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Latinx Literature in the Anthropocene

I. Who Are We, Anyway?

We are living in the Anthropocene, a geological epoch in which we wield power over the entire planet. But who, exactly, is the “we” in that sentence? When Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer published the first prominent article on the Anthropocene (2000), they used the word “we” to refer to a human species with a dominant and even determining influence on “our” nonhuman environments. In the following decades, Crutzen’s and Stoermer’s colleagues found many ways of assessing our impacts: they studied the fossil pollens that saturate lake and marine sediments, they read the radionuclides that are trapped in tree-rings, and above all, they measured the chemicals that are frozen in ice cores. While analyzing their data, the scientists proposed different starting dates for our epoch: William Ruddiman pointed to prehistoric agricultural advances, Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin focused on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century colonialism, Will Steffen and John McNeill emphasized eighteenth- and nineteenth-century industrialization, and Colin Waters and his co-authors highlighted the twentieth century’s Great Acceleration. Through their research, these and other figures redefined our history, and in the coming years, the International Commission on Stratigraphy is all but certain to adopt the Anthropocene as a formal chrono-stratigraphic unit. However, if the environmental sciences have been quick to reach a consensus, the environmental humanities have been even quicker to start

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conflicts. Around, above, and against the seemingly singular figure of *Anthropos*, scholars in these interdisciplinary fields have wrestled with several questions: Is it really the case that all of us have shaped our planet, or might it be more accurate to say that some of us have imposed our will on others? Will we really face the future as a united species, or will we further divide ourselves into competing classes, races, and nationalities? In these inquiries, scholars have linked the climate crisis to an identity crisis: while looking out on our more-than-human planet, they have looked back at our all-too-human communities.¹

Since the Rio Earth Summit (1992), the members of the United Nations have recognized their “common but differentiated responsibilities” for both causing and confronting climate change. Across the environmental humanities, scholars have devoted the last few decades to giving this framework a greater granularity of detail—and especially, to determining which of us has borne and will bear the most responsibilities. With the concept of the *Capitalocene*, Alf Hornborg, Andreas Malm, and Jason Moore have blamed climate change on the bureaucrats who fueled the “Fossil Economy” and the businessmen who exploited “Cheap Natures.” Similarly, with the term *Plantationocene*, Sophie Moore and her collaborators have linked climate change to the transatlantic slave trade and its afterlives. Finally, through calls to “Indigenize the Anthropocene,” Zoe Todd (*Métis*) and Kyle Whyte (*Potawatomi*) have associated climate change with the European colonization of the Americas. By developing such detailed accounts of our responsibilities, these scholars have changed the ways we think of ourselves. However, they have also inspired more ideas than we could ever consolidate: to take the most exaggerated example, Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz have alternated among the *Anglocene*, the *Agnotocene*, the *Phagocene*, the *Phronocene*, the *Polemocene*, the *Thanatocene*, and the *Thermocene*.

While it is easy to laugh at the “rival ‘cenes . . . straining forward and puffing their chests,” we cannot afford to make light of the “Neologismcene” (Mentz 1). In the twenty years since Crutzen and Stoermer published their famous paper, global temperatures have increased, polar ice sheets have melted, and extreme weather events have hurt countless communities. If these changes have allowed us to imagine ourselves as a single species, they have also intensified the inequalities that divide us into disparate groups. With Australia burning and South Asia flooding, some in the environmental humanities have turned away from historical responsibility and toward “differential vulnerability” (Pulido). Where Crutzen and Stoermer addressed all “mankind,” these scholars have analyzed axes of differentiation like gender and sexuality (Alaimo), race and ethnicity

(Pulido), citizenship status (Milian), and Indigeneity (Davis and Todd; Todd; Whyte). To quote Rob Nixon, they have demonstrated that “we may all be in the Anthropocene but we’re not all in it in the same way” (“Anthropocene” 8).

