants reveals how they become kin to one another and – I speculate – mutually recognised as beings to be nourished and cared for. The theoretical scaffold in this book draws on several of the authors contributing to *The Language of Plants*. However, it could also be read as part of a Latin American-specific conversation on the affective relationships between humans and plants, including ethnographic studies such as Kristina Lyons's *Vital Decomposition* (2020) and Micha Rahder's *An Ecology of Knowledges* (2020). In this regard, the book makes a significant contribution as it offers an innovative approach to studying small localised affective ecologies by attending to sensory experiences in multispecies relating.

As Karban (2021) suggests, botanical communication is a tactile experience. In *Plant Kin*, touch emerges as a bodily relation through which humans interface with plants and their expression, enabling the author to think beyond the narrow parameters of human-centred symbolic communication. Miller explores these tactile ways of communicating through a rich analysis of gardening practices happening in the Canela community. In the book, we see Canela gardeners touching-as-attending their plants in a similar way – Miller argues – as a mother touches and learns about her children. As readers we also learn that, through tactile relations, Canela gardeners do not encounter plants as objects to be consumed, but as kin that nurture the community. Empirically, this argument draws from a decade-long ethnographic engagement with the gardeners, and it is analytically explored through what the author refers to as the *sensory ethnobotany framework*. This framework is conceptualised as an investigative toolset that articulates conversations on sensory phenomenology, affective anthropology, and cutting-edge research on botanical communication, to attend to touching practices from an ecocultural perspective. At the same time, the study is informed by contextual ethnographic quantitative and qualitative investigations, and a robust historical-comparative analysis on the region's ecologies of co-existence. This rich multi-method analysis constantly moves the reader from nineteenth-century chronicles to the careful participant observation on child gardening and kin-building, to think about touch as a compositional force.

What readers find in Miller's investigation is a rich ecosocial world composed of relational pathways between humans and plants that are dynamic and transformational. To some capacity, thinking through Latin American jungle gardens enables the author to encounter not singular plants and their care-takers, but an ecology of practices that co-constitute them. While this demands a complex argumentation, the book structure responds quite well to it. As such, the book unfolds through two introductory chapters, one conceptual and deeply engaged with phenomenological anthropology, and another historical-comparative chapter which situates the reader in the long tradition of ethnographic studies conducted in the Amazonian region. Chapters 3 to 5 reflect on Miller's extensive ethnographic engagements and offer thought-provoking vignettes and analysis on the sensory experiences through which multispecies kin relations are produced. Chapter four, on the practices of naming and categorising, is an outstanding example of how the book's analytics unfolds as it explores how acts of noticing enable processes of exchange, communication, care, and affective and sensory entanglements between plants and humans. The book ends by discussing the crude realities that the Anthropocene proposes to the region, and by inviting the readers to connect contemporary notions of environmental resistance to the Indigenous multispecies care practices. Throughout this work, we note that communication between humans and plants is much more than an intellectual provocation. It is an actual engagement from where new tools for thinking and producing sustainable worlds may emerge.

Lesley Wylie's *The Poetics of Plants in Spanish American Literature* also studies vegetal expression and the multispecies co-production of lifeworlds in Latin America. In this case, it is through the analysis of literary and artistic practices. Attending to the cross-pollination of botanical and cultural forms, Wylie's book is an effort to

relate plant languages to the postcolonial poetics of dissensus within regional cultural production. Thinking through plants, Wylie suggests, is a practice that has been very persistent among Spanish American writers and artists. As such, the book engages in a close reading of the buried narratives that plants present within the Spanish American literary canon. By doing so, the author reveals the profound entanglements between plant expression, native and localised imaginaries on ecosocial survival, and the roots of dissent in political and moral thought in Spanish American culture. The flowery language of the new world baroque, for example, is illuminated through Wylie's analytics in order to reflect not the author's discursive determinations – the *languaging* of plants – but the aesthetic openings that botanical vibrancy, hybridity, and queerness offer to postcolonial thinking. In this way, Wylie's book suggests that botanical expression has been at the core of Latin America's dissenting identities and counterhegemonic imaginaries from the colonial period onward (Wylie 2020, 4).

*The Poetics of Plants* is a robust investigation. The provocation followed by the author is to engage in careful and attentive listening to the voices of the plants in the Spanish American canon. Throughout her writing, Wylie attends to the descriptions and actions through which plants emerge as well as to the metaphoric language and symbolism. One of the crucial challenges that the book addresses is how to frame the contours of Spanish American postcolonial culture as a site of analysis. In this regard, Wylie has carefully selected cultural products representing the traditional literary and artistic canon while incorporating important voices of dissent. To open the poetics of plant language to her analysis, Wylie borrows Michael Marder's notion of "plant thinking" as a conduit to conceptualise the non-ideational and non-conscious modes of expression that emerge through plant proliferation and their worldmaking capacities (Marder 2013). As other scholars in the botanical turn have suggested, to think alongside plants is to stay with the immanent and to outgrow the epistemic limits of Western metaphysics (Coccia 2018). Thus, more than exploring plants as stylistic resources employed by artists and writers, Wylie reveals plants' work in expressing dissent in parallel to the ideational determinations of those who write about it. In Andrés Bello's modernistic writings, for example, plants express anti-agrarian poetics that offer cautionary tales on the dangers of sacrificing non-human life through the expansion of plantation economies. Similarly, by reading the language of flowers in Jorge Isaacs's *María*, the book illuminates the feminist undertones to this male-centric narrative.

