THICK RELATIONALITY IN CENTRAL AMERICAN TEXTS: STORYTELLING FOR REFRAMING THE ANTHROPOCENE

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In a published interview in *El País*, Jorge Morla asks Claudia Hernández, "Has it been more difficult to break through in the literary world because you are a woman?" Her answer takes the form of a revelatory reframing: "I imagine it must be (it is in many areas), but I think I don't feel it because I'm not looking for a place for myself, but for the stories and the people from which they have come."[1] The deft response recognizes the frame offered by Morla, centered on the individual woman writer, acknowledges its likely validity, and then shifts the frame to center a collective, and Hernández's relationship to that collective. The reframing makes perceptible what the initial frame had excluded from consideration, that is, stories and people from whom the author's writings have sprung. The response is, in many ways, illustrative of the maneuvers made by Latin American creators—of texts, social movements, networks—in their many engagements with the Anthropocene.

Data, mantras, and calls to action proliferate around the topic of anthropogenic environmental change and its headline event of climate change, which imperils inclusive human futures on the planet we inhabit. But as grassroots activists, environmental humanists, and decolonial scholars point out, we humans inhabit place and planet differentially. Premised upon the extraction and exploitation of territories and bodies, the intertwined and co-constituting dynamics of coloniality and modernity have been destroying worlds, as Kathryn Yusoff puts it, since their inception.[2] Anthropogenic socioenvironmental crises necessitate reframing widely accepted imaginaries with origins in Western thinking, including those premised upon the notion of time as "a linear, uninterrupted march toward progress" and nature as backdrop for human experience.[3] Accelerating disruptions, for more people and in more privileged spaces, unsettle conceptualizations that have been normalized and give rise to a context in which those conceptualizations may be more broadly recognized as foundational myths in coloniality/modernity.

As disruptions in the material world imperil more lives and life-worlds, Gisela Heffes poses in "Estéticas del antropoceno" an important question for the creative arts: "is it possible (or not) to account for these changes aesthetical-

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ly?"[4] If it is possible, and the responses by authors to Heffes' question suggest it is, how do texts that engage with Anthropocene realities undertake labors of imagination and reframe questions of temporality, spatiality, and being-in-relation in a pluriversal world, a world of worlds? What can creative and critical Latin Americanist engagements with the Anthropocene illuminate about the present moment and uncertain human futures?

This essay centers on the labors of imagination and reframing of Anthropocene realities in Rodrigo Rey Rosa's *El país de Toó* (2018);[5] related essay "El Tesoro de la Sierra" (2004);[6] and Claudia Hernández's *Roza tumba quema* (2017; *Slash and Burn* in 2021 English translation).[7] The texts represent unique aesthetic and ethical engagements of anthropogenic socioenvironmental change through the creation of narrative worlds of thick relationality, in which the pluriverse in the Anthropocene is rendered perceptible and a right to opacity conveyed with respect to people whose knowledges and existences have historically been marginalized.[8] The human subjects with which the reader is invited to identify are all relational subjects attentive to reciprocity, just actions, and an ethics of care. The narrative arcs center their wayfinding through and against the forces of extraction and accumulation; this wayfinding is a counterforce for life in the face of persistent colonial logics premised upon control of territory and bodies by means of violence.

This essay is an aspirationally constructive, positive, and generous engagement with the primary texts.[9] That is, it is an attempt at reading with reciprocity, which Max Liboiron, in dialogue with Joe Dumit, Zoe S. Todd, and Eve Tuck, has described as a way of reading "that accounts for the text not as a site to mine for goods …, but as a gift, an event, a body of work."[10] The primary texts are emergent from and engage with isthmian social, material, political, and cultural realities, and I will situate the texts in the context of both environmental humanities and Central American studies, so their gifts may be more readily apprehended. In the same way, since my own reading of the authors' engagements with the Anthropocene is emergent from thinking about their texts in relationship to concepts for apprehending relationality from several thinkers, I will then explain the concepts that give rise to my understanding of the authors' gifts.