Given Nixon’s point, it is tempting to conclude that the arguments about the Anthropocene have made it impossible to answer my initial question: who are we, anyway? However, while these arguments have taken many turns, they have all shared a fundamental feature: whether they have emphasized responsibility (for the Capitalocene, for the Plantationocene, or for some other state of affairs) or vulnerability (of the poor, of the formerly colonized, or of some other social group), they have shifted between human and more-than-human scales. To understand these shifts, we can turn to Dipesh Chakrabarty. In “The Climate of History” (2009) and “Climate and Capital” (2014), Chakrabarty shows how the arguments about the Anthropocene have resituated the hundred- or thousand-year scale of “human history” within the million- or billion-year scale of “natural history.” Similarly, in “The Planet” (2019), he explains how these arguments have connected petty power struggles over “the globe” to the basic life support systems of “the planet.” Finally, in his Tanner Lectures (2015), he observes that these arguments have produced two perspectives on the “human condition”: while the “Homo” in “Homocentrism” can be responsible for and/or vulnerable to environmental problems, the “Anthropos” in the “Anthropocene” has “no moral value,” for “it is there simply to suggest that the kind of geophysical force usually needed to change the climate of the planet as a whole was supplied this time . . . mainly by actions of humans” (157). Over the course of his inquiries, Chakrabarty theorizes the “thrownness” of being “decentered from the narratives that we ourselves tell of this place”—of seeing “our smaller histories of conflicting attachments” disappear into larger spatiotemporal scales (183). But where others might alleviate this anxiety with a definitive prescription, Chakrabarty lingers in open-ended description: realizing that “one can inhabit the tension but not resolve it,” he sees shifting scales in their indissoluble interdependence (181).

By “inhabit[ing] the tension[s]” between the global and the planetary—and, more broadly, the Homocentric and the Zoocentric—Chakrabarty models a new approach to the Anthropocene. While Crutzen and Stoermer lead the environmental sciences on a search for a single stratigraphic signature, Chakrabarty asks the environmental humanities to alternate among a plurality of possible periodizations.² As those of us in these fields try to answer his call, we can keep advancing arguments about responsibility (“the Global North has created the Capitaliocene”) and vulnerability (“the Global South has suffered

through the Plantationocene"). At the same time, though, we must start asking questions about *perspective*. Like Chakrabarty, we can address these questions to the more-than-human planet ("How," we could ask, "have the Global North and the Global South shaped a single earth system?"), but in the end, we will have to route them through our all-too-human communities ("How," we would continue, "have the Global North and the Global South developed conflicting ways of depicting and dwelling in this system?"). Once we "inhabit" this second type of "tension," we will be able to see that social groups do not simply have different responsibilities for and/or vulnerabilities to environmental problems: in addition, they have different environmental aesthetics. If we can cultivate the close critical attention that is the hallmark of the humanities, we will be able to learn how these groups have used their aesthetics in the past—how the Global North has employed literature to entrench environmental inequalities, or how the Global South has enlisted art in its fight for environmental justice. Then, if we are lucky, we may be able to use some of these aesthetics to pave paths through our planet's fiery futures.

To start playing with human perspectives on our more-than-human planet, we will have to heed one of Donna Haraway's aphorisms: "it matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties" (12). In the spirit of this aphorism, Haraway devotes her most recent book to critiquing dominant "stories" about the Anthropocene. However, even as she explains how "Anthropos did not do this fracking thing and he should not name this double-death-loving epoch," she insists that "what and whom the Anthropocene collects in its refurbished netbag might prove potent for living in the ruins" (47). Sharing her sense that "it matters . . . what descriptions describe descriptions"—and specifically, her sense that "descriptions" of the Anthropocene are both problematic and "potent"—I want to spend the rest of this essay "collect[ing]" some of the perspectives that flow into, out of, and around this "refurbished netbag." For my "thoughts [that] think thoughts," I will take up two other terms: the social position that we call "Latinx," and the social practice that we call "literature." By working through the concrete context of Latinx literature, I will reinterpret the abstract arguments about the Anthropocene—and in particular, the binaries between responsibility and vulnerability. At first, I will borrow from Latinx and Latin American ecocritics; in turn, I will engage with writer-activist José Martí; at last, I will read Martí into a long (but long-ignored) lineage of environmental aesthetics. Ultimately, I will argue that Latinx literature

can help us cope with droughts along the US–Mexico border, climate disasters in the Caribbean, and environmental conflicts across the Americas.

