

ENVIRONMENT UNDER THE GUN: LITERATURE AND ENVIRONMENTALISM
IN COLD WAR CENTRAL AMERICA

By

JACOB GOASLIND PRICE

A dissertation submitted to the

School of Graduate Studies

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Spanish

Written under the direction of Jorge Marcone

And approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

October 2019

©2019

JACOB GOASLIND PRICE

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION
ENVIRONMENT UNDER THE GUN: LITERATURE AND ENVIRONMENTALISM
IN COLD WAR CENTRAL AMERICA

by

JACOB GOASLIND PRICE

Dissertation Director:

Jorge Marcone

This dissertation explores how Central American poets reinterpret both the political, historical, and cultural value of landscapes that were devastated by new political, economic, and international military governmental policy that coincided with the Cold War. By examining environmentally engaged literature produced between the 1950s and 1990s in Central America, I elucidate how ecological paradigms shifted in the face of North American military, economic, and environmental intervention. The cases of the CIA-led Guatemalan coup in 1954, the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua in 1979, and the Mayan genocide of the 1980s constitute rallying points around which Central American authors renegotiate how humans interact with the environment. Their literary output encapsulates the varied historical and environmental results of anthropogenesis in both Western and indigenous cultures. Authors restructure the political ecology of their respective countries and the fundamental place of humans in nature. Their works reflect changes in environmental history, anti-capitalism, ecotourism, genocide, and indigeneity outside of traditional binary definitions of the Cold War that showcase the inherent

contradictions in the capitalist promise of modernization and human prosperity. The tangible consequences of the Cold War manifested through Civil Wars and intense environmental degradation, especially throughout the 1970s and 1980s, led writers to challenge the traditional, Western relationship between humans and nonhumans. I examine Central American poets who witnessed the ecological repercussions of the Cold War inscribe into their how nonhumans suffered and questioned how nonhumans responded to their polluted and destroyed environments. Several Nicaraguan writers who published texts close to the Sandinista revolution recognized the potential for nonhumans to collaborate in human politics and imbued them with agency. Indigenous publications from the 1990s exemplify a reflective and meta-poetic transition away from Cold War ideologies. These works contribute to global discussions surrounding land proprietorship and nonhuman subjectivity by challenging traditional Cold War understanding of nature. Their work represents how a variety of Mayan ontologies understand the implications of genocide and ecocide that resulted from the Cold War beyond the global division between East and West. I conclude that one of the tenets of Cold War ideology that necessarily leads to environmental degradation is the North American discourse of security, which transformed Cold War anxieties into the War on Drugs and furthered economic practices that jeopardize ecological welfare in Latin America.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I, Jacob Goaslind Price, acknowledge that a portion of the second section of chapter 2, titled “Living in Slow Violence: The Promise of a New Ecology in Sandinista Nicaragua” will be published in a collection of essays titled *Ecofiction and Ecorealities: Slow Violence and the Environmental in Latin America and the Hispanic/Latino/a/Latinx World*. Routledge, 2020.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgement	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: A Material Environmental History of the Cold War in the Poetry of Pablo Antion Cuadra, Ernesto Cardenal, Romelia Alarcón de Folgar and Lizandro Chávez from the 1950s	21
Chapter 2: The War on Nature: Marxism and Slow Violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua	63
Chapter 3: Peace in the Land or Peace in the Graveyard: Indigenous Critiques of the Cold War in the Poetry of Víctor Montejo and Humberto Ak'abal	110
Conclusion: Securing Latin American Environments: The Ecological Evolution of Cold War Fears into the Twenty-First Century	155

Introduction

Miles upriver in a remote section of the Amazon basin, Christopher Leiningen, played by Charlton Heston in the film *The Naked Jungle* (1954), readies his cacao plantation for the inevitable invasion of the *marabunta* ants. In his preparations, Leiningen reveals his two principal reasons for staying to defend his property in the jungle despite the general consensus that fighting the billions-strong soldier ant army is suicidal. The first one he explains while in conversation with The Commissioner, a political liaison between Leiningen and an unnamed South American country: “Fifteen years ago I took [the savages] out of the jungle. If I leave they’ll all go back and that’ll be the end of civilization. If I stay then so will they” (1:08:51 *The Naked Jungle*).

Leiningen’s logic reflects the then one hundred-year-old Latin American categorization of humans as either barbaric or civilized. As a North American, Leiningen portrays the globalized and racialized notion of this dichotomy, taking upon himself the role of a white, civilized savior whose wit and brute force are his instruments of salvation against the insects. Ironically, six minutes later in the film Leiningen confides to his wife that he has burned all of the indigenous workers’ boats rendering them unable to leave the plantation. He claims to stay to civilize the local Amazonian population but ultimately reinforces the racist belief that they are at risk of becoming barbaric and as a consequence forces them to sacrifice their own lives for his selfish desire to protect his wealth. The second reason that Leiningen decided to stay and defend the plantation is his belief that humanity is inherently superior to nonhumans and therefore he can defeat the *marabunta* even though indigenous groups have failed. When conversing with Inkacha, Leiningen’s

head indigenous servant and “number one guy,” the American insists through a scientifically based logic his intelligence will save the plantation from the ants:

“Ants are strictly land creatures. They can’t swim. Right, Inkacha?”

“Monkeys can’t swim but also cross rivers even so.”

“The intelligence of monkeys is more than ants and less than man’s.”

“*Isso*. Even so, when ants come, monkeys run.” (1:14:05 *The Naked Jungle*)

This exchange sets up the final confrontation between Leiningen and the *marabunta* in which he loses the battle with nature for the plantation despite his confidence in himself. Although he extensively prepared for their arrival, the ants cross a moat around the fields on leaf rafts and consume all the cacao trees until they reach the protective walls surrounding Leiningen’s house. Having secured stability in the battle and quarantined the ants outside the walls, he determines to blow up the dam that regulates the plantation’s moat in order to drown all the ants. Leiningen ruminates over the cost of this action to save his life: “It took me fifteen years to build my paradise. Three days to turn it into hell. I’m giving back everything I ever took from the river” (1:26:33 *The Naked Jungle*). Leiningen eventually recognizes that he cannot defeat the ants without a pyrrhic victory and leaves the jungle with his newlywed bride for the United States before the film fades to black.