The book has five chapters. The first three chapters focus on works that redefine Western forms and genres through botanical themes, while the latter two attend to works that explore the correspondences between plant and human life. The book addresses an extensive corpus of cultural forms, both temporally and regionally diverse. By doing so, Wylie shows that botanical thinking is a recurring force in Spanish American cultural production despite historical and geographical differences. This is an argument that, as Wylie acknowledges, draws from a long tradition of ecocritical works (Heffes 2013). It resonates, for example, with Marcone's (1998) classic essay on Ciro Alegría and the "novela de la selva"; or more recently with Andermann's (2018) studies on the landscape. Wylie's contributions to this tradition, I would argue, are two. First, it deepens the discussion on the presence of plants in

the shaping of Spanish American cultures by considering the generative modes of conceptualising plant life present in the contemporary botanical turn. Second, it explicitly argues that human-plant relations in Spanish American culture have contributed to destabilising hegemonic modes of thinking, and at the same time to articulating counterhegemonic political discourses, imaginaries, and aesthetics.

It is in this attention to the circulation, production, and decomposition of modes of thinking and being that I find the Latin American botanical turn to be most productive. Drawing on their studies on cultural formations, both Wylie and Miller suggest that by attending to the compositional capacities of plants, the ontoepistemic division between the botanical and the human becomes very slippery. Not only do humans make plants, we also learn that plants define what it is to be human. This ontological murkiness is not necessarily a recent argument in Latin American cultural studies (Viveiros de Castro 2005), yet it offers a productive dialogue for practitioners in the botanical turn around the relational dimensions of vegetal expression. In this direction, the books here reviewed also offer unexpected tools to learn how to coexist in difference. In *Plant Kin*, specifically, this idea is expressed through the emergence of kinship ties that compose more-than-human families. In *The Poetics of Plants*, it is through exploring the "plantification" of people and the "personification" of plants. This argument unfolds even more clearly in Wylie's third chapter while discussing Alejo Carpentier's baroque. Like several of his contemporaries, Carpentier was interested in the forces and presences composing Latin American identities. However, in Carpentier's work, Wylie suggests that the question was not necessarily framed in terms of cultural and racial identities – as it would have been in Vasconcelos, for example. For Carpentier, Latin America's being-hood emerges amidst the ontological messiness that brings the human and the non-human into new forms of composition. This post-humanist standpoint effectively integrates the material, the botanical, and the cultural and gives different meanings to Latin American-centric notions such as entanglements, hybridity, and metamorphosis in productive ways.

As Wylie advocates, these post-human propositions respond to a distinctively Latin American intellectual trajectory that draws on legacies of Amerindian cosmologies and their non-binary relations of proximity with the botanical world. Following Wylie's exploration, one can also imagine how Amerindian forms of animism have been carried into modern postcolonial thinking and shaped imaginaries on alternative collective futures. In this regard, thinking about Latin American modernity forces us to slowly think about what totalising notions such as "Anthropocene logics" or "Western metaphysics", deployed repetitively by practitioners of the botanical turn, really mean. Similarly, Wylie's work suggests that Spanish American thinkers have articulated divergent visions of progress, selfhood, culture, and society through vegetal thinking. In some capacity, this resonates with the arguments proposed by other Latin American scholars such as Marisol de la Cadena or Arturo Escobar who have been exploring how contemporary humans are *not only* modern subjects. Identifying the contours of these trajectories, modes of proliferation, and hybrid actualities, one can also wonder how these discourses may serve the type of work necessary to imagine new modes of being that are attentive and akin to the survival of our lifeworlds in the Anthropocene. Thinking

through botanical worlds in Latin America, these books suggest, entails posing crucial questions on how we may conceptualise more-than-modern understandings of those presences that participate in the redefinition of the commons at times when the line that divides the background and the foreground to our everyday lives has been critically blurred.

## Final comments

The turn to plant life in cultural studies is an urgent response to global environmental devastation. This is a conversation that brings together a multiplicity of investigative engagements on plant life and expression while raising thought-provoking questions on key concepts usually attributed to human life. At the same time, practitioners in the botanical turn are widening the analytical lenses in the humanities, so that new sensibilities and care practices for more-than-human lifeforms can be imagined. Monica Gagliano, John Ryan, and Patrícia Vieira's edited volume *The Language of Plants* is an important contribution to this conversation as it articulates a common framework and offers solid conceptual grounding for future research. *The Poetics of Plants* and *Plant Kin* illustrate how generative the encounter between conversations in the botanical turn and Latin American cultural studies can be. These later works also show how the region's specificity may raise thought-provoking questions regarding non-modern ways of relating to plant beings and, by doing so, contributing to the general conversation of the botanical turn.

The points of contact between Latin American cultural studies and the botanical turn are currently in the process of formation. As an intellectual and creative space of the global north, the botanical turn is an invitation for scholars not only to think about those beings that sustain our worlds but also to think through their modes of expression in order to foster sustainable and liveable worlds. With a long trajectory of investigations concerned with notions of hybridity, mediation, mixture, experience, and expression, Latin American cultural studies may offer generative alternatives to thinking outside the totalising categories of Western cultures. To think about plants in Latin America is to think through jungles and entanglements, as it is through these murky encounters that regionalised definitions of what a plant is and how it expresses itself can emerge. Dwelling on the material realities posed by the ecological depletion driven by the Anthropocene, this cross-fertilisation of academic conversations may also offer important tools for thinking about modes of sustaining our earthly lifeworlds. For cultural studies scholars, the relationality of more-than-human worlds may also be a fertile site for imagining practices that foster inclusion, sustainability, and resilience. The question, then, is not *if* but *how* plants can help us shape the political and ethical practices that are necessary to reimagine Latin America otherwise.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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# ENVIRONMENTAL THINKING AND INDIGENOUS ARTS IN BRAZIL TODAY