II. Ecocriticism, Latinx Studies, and Latin American Studies

As readers of this journal will know, to theorize Latinx Literature in the Anthropocene is to draw on and develop ecocriticism. Although ecocriticism emerged as the study of white men who connected with capital-N Nature, it has come to include a wider range of human subjects (not just whites, but racialized peoples; not just men, but women) and nonhuman environments (from city streets to waste sites, and from oil fields to battlefields).³ At the intersection of ecocriticism and US ethnic studies, Joni Adamson has examined Indigenous environmental justice movements, Sarah D. Wald has explored Japanese and Filipinx counter-agrarianisms, and Sonya Posmentier has recovered Black “lyric ecologies.” Meanwhile, blending ecocriticism with postcolonial studies, Rob Nixon has explained how “environmentalists of the poor” expose “slow violence,” Cajetan Iheka has described how African authors deploy an “aesthetics of proximity,” and Jennifer Wenzel has argued that African and South Asian culture-makers contest the dominant “disposition of nature.” With climate change affecting every part of the planet, these and other ecocritics have reassessed “[our] common but differentiated responsibilities [and vulnerabilities].” Even more importantly, they have routed their general inquiries through particular perspectives: in Elizabeth DeLoughrey’s terms, they have shown how “the universalizing figure of the Anthropocene might be *grounded* by engaging specific places” (2, emphasis in original).

Amidst all of these changes, ecocritics have started “ground[ing]” themselves in Latinx and Latin American communities. For a special issue of *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* (2014), Gisela Heffes wrestled with environmental aesthetics that “exceden al aparato teórico proveniente de la academia norteamericana e inglesa” (“exceed the theoretical apparatus of the North American and English-dominant academy”) (32). Shortly thereafter, in *Writing the Goodlife: Mexican American Literature and the Environment* (2016), Priscilla Solis Ybarra reconstructed a literary tradition that “embraces the values of simplicity, sustenance, dignity, and respect” (4). Most recently, in *Latinx Environmentalisms: Place, Justice, and the Decolonial* (2019), Sarah D. Wald, David J. Vázquez, Sarah Jaquette Ray, Priscilla Solis Ybarra, and eleven contributing authors explored texts that redefine relationships among humans and nonhumans. Through their research, these

scholars have developed what Wald and her co-editors call a “recovery model” for ecocriticism, Latinx studies, and Latin American studies. Instead of forcing “all nonwhite environmental concerns” into the narrow framework of “environmental justice,” these scholars have followed Latinxs and Latin Americans as they experiment with a wide range of aesthetics. Taking time to look and listen, they have replaced the relatively simple question “How do we get more diversity in environmental humanities?” with the much more interesting inquiry “How can [we] recognize the ways that [Latinxs and Latin Americans] have always been ‘environmental?’” (10).

Up to this point, the “recovery model” has found its fullest expression in studies of specific sites—think, for instance, of Jorge Marcone’s articles on the Amazon, David J. Vázquez’s chapter on New York City, or Priscilla Solis Ybarra’s book on the US–Mexico borderlands. Building on such studies, I have devoted parts of my first book project to the ways Latinxs define themselves on the basis of race (as “Mestizxs” or “Genízarxs”), region (as “Nuevomexicanxs” or “Tejanxs”), and other attributes. However, in contemplating what Chakrabarty calls “the human condition in the Anthropocene,” I find myself wondering how the larger category “Latinx” might unite (or fail to unite) smaller social groups. In these moments, I remind myself that “Latinx . . . has little currency beyond English-speaking, academic, and class-ascendant communities” (Rodríguez 203). In turn, I remember that while “Latinx” can unsettle the masculine “-o” and the feminine “-a,” it can also “cross out” nonconforming genders and sexualities (*ibid.*).⁴ In the end, though, I conclude that “Latinx” offsets these problems by opening possibilities—and, in particular, that it helps us see how a variety of human groups have understood and used their more-than-human planet. Most narrowly, “Latinx” “marks [specific] spots” in the US–Dominican barrios in New York City, or Salvadoran parts of Washington, D.C. (Rodríguez). More broadly, “Latinx” calls attention to a hemispheric “continuum” (Lamas)—thus, throughout this essay, I refer to José Martí as Latinx precisely because he was at once Cuban, Cuban American, Latin American, and so much more.⁵ Between the poles of specificity and generality, “Latinx” acts as a “mathematical unknown”: in its “capricious arbitrariness,” it invites us to play with “X’s and O’s,” with “the epistolary tradition of ending love letters with XOXO,” and with “many other things” (Milian 6, 10–11). If we accept this invitation—and if, in Chakrabarty’s terms, we “inhabit the tension[s]” among these Latinidades—we can find new frameworks for ourselves, each other, and our increasingly precarious planet. With such plural possibilities in mind, let us turn to Martí’s most famous essay, “Nuestra América” (“Our America”) (1891).⁶