Isthmian Worlds and the Environmental Humanities

The roots of thinking now labeled environmental humanities are deep in cultures, and attentiveness to texts from isthmian worlds can reframe and enliven contemporary discussions in the field. For example, though attention to interspecies relationships has increased in the environmental humanities, not only interspecies relationships but also interspecies and interbeing co-conspirators are a key element in isthmian imaginaries, as the *Popol Vuh* and oral texts

attest. Dialogue, persuasion, and collaboration ensure the defeat of common adversaries and ensure survival; telling and re-telling these stories shapes an understanding of being co-present in a world.

Twenty-first century isthmian authors (as well as others before) draw upon the deep cultural roots of lifeways in the isthmus, and they also often write from and beyond Central America, in the transisthmian space that exiles, dislocations, and opportunities create, and that exceed the space-time of the isthmus.[11] What affordances are there for the environmental humanities for thinking with these isthmian imaginaries? How do their relational imaginaries, and particularly those that affirm interdependencies with obligations, elucidate the ways people negotiate power dynamics to survive in and beyond the places and worlds in which their lives are anchored?

Twenty-first century texts from isthmian creators come forth from long genealogies of critical engagements by authors with the inequities born of genocide, extraction, and deterritorialization, and with resilience, persistence, ingenuity, evasion, and the survival of communities. Significantly, Rey Rosa and Hernández write about both what exists and persists in the process and wake of extractivism, including the wars and violence with which extractivism is entangled, and what is "backdrop" for the extractive processes that make modernity. That is, the lives, territories, histories, and knowledges of those marginalized, surveilled, and displaced become the main story. Their twenty-first century texts register in creative writing the same reverberations theorized by scholars like Macarena Gómez-Barris, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, and Kathryn Yusoff. For example, Macarena Gómez-Barris's *The Extractive Zone* "attends to the regions of extractive capitalism by foregrounding submerged perspectives" and "engages the possibility of renewed perception" by noticing how knowledges that have been submerged "perceive local terrains as sources of knowledge, vitality, and livability."[12] So too do the authors studied here cultivate "renewed perceptions" of territories that are at once local, imbricated in global processes, and differently understood according to the diverse onto-epistemologies that shape them. Like Tsing in *Mushroom at the End of the World*, who directs attention to "what manages to live despite capitalism," so, too, the authors give narrative attention to what manages to live despite extractive agricultural economies, military dictatorships, civil wars, international development aid, everyday patriarchy, and ongoing exiles, displacements, and deterritorialization.[13] Their writing takes up exactly those "patchy landscapes, multiple temporalities, and shifting assemblages of humans and nonhumans: the very stuff of collaborative survival" that concern Tsing (20).

By way of further situating the texts, I will reference briefly how I understand them in relationship to overlapping concerns in writing from the isthmus since the 1980s. Many Central American works from the 1980s and early 1990s were written in a time in which remaking the nation-state in the wake

of conflict seemed much more possible than it does decades later. Some literary texts, like those considered in *Writing Women in Central America*, imagined isthmian communities inclusive of people who had been made minoritized by heteronormative, patriarchal, colonial, and neo-colonial logics. [14]Long-entrenched patterns, however, were resurgent, and in the post-war years, hopes that peace accords had elicited soon faded. Beatriz Cortez named the way post-war works marked these realities an "aesthetics of cynicism."[15] Texts registered counterpoints to hollow promises of democratization and prosperity, made critiques of developmentalist imaginaries, and marked the impossibility of sense-making in an absurd milieu.

Creative texts from the isthmus during the first two decades of the 21st century have emerged from a dynamic context shaped by both long-standing struggles, as well as new affordances for communication and collaborative action made possible by technology, legal frameworks, and diasporic communities and their allies. Cell phones and social media platforms to which access increased in the 2010s made possible swift, multimodal communication and mobilization in response to injustice. The response to the murder in 2016 of Honduran activist Berta Cáceres epitomizes the use of digital communications and networks, in combination with embodied activism in streets and meeting rooms, to demand accountability from institutions, including states and lenders. The "pluricultural, intercultural, multicultural, and plurilingual discourses by nation-states in Latin America" ascendent in the first decade of the 21st century opened new possibilities for isthmian Indigenous communities asserting rights to territory, autonomy, and participatory inclusion in cultural spaces from which they had been excluded.[16] In academic spaces, journals such as *Istmo*, founded in 2001, cultivated understandings of isthmian studies that exceed categories anchored in the notion of the nation-state and which underscore that the "multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual character of Central American populations is therefore not a novelty, but rather the sociocultural reality of the isthmus since before the colonial era."[17] The founding of the journal was a harbinger of change in academic institutional spaces, as scholars (some of whom are also active in arts) founded programs, centers, and collaborations for study of the isthmus, where before few such spaces existed in universities in the United States and Europe, and uplifted collaborations among scholars, writers, activists, and communities in diaspora and in the isthmus.