Although *The Naked Jungle* takes place in the Brazilian Amazon in the year 1901, the film’s release coincides with the CIA-led Guatemalan coup in 1954 and the evolution of North American military, economic, and environmental intervention in Central America during the Cold War. Leiningen’s outlook on the locals, economic enterprise, and the environment exemplify American mid-century attitudes. Leiningen’s actions, specifically how over the course of fifteen years and three days he significantly altered and damaged the Amazonian ecosystem, mimic the thoughtless consequences of

North American intervention on the environment. *The Naked Jungle* neglects to show the aftermath of the flooded plantation. Leiningen and his wife Joana are able to board a ship northward bound, but the indigenous communities whose livelihood is destroyed by modernization's inability to cope with forces of nature are left to deal with the repercussions. The ecosystem will have to deal with the near-extinction of the *marabunta* and the plantation waste carried downstream. My dissertation explores how Central American writers make sense of similarly devastated landscapes starting from the 1950s through the 1990s. The ecological issues presented in *The Naked Jungle* evolve throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and complicate environmental history and surface in conflicts surrounding the environmentally precarious character of hydroelectric projects and the unregulated use of pesticides. *The Naked Jungle* also showcases issues that would emerge in a new context in the 1980s, such as the Mayan genocide, and indigenous perspectives towards nature. In this introduction, I identify the 1950s as a critical decade in which Cold War politics take a physical toll on Latin American environments and how Central American writers change the way they write literature about nature. Throughout the dissertation I argue that multiple decades of poetry from Central American writers highlight the evolution of environmentalist thought that countered the sustained ecological degradation resulting from Cold War capitalist enterprise in Central America.

The 1950s mark a shift in international relations between the United States and Latin America due to the relative absence of North American intervention in Latin American affairs during World War II. With the United States focused on Europe, Latin American countries were able to democratize and prioritize social needs. The 1950s,

which is largely considered the decade in which the Cold War began, marked the United States' renewed interest in Latin American politics for fear that socialism or communism would snowball into a threat of national security. The case of Guatemala most exemplifies how World War II impacted Latin America. Historian Greg Grandin details how labor reform after the 1944 October Revolution, which ousted dictator Jorge Ubico, started out mild but eventually developed into the 1952 agrarian reform (48-51). The steady changes in legislation over the course of eight years allowed for more suitable wages, thanks to massive unionizing, and more social services provided by the government for all Guatemalans. After 1952, the United States began to worry about the growing socialist governments in Guatemala. Grandin recognizes that the new legislation regarding property ownership was a factor in the U.S. overthrow of president Árbenz, but also states that "Cold War anti-communism and an accurate evaluation of the PGT's (Guatemala's Communist Party) strength drove U.S. agents" (52). Grandin's scholarship identifies how capitalist rhetoric adapted to the context of the Cold War in Latin America by construing communism as strictly anti-democratic or anti-United States, revealing one inherent contradiction: "Yet interpretations that highlight the political culture of the Cold War in order to counter less sanguine accounts of U.S. motivation often miss a key point: there would not have been a significant expansion of democracy in Guatemala were it not for the PGT" (52).

North American Cold War governments and businesses would leverage this contradiction to intensify their grip on Central American economies. Erika Beckman coins the phrase "capital fictions" as unrealized capitalist promises of nation-wide modernization created by the private sector in order to increase profits. While Beckman

uses this term in the context of the first half of the twentieth century, by the Cold War in Central America, the capital fictions that Beckman addresses were widely replaced with socialist policies. The CIA-led operation that resulted in president Arbenz' resignation alludes to the U.S. government's need to reproduce these narratives in the Cold War era. While the exact capitalist policies of the first half of the twentieth century do not apply to the Cold War period, I argue that Beckman's notion of capital fictions' impact on the environment remains the same:

What passes as impeccable logic today is rooted in a *fiction*, raised to previously unimaginable heights: that natural resources, together with human creativity and labor, "exist" only so that they might become alienable commodities. In the form lived today, under the hypercommoditized logic of neoliberalism, these fictions allow us to believe that the end of human existence is the market, not that the market exists to serve human needs. (viii-ix)

The canonical *novela de la tierra*, a popular genre of novel from the first half of the twentieth century that uses nature allegorical for nation building, exemplifies how this hypercommoditized logic regulated the relationship between national identities and the environment. The novel *El árbol enfermo* (1918) written by Costa Rican author Carlos Gagini exemplifies the Central American experience dealing with foreign influence and the promises of nation-wide modernization during the first half of the twentieth century. The novel centers on Fernando Rodríguez, a young man from San José who represents the nation's potential for modernization. He is an accomplished playwright, poet, journalist, and lawyer who eventually is exiled to the United States due to the American entrepreneur Mr. Ward's cunning business tactics. The conflict between these two characters symbolizes North American intervention in the isthmus. Mr. Ward, representing the United States and its occupations of Nicaragua, Panama, and Honduras

throughout the so-called “Banana Wars,” a loose term that describes the political and economic conflicts in the mid-century that embroiled banana plantations. Despite the ideological differences between the two men, the protagonist still embraces capitalism as a means to achieve modernization and champions an allegorical relationship between humanity and nature, symbolized in the titular tree that becomes more diseased while Mr. Ward’s influence permeates Costa Rican society.

Capitalism’s promise of modernization remained unchallenged in the early twentieth century until environmentalism that grew out of the Cold War context confronted it. This does not mean that the first half of the twentieth century is devoid of any literary texts that advocated for the environment. *Huasipungo* (1934) by equatorian author Jorge Icaza and *Llamaradas* (1938) by poet Romelia Alarcón de Folgar, although works written marked by non-native people about indigenous struggles that suffer from the prevalent shortcomings of *indigenismo*, are two examples of early twentieth century environmentalist thinking. Due to the elected socialist governments in several Central American nations during World War II, the Cold War period marks a time in Central American literary history in which writers reacted to the neocolonial capitalist project of North American intervention. These writers react not only to the economic infrastructure that foreign companies hoped to impose and maintain on Central American governments and peoples, but also to the process of resource extraction that exploits and harms the landscape.