III. “Nuestra América,” Nuestro Planeta

More than almost any of his contemporaries, José Martí shaped what it means to be Latinx—and, as I shall suggest, what it means for Latinx literature to engage with the Anthropocene. Between his birth in 1853 and the breakout of the Ten Years’ War in 1868, Martí spent much of his time in Havana, but after he was arrested for supporting the Cuban side in the War, he lived mostly in exile. To take the title of Laura Lomas’s brilliant book, Martí was a “migrant Latino subject”: in the 1870s, he passed through Madrid, Zaragoza, Mexico City, and Guatemala City; then, in the 1880s, he moved to New York City. While working with other exiles to win Cuba’s independence, Martí became a leader of Latin American modernismo.⁷ Despite many medical maladies, he wrote plays (such as *Amor con amor se paga*, 1875), poetry collections (like *Versos sencillos*, 1891), and translations (including one of Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona*). Most of all, he wrote crónicas—short “chronicles,” at once journalistic and impressionistic, that described US life for a hemispheric and hispanophone public sphere. At the height of his powers, Martí participated in the First Pan-American Conference (1889–90) and the International Monetary Conference (1891), and in addition to filing his regular reports for Argentina’s *La Nación*, he published “Nuestra América.” Much more than a mere conference proceeding, “Nuestra América” critiqued the US for closing its continental frontier and opening an overseas empire. Against this “Other America,” the essay united “Our America”—Natives who were resisting settler colonialism, Afro-Latinxs who were challenging racial capitalism, and others who were fighting for alternative futures. In the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s, the essay inspired the transnational turn in American studies (Saldívar, Belnap and Fernández, Shukla and Tinsman, Lomas). Now, in the 2020s, it can catalyze conversations across Latinx studies, Latin American studies, and the environmental humanities.⁸

If “Nuestra América” is able to illuminate Nuestro Planeta, it is because it uses the symbolic strategies that characterize modernismo (Jrade, Rotker). Consider the essay’s opening paragraph:

Cree el aldeano vanidoso que el mundo entero es su aldea, y con tal que él quede de alcalde, o le mortifique al rival que le quitó la novia, o le crezcan en la alcancía los ahorros, ya da por bueno el orden universal, sin saber de los gigantes que llevan siete leguas en las botas, y le pueden poner la bota encima, ni de la pelea de los cometas en el cielo, que van por el aire dormido[s] engullendo mundos. Lo que quede de aldea en América

ha de despertar. Estos tiempos no son para acostarse con el pañuelo a la cabeza, sino con las armas de almohada, como los varones de Juan de Castellanos: las armas del juicio, que vencen a las otras. Trincheras de ideas, valen más que trincheras de piedra. (15)

The vain villager believes that his village contains the whole world: as long as he can stay on as mayor or humiliate the rival who stole his sweetheart or put savings in his piggy bank, he feels like the universe is in order, knowing nothing of the giants in seven-league boots who can crush him underfoot, nor of the comets that combat in the heavens, devouring sleeping worlds. Whatever is left of that sleepy village in America must awaken. This is no time for turning in with a little sleeping cap on one's head, but rather, like Juan de Castellanos's men, with weapons for pillows—weapons of good judgment, which overcome all opponents. Trenches of ideas are worth more than trenches of stone.

To readers of *La Revista Ilustrada* and *El Partido Liberal*, Martí's symbols were immediately intelligible: the "vain villagers" were Latin Americans squabbling over their separate states, while the "giants in seven-league boots" were US Americans colonizing all of the continent. Throughout the transnational turn in American studies, Martí's symbols retained their original significance: in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s, Latin Americans still prioritized the "savings" in their individual "piggy bank[s]," and US Americans still "crush[ed]" many of them "underfoot." However, in the era of the environmental humanities, Martí's symbols are taking on new meaning: as we enter the 2020s, all-too-human crises (of colonialism or of capitalism) are more clearly intertwined with their more-than-human counterparts (deforestation, desertification, and so on). To be sure, Martí's symbols antedate the significant studies of climate change. But if we play with Michaela Bronstein's provocative point that "read[ing] transhistorically is [not] read[ing] ahistorically" (7), we can let the old text move into new contexts. With its symbols, "Nuestra América" shows how small spatio-temporal scales ("village[s]" that seem like "whole world[s]") intersect with larger ones ("comets that combat in the heavens, devouring sleeping worlds"). "Inhabit[ing] the tension[s]" among these scales, it demonstrates that even a "universe" that appears to be "in order" can contain (or worse, conceal) existential threats.