Emergent from this 21st century milieu, the texts I consider here express an aesthetics of relationality, an ethics of care, and an affirmation of the possibilities, as well as limits, of persistence and future-making. Though their shadows linger, gone are the master narratives, totalizing interpretive frameworks, and formulas for hope of the revolutionary period in Central America. The failure of the state (for example, as guarantor of democratic, participatory processes) is a given, as is its corruption. And unlike in many texts, violence is not centered.

While present, violence is most often briefly described or happens off-scene (that is, it is referenced but not described). Instead, what abound are imaginaries of persistence and wayfinding in the face of harm-producing colonial and capitalist logics: theft of territory, denial of history, displacement and deterritorializaton, extraction, surveillance, and incarceration.

Thick Relationality and Isthmian Worlds

In a thickly relational world, extraction is an aberration that defies logic; the fragmentation and reductionism at its core produce harms that reverberate. Rodrigo Rey Rosa's *El país de Toó* and "El Tesoro de la Sierra" and Claudia Hernández's *Roza tumba quema* foster relational thinking in the face and wake of extraction of material (like metals), labor (in combat and in private security services), and human beings (such as children). In the narrative worlds each author crafts, solidarities are quotidian, born from an ethics of reciprocity from which survival, solace, and joy are made, and entanglements are co-constituted from among biological, hydrological, geological, and digital elements in dynamic relationship in the world. Bodies, psyches, and lives are intertwined with, displaced from, return to, and forge relationship with new territories. Affective interpersonal and territorial bonds lead to the activation of social and digital networks, and the cascade of digital relationships expresses and multiplies connection in ways that create and hold space for the persistence of life.

What interests me specifically is how the texts take up being in the isthmus in ways that render perceptible a thick, socioenvironmental relationality in a world that is ontologically diverse.[18] Three relational concepts, all elucidated by thinkers working from a positionality of trans-spatiality, have cultivated my attentiveness to the ways that Rey Rosa and Hernández affirm an ontologically plural world and depict wayfinding amid complexity. These concepts are the following: the right to opacity (Edouard Glissant), which shapes my reading of both works; Kab'awilian strategies (Gloria Elizabeth Chacón), the affirmation of which I perceive as fundamental in Rey Rosa's novel; and echolocation (Alexis Pauline Gumbs), a concept that situates the subject as always in dynamic, somatic relation to other entities and which is key for me in reading Hernández's novel.[19]

Glissant insists the right to opacity exceeds affirmation of the right to difference (190). He explains: "Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components" (190). When the frame of focus is on the texture of the weave, what becomes more perceptible is relationality: the lively, multi-agentic "putting together" of the socioenvironmental world comprised of many worlds. Chacón's Indigenous cosmolectics, a way of apprehending the world which is emergent from Indigenous onto-epistemologies,

also centers relationality. Kab'awilian strategies are "maneuvers that invert or help indigenous cultural producers imagine possibilities outside the matrix of coloniality and its ordering of things" (18). These strategies are a means by which Maya and Zapotec writers and creators engage the coloniality of power, resist epistemic violence, and affirm Indigenous cosmolectics. Of particular interest for me is the way a text by a writer who is not Indigenous, such as Rey Rosa, depicts Kab'awilian strategies, including in ways that destabilize the reader's interpretations of the narrative authority of the novel itself. Gumbs's concept of echolocation offers a somatic understanding of relationality in a multi-species, multi-agentic world. In writing about the thinking from which Undrowned was emergent, Gumbs explains: "I had to go deeper. I took my cue from the many marine mammals who echolocate. I had to focus not on what I could see and discern, but instead on where I was in relation, how the sound bouncing off me in relationship to the structures and environments that surround me locates me in a constantly shifting relationship to you, whoever you are by now" (6). Being-in-relation in a constantly shifting world of war, post-war, and resettlement, in which affective ties transcend borders, is what Hernández brings to life in a narrative about four generations of women in a Salvadoran family.