In Giorgio Agamben’s *The Open* (2004), he elaborates a theoretical framework of ontology based on Western history’s entanglements with humanization of the animal and the animalization of the human. As I show throughout the chapters of this project, his

definition of ontology elucidates how capitalism and North American intervention justify their environmental practices based on the ontological and political categorization and its insistence on humans and nonhumans as distinct groups. This dissertation illustrates how these categorizations resurface in new ways. Indigenous ontologies and literature that defends nature challenge Agamben's definitions and showcase that Agamben's understanding of the nature/culture divide is only one means of examining how capitalism mediates the relationship between humans and nonhumans.

In a chapter of *The Open* titled "Anthropogenesis," Agamben summarizes the overall arguments that Western philosophers have made related to the separation of humans and nonhumans. His second bullet point includes his own observations that have significant repercussions for the category of the human: "Ontology, or first philosophy, is not an innocuous academic discipline, but in every sense the fundamental operation in which anthropogenesis, the becoming human of the living being, is realized" (79). Agamben's understanding of ontology is essentially the creation of the classification of the human species, through which humanity constructs an epistemology that separates *homo sapiens* from the rest of the natural world. This ultimately created a value for the category of the human. This division does not inherently create a hierarchy between humans and nonhuman, but it does facilitate the possible of exclusionary politics by accounting for what humanity prioritizes and implementing strategies to meet those goals. Agamben addresses this possibility through a discussion of the philosophical goals of metaphysics:

From the beginning, metaphysics is taken up in this strategy: it concerns precisely that *meta* that completes and preserves the overcoming of animal *physis* in the direction of human history. This overcoming is not an event that has been completed once and for all, but an occurrence that is always

under way, that every time and in each individual decides between the human and the animal, between nature and history, between life and death. (79)

I understand the “overcoming of the animal *physis*” that Agamben defines as the historical trajectory of the separation of humanity from nature that has emanated since the anthropogenesis of Western cultures. This creates the possibility for human history to supplant environmental history and deep time, leading to anthropocentric political decisions that exclude and subjugate nonhumans. The scientific categorization of life into species exacerbates this potential, resulting in extreme hierarchies such as the notion of animals as machines and scientific racism.¹ Some indigenous literatures and ontologies counter this consequence of Western cultures through notions of humanity that are not confined to the scientific distinction between species, or to a transcendental essence of the human species, and thereby elude the “overcoming of the animal *physis*.”

Central American writers during the Cold War encapsulate the varied historical and ecological consequences of anthropogenesis in both Western and indigenous cultures. Agamben addresses how dictatorships in the twentieth century evolved their nineteenth century nationalist and imperialist goals, including how they culminate in a crossroads of anthropocentric history and environmental history. He refers to Alexandre Kojève’s notion that the end of history will result in “Man remain[ing] alive as animal in *harmony* with Nature or any given Being” (436):

The totalitarianisms of the twentieth century truly constitute the other face of the Hegelo-Kojeveian idea of the end of history: man has now reached his historical *telos* and, for a humanity that has becomes animal again, there is nothing left, but the depoliticization of human societies by means

¹ Nathaniel Wolloch explains how Enlightenment philosophy and scientific practice redefined the category of the animal in his article “Animals in Enlightenment Historiography” (2012).

of the unconditional unfolding of the *oikonomia*, or the taking on of biological life itself as the supreme political (or rather apolitical) task. (76)

The totalitarian dictatorships themselves were not the “end of the history” but rather the historical events that led to a reimagining of the relationship between different species. I disagree that there is “nothing left” in the aftermath of totalitarianism except a depoliticized return to nature since that was not the case for many Central American writers in the latter half of the twentieth century. The majority of non-indigenous writers did not oppose the category of humanity or history created from Western ontologies and sought reconciliation between humans and nature through reconfigured anthropocentric politics. In the 1950s and 1960s there were many responses to the new wave of North American intervention that produced ecologically consciousness literature that relied on social justice movements and nostalgia for environments that thrived under the leftist governments during World War II.

Panamanian novelist Joaquín Beleño’s *Flor de banana* (1965), when put in contrast to Gagini’s *El árbol enfermo*, exemplifies the shift in ecological thinking that reacts to governments that emphasize the division between species based on the ontological categories that Agamben describes. This novel follows Ramiro Vagones, an orphaned indigenous boy raised in a wealthy white household. Ramiro is best friends with the family’s daughter, Irene, but eventually is kicked out of the house and forced to find work on plantations. Irene later becomes engaged to an American businessperson, but she decides to help Ramiro and other workers strike after she becomes aware of her husband’s infidelity. The two novels follow the same tropes about gender, and the romances are nearly identical in their development and conclusion. The significant difference is the discussion that *Flor de banana* fosters around unions, capitalism, and

race, problematizing how industrialized agribusiness exacerbates racial and economic tensions in addition to disturbing ecosystems:

Los bosques oscuros e impenetrables fueron derribados para sembrar banano. Las fincas crecieron en la medida que se tendió la línea. Se introdujeron nuevos sistemas de cultivo y métodos para preservar la fruta de la sigatoca. Entonces, adiestraron indios para regar caldo bordelés, igual que los empleaban en las chapias, deshije y corte de bananos. Los indios cegatos de alma, sufrieron el impacto del corrosivo. Entonces regresaban a morir ciegos en la selva. (188)

This passage encapsulates the crux of the ecological degradation and cycle of environmental injustice in Central America during the Cold War. The capitalist impulse to increase profits even with unsustainable methods, such as obligating indigenous workers to utilize the toxic soap *caldo bordelés* in order to clean bananas and preserve them from *sigatoca*, a common banana disease, ultimately disables and kills indigenous workers in an unsustainable revenue cycle. This economic strategy produced varied results in the various Central American nations and writers responded to environmental degradation, plantation life, and capitalism in multiple ways, coalescing in the immediate need to reevaluate humanity's relationship with nature.