Read in this light, "Nuestra América" resembles the "allegories of the Anthropocene" that Elizabeth DeLoughrey explores in her recent

book. Like these twentieth- and twenty-first-century texts, "Nuestra América" thrives on polysemous symbolism: while engaging directly with human societies, it taps transhistorically into nonhuman environments. In another similarity to these texts, "Nuestra América" treats aesthetics as the ultimate form of activism: in the paragraph I have already analyzed, it insists that "trenches of ideas are worth more than trenches of stone." Since it shares so many features with these texts, "Nuestra América" can "help us navigate an ecological crisis that is understood as local and planetary" (DeLoughrey 3). However, where most "allegories of the Anthropocene" are "grounded [in individual] postcolonial islands" (ibid. 2), "Nuestra América" ranges across two (post)colonial continents. To work on such a vast scale, "Nuestra América" focuses on the fundamental features that divide and define Latinxs. Glancing up at the United States, it explains how "el peligro mayor de nuestra América" es "el desden del vecino formidable, que no la conoce" ("the greatest threat to our America" is "the disdain of the formidable neighbor who does not know her") (22). Then, looking into Latinx culture, it argues that "el deber urgente de nuestra América es enseñarse como es, una en alma e intento, vencedora veloz de un pasado sofocante, manchada solo con la sangre de abono que arranca a las manos de pelea con las ruinas, y la de las venas que nos dejaron picadas nuestros dueños" ("the urgent duty of our America is to show herself as she is, one in soul and intent, swiftly overcoming her suffocating past, stained only with the blood that is shed from her hands while fighting with ruins, only with the blood of the veins left open by our former masters") (22). In the end, therefore, "Nuestra América" asks the same question as many of the articles about the Anthropocene: who have we been, and who might we be? In response, though, the essay risks an answer: we are Latinxs, and we must "show [ourselves] as [we are]."

To make and maintain this human perspective, "Nuestra América" turns to nonhuman environments. While it refers to many plants and animals, it pays particularly close attention to trees:

Ya no podemos ser el pueblo de hojas, que vive en el aire, con la copa cargada de flor, restallando o zumbando, según la acaricie el capricho de la luz, o la tundan y talen las tempestades; ¡los árboles se han de poner en fila, para que no pase el gigante de las siete leguas! Es la hora del recuento, y de la marcha unida, y hemos de andar en cuadro apretado, como la plata en las raíces de los Andes. (15)

We can no longer be a people of leaves, living in the air, our crown brimming with blooms, crackling and whirling, subject to the capricious caress of the sun and the terrible thrashing of the tempests. The trees must form ranks to block the seven-league giant! It is the hour of reckoning, of marching in unison, and we must advance in a structure that is as strong as the silver in the roots of the Andes.

In many respects, this passage resembles the familiar forms of capital-N Nature writing: indeed, with its “crackling” “leaves” and “thrashing” “tempests,” it sounds a lot like John Muir’s “A Wind-Storm in the Forests” (1894). Upon close inspection, however, this passage does not affirm attempts to situate Martí within environmentalism (DeVries) or bioregionalism (Schwarzmann): instead, it encourages efforts to learn how Latinxs have disrupted these paradigms (Wald et al.).⁹ Although it opens in a “capricious” Nature whose “crown [is] brimming with blooms,” the passage concludes with a tightly-controlled culture where “trees” form “structures” and where everything “march[es] in unison.” To make matters more complicated, the passage shifts among several subjects: first it focuses on humans (“we can no longer be. . .”), then it turns to nonhumans (“trees must form ranks. . .”), and at last it combines these two categories (an ambiguous “we,” at once anthropological and arboreal, that “must [be] as strong as the silver. . .”). In these subtle but substantial ways, the passage departs from both environmentalism (which might celebrate the “caress of the sun”) and environmental justice (which might critique the mines at “the roots of the Andes”); in their place, it deploys Latinx aesthetics (which considers relations among the bright sun, the dark mines, and other actors). From this passage, we can begin recovering the long (but long-neglected) lineage of Latinx literature in the Anthropocene. Using Martí’s symbols to shift among scales, we can see how Latinxs have been both responsible for and vulnerable to socio-ecological struggles. Meanwhile, building on Martí’s argument that “Una idea enérgica, flameada a tiempo ante el mundo, para, como la bandera mística del juicio final, a un escuadrón de acorazados” (“an idea set aflame at the proper time and place can, like the mystical flag of the Last Judgment, stop a fleet of battleships”) (15), we can play with the possibility that all-too-human aesthetics might help our more-than-human planet.