Rey Rosa and Hernández frame isthmian worlds as storied worlds, and their narrative strategies honor the right to opacity, even as they "focus on the texture of the weave" of these thickly relational isthmian worlds. The isthmus, in these texts, is a meshwork of thickly layered, emplaced, and embodied relationships and memories. It is complex and is inclusive of individuals, communities in diaspora, and their human and more-than-human allies and co-conspirators. Protagonists wayfind thoughtfully, and with an ethics of care, as they make their lives amid injustices that are both chronic and acutely manifested in specific occurrences, sites, bodies, and relationships. Wayfinding, guided by reciprocity and compassion, opens possibilities for what Kristina Lyons has called, in another context, "relational, more-than-capitalist worlds."[20]

Importantly, an aesthetic of thick relationality reframes socioenvironmental inequities, including extractive practices, racialized hierarchies, and the privilege of mobility, within deeper histories of colonialism and spatial scales from the individual through the planetary. In thinking with the texts, I am particularly drawn to the different strategies by which the texts convey thick relationality: Rey Rosa, by means of *narrative representation* of thick relationality, and Hernández, by means of *narrative enactment* of thick relationality. I understand discursive engagement of relationality on a spectrum. On one side of the spectrum, in which there is little engagement with multi-being relationality, the individual human subject is centered; social relationships are registered; and geological, hydrological, and biological worlds are largely backdrop for human actions. On the opposite side of the spectrum is deep engagement

with relationality, a discursive affirmation of a complex web of entangled and dynamic socioenvironmental relationships, and of diverse onto-epistemologies in contact with one another.

In *El país de Toó*, and also Rey Rosa's essay, there is *narrative representation* of thick relationality, and knowing how to make sense of thick relationality is key for wayfinding through webs of relationships, including layers of corruption. Sensemaking and wayfinding by main characters involves acting upon Indigenous onto-epistemologies, and the unraveling of the intrigue is depicted as co-produced among humans, other animals, fungi, machines, digital networks, and oral and written texts. In this world, unlike in traditional crime novels, there is no guarantee that figuring out where injustice is located, how it is operating, and who derives benefit will lead to restoration of a just social order. In fact, knowing about injustice is more likely to make one a target. Instead, making and increasing space for alternatives, both present and possible, must be continuously wrought through a commitment to compassion and reciprocity, a savvy understanding of dynamic relationships, and co-conspiratorial alliances across lines of difference.

Claudia Hernández's *Roza tumba quema* (2017) is a narrative enactment of thick relationality by means of a poetics of echolocation. Absent proper nouns, with the sole exception of the city name "Paris," Hernández's prose asks the reader to understand a protagonist as she "pings" constantly to find her way through constantly shifting sociopolitical realities mapped onto territory. The reader accompanies her and makes sense of her story by gathering information that reveals how the daughter-combatant-lover-mother-ex-combatant-daughter makes way for the survival of herself and people she loves.

Rey Rosa's "El tesoro de la Sierra" and *El país de Toó*

Relation-actions figure prominently in both "El tesoro de la Sierra" and El país de Toó, which repeats verbatim scenes of relation-making and solidarity from the essay. "El tesoro de la Sierra" moves in relational ways along spatial and temporal axes: it begins with a well, from which an elder farmer draws water, and which, to his surprise, runs dry one rainy season. From this very localized start, the essay contextualizes the phenomenon within the recent history of the Valle de Siria, in Honduras, where a Glamis Gold mining operation has displaced residents, excavated sand, diverted water, and exploded mountains in a quest for gold. The narrative then zooms in on a tourist bus traversing the Valle and follows the bus to El Pedernal. The narrator is now in and among what is revealed to be a bus not of tourists, but a transnational network of activists: grassroots participants in anti-mining organizing from Guatemala; a Belizean-born engineer; environmentalists. The piece moves among territories and texts: dialogue and speeches in a multiethnic, multilingual gathering

in Sipacapa in Guatemala; web sites; the Marlin mine environmental impact study. It ends with another gathering that relationships made possible: Rey Rosa lunching in Guatemala with a former classmate who is now a mining company manager and the tight-lipped, Costa Rican environmental officer for the project. Living and working apart from entanglements is impossible.