The Costa Rican and Panamanian novels I have mentioned exemplify the overall shift in environmental ethics in Central America during the Cold War timeline, but they do not represent how Cold War policies directly impacted the environment. I primarily examine poetry written and published between 1950 and 2000 from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua because these countries' literatures and histories more closely reflect the predominant international ideological conflicts during the Cold War. Poetry is the preferred genre for this project because of the strong environmental overtones many Central American poets adopted throughout the Cold War. The majority of these poets

preemptively follow the call that Jonathan Bate issues in his 2001 *Song of the Earth* in which poets act as intermediaries between readers and the more-than-human world. This range of 50 years does not conform to the traditional timeline of the Cold War, which typically begins with the end of World War II in 1945 and ends with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Instead it traces a historical trajectory that is more faithful to the effects of the Cold War in Central American environmentalisms. 1950 marks a time in Central American history when the democratic socialism of Guatemala evoked Cold War anxieties in the United States. At the same time, already existing dictatorships that benefited from U.S. support, particularly the Somoza dynasty in Nicaragua, were already provoking ecologically conscious writers to examine the environmental degradation that their governments allowed. While the Soviet Union officially dissolved in late 1991, ending the tensions between Washington and Moscow, many Cold War-era military interventions extended their legacies into the 1990s. The most prominent example is the Guatemalan Civil War that officially ended in 1996 but had consequences that carried on for much longer. In the 1990s Central Americans reflected on the atrocities committed throughout the Cold War and literature from this period presents startling evidence about the violence that the landscape and people had survived.

This dissertation highlights works that reveal the capital fictions of the Cold War and challenges political and international discourses that portray non-capitalist economic systems as barriers to freedom and peace. In chapter 1, “A Material Environmental History of the Cold War,” I analyze Pablo Antion Cuadra’s and Ernesto Cardenal’s poetry from the 1950s, showing how it concentrates on the material connection between humans and nonhumans as a medium through which writers redefine history. Their focus

on biological cycles rebuts the ideological separation of humanity from nature that capitalism reinforces. The philosophical character of this poetry reflects an environmentalist mindset that Pablo Antonio Cuadra developed throughout his career. Cuadra's *La tierra prometida*, published before his poetry abandons Cold War critique, constructs environmental history as a way to reject Cold War fears of national security. His texts supplant concerns for security by imagining how the material reality of humans and nonhumans can overcome anthropocentric ideologies that justify violence. Cardenal's text "La hora cero" and Lizandro Chávez's *Hay una selva en mi voz* similarly rely on the politicization of the material connection of humans and nonhumans, and utilize historical events to cement the material character of living beings as the foundation of life that humans and nonhumans share. Romelia Alarcón de Folgar's *Isla de novilunios* boasts similar characteristics to those found in Cuadra's words, but her poetry introduces a nostalgic tone that laments ecological degradation. I analyze how texts from these writers work together to trace an ecological awareness based on environmental history, developing the theoretical underpinnings and producing images that employ the praxis of this ecological consciousness.

The following chapter, "The War on Nature: Marxism and Slow Violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua," presents works primarily from the 1970s and 1980s that develop environmentalisms characterized by Marxist or other non-capitalist critiques of violence carried out in the defense of global security. Guatemalan literature in the 1970s reflects on the social and political turmoil left in the wake of the 1954 CIA-organized coup of socialist president Jacobo Árbenz. The Guatemalan poetry in this chapter is indicative of broader literary trends that highlight writers whose works witness

the consequences of local cases of extractivist capitalism and their relationship to global capitalist and environmentalist movements. These texts challenge global mainstream environmentalisms as well as the government's use of violence to eliminate suspected communism in rural Guatemala. Guatemalan literary trends tackle Cold War notions of security head-on, reconstructing the images of devastated landscapes and villages victimized by Guatemala's own military. In this way, Guatemalan literature employed a type of environmental realism that would also define *testimonio* literature from the region. The new and popular non-fictional, global phenomenon of the *testimonio* was an avenue through which literary voices, particularly women voices, developed a new sense of environmentalism that challenged patriarchal governments and environmentalisms alike (Sternbach 91).

The poetry discussed in this chapter features witnesses of environmental and social decline as evidence of Cold War capitalism's inability to develop Central America. The poems by Salvadoran writers express a Marxist-branded type of development that promises to support rural human populations as well as nonhuman environments. The version of Green Marxism that poets from El Salvador describe is isolationist rather than a military retaliation against the United States and do not go beyond cutting ties with the United States despite the blame and compensation that Central American governments demanded. In this way, Guatemalan and Salvadoran literature advocated for retribution rather than vengeance, something that contradicted U.S. rhetoric of security. By focusing on Central American civil wars and state-sponsored genocide, these authors leveraged case studies of environmental degradation as evidence of North American economic and national strategies to secure revenue generated in Central America for U.S. profit.

I return to Pablo Antonio Cuadra and Ernesto Cardenal in the second section of chapter 2 to emphasize how ecologically conscious Nicaraguan literature evolved from the 1950s to the Sandinista revolution. The political sea change of the 1970s in Nicaragua in conjunction with the environmental crises that Somoza left in Nicaragua prior to fleeing created ideal circumstances for a government-wide shift in environmental policies (Faber 151-53). The two publications that I place into dialogue, Cuadra's *Cantos de Cifar y del mar dulce* and Cardenal's *Vuelos de victoria* engage with the Sandinista revolution from opposite viewpoints. The bridging factor between the two books is a sense of ecological mystery described in *Cantos de Cifar* that is discovered in *Vuelos de victoria*. Poems in Cuadra's book detail how years of unchecked toxic dumping as slow violence disrupted habitat without being able to quantify or articulate exactly how contamination was occurring beyond anecdotal evidence. *Vuelos de victoria* was published during the early years of the Sandinista government after environmentalist branches of the government had collected data and quantified the ecological damage that Cuadra's early poetry could not explain. *Vuelos de victoria* utilizes the poetic style of exteriorism² to engage poetics with science and governmental policy in a combination of art and activism on behalf of the environment.