*In this essay, I consider intersections between environmental thinking and Indigenous art-making in recent scholarship and artistic production in Brazil, situating some of their contributions to Latin American Cultural Studies in recent years. I examine Stelio Marras, Joana Cabral de Oliveira, Marta Amoroso et al.'s* Vozes vegetais: Diversidade, resistência e histórias da floresta *(Plant Voices: Diversity, Resistance and Forest Histories, 2021) and Ailton Krenak's* A vida não é útil *(Life is Not Useful, 2020a). I show that both works challenge extractivist paradigms and the hierarchisation of life forms. I then consider works by two Indigenous artists: Glicéria Tupinambá's powerful reclaiming of the traditional Tupinambá cloak, and Denilson Baniwa's critical engagements with museums and collectionism. By mapping some of the emerging directions in environmental thinking and Indigenous arts in Brazil, I argue that recent shifts in scholarship and artistic production in the country owe much to Indigenous approaches to interspecies relationality, offering valuable lessons about forms of creativity that resist commodification.*

**Keywords:** Brazil; Indigenous arts; environmental thinking; monoculture; mining; extractivism

This review essay considers intersections between environmental thinking and Indigenous art-making in recent scholarship and artistic production in Brazil, situating them in a wider field of cultural and academic production in Latin America. The 32nd Bienal de São Paulo, held in 2016, sought to reflect on strategies offered by contemporary art to inhabit uncertainty. Titled *Incerteza Viva* (Live Uncertainty), the biennale raised debates about contemporary environmental crises, concerns about the future, and the Anthropocene. Indigenous ways of life stood out as a theme, and showed up in creations by non-Indigenous artists, such as Bené Fonteles, and the presence of Indigenous artists while the presence of thinkers – like Davi Kopenawa, Ailton Krenak, and Jaider Esbell – remained limited to guest-talks or quotations. This would change in the 34th Bienal de São Paulo, held in 2021, which presented the highest number of Indigenous artists in its history, such as the late Jaider Esbell, Daiara Tukano, Sueli Maxakali, and Gustavo Caboco – part of a generation that has been consolidating Indigenous protagonism in the arts in Brazil. Theories and concepts related to posthumanism and conflicts between ontologies have also been gaining momentum among Latin

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Americanist circles in the 2010s, serving as a ground for new developments in the work of Marisol de la Cadena (2010, 2015), Mario Blaser (2009, 2010, 2013), Mauro Almeida (2013), and Eduardo Kohn (2013), among others.

As Vincent (2017) argued, one of the risks involved in the thematisation of Indigenous realities by the 32nd Bienal de São Paulo was the projection of primitivist and romantic clichés on the association between ecology and Indigenous societies. Whatever the scenario, it is key to keep in mind that what Euro-American discourses understand as "environment", "ecology", and "nature" may not coincide with Indigenous conceptual frameworks. A clear example of that is Davi Kopenawa's rejection of the idea of "meio-ambiente", a common term in Brazilian Portuguese, since it would, in his view, imply the idea of "halving" the environment. In contrast, he proposes the Yanomami idea of "urihi a" or "land-forest", meaning the entire world, which should be conceived as a whole, not divided in halves (Pinheiro Dias 2016).

Informed by a commitment to advancing the decolonisation of knowledge production in Latin American Cultural Studies, I argue that even if Indigenous creative and intellectual contributions do not take place specifically or strictly within academia, they should nonetheless be discussed alongside academic scholarship. By mapping emerging directions in environmental thinking in Brazil as part of this unfolding process, I intend to show that Indigenous epistemologies have been playing a central role among the most important currents in scholarship in the country over the last decade. Most notably, the period has been profoundly marked by the impact of the work of Brazilian Indigenous intellectuals Davi Kopenawa Yanomami[1] and Ailton Krenak,[2] which has energised research agendas committed to a critique of human exceptionalism, consumerism, and utilitarian approaches to life. Their influence is also readily apparent in *Vozes vegetais* (Marras et. al. 2021). Krenak's and Kopenawa's conceptual frameworks make space for envisioning a "reduction or slowing down of the Anthropocene" (Viveiros de Castro and Danowski 2017, 104), of which Krenak's notion of "treading lightly on the Earth" (2020a) can be considered a key analytical trope.[3] In Yanomami terms, in turn, "treading lightly on the Earth" could be seen as an antidote against the ambitions of the "Earth eaters" (*urihi wapo pë*) who insist on exploiting plants, minerals, and all instances of interspecies socialities as "resources", objects of extraction in the name of the anthropocentric greed of the "people of merchandise" (*matihi tʰëri pë*).[4]

## Against monoculture

An edited collection of 17 chapters stemming from a symposium held at USP and UNICAMP in 2019, *Vozes vegetais* reflects on a diversity of forms of co-constitutive entanglements between plants and humans, placing the philosophies and practices of Indigenous peoples, *quilombolas*, and workers from the landless workers movement (MST) at the centre of the debate.[5] Their sense of intimacy with hyper-agro-biodiversity contrasts sharply with what Joana Cabral de Oliveira, in the chapter "Agricultura contra o Estado" (Agriculture Against the State), describes as the

"herbicidal state" – a reference to the political anthropological work of Pierre Clastres. She discusses how "a cosmopolitical war has been waged through plant alliances" (2021, 78): on one side, the homogeneous character of monoculture, which makes species more vulnerable to pests and large-scale infestation; on the other side, Amazonian Indigenous peoples and their heightened awareness of interspecies relationality. The chapter also advances the idea that the relationship between plants and Amazonian Indigenous peoples is not based on the control of the former by the latter. In addition, it is not a one-on-one relationship, but a collective effort: for instance, other beings, such as *temitorõ* ants and *caxirizeira* bees, also take part in how cassava comes to life. In addition, cassava inebriates and seduces Wajãpi women with its aesthetic properties and flavour to keep them planting and increasing its diversity. Learning to do politics with plants with the Wajãpi people living in the Amazonian state of Amapá, Cabral de Oliveira notes that their knowledge about cassava and their respect towards the particular rhythm of each species that relates to it allow them to maintain and increase agrobiodiversity, preventing problems usually faced by capitalist industrial agriculture. Cassava, in the same way as other species, is not to be commodified and treated as a "natural resource", says Cabral de Oliveira as she quotes Krenak in her chapter, mentioning his rejection of the framing of rivers, mountains, and forests as "natural resources" (Krenak 2016, 159).