El país de Toó takes up entanglements in depth. In his review essay, William Clary explains the plot succinctly (and without spoilers):

> The cast of emblematic characters that populate *El país de Toó* advance a story of impenetrable corruption and violence, ethnic marginality, the privileges of class and how they intersect and operate inside this unnamed, contemporary Central American republic which can only be, given the abundance of indicators, Guatemala. In many ways, the multiple tropes foregrounded in the novel persist today in contemporary Central America; imperialistic ventures in search of natural resources, conniving local opportunists and government officials, innocent citizens getting caught up in the webs of venality, and those who challenge the pillars of status quo power, personified by a marginalized and seemingly impotent underclass that acts as their opponents.[21]

The main cast of human characters includes Don Emilio, wealthy antiques dealer and father of Jacobo; Doña Matilde, Jacobo's nanny, a speaker of Quiché with roots and ongoing relationships in the land of Toó; Cobra (short for Cobrador), a former gang member originally from El Salvador and subsequently Don Emilio's driver; Polo, an activist for land rights and anti-corruption work; and Futuro, general, friend of Emilio, and eventually president.

While *El país de Toó* (2018) features conspiracy, the novel centers more on relationships among its main human characters, the places in Central America to which they are connected (or from which they are alienated), and their entanglements and collaborations, rather than on a single, mystery-solving protagonist. In the thick relationality of this world, engagement by humans in multispecies reciprocity is life-sustaining. In juxtaposition is a web of social relationships anchored in egotism, power, and fear that are extractive and exploitative. Within this framework, the pivotal roles of interspecies, interethnic, and intergenerational relationships in turning the plot repeatedly mark the presence and importance of diverse ontologies and more-than-human agency. Furthermore, the presence of Mayan onto-epistemologies, referenced as ways characters make sense of events and places and quoted explicitly, signals how readers might deepen their thinking about the novel and reframe their understanding of it.

Of the interspecies relationships, most important are those among a mushroom, a cat, and three people who have been marginalized by a transnational extractive class: Matilde and Cobra, and young Jacobo, who experiences cognitive impairment after nearly drowning as a child. In this assemblage, acts of compassion and reciprocity foster an exceptional and thick relationality, and each action increases possibilities for liberation. The cat, for example, appears initially as a stray that Cobra rescues and gives to Jacobo early in the sequence of events. The mushroom is *Kakulhá*, or *ixtantlalok*, "thunder and lightning" (loc. 1642): "a dry, flesh-colored mushroom the size of a communion wafer …. Few are those who know its curative properties or its magical powers, even in the land of Toó, where ordinary people think it is poisonous and avoid contact with it."[22] The description matches that of *Amanita muscaria*.[23] On the 26th of June, 2011, a propitious date that Matilde has awaited with impatience, she gives the mushroom to Jacobo in the medical facility where he has been interned by his father. The cat, which Matilde keeps in her care even after she terminates her employment with Jacobo's father, accompanies her on visits to Jacobo and ultimately leads Cobra and Matilde to the security vault where Jacobo's father sealed him alive (along with money, explosives, and arms) before fleeing the country. The rescue of Jacobo and discovery of the stash increase possibilities for the defense of territories and sustenance of life in the land of Toó.

Importantly, through both description of place in the narrative and the figure of Cobra, Rey Rosa in *El país de Toó* gestures toward a co-conspiratorial engagement, of alongsidedness and solidarity, with Indigenous cosmolectics. Kab'awilian strategies are referenced as ways of making sense of a thickly relational landscape in the first paragraphs of the novel:

> Behind the house, straight and long as the beach, were the channels of turbid and calm water —hatchery for crabs, catfish, and four-eyed fishes— opened by the nana's great-great-great-grandparents to carry their merchandise in wooden canoes from Tapachula, in Mexico, to Sonsonate, in El Salvador, as she recounted, although the owner of the house, a rich man, who knew a very different history, contradicted her (loc. 20).[24]

The start of the novel thus signposts a richly populated, pluriversal, and interspecies isthmian world, with a history, inhabitation, and understanding that are all contested.