This last section of chapter 2 marks a shift in governmental transparency that had serious repercussions in Cold War politics. The inauguration of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua coincides with the 1980 presidential elections in the United States, in which Ronald Reagan defeated Jimmy Carter's reelection bid. The two parallel

² Exteriorism is a literary technique that Cardenal frequently employs in his poetry. It is a factual description of events that relies on data and objective results to add a measure of realism in poetry.

changes in government perpetuated Cold War tensions that embroiled Central America in continued surrogate warfare and environmental devastation. The Reagan Administration reignited discourses of American national security throughout the 1980s, proposing that congress fund the Contras in Honduras against the Sandinista army:

Using Nicaragua as a base, the Soviets and Cubans can become the dominant power in the crucial corridor between North and South America. Established there, they will be in a position to threaten the Panama Canal, interdict our vital Caribbean sealanes, and, ultimately, move against Mexico. Should that happen, desperate Latin people by the millions would begin fleeing north into the cities of the southern United States or to wherever some hope of freedom remained... The Soviets and the Sandinistas must not be permitted to crush freedom in Central America and threaten our own security on our own doorstep. (Reagan 12)

In this speech from Ronald Reagan, the president expresses his exact security fears that his administration had in striking clarity, culminating in concern for direct sources of wealth, like the Panama Canal and a warning against predicted immigration. Land is referred to in territorial, political terms while the actual health of the environment is absent from this speech. By defining nature in these terms, Reagan ignores the environmental and political reasons that his administration created that prompt Central American people to immigrate to the United States.

Sandinista Nicaragua attempted to reverse previous ecological damage sustained during Somocista rule, but was impeded by U.S. intervention through the Contra War, which caused more environmental damage through standard warfare. Daniel Ortega, then President of Nicaragua at the end of the Sandinista government, in his 1987 address to the United Nations in regard to the Contra War responded to the overt, anti-communist rhetoric common in Reagan's speeches: "that is what we want – respectful relations with the United States. Moreover, we wanted, and want, friendly relations with the United

States. But the response of the United States has been to try to wrest from us our hard-won freedom and send the Somoza regime's former guards back to Nicaragua to rule there" (1). Ortega appeals to notions of liberty amidst the Cold War rhetoric of security, contradicting Reagan's discourse of American nationalism and freedom embedded in the discourse of security. Manifested in Sandinista environmentalist policy and poetically translated in Cardenal's writing is the assumption that liberty belongs to nonhumans as well as humans. Both national leaders ultimately refer to a type of environmental security in addition to national security or peace. For Reagan, environmental security meant using funds and force to reverse so-called communism in Nicaragua in order to reinstate extractivist capitalism and secure geographic pathways of wealth such as the Panama Canal and unsustainable agribusiness. His rhetoric of environmental security were just as much in conflict as any other ideological conflict of the Cold War, and the literature analyzed in chapter 2 sheds light on Central American responses to environmental security through the development of environmentalisms that dialogue with Cold War politics.

I structured the third chapter of this dissertation, "Peace in the Land or Peace in the Graveyard: Indigenous Critiques of the Cold War," to allow indigenous literature space in the Cold War conversation of security and the environment. The first two chapters examine ideologies and discourses that are easily categorized in dichotomies of the Cold War: East/West, North/South, capitalism/non-capitalist, etc. Indigenous literature is paramount for the discussion of Cold War politics due to the physical sites of warfare during the latter half of the twentieth century. The Mayan genocide that resulted from the Guatemalan Civil War is one of the most violent examples of how the Cold War

was not just an ideological and economic debate between the East and West. Guatemalan writers Victor Montejo and Humberto Ak'abal produced separate responses to the Cold War, highlighting the heterogeneous character of Mayan groups. The poets come from different Mayan cultures and express their opinions in unique ways and challenge assumptions of homogeneity within indigenous identity. Neither poet, alone or when put into dialogue with each other, represents the whole of Central American indigenous thought or interaction with Cold War politics. However, Montejo and Ak'abal respond to the ideological debates of the Cold War, challenging stereotypes of indigenous poets as backward writers isolated from global discussion. The poetic voices in their works share a common critique of Western ethnocentrism and challenge inherited colonial legacies as a way to insert Mayan ontologies into global political discussions during the 1990s before the Guatemalan peace accords in 1996.

Montejo's and Ak'abal's poetry coincide in their critiques of ecological discourse. The linguistic colonial history of Latin American indigenous groups in addition to Western notions of literature versus indigenous conceptions of art complicate the locus of enunciation of indigenous writers. The poetry I analyze in this section was written in Spanish, although some indigenous words remain in the texts. They frequently question the Spanish language and its colonial legacy through explanations of indigenous language and ontology. In this way, the Guatemalan indigenous literature in chapter 3 embraces a pedagogical character that dismantles Western tropes and categories of literature as well as the neocolonial character of Cold War politics. Several of Ak'abal's poems, for example, challenge the onomatopoeia as a trope. Many of the indigenous words in his poems are not literary personifications, but instead communicate a specific experienced

relationship between different species. The various voices that speak in his poetry express their own thoughts and desires. This type of subjectivity or animism is the distinguishing factor of the indigenous response to the Cold War and its environmental impact on Central America.

This dissertation does not examine ecologically engaged writing produced in Honduras, Panama, and Costa Rica, despite writers from those countries challenging traditional, Western notions of nature due to those countries' unique histories within the Cold War context. I focus primarily on how environmentalisms developed, evolved, and resisted capitalist and imperialistic Cold War ideologies. Honduran environmental history differs from the rest of the isthmus, particularly due to its position as the base of operations for the United States during the Contra War. Environmental historians detail the enormous ecological damage that southern Honduran forests suffered when the U.S. army organized its frontline with Nicaragua. The North American occupation stunted their environmental engagement and ecological development. Honduran writers resisted this occupation and disagreed with the economic practices that destroyed the landscape, but were unable to create systemic changes that reflected anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist politics, such as in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.

Panama's relationship with the United States during the twentieth century is more akin to Honduras's than it is with other Central American nations because of the Hay-Bunau Varilla Treaty that granted the United States widespread control of the Panama Canal that would overlap into Panamanian politics (Lindsay-Poland 26-27). The Panama Canal was a site for many ecologically minded writers to criticize how modernity and development harmed the environment. The U.S. occupation of Panama, like Honduras's

situation, impeded the development and implementation of environmentalist policies in Panama. Despite the civil unrest during the 1960s and 1970s, the government and social elite remained on friendly terms with the U.S. until the end of the 1980s in which the United States suspected the Panamanian military dictatorship of drug trafficking. This resulted in the North American invasion in 1989. While this year is still within the time frame of the Cold War, the new motive to halt drug trafficking marks another reason that is not consistent with Cold War rhetoric to justify North American intervention.