Marta Amoroso's chapter, "A descoberta do manhafã: seguindo as trilhas da floresta com os Mura" (Discovering Manhafã: Following the Trail of the Forest with the Mura), shows how, for the Mura people from the Cunhã-Sapucaia Indigenous Territory in Borba, Amazonas, the *manhafã* potato (*Casimirella spp.*) constitutes a temporal index that points to trails travelled by ancestors to past villages, often indicating to the Mura where they can find "Amazonian Black Earth" ("Terra Preta de Índio") – anthropic soils of remarkable fertility that many scientists say are the result of human activity in the Amazon, beginning thousands of years ago. Amoroso expands on Caetano-Andrade et al.'s description of Brazil nut trees (*Bertholletia excelsa*) as "time capsules" that echo stories of human-forest entanglements (2020), and argues that *manhafã* potatoes are a living record of how nutrients, humans, and other organisms have communicated and circulated in Amazonian soil across time – like "books in a library" that tell stories of ancient, interspecies forest technologies. Another insightful contribution comes from Karen Shiratori, whose chapter "Vegetalidade humana e o medo do olhar feminino" (The Plantness of Humans and the Fear of the Female Gaze) describes how the Jamamadi people living along the middle Purus river, in Southern Amazonas, describe the different cycles of the human body by mobilising categories that coincide with those used to refer to the growth and development of plants. For instance, in the vocabulary relating to human morphology, girls who are in pubertal seclusion are seen as developing like fruit, that is, as going from a state of *borehe*, or unripened, to a state of *hasa*, or ripened. With that in mind, Shiratori goes on to argue that Jamamadi humanness is produced *with* and *through* plants. At the same time, the Jamamadi do not conceive of plants as deprived of human character and subjectivity. Her analysis of Jamamadi plant perspectivism suggests that it is not structured by polarised notions of "anthropomorphisation of plants", on the

one hand, or a "plant-like metaphorisation of the human", on the other – since that perspective would reassert the dichotomy between nature and culture. What Shiratori presents is an alternative framework that allows us to capture the plant-ness of humans – or, put otherwise, to see how plants hold ties of kinship with humans and are invested with metaphysical dignity and political existence.[6]

*Vozes vegetais* provides the reader with a broad theoretical overview of the place of plant agency in worldmaking from the perspective of traditional peoples in Brazil, as well as with clear examples of the inseparability between humanness and plantness in Amazonian Indigenous thinking. It is no news that humanity, for Amazonian Indigenous peoples, is not a domain separate from plant and animal life – in the same way that culture is not a domain separate from nature (Viveiros de Castro 1996, 2002a; Descola 1986, 1992, 2005). As Davi Kopenawa powerfully epitomises, "no forest, no history" (Dias and Marras, 2019). Poet Júlia de Carvalho Hansen, who has long been interested in interactions between forms of plant communication and human language, and who opens the four parts of *Vozes vegetais* with a selection of poems from the 2016 book *Seiva veneno ou fruto* (Sap, venom or fruit), recently noted that if a "plant turn" or "virada vegetal" (as it is called in Brazil) is indeed taking place as a critical current, it must be taken into account that this notion of "turn" is an Eurocentric one, since plants have been playing a central role in many non-European traditions since time immemorial (Flip, 2021). Having said that, I must add that even though the notion of "turn" is frequently mobilised in academic discourse, I would, in what concerns a consideration of Indigenous modes of thinking, express reservations about the assumption that knowledge-production necessarily unfolds in sequential phases that could be quantified as "turns", or stages at which knowledge radically changes in a different direction, since Indigenous traditions are not anchored in the same kind of progressive, teleological, cumulative understanding of time that is predominant in Euro-American cultures. Rather than necessarily associating transformation or meaningful change with grand theoretical trends, Indigenous knowledges invite us to reflect on time – as well as on changes in thinking – as a variable value through which historicities take shape (Overing 1995). Therefore, the kind of interspecies relationality seen as part of a "plant turn" or an "animal turn"[7] in a conventional academic timeline may be common knowledge for many Indigenous people.

Bearing that in mind, it is fair to note that *Vozes vegetais* shows that the increasing scholarly interest in plant agency within the Humanities and Social Sciences at large, and in particular within Brazilian studies – in a way that is analogous to what has become known as the "ontological turn" – owes much to a greater openness in academia towards taking seriously what Indigenous peoples themselves take seriously. Here I refer to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's (2002b) well-known approach to the notion that taking Indigenous thinking seriously implies *refusing to neutralise* it by framing it as a system of *beliefs*, and instead considering Indigenous ideas as *concepts*, symmetrically taking them as knowledge that is as theoretically valid as academic knowledge. Twenty years after the original publication of Viveiros de Castro's seminal essay "O nativo relativo",[8] Indigenous academics are on the rise in Brazilian universities, achieving and consolidating the legitimacy to ensure their own conceptual self-determination, that is, to specify themselves the

conditions under which their ideas are to be taken. A historical watershed of this process was the enactment of Brazil's affirmative action law for universities in 2012, known as Law 12.711, which provides for a quota of vacancies in federally funded public universities for self-declared Black, brown, and Indigenous students, expanding access to higher education for non-white people (Baniwa 2013).