The *Popol Vuh* and *Chilam Balam* become explicit referents in the second and third books as the allies and co-conspirators enter new relationships and become co-located and then rooted, or re-rooted, in the land of Toó. If the reader has not picked up on the import of Mayan references by book three of

three, Rey Rosa crafts a scene in which Jacobo gives his name as Junajpú to an elder, who reacts with incredulity. Jacobo is renamed ("rebautizado" in the text) Junajpú in the land of Toó (loc. 2524). This name, of course, is that of one of the hero twins of the *Popol Vuh*, a text with which Jacobo became familiar through Matilde during her visits to him in the sanatorium.

Rey Rosa's representation of thick relationality takes care to represent the intersecting and entangled plots of those who move within and across different languages, different onto-epistemologies, and shared territory, and especially those who are no longer of use to extractive regimes, for example, hit men after hits and heirs who do not conform to ableist expectations. The arc of the plot affirms an ethics of care, a right to opacity, and a politics of integrity and resistance. There is a vindication of neurodiversity in Jacobo and Alex (perhaps the other hero twin?), a boy with Asperger's who briefly accompanies Jacobo in the sanatorium, and who teaches him about texts on the web, including those that reveal dark aspects of his father's life. The text also takes care to depict the ongoing co-creation of rituals, for example, the one led by don Santos, principal in the land of Toó, which allows Cobra to become rooted as a protector of the territory.

However, it is Mayan languages and texts that themselves situate the novel in thick relationality and which also destabilize its narrative authority. As Nanci Buiza notes, "ancestral dreams of social justice wield a power over the present that extends beyond the Mayan realm," and the sequence of events appears to be foreordained by the prophecy of the *Chilam Balam*.[25] It is possible to read *El país de Toó* as a story of corruption and redemption, with a somewhat felicitous resolution in that Cobra, Polo, and Jacobo all escape attempts on their lives and work to co-create a territory of resistance in Toó. But an additional reading becomes possible with attentiveness to perspectives that have been submerged by extractivism, and the reframing of the novel resituates intrigue and corruption within a different understanding of history and future.

Claudia Hernandez's *Slash and Burn*

Enactment of thick relationality marks Claudia Hernandez's *Slash and Burn* from the very beginning. The text opens with a deceptively simple line: "She's never been to Paris" (6). However, the narrative then broadens and weaves across memories and relationships to become inclusive of classmates, teachers, aid agencies, and the mother's impending visit to Paris. By means of a poetics of echolocation and shifting focalization, the narrative moves from the thoughts and experiences of different Salvadoran women, mostly within the same family, across the timespan of four generations. The visit to Paris by the mother of the daughter who has never been to Paris thus becomes resituated in the mother's life story and the life story of her daughter in France. The narra-

tive is associative and relational as it moves across time and space, and the prose marks this explicitly in phrases like "the place where the daughter, her siblings, and the rest of the villagers were"(20), "a district where some friends lived who could take them in" (22), "a place that wasn't her own" (48), "her firstborn wasn't in the place she was meant to be when the war ended" (121).

The wayfinding in the world by the women over generations mirrors that of itinerant agricultural practices of slash and burn. Driven by the imperatives of survival and the obligations of affective bonds, they move from place to place (and return to some places after the passage of years). However, the women are not the primary agents of the slashing and burning; it is generally men with positional authority and decision-making power, including violence by which power is enforced, who necessitate the women's movement across places. The forces that produce their displacement are greater than the women —currents of power related to military strategy, the Catholic church, the state, and transnational aid networks— and intimately intertwined with their lives. The acts of the women of the family are acts for restoration, for rebinding with people and places, as they orient themselves (echolocate) in relation to others and seek to safeguard their relational world against continuously shifting sources of danger.

The narrative enacts thick relationality in discourse to such an extent that the only way for the reader to follow the plot is to co-participate in a relational understanding of people, places, and events. There is only one proper name in the entire text, Paris, the city where the mother's first daughter has been raised by adoptive parents who purchased her during the Salvadoran civil war. With the sole exception of Paris, the novel marks the movement across territory by naming without place names: a parcel in a place named after a plant, the place named after insects, the farm named after a horse. Since none of the women are referenced by proper names, either, all the characters, locations, and events, such as those in this passage, are co-constituting.