IV. Toward a Hemispheric History of Environmental Aesthetics

The final sentence of “Nuestra América” follows the “Gran Zemí” as it sits atop a “condor,” flies “from the Rio Grande to the Strait of Magellan,” and “sows . . . the seed of a new America” (“del Bravo a Magallanes, sentado en el lomo del cóndor, regó el Gran Zemí, por las naciones románticas del continente y por las islas dolorosas del mar, la semilla de la América nueva”) (23). By combining a human spirit, a nonhuman animal, and two geological features, this sentence “inhabits tensions” among several spatiotemporal scales. In the process, it draws on and develops a Latinx account of the Anthropocene. For “Nuestra América”—and, more broadly, for Latinx literature—our present epoch began when Columbus and his crew landed in the Caribbean. Like the asteroid that caused the Cretaceous-Paleogene extinction event, the colonists left lasting stratigraphic signatures: as they blended the biotas of the Old and New Worlds, they filled both continents with foreign fossils, and as they committed genocide against Indigenous Peoples, they altered the planet’s carbon cycle (Lewis and Maslin). Unlike earlier geological actors, the colonists made these more-than-human changes while pursuing all-too-human interests: they moved mountains to build cities, created crops for slave plantations, and turned fossil fuels into the basis for a way of life (Davis and Todd). Through these interlocking processes, the colonists put our planet’s future in question. Along the way, though, they contributed to the hybrid and heterogeneous cultures that may yet provide us with answers. Latinxs comprise one of these cultures. Descending from North Americans, South Americans, Europeans, Africans, and many other peoples, Latinxs embody the Anthropocene. At once colonial and decolonial, at once responsible and vulnerable, Latinxs have unique ways of representing, relating to, and residing in this “double-death-loving epoch” (Haraway 47).

If Latinx literature emerged at the dawn of colonialism, it has evolved in the age of “extractivism,” which Macarena Gómez-Barris defines as “an economic system that engages in thefts, borrowings, and forced removals, violently reorganizing social life as well as the land by thieving resources from Indigenous and Afro-descendent territories” (xvii). At some points, Latinx writers have confronted extractivism at sites of capitalist consumption: thus, in the crónica “Coney Island,” Martí mocked white beachgoers who were “turbados solo por el ansia de la posesión de una fortuna” (“alarmed only by their anxiety to possess wealth”) (126). At other points, Latinx writers have examined extractivism at its source. In the late nineteenth century, Mariano

Guadalupe Vallejo and María Ruiz de Burton used several literary genres to protest against the dispossession of the US–Mexico borderlands.¹⁰ Similarly, in the mid twentieth century, Alejo Carpentier and Mario Vargas Llosa wrote novels that pierced through promises about capitalist development in South America (Rogers). Finally, at the turn of the twenty-first century, Tony Capellán built sculptures from the many forms of waste that circulated through the Caribbean (DeLoughrey). In these and other contexts, Latinxs have not simply said that extractivism hurts human communities and nonhuman environments: more importantly, they have shown how it forms these entities in the first place. Whether they have written about the agricultural products of the Plantationocene, the fossil fuels of the Capitalocene, or other objects, Latinxs have theorized the dynamic co-production of the all-too-human and the more-than-human: in Jason Moore’s terms, they have traced the “double movement [of] capitalism through nature [and] nature through capitalism” (1).