## Treading lightly

*A vida não é útil* (2020a) – Ailton Krenak's most recent book manifesto, consisting of texts adapted from talks and live streamings held between November 2017 and June 2020 – constitutes an eloquent critique of extractivism that is having a significant impact on Latin American Cultural Studies today. "We humans are not all that – the Earth declares it", Krenak asserts. The Indigenous thinker argues that life is not useful in the sense of not serving utilitarian purposes. He points out that we who are "addicted to modernity" keep forgetting that everything is permeated by a deep relationality between animals, mountains, trees, humans, and minerals, reminding us that we have been guided by an idea of humanity as an upper caste or an exclusive club that leaves out a sub-humanity composed of Indigenous peoples, *caiçaras*,[9] *quilombolas*[10] and many others marginalised by utilitarianism. The members of this exclusive club have proven to be the plague of the planet, consuming the Earth and its various life forms for the sake of the concentration of wealth and progress. He criticises the fetish for technological apparatuses and advocates the connection between dreams and everyday life, while arguing that we have to stop "developing" and start "getting involved". The possibility of the continuity of life on Earth, as well as what is useful and what is useless for those who want it, is a connecting thread between the five chapters of the book – "Não se come dinheiro"; "Sonhos para adiar o fim do mundo"; "A máquina de fazer coisas"; "O futuro não está à venda" and "A vida não é útil" (You can't eat money; Dreams to postpone the end of the world; The machine for making things; The future is not for sale and Life is not useful). Krenak urges us to consider the meaning of life "beyond the dictionary", since in his view we have been stuck in a reductionist approach to living.

Engaging incisively with debates around anthropocentrism and the Anthropocene, Krenak says that biodiversity does not need us, since there are many forms of life beyond us. The COVID-19 pandemic, as Krenak points out, is the consequence of a variety of factors: a mode of production that is destroying the planet, unbridled consumerism, life-draining necrocapitalism and its unsustainable relationship with the Earth. At stake here are the issues of greed, human exceptionalism, and the utilitarian will to control life, against which Krenak proposes the practice of "treading lightly".

Indigenous approaches to interspecies relationality also offer valuable lessons about forms of creativity that "tread lightly" and resist commodification. Let us consider the recent exhibition *Kwá yapé turusú yuriri assojaba tupinambá | Essa é a grande volta do manto Tupinambá* (This is the Great Return of the Tupinambá Cloak),[11] held from September to November 2021, first in Brasília and then in Porto Seguro. It centred on the history of the Tupinambá's cloaks, known in Old Tupi as "assojaba", ritual feathered capes that were taken from Brazil by Europeans in the colonial period. It also showed that the cloaks never ceased to inhabit the

world of the spiritual entities that guide the Tupinambá – the *encantados* – even if the garments that sit in European museums were never repatriated. Eleven of these cloaks, produced between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, are still kept in museums in Basel, Brussels, Copenhagen, Florence, Milan, and Paris. Glicéria Jesus da Silva Tupinambá, also known as Célia Tupinambá, an important leader, teacher, and filmmaker of the Tupinambá community from Serra do Padeiro, has long been exploring the role that the cloaks play in the history, cosmology, and culture of her people. Along with Augustin de Tugny, Juliana Caffé, and Juliana Gontijo, she was one of the curators of the "Essa é a grande volta do manto Tupinambá" exhibition. One of the pieces included in the exhibition was a video of Tupinambá at the collection storage of the Musée du Quai Branly, where she had the chance to see one of the cloaks that were taken to Europe. During the visit, she felt that the cloak was speaking to her; in fact, she felt that it had been waiting for her (Tupinambá *apud* Roxo 2021). Through careful observation, Tupinambá realised she would apply beeswax to wax raw cotton thread, weave it with the traditional *jereré* technique – which is still used nowadays for making fishing nets – and give form to the structure to which the cloak's feathers are attached. She emphasises that cloak-making does not involve killing any birds: feathers are only harvested when birds naturally shed old, worn feathers during the moulting process.[12]

Rather than adopting the repatriation of the cloaks located in European museums as her agenda, Tupinambá (2021) focused on reactivating ways of relating to her territory and engaging her community, human and other-than-human alike, in the making of new cloaks (Figures 1 and 2). In fact, Tupinambá's understanding is that the *encantados* do not want the repatriation and that Europeans are condemned to serve the penalty of "spending billions" to preserve the fragile material of the old cloaks. Therefore, the fact that the Nationalmuseet of Denmark and the other European museums that hold Tupinambá cloaks are to continue to care for the pieces indicates that the Tupinambá "do not forgive them". The decision to let Europeans carry the burden of their own plundering legacy, as Tupinambá concludes, shows that they are being punished for their wrongdoings: "repatriating the cloak would mean that we have forgiven them, and we don't intend to forgive them", she continues. "If we were to ask for the repatriation of the cloak, it would mean that it would return to nature."

The mode of creativity with which Tupinambá becomes entangled evokes a notion of technics that is not exclusive to humans. In this sense, her assertion resonates with Viveiros de Castro's recently published dialogue with Yuk Hui (2021), in which the Brazilian ethnologist argues that even if we agree that "it is possible to talk about human technics and then about non-human technics", "a less anthropocentric definition of technology is needed". "Technics is not immanent to humans; it always comes from outside", Viveiros de Castro asserts. For environmental thinking, an implication of this argument in favour of the technical continuity between humans and other living beings is that if humans are not considered as the only players of what we call creativity, art praxis is populated by a tangled ecology of human, plant, animal, mineral, spiritual, and other non-human beings. It also follows that humans, as actants or agents involved in the creative process, are not in full control nor can utterly predict what will arise from this symbiotic driving force.