The unresolved tension of the novel is not whether some knowledge might be attained (it often is, partially) but whether relationships might be affirmed. Even resolved tensions, such as finding out where the daughter is or locating the ring of the father, are premised upon and solidify relational bonds, as in this passage: "She needed to be alone to connect with the time they'd spent together. But once she knew, she'd recover [the ring] for her, now that she felt closer to her, even if it meant visiting regions she'd rather never return to" (225-226). She finds the ring "buried in the backyard of the house the soldiers had set fire to. Her father must have gone back there after the devastation to renew his promises to her mother —whose fate and whereabouts were unknown to him them— and to his children, and to his land" (226). The narrative presents the intentions of the father as unknowable —his burying the ring there "might have meant something else altogether" (226)— but the recovery of the material

symbol of the relationship means that her mother will now not be alone when she is buried.

The plot centers on two fundamental tensions: whether the mother, through relational acts, might bring the daughter who is not "in the place she was meant to be when the war ended" (121) from estrangement (preferred by the daughter) into a reciprocal relationship, and whether the mothers and daughters might create a safe place for their lives to unfold. In circling back to elements required for resolving each tension, such as communication with the daughter taken to Paris, the compensation for combat and wounds sustained in the war, or access to education for the daughters, the narrative weaves in ever more stories, always emergent from relationships, related to the civil conflict and postwar years. The two persistent tensions are ultimately unresolved; they signal both the long wake of trauma and the ongoing imperative of collaborative wayfinding and placemaking for those whose lives persist through it.

Conclusion

What are the labors in such imaginaries? Rey Rosa and Hernández depict acts of quotidian co-creation in an Anthropocene that began long ago, and the representation of these acts affirms and renders perceptible dependencies, histories, and being-becoming part-of. Theirs is a writing against extraction; they shift the frame and re-shape imaginaries for co-presence and wayfinding in a pluriversal world. Thick relationality, the representation and enactment of entanglements in territories and across temporal scales, reintegrates a world of worlds.

NOTES

[1] "¿Ha sido más difícil abrirse paso en el mundo literario por ser mujer?" Her answer takes the form of a revelatory reframing: "Imagino que debe serlo (lo es en muchas áreas), pero creo que no lo siento porque no busco un lugar para mí, sino para las historias y para la gente de donde ellas han surgido." Translation for this and all subsequent quotes in Spanish, except those for Slash and Burn, are my own. Jorge Morla, "Claudia Hernández: 'Escribir es entrar donde nadie te ha llamado,'" *El País*, March 3, 2018, https://elpais.com/cultura/2018/05/03/actualidad/1525364391_254361.html.

[2] "The Anthropocene might seem to offer a dystopic future that laments the end of the world, but imperialism and ongoing (settler) colonialisms have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence." Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), xiii.

[3] Carolyn Fornoff, Patricia Eunji Kim, Bethany Wiggin, "Environmental Humanities across Times, Disciplines, and Research Practices," in *Timescales: Thinking across Ecological Temporalities*, ed. Bethany Wiggin, Carolyn Fornoff, Patricia Eunji Kim (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2020), xiii.

[4] "¿es posible (o no) dar cuenta estéticamente de estos cambios?"; Gisela Heffes, "Estéticas del antropoceno," *Hablemos escritoras* (Podcast), Episode 277, https://www.hablemosescritoras.com/posts/649.

[5] Rodrigo Rey Rosa, *El país de Toó* (Barcelona: Alfaguara, 2018). Subsequent references are cited in parentheses in the text.

[6] Rodrigo Rey Rosa, "El Tesoro de la Sierra," *Granta*, 2018, https://www.granta.com.es/2018/10/el-tersoro-de-la-sierra/.

[7] Claudia Hernández, *Slash and Burn*, trans. Julia Sanches (Sheffield: And Other Stories, 2021). All quotes in this essay are from the published English translation. Subsequent references are cited in parentheses in the text.

[8] Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1990), trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997), 189-94.

[9] Joe Dumit, "How I Read," Sept. 27, 2012, https://dumit.net/how-i-read/.

[10] Max Liboiron, "#Collabrary: A Methodological Experiment for Reading with Reciprocity," *Clear*, January 3, 2021, https://civiclaboratory.nl/2021/01/03/collabrary-a-methodological-experiment-for-reading-with-reciprocity/.