The Costa Rican government throughout the Cold War enjoyed relative autonomy without the United States or any other foreign government intervening in its economic and governmental affairs. Costa Rican politics eventually gravitated towards environmentalist policies and became one of the leading green nations in the Western hemisphere by the end of the Cold War. There is plenty of literature produced during the Cold War period that discusses nature, the human/nonhuman relationship, and environmental degradation, ecotourism, and conservation, but without the tension that Cold War politics introduce in other Central American countries.

Unlike the histories of Honduras, Panama, and Costa Rica, the fictionalized experience in *The Naked Jungle* summarizes the history and ecological questions engrained in the Cold War conflict in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Starting in the 1950s, specifically with the Guatemalan coup in 1954, the Cold War cast Central American into several decades of environmental crises. Both prominent and lesser-known authors reflected on the ecological consequences of capitalism and modernity from the early twentieth century and their repercussions on the latter half of the twentieth century during the Cold War. The conflicts and ideologies that initiated in the 1950s pivoted

ecological discourse in the isthmus to the extent that writers innovated and renegotiated Western notions of nonhumans and developed politics that developed and protected nonhuman rights. The exact policies and implementation of new understandings of the interconnectedness of humans and nonhumans varied between Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, from the Sandinista government enacting environmentalist legislation to Guatemalan government's reckoning with its genocidal and ecocidal history. Both indigenous and non-indigenous writers challenge the mainstream discourse of the historical events of their respective countries, effectively mirroring and cultivating ecological attitudes in Central American throughout the Cold War. The environmentalisms that grew out of Central American's Cold War experience equipped future generations with the knowledge and ability to counter repeated foreign interventions that emerged with the War of Drugs and now with renewed Cold War tactics in the Trump and Bolsonaro presidencies.

Chapter 1: A Material Environmental History of the Cold War in the Poetry of Pablo Antion Cuadra, Ernesto Cardenal, Romelia Alarcón de Folgar and Lizandro Chávez from the 1950s

The way that the Western world characterizes time as a kind of outboard motor make[s] the relationship between humanity and nature superficial. . . . Hispanic America is one of the resources that modern humanity has at its disposal to create a new civilization based on a humanistic power because it's a region in which the fertile link between humanity and nature still exists and may even predominate. (Cuadra, *Plenitude*, 29)

Pablo Antonio Cuadra's *Poemas nicaragüenses* is a collection of poetry that challenges the notion of linear, anthropocentric time as an adequate parameter to measure history. This collection of poetry, along with others from the 1950s, expands on the complex military and political history of Latin America that contests the anthropocentric character of Western history through environmental history. *Poemas nicaragüenses*, having been published in multiple iterations over the span of sixty years (1934-1994), describes the specific ways in which the Nicaraguan landscape has evolved through Somocismo, the Cold War, and the Sandinista Revolution. Steven F. White's exhaustive ecocritical study of the corpus of Cuadra's literary production, published in 2002, concludes that this character of *Poemas nicaragüenses* frames ecology in Nicaragua:

Poemas nicaragüenses pertains to a book in pieces that gains a new bodily unity over fifty years as a kind of *organic* imagined community that is re-imagined in each rendition, similar to Nicaragua and the diverse environment that defines the country. (35)

The collection functions as a way to understand Cuadra's poetics of the Nicaraguan landscape throughout the twentieth century without being restricted to one publication date and one slice of history. *La tierra prometida*, the title of the 1952 version of *Poemas nicaragüenses*, presents the environment and the humans who inhabit it as one singular

environmental history with a distinct political agenda that reacts against colonial and neocolonial structures that the Somoza government imposed on Nicaraguan people and landscapes.

White understands the Nicaraguan landscape in *La tierra prometida* as a type of imagined community as Benedict Anderson famously theorized. Anderson defined the imagined community as a network of people who were unified as a nation or group that extends beyond the local community despite the fact that many of these people never meet or see each other. Instead, people are united through nationhood and “have complete confidence in [the] steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity” of the fellow members of their nation, tribe, etc. (26). This type of unity prioritizes the cohesion and functionality of people connected through one government that is able to organize all of its members efficiently to “move steadily down (or up) history” (26). The notion of the imagined community, for Anderson, is an anthropocentric and chronologically linear version of history. White adds to Anderson’s theory by explaining that in Cuadra’s poetry there exists a “new bodily unity” that extends beyond humans that challenges the imagined community’s notion of history and exclusion of nonhumans. White calls his version of Anderson’s idea the “organic imagined community,” which is a political ecology, or an ecosystem, rather than the political ideal of nationhood or nationality. White also envisions the “organic imagined community” as one that includes nonhumans as participating subjects in the ecosystem instead of entities that humans use for their own gain. The poetry I analyze in this chapter, rather than only acknowledging the existence of humans and nonhumans as beings that are cognizant of one another, politicizes the “organic imagined community.”

I begin this chapter by examining *La tierra prometida* and illustrating how Cuadra politicizes environmental history through a molecular analysis of biological cycles. Ernesto Cardenal's poem, "La hora cero," published first in 1952 and later in 1962, does not span the same timeframe as Cuadra's *Poemas nicaragüenses*, but similarly reexamines the Nicaraguan landscape and its community of humans and nonhumans as it changes throughout the course of the Cold War. Cardenal relies more on concrete events in mid-century Nicaragua as catalysts through which he claims that nature is a co-revolutionary. This characterization of nature suggests that it that retaliates against Somocismo's oppressive policies alongside humans. Lizandro Chávez's *Hay una selva en mi voz* (1950) is another Nicaraguan collection that politicizes the environment in favor of revolution, but differs from Cardenal in how it approaches racism in Nicaragua, revealing contemporary contradictions regarding equality for non-white Nicaraguans. I also include analysis of poems from Guatemalan writer Romelia Alarcón de Folgar's *Isla de novilunios* (1954) that harness nostalgia to challenge the political changes in Guatemala's Cold War history during the coup d'état that run parallel to failed revolutions in Nicaragua. The works from all of these authors exemplify the material network that unites humans and nonhumans in environmental history. These poems document the evolution of humans and nonhumans broadly as it occurred in the landscape, in politics, in technologies, in population increases and decreases, etc. These changes ultimately display a dynamic environmental history that rejects an anthropocentric notion of the history of the Central American landscape.