**Figure 1. Assojaba Tupinambá. Tupinambá people from Serra do Padeiro, made by the hands of Glicéria Tupinambá. One of the three cloaks that were part of the "Kwá yapé turusú yuriri assojaba tupinambá | Essa é a grande volta do manto Tupinambá" ("This is the Great Return of the Tupinambá Cloak") exhibition. Photograph by Jamille Pinheiro Dias, 15 October 2021. *Fayga Ostrower Gallery,* Funarte (Brazil's National Arts Foundation). Brasília, Distrito Federal, Brazil.**

The Tupinambá cloak matters not only because of how emblematic it is in their historic resistance, taking one back to stories and memories shared by elders. It matters not only because of how substantially it embodies the territory, being made from several plants and animal species, most notably domestic and wild bird species. It matters because it is an index of the Tupinambá's fundamentally relational approach to life and creativity: without the forest, there can be no birds; without the birds, there can be no feathers; without their territory, there can be no Tupinambá and there can be no cloak. Unlike the seventeenth-century cloaks that are in European museums, the twenty-first-century cloaks are no longer bright red like the scarlet ibis (*Eudocimus ruber*) – since the bird stopped living in their lands – but bear the earthy tones of the Tupinambá territory, predominantly brown and beige.

Overall, this recent exhibition marked the culmination of years devoted by Tupinambá to investigating the technical and cosmological aspects involved in the

**Figure 2.** **Assojaba Tupinambá. Tupinambá people from Serra do Padeiro, made by the hands of Glicéria Tupinambá. One of the three cloaks that were part of the "Kwá yapé turusú yuriri assojaba tupinambá | Essa é a grande volta do manto Tupinambá" ("This is the Great Return of the Tupinambá Cloak") exhibition. Photograph by Jamille Pinheiro Dias, 15 October 2021. *Fayga Ostrower Gallery,* Funarte (Brazil's National Arts Foundation). Brasília, Distrito Federal, Brazil.**

making of the cloak, which unfolded in tandem with the struggle of her people to take back the areas where they traditionally lived.[13] Bringing cloak-making back to life was thus an existential reclamation. Here it is pertinent to make reference to Isabelle Stengers's notion of "reclaiming" (2012) not as a nostalgic gesture that would resurrect the past as it was, making some "'true', 'authentic' tradition come alive". This perspective invites us to think of the reclaiming of the cloak as a way of reactivating an environment through a regeneration of practices. As a consequence of this approach, focusing on artistic practices that have been critically engaging with the intersection between environmental issues and Indigenous creativity suggests that we expand our notion of "environment" beyond the nature-culture divide. To this end, Tupinambá's work provides us with the means to learn by way of a powerful Indigenous interrogation of the Anthropocene.

## On ashes and Amazonian Black Earth

What the artistic and intellectuals works discussed in this essay contribute to environmental thinking in the scope of Latin American Cultural Studies centrally involves *challenging the assumed division between aesthetics and ecology*, as a result of a *questioning of the demarcation of creativity as solely human*. Among contemporary art

practitioners contributing to these unfoldings is the Amazonian Indigenous artist Denilson Baniwa. His timely work unfolds through a confrontation of how museums – as well as cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro and the ways they were built on Indigenous territories – materialised and validated a system of dispossession and prejudice. At the same time, while his interventions expose epistemologies stemming from and relying on colonial practices, they also seek to prepare the soil for new forms and practices of living. Baniwa's aesthetic responses to the fire at the National Museum converge with his denunciation of the history of plunder and epistemic violence, a constant theme in his works. In his protest-performance "breaking into" or rather, as he puts it, "hacking" the 33rd São Paulo Biennial in November 2018, dressed in his Jaguar-Shaman[14] cape, mask, and rattle and holding flowers in his hands, Baniwa tore up a copy of the Brazilian edition of Susie Hodges's "The Short Story of Art" pocket guide. Standing in front of large-scale photographs of the Selk'nam People from Ona-sin land (later called Tierra del Fuego by colonisers), curated by artist Sofia Borges, he then declared: "The short story of art. It's so short, so short, that I don't see any Indigenous art. So short that if I see Indians in this story of art, it is only as sources. I see Indians and the cultures that were stolen from them" (Baniwa 2018). The artist continued to take up this leitmotif through different initiatives, among which I would call attention to his installations "Amáka" (2020) – the second work in a three-part project he developed for Pinacoteca de São Paulo's exhibition *Véxoa: Nós Sabemos* (Véxoa: We Know, 2020–2021) – and "Pequenas crônicas de uma cidade-memória" (Short Chronicles of a City-Memory, 2021), on show as part of the *Crônicas Cariocas* (Chronicles from Rio de Janeiro) exhibition at MAR (the Rio Art Museum), in Rio de Janeiro, until 31 July 2022.

For Véxoa, Baniwa proposed a work in three parts, entitled *Nada que é dourado permanece* (Nothing Gold Can Stay), one of them being *2: Amáka (Coivara)*, in which he gathers ashes from the National Museum fire, which occurred on 2 September 2018, in a set of glass jars. *Amáka* is the term in the Baniwa language that designates an area burnt for the purpose of planting by using slash-and-burn agriculture, a technique that seeks to make land fertile. With the site-specific intervention *1: Hilo*, Baniwa began planting medicinal and ornamental plants, flowers, and spices in the parking lot of the Pinacoteca, exactly two years after the National Museum was consumed in flames. *3: Terra Preta de Índio* (Amazonian Black Earth), in turn, consists of a video recording of the sowing process that took place in the parking lot, broadcast live and shown inside the museum (see Pinheiro Dias 2021).