[11] Ana Patricia Rodríguez, *Dividing the Isthmus: Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures, and Cultures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 2.

[12] Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 1.

[13] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World on the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), xviii. Subsequent references are cited in parentheses in the text.

[14] Laura Barbas-Rhoden, *Writing Women in Central America* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003).

[15] Beatriz Cortez, *Estética del Cinismo : Pasión y el Desencanto en la Literatura Centroamericana de Posguerra* (Guatemala: F&G Editores, 2010).

[16] Gloria Elizabeth Chacón, *Indigenous Cosmolectics: Kab'awil and the Making of Maya and Zapotec Literatures* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 9.

[17] Valeria Grinberg Pla, "Introducción: Más Allá de los Espacios Nacionales," *Istmo. Revista Virtual de Estudios Literarios y Culturales Centroamericanos* 40 (2020): 3.

[18] Regarding relationality, I am thinking primarily with considerations from Édouard Glissant (1990); from Zoe S. Todd (2016); from Eve Tuck (2009 and 2014, with McKenzie and McCoy); and always, from the stories of relationality shared in my own diasporic family. Zoe S. Todd, "An indigenous feminist's take on the ontological turn:'Ontology'is just another word for colonialism," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29, no.1 (2016): 4-22; Eve Tuck, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no.3 (2009): 409-427; Eve Tuck, Marcia McKenzie, and Kate McCoy, "Land Education: Indigenous, Post-colonial, and Decolonizing Perspectives on Place and Environmental Education Research," *Environmental Education Research* 20, no.1 (2014): 1-23.

[19] Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2020).

[20] Kristina M. Lyons, *Vital Decomposition: Soil Practitioners and Life Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 37. Lyons underscores the importance of "relational, more-than-capitalist worlds" for the campesinos she accompanied in Colombia and with whose practices she thinks in *Vital Decomposition.*

[21] William Clary, "El país de Toó by Rodrigo Rey Rosa," *Latin American Literature Today* 1, no. 11 (August 2019), https://latinamericanliteraturetoday.org/book_review/el-pais-de-too-rodrigo-rey-rosa/.

[22] "un hongo seco color carne del tamaño de una hostia …. Pocos son quienes conocen sus cualidades curativas o sus poderes mágicos, incluso en Toó, donde el común de la

gente lo cree venenoso y evita su contacto."

[23] For discussion of the use of this mushroom by diverse cultures, including those of Mexico and Mesoamerica, see Kevin Feeney, "The Significance of Pharmacological and Biological Indicators in Identifying Historical Uses of Amanita muscaria," in *Entheogens and the Development of Culture: The Anthropology and Neurobiology of Ecstatic Experience*, ed. John Rush (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2013), 279-318.

[24] "Detrás de la casa estaban los canales de agua turbia y mansa —criadero de jaibas, bagres y cuatrojos— rectos y largos como la playa, abiertos por los tátara tatarabuelos de la nana para llevar sus mercancías en cayucos de palo desde Tapachula, en México, hasta Sonsonate, en El Salvador, como ella contaba, aunque el dueño de la casa, un hombre rico, conocedor de una historia muy distinta, la contradecía." Rey Rosa, *El país de Toó*, 20.

[25] "Para la comunidad de Toó, los sueños ancestrales de justicia social ejercen un poder sobre el presente que se extiende más allá del ámbito maya. El hecho de que el Cobra, un ladino, experimenta un renacer espiritual y regresa a Toó, ya no como empleado de un empresario rico y corrupto sino como aliado de la comunidad maya, es parte de un destino mucho más totalizador: es una realización de la profecía del *Chilam Balam*, de que «el *katún* de las traiciones» —la época del expolio y la corrupción— llegará a su final, y los «caciques zorros» —«maleficio de los pueblos»— caerán del poder. El hecho de que la novela se encuadra dentro del *Chilam Balam* le confiere un carácter metafísico a los acontecimientos que describe." Nanci Buiza, "La búsqueda del mythos en la posguerra centroamericana: Una aproximación a la narrativa de Rodrigo Rey Rosa," *Iowa Literaria* 2 (2020), https://iowaliteraria.lib.uiowa.edu/article/la-busqueda-del-mythos-en-la-posguerra-centroamericana-una-aproximacion-a-la-narrativa-de-rodrigo-rey-rosa/.