George B. Handley's understanding of environmental history, as well as his understanding of postcolonial and decolonial politics, elucidate how this Central

American literature utilizes the organic imagined community as a way to advocate for a decolonial politics. When placed in dialogue with Anderson's imagined community, Handley looks beyond the political boundaries that Anderson outlines and into the discipline of history in order to examine how poets position themselves in the more-than-human world instead of in the anthropocentric world of culture. Handley's book hones in on the poet's ability to serve a postcolonial function as he or she writes about the human impact of colonization on the nonhuman world. The decolonial character of these ecopoetics comes from how poets recognize that colonization and imperialism change the more-than-human world in environmental history and how literature leverages this recognition of the altered landscape as a way of politicizing the landscape. White's book is a remarkable but politically sterile ecocritical study that eludes the poetic and political agenda of the poets towards the landscape or the more-than-human world. By merging natural and human histories into one more-than-human history, collections from the poets mentioned scrutinize the intimate relationship between human and nonhuman well-being. By underscoring the shift in focus from human history to environmental history, the possibility emerges for nonhumans to exist and to live on their own terms and for themselves rather than for capital gain for human welfare.

The environmental history that these Central American authors refer to accounts for the exchanges, from the molecular level to the macrobiological level, between humans and nonhumans through biological cycles such as decomposition and recycling nutrients as plants grow. *La tierra prometida*, *Isla de novilunios*, and "La hora cero" rely on a scientific understanding of the molecular exchange of matter, but do not embrace science as the way in which nature may enter into human politics. These publications

suggest through a more-than-human history, or by embracing a material connection between human and natural history, Central American countries might overcome exploitation by foreign intervention. These poems substitute the capitalist logic that abstracts nature from humanity with the notion of a material connection between humans and nonhumans as the basis for a decolonial politics that undoes exploitative economic and politic structures. By removing the abstraction of nature and the subsequent separation of humans from nature via capitalism, their poetry promotes a “natural equality” that is the factual, material reality of humans and nonhumans. This “natural equality,” as proposed by the poetry, supersedes any inequality that human ideology invents with the goal to keep humans separated from and superior to nature. The poems, by the same logic, also call for an elimination of hierarchies within the human species, especially those created from economic disparities.

Established Guatemalan poet Romelia Alarcón de Folgar’s *Isla de novilunios* published in 1954 utilizes nostalgia as a tool to promote ecological consciousness and to rethink the material connection of humans to the natural world. Her poetry laments how landscapes have changed over time has an environmentalist tone, hinting at sustained ecological damage over time, such as nonhuman population decreases. Despite there being no shortage of images of nature, not all of the poems equally advocate for the environment or invent an ecological ethos. The poem that begins on page 31 contains several stanzas that utilize natural images and metaphors in order to discuss prominent environmental issues that would gain traction in the latter half of the twentieth century³:

Sin embargo
a veces,

³ The collection contains a series of untitled works that I refer to by their starting page.

percibo en cada rosa
 un niño que me mira;
 abro la puerta al mar
 y oigo sus caracoles. (31)

The poetic subject in this stanza questions traditional notions of nonhumans as static, inanimate entities. The poem stretches the concept of personification by assigning more-than-human qualities to *cada rosa*. This description approximates indigenous ontologies that understand the human spirit as a universal part of all lifeforms, despite their corporal expression as animals, plants, or otherwise. The literary nod to indigenous cosmology relates to Erin Finzer’s term “cosmic conservatism” that she elaborates in a close reading of Romelia Alarcón de Folgar’s 1938 book *Llamaradas*: “I define cosmic conservatism as an ethic that not only values biodiversity and human diversity, but also nurtures the contingencies between living in harmony both with the environment and peoples of different cultures and ethnicities” (2). *Llamaradas* has a clearer *indigenista* goal than *Isla de novilunios*, but this stanza illustrates how the author’s “cosmic conservatism” persists 16 years later in a more subtle iteration.

The significant difference in *Isla de novilunios* in contrast with *Llamaradas* is that the poetic voice claims the possibility that every rose is to some degree human for themselves, without writing for indigenous groups. The following stanza ties in the notion of nonhumans with human nostalgia for past landscapes:

Ayer lo vi en el parque;
 inmediatamente
 regresaron los árboles antiguos;
 su mirada lanzó pájaros pretéritos
 en un aire de sílabas gastadas. (32)

The line “inmediatamente” separates the natural enclosure of a park with the openness of the latter part of the stanza. This juxtaposition presents two concepts of the environment:

nature as a regulated space designed for human pleasure or an open space that all living creatures inhabit. The preterit tense in the first line describes the narrative experience of the poetic subject but the last three lines portray a past landscape that exists only in the potential for nonhuman subjectivity represented by the “el niño que me mira” (31). The trees, birds, and syllables are all nuanced with adjectives that create a sense of the irrecoverable character of these things. “Pretéritos” and “gastadas” indicate that the birds and words that they describe no longer exist except as memories. The stanza is melancholic and seeks to conjure a past that is not compatible with the poetic present. The landscape and nonhumans that the poetic subject presents are not filtered through metaphor or allegory but rather images of the literal disappearance of trees, birds, and syllables spent in the air. While it is unclear if the poem is meant to reference any specific event of major deforestation or avian population decreases, due to the literal sense of environmental concern and the pervasive nostalgia in the poem, the stanza is reacting to a general change in the landscape. Deforestation and habitat loss were widespread in the first half of the twentieth century in Guatemala with the increased agricultural development of land for coffee cultivation. Read from this historical context, the poem laments the apparent transformation of the environment.

The poem that commences on page 20 further elaborates the nostalgic sentiment present in the collection with optimism for the future. The images utilize the transition from autumn to spring as metaphor to express the poetic subject’s attitude towards the environment:

En esta hora de otoño
clamo por la flor y el retoño.