In *Nada que é dourado permanece* (Figure 3), Baniwa makes reference to notions of destruction and rebirth by bringing together two seemingly contrasting yet complementary acts: planting new seeds, possibilities, and futures between the paving stones in the Pinacoteca parking lot; and displaying vestiges of the fire that ravaged the National Museum, consuming invaluable items of Indigenous material culture. In the interview that we conducted for the short documentary *Fertile Land: Véxoa and Contemporary Indigenous Art at Pinacoteca de São Paulo* (2020), he told me that his purpose was to reflect on the role that institutions play in safeguarding Indigenous memories, in particular on how those memories become imprisoned in bureaucratic, colonial institutions, in spite of apparently being very safe and well

**Figure 3.** **Denilson Baniwa, *Nada que é dourado permanece 1: Hilo*. Pinacoteca de São Paulo. 19 September 2020. Photograph by Isabella Matheus. Courtesy of Pinacoteca de São Paulo. São Paulo, Brazil.**

protected. The ashes that make up *Amáka* (Figure 4), therefore, are an index of memories in transit: charcoal and ashes indicate the ephemeral character of those memories. The artist notes:

> They have become something that you cannot discern. You can feel them, smell them, taste them if you'd like, since they still exist. But they do not exist in a visually recognisable form. For example, think of the Aymara mummies that were burnt and lost in the fire. Just like this institution, I have put them in bottles. They still exist, even if we cannot see them.[15]

Baniwa thus invites us to imagine modes of memory-keeping that are constantly forged in transformation, rather than based on the confinement of objects in

**Figure 4. Denilson Baniwa, *Nada que é dourado permanece 2: Amáka*. Pinacoteca de São Paulo. November 2020. Photograph by Isabella Matheus. Courtesy of Pinacoteca de São Paulo. São Paulo, Brazil.**

archives and collections. In a more recent conversation, this time with artist and filmmaker Ana Vaz, Baniwa talked about the feelings of despair, shock and the constant and continuous mourning that followed the fire at the National Museum. On the other hand, it is possible to think of ways of reconstructing forms and practices of living amid the ruins and ashes. The already-mentioned notion of "Amazonian Black Earth" ("Terra Preta de Índio") is suggestive of that. As Baniwa puts it, it is as "living memory, a library, a database that's been alive for 5,000 years" (Baniwa, 2021b). His stimulating approximation of the high fertility of Amazonian Black Earth and a millenia-old library invites us to think of ways of cataloguing that contrast with the importance that Westerns place on collectionism. While it may look as a contradiction, the fact that Baniwa and other Indigenous artists in Brazil are using museums – the very spaces that have historically excluded them from the art canon – as platforms to showcase their works is a conscious effort to subvert the authority of dominant forms of representation. In *Amáka*, in particular, his decision to "confine" the ashes of the National Museum to a set of glass jars – similar to those used to store specimens in natural history museums – can be interpreted as an ironic confrontation of Western collectionism.

For the *Crônicas Cariocas* exhibition at the Rio Art Museum, Baniwa takes one step further with "Pequenas crônicas de uma cidade-memória" (2021), invoking and giving shape to a mummified head that references those that were lost in the ashes of the National Museum (Figure 5). He argues that the mummy can be seen as a former political prisoner that was given a "habeas corpus" by the fire in a text that accompanies the installation, noting: "Lost forever in the ashes of the 2018 fire, it is no longer trapped between the walls of the glass case where it was trapped. It is now free and walks around the city, revisiting the old places it knew before its museological imprisonment" (Baniwa, 2021a). This invented mummy, who had witnessed the birth of Brazil, now enjoys a taste of freedom and walks around places in Rio de Janeiro where confrontations between Indigenous people

**Figure 5.** **Denilson Baniwa, *Pequenas crônicas de uma cidade-memória*. November 2021. Courtesy of the artist. Museu de Arte do Rio. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.**

and European colonisers took place – such as Cinelândia, Largo da Carioca, Candelária, Saara, among others – fully equipped with cardioid and shotgun microphones, an audio recorder, and other sound-capturing tools. However, as it returns to its places of origin, the now released prisoner does not recognise the streets, river embankments, and inlets of Rio. The impossibility of a proper return and recognition of those places points to a link between colonisation and the of theft memories.

## Conclusion

In Brazil, debates around Indigenous epistemologies and their contributions to environmental thinking in broad terms are being shaped by a confluence of historical factors, ranging from the growing visibility that Indigenous artists have achieved in recent years,[16] an intense production of film, literary writing, music, and social media content by Indigenous creators, as well as an increasing presence of Indigenous students in higher education. Of course, the rights that the 1988 Constitution guaranteed to Indigenous peoples helped to lay the foundation for these developments. Considering this context, this essay has sought to provide an assessment of recent publications and artworks as valuable contributions for discussing the issue of commodification of life, both human and non-human, that persists in extractivist practices. Of key importance here is Krenak's critique of a homogeneous and exclusive idea of humanity (2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c), which shows how epistemic diversity and agrobiodiversity go hand in hand, echoing Sousa Santos's call for an ecology of knowledges that could open up the dominant canon and challenge the "monoculture" of Western scientific thinking (2008).

Resonating with the non-utilitarian approaches put forward in *Vozes vegetais*, Tupinambá's and Baniwa's artistic resistances to legacies of dispossession, appropriation, and erasure ultimately offer original ways to break the cycle of epistemic

and material theft that undergirds colonial legacies. The liveliness of both Tupinambá's cloak and Baniwa's approach to "Amazonian Black Earth" defy the fossilising contours of collectionism, reflecting an awareness of interspecies relationality as active in worldmaking and art-making. As we have seen, from Baniwa's bold jaguar-shaman to his freed mummy, passing through his investigation of devastation and regeneration involving ashes and fertility, one can find an opportunity to engage in conversations about Indigenous art-making as a way of challenging the assumption of a homogeneous humanity, reconnecting with memory and building anti-colonial struggles and futures. Tupinambá's radically non-anthropocentric reclaiming of cloak-making techniques, in turn, opens up fresh perspectives on the unforgiving denial of the premise of repatriation, on tangibility, intangibility, and collective processes of creation, and the inextricable bond between Indigenous arts and the regeneration of Indigenous territories. In the end, what is important is this: no matter how many tangible cloaks the colonisers could steal, they would never be able to take away the Tupinambá's intangible mode of relating to the land, which one cannot objectify and then commodify. Their *cosmotécnica* [cosmotechnics] – as Tupinambá terms it (Roxo 2021) – could not be captured by the logic of plundering, precisely because it does not operate according to extractivist paradigms.