Amidst these conflicts, some Latinxs have cultivated deep connections to particular places. Whereas most white bioregionalists have prioritized pleasure (think of Muir in the treetop or Leopold by a lake), these Latinx writer-activists have wrestled with pain (consider Martí’s repeated references to “nuestras dolorosas repúblicas americanas,” or “our long-suffering republics of the Americas”). Sometimes, they have refracted pain through symbolic lenses: for instance, when Martí advanced arguments about “good governance” (Ramos), he invoked images of bad nature (famously, he referred to greedy Anglos as “pulpo[s],” or “octopus[es]”; even more evocatively, he called cowardly Latinxs “insectos dañinos, que le roen el hueso a la patria que los nutre,” or “bad bugs, who eat away at the bones of the very homelands that nurture them”) (16). Other times, they have addressed pain directly. As I show in a recent article, Latinx writer-activists have developed several strategies for dealing with the difficulty of life in the arid borderlands. In the early twentieth century, Adelina Otero-Warren and Fabiola Cabeza de Baca created what I call the Precarious Desert, an imagined environment of droughts, dustbowls, and other natural disasters. Then, in the 1960s and 1970s, the Alianza Federal de Mercedes revived what I refer to as the Pueblo Olvidado, an imagined environment that reckoned with capitalist dispossession and ecological degradation. By circulating their imagined environments, these writer-activists reclaimed the resilient subsistence ecologies that they lost after the US–Mexico War. However, even as they rallied around particular points of pain, they illuminated other sites of struggle: thus, in an article about one of the Alianza’s many publications, Emily Cheng notes their support for environmental justice in Vietnam.

While Otero-Warren, Cabeza de Baca, and the Alianza were based in a single bioregion, other Latinxs have migrated across multiple environments. On the basis of their ever-changing experiences, these Latinxs have pushed Anglo-European ecomedia toward new possibilities; in their life and their work, they have confirmed Martí's claim that "con un decreto de Hamilton no se le para la pechada al potro de llanero" ("no decree of Alexander Hamilton's can stop the heaving heart of the llanero's horse") (17). Since the Columbian Exchange, explorers like Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca have engaged with the human-nonhuman hybrids that live beyond the borders of nation-states. Against the Monroe Doctrine, intellectuals like Salomón de la Selva have illuminated the economic and environmental inequalities that take shape through transnational trade. Finally, amidst the Great Acceleration, migrant farmworkers like Dolores Huerta have exposed the toxicity at the heart of the global food system. Over the centuries, these Latinxs have put their mobility to many different purposes. At the same time, they have created a common framework for the Anthropocene. Most concretely, they have proven that our present epoch has been and will be migratory: "exiled and estranged" from origins and destinations (Ramos), they have invented ingenious survival strategies. More abstractly, they have suggested that the Anthropocene requires a (re)construction of citizenship; with the practice that Jennifer Wenzel calls "world-imagining from below," they have searched for "a counterintuitive planetary subjectivity" (22).

Whether they have lived in particular places or moved across vast spaces, Latinxs have contributed to conversations about Latinidad. In some contexts, they have focused on fundamental similarities: at the climax of "Nuestra América," Martí insisted that "el alma emana, igual y eterna, de los cuerpos diversos en forma y color" ("the soul emanates, equally and eternally, from bodies diverse in form and color" (22). For the most part, they have dwelt on racialized and gendered differences: elsewhere in his essay, Martí disparaged "masas mudas de indios" ("mute masses of Indians") and "hombres . . . [con] uñas pintadas" ("men . . . [with] painted nails") (16). Since Latinxs have reproduced so many insidious ideologies, Latinidad may seem like a bad basis for literature in the Anthropocene. However, if we accept Cristina Beltrán's argument about the "trouble with unity," we can extend the *Latinx Environmentalisms* recovery project across the whole hemisphere. First, with José David Saldívar, we can reconstruct problematic pasts: conceiving of Latinidad as a "common situation shared by different cultures," we can read Latinxs "against each other as well as against the (North) American grain" (4). Then, with Beltrán, we can play with possible futures: using Latinidad as "a form of enactment [through]

which subjects create new patterns of commonality,” we can seize upon “evanescent moments of collective identification” (157). Ultimately, we can create all-too-human communities for our more-than-human planet: extirpating Latinidad’s investments in anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, and machismo, we can root more respectful relationships.