Quizás las estrellas y las rosas

dejaran sus semillas en mis ojos
y de pronto revienten bajo el llanto. (20)

The poem repeats the opening rhyming couplet several times, thereby solidifying the general tone of anticipation for spring. Each time that the couplet is reintroduced, a stanza that begins with the word *quizás* or *ojalá*, expressing the poetic subject's desire for environmental change that cannot exist, follows it. The use of the past subjunctive instead of the present subjunctive highlights the poem's lament of a lost connection with the natural world. The first iteration of this pattern is unusual compared to the others with its surrealist image of stars and roses leaving seeds in the eye of the poetic voice. This image centers on humanity's vision of nature. The first two lines depict the differences that humans perceive between seasons. Humanity has utilized the transition from autumn to winter and then spring as a metaphor for rebirth, and while this poem does not challenge that reading of seasonal change in nature, the following three lines indicate how humanity has become blind towards nature's biological cycles, represented by the stars' and roses' seeds. The two stanzas in contrast exemplify how humanity's vision has become obfuscated by the culture/nature dichotomy desiring only nature's beauty but not its sustainability. In one of the final stanzas of the poem that hinges on the longing of a past nature, the poet returns to the necessary relationship between humans and the environment in order for humanity to thrive:

Ojalá en el estanque,
en la faz del agua
brotaran aquéllas violetas,
y de nuevo mis dedos
entre sus cabellos
se nutrieran de esencias fragantes. (22)

This stanza hinges on the word “nutrieran” which implies that the poetic voice can no longer receive the nutrition that nature offers. The human voice in the poem knows where and how to obtain this sustenance from nature, but no longer is able. This section of the poem, unlike the earlier ones, suggests that nature is incapable of producing what the poetic voice desires.

The poem from page 20, in the context of cosmic conservatism, ultimately faults Western cultures for its inability and unwillingness to understand outside of the culture/nature divide. The poem suggests that something beyond cultural attitudes towards nature is amiss but not does provide any specific details. The historical context of the revolutionary government does provide a few clues. The collection was published during Jacobo Árbenz’ tenure as president of a still-socialist Guatemala, although the CIA-led coup was imminent. The Árbenz Administration continued in the footsteps of its predecessor and pushed for social reforms. While many of these governmental changes affected land ownership and peasant’s agrarian rights, they do not challenge deep-seated ontological beliefs on the separation of humanity from nature, or the necessary biological connection between humans and the environment like Folgar’s poetry suggests.

Near the end of the collection, the tone shifts in a dramatic way in the poem that begins on page 47 that examines how humanity returns to nature upon death. Unlike previous poems that centered on how human life is sustained by nature, this poem inverts the anthropocentric focus on human life through images of the poetic voice in nonhuman bodies:

Mañana seré hojas
 en el tallo fragante de las matas.
 Caminaré por todos los senderos
 en gajos de ramajes.

Mañana seré dalias.
 Tornaré de la muerte
 en la inocencia blanca del perfume. (47)

The images of fragrant flowers reflect the blossoming springtime when plants awake from their dormant state. The poetic voice reincarnates in flowers, exemplifying the cyclical nature of biological processes such as decomposition that reinvigorates the life cycle. The poem's subject retains their identity in new, nonhuman corporeal forms particularly in the aromas that the plants manufacture. The focus on the constant activity of plants reflects the seamless actions that humans and nonhumans do and demonstrates the dynamic character of environmental history. These two stanzas showcase how the landscape is not a backdrop for anthropocentric history, but that nonhumans have participated in the same history as humans.

La tierra prometida evokes imagery and agency of the Nicaraguan landscape and more-than-human history at the dawn of the Cold War through similar connections between humans and nonhumans. The poem, "El poeta muerto," also does not contest the worldwide circumstances of the Cold War in the 1950s, but it does rethink the categorical separation of natural and human history to claim that humans and nonhumans can work in tandem to make political change in Nicaragua. As Moisés Elías Fuentes Aburto states: "En la evolución poética de PAC, el ser humano regresa a las raíces, a la esencia terrestre, tanto para recuperar el pasado como para recrear el presente" (175).

The first stanza of "El poeta muerto" directs the reader to the power of nonhumans to alter the place where they reside: "¡Cuantas cosas suceden por la cólera de los árboles/por la rebelión iracunda de las piedras!" (37). Regardless of any criticism of anthropomorphism, the lines initiate the poem with the power of non-humans, both biotic

and abiotic respectively. Numerous studies detail at length how trees prevent erosion and how forest growth changes landscape, while rocks and other solid abiotic matter alter ecologies in the form of natural disasters or their diversion of water flow, for example. Over the course of centuries, humans, aside from finding utility in different species and minerals, also have found trees and rocks to be impediments, necessitating the invention of tools and technologies to deal with them in order to promote human interests. The invocation of a frustrated and malcontent attitude positions the trees and rocks against influences external to their own and highlights their agency.

The poem, before disclosing who or what the antagonist of the trees and rocks is, evokes the network of material interactions of nature in history. The following stanza moves from microbiology down to the molecular level:

Veíamos pasar a los ángeles del polvo
 llenos de cal, de tiempo sus cabellos.
 Luego, en silencio, se reunía la materia.
 Se convocaban los átomos,
 las enfurecidas moléculas del mundo,
 las que miramos levitar su mansedumbre,
 diminutivas,
 en el recreo iluminado de los aires... (37)

The notion that nonhumans in the poem act as agents reconciles the juxtaposition of the *enfurecida* attitude of the trees and rocks and now the molecules in the second stanza with terms that connote gentleness. The etymology of the word *furia* also explains the wide range of emotion that the nonhumans exhibit as agents. *Furia*, derived from Latin, is understood to be a “fierce passion,” which lends the poem an added measure of urgency and motivation. The molecules are furious because they are passionate about the constant chemical exchange as molecules trade particles and form new bonds with other material to create new entities. The following stanza centers on the process of

decomposition that manifests the process of change that takes place at the molecular level, where the *furia* of the *los ángeles de polvo*, atoms, and molecules enables change. The fury of change is an expression of the nonhuman agency of molecules that is invisible to the naked eye, making it a process that occurs *en silencio* and in *su mansedumbre* from the anthropocentric perspective.

The third stanza centers