Thus, what these Indigenous forms of art-making might give rise to is not the "resurrection" of an "authentic past" against coloniality, but modes of decommodifying the very nexus between time and creativity – experiments in aesthetic reactivation that are not exclusive to the present nor to the human – and in which, nonetheless, the human might still feed the soil for ancestral and future arts to sprout. Therefore, the new directions these developments signal in Latin American Cultural Studies push forward environmental thinking by making explicit the link between creativity and a myriad of life forms. In conclusion, Indigenous approaches to interspecies relationality offer reflections about how the hierarchisation of life forms takes part in a history of epistemic violence that is implicated across the spectrum of both capitalist monoculture and the coloniality inherent in the history of museum collection practices.

## Notes

1. *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman* (2013), originally published in France (*La chute du ciel: Paroles d'un chaman yanomami*, 2010, and subsequently in Brazil as *A queda do céu: palavras de um xamã yanomami*, 2015).
2. *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo* (*Ideas to Postpone the End of the World*, 2019, published in English in 2020 by House of Anansi) and *A vida não é útil* (Life is Not Useful, 2020a).
3. In the Brazilian context, some of the key moments that gave shape to this shift in academia were Krenak's talks in events such as the one held at University of Brasília's Sustainable Development Programme, which took place on 15 April 2009 and initially inspired the title of his widely read book *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo* (*Ideas to Postpone the End of the World*); as well as the colloquium *Os Mil Nomes de Gaia* (A Thousand Names of Gaia"), in Rio de Janeiro, 15–19 September 2014; and the 6th Meeting of Anthropology of Science and Technology (ReACT), at the University of São Paulo, 16–19 May 2017.

4. Kopenawa and Albert (2015, 261).
5. *Vozes vegetais* joined a number of important translations and original-language books pointing to the idea of plants as protagonists that have recently been published in Brazil, such as those by Coccia (2018), Mancuso (2019) and Nascimento (2021).
6. For a more in-depth and detailed study, see Shiratori's doctoral dissertation (Shiratori 2018).
7. In Brazil, recent translations of thinkers such as Haraway (2021) and Despret (2021) have been increasingly influential. See also Fausto (2020).
8. Published in English as *The Relative Native: Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds* (Chicago: HAU Books, 2015).
9. Traditional populations living alongside the southern Brazilian coast who descend from Indigenous, Black, and Portuguese ancestors. Their livelihood is primarily based on small-scale fishing and agriculture.
10. Descendants of ancient runaway enslaved communities, or (former) maroon communities (quilombos), that have maintained cultural and religious traditions throughout the centuries.
11. The exhibition "Kwá yapé turusú yuriri assojaba tupinambá | This is the great return of the tupinambá mantle" was on display at Galeria Fayga Ostrower – Funarte Brasília from 16 September to 17 October, and Casa da Lenha, in Porto Seguro, where it was shown from 28 October to 27 November 2021. It was developed as part the project "European travelling artists and the case of the Tupinambá cloaks in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Porto Seguro", curated by Augustin de Tugny, Glicéria Tupinambá, Juliana Caffé, and Juliana Gontijo, and awarded the Funarte Visual Arts Prize 2020/2021. In addition to three cloaks made by Glicéria's hands, it included photographs, poems, and drawings by Glicéria as well as by Edimilson de Almeida Pereira, Fernanda Liberti, Gustavo Caboco, Livia Melzi, Rogério Sganzerla, and Sophia Pinheiro. The catalogue is available on https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/65935132/catalogo-kwa-yepe-turusu-yuiri-assojaba-tupinamba, accessed 10 December 2021.
12. A rich and detailed description of Glicéria's engagement with the process of cloak-making is available on the website of the Another Sky ("Um outro céu") project: https://anothersky.ufba.br/exhibition/tupinamba-mantle/, which was developed as part of the "Sustainable" Development and Atmospheres of Violence: Experiences of Environmental Defenders, financed by the British Academy and coordinated by Mary Menton (SSRP/University of Sussex), Felipe Milanez (IHAC/UFBA), Jurema Machado (CAHL/UFRB), and Felipe Cruz Tuxá (Opará/Uneb).
13. As Alarcon shows, cocoa monoculture has occupied the area since the end of the nineteenth century, acting as the main instrument of expropriation against the Tupinambá, preceded by Jesuit settlements in the seventeenth century. Tourism also intensified capitalist expansion on Tupinambá lands in the twentieth century. See Alarcon (2018). For a comprehensive account of this process, see Alarcon (2019). See also Alarcon's documentary "Tupinambá: The Return of the Land" (24m38s, 2015): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDF3ZrSlACA, accessed 10 December 2021.
14. The Baniwa consider the jaguar-shaman to be the most advanced and knowledgeable form of shaman. See Wright (2013).
15. Due to time constraints, this excerpt of the interview I conducted with Denilson was not included in the final cut of *Fertile Land*.
16. Consider, for instance, the 2021 São Paulo Biennial, which became known as "the Biennial of Indigenous peoples", as well as recent acquisitions, rehangs, and exhibitions at

Pinacoteca de São Paulo, the São Paulo Art Museum (MASP), the Modern Art Museum of São Paulo (MAM), and MAR (the Rio Art Museum), to name but a few. See also Queiroz (2021).

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