The day before he died at the Battle of Dos Ríos in the Cuban War of Independence, Martí wrote one of his most famous sentences: “viví en el monstruo, y le conozco las entrañas—y mi honda es la de David” (“I lived in the monster, and I know its entrails—and my sling is the sling of David”). With this sentence, Martí summed up his lifelong fight against the “monsters” of “imperial modernity” (Lomas). However, he also turned to a literary lineage that emerges from the “entrails” of the Anthropocene. Ever since Columbus started jotting in his journals, Latinx literature has wrestled with our epoch’s key x-ings. At many points, it has contributed to settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and ecological degradation. At other points, though, it has become a “sling” for slaying these Goliaths. By shifting through spatiotemporal scales, Latinx literature has shown how social groups (“village[s]” that seem like “whole worlds”) intersect with natural environments (“comets that combat in the heavens”). Then, by complicating claims about responsibility and vulnerability, Latinx literature has forced our all-too-human ethics to face the more-than-human planet. Amidst and against the familiar frameworks of environmentalism and environmental justice, Latinx literature has helped historic homelands, contemporary diasporas, and other human-nonhuman networks. In its commonalities and its conflicts, Latinx literature has reimaged and reshaped the Anthropocene.

For the last few years, Bruno Latour has tried to bring the environmental humanities “down to earth.” As a starting point, he has grounded his abstract arguments about the “new climatic regime” in the “plot of land to which [he is] attached by a family of wine merchants” (99). Whenever I read Latour’s books—and whenever I drink his family’s wine—I feel tempted to take “refuge” in his European “homeland” (106). Then I remember Martí’s wise words: “El vino, de plátano; y si sale agrio, ¡es nuestro vino!” (“Make wine from plantains; even if it comes out sour, it will still be our wine!” (20). To be sure, Latinx literature is “sour” with colonialism, capitalism, and other troubling tastes. However, it also contains powerful palette cleansers. If we take up the traditions of Nuestra América, we may yet survive on Nuestro Planeta.

NOTES

1. Although Zalasiewicz et al. have recently published an authoritative summary of the Anthropocene debates, I would still recommend rereading the prominent pieces that I mention in this paragraph.

2. As well as Chakrabarty, I am thinking with Mentz, who asks us to “pluralize the Anthropocene!”

3. To my mind, the sharpest summaries of ecocriticism’s evolution are still Buell’s *Future of Environmental Criticism* and Heise’s “Hitchhiker’s Guide to Ecocriticism.”

4. For a variation on this theme, see Lazo: as he demonstrates, the gender-neutral “-x” poses problems for reading the Latino and/or Latina nineteenth century.

5. While Carmen Lamas helps me locate Martí on a “Latinx continuum,” José David Saldívar and Laura Lomas justify reading “Nuestra América” as “Latinx literature”: as they demonstrate, the essay took shape while Martí lived in, wrote about, translated from, and otherwise engaged with the United States.

6. José Martí, “Nuestra América,” *El Partido Liberal*, January 30, 1891. In this essay, I cite Martí’s texts as they appear in *Obras Completas*, 28 vols. (Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975). I follow Spanish quotations with my own English translations. While making these translations, I consulted the ones that appear in Allen (ed.), *Selected Writings* and Ramos, *Divergent Modernities*.

7. Latin American modernismo must not be confused with Anglo-European modernism. To explore the tensions between these terms in general, begin with the books by Jade and Ramos. To learn more about Martí’s crónicas in particular, continue to the books by Lomas and Rotker.

8. In this essay, I engage with scholarship on Martí (Jade, Lomas, López, Ramos, Rotker) and “Nuestra América” (Belnap and Fernández, Saldívar, Schwarzmán, Shukla, and Tinsman). However, I do not make major interventions into Martí studies. It is all but impossible to exaggerate this field’s diversity and depth: over the course of the twentieth century (and especially since the founding of the Centro de Estudios Martianos in 1977), it has illuminated every aspect of Martí’s life and work (thus, a complete library might include Ricardo Tablada’s study of Martí’s health and Miguel Fernández’s book about Martí’s death). Martí studies is riven by the same divisions as the rest of Cuban and Cuban American culture: whereas the Habana-based Roberto Fernández Retamar devoted his distinguished career to associating Martí with anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism, US-based Carlos Ripoll invested equal energy in more moderate interpretations. As a Cuban American whose family is polarized around such debates, I am tempted to tie the tensions in Martí studies into my larger argument about Latinx literature in the Anthropocene. However, since I do not have sufficient space to complete this “knot” that “knot[s] knots,” I will simply point readers who are interested in Martí’s afterlives to the work of Ottmar Ette and Emilio Bejel.

9. Of course, this passage also forms a branch in Julio Ramos's account of Latinoamericanismo (257).

10. Three of the chapters in Belnap and Fernández put Martí in conversation with Ruiz de Burton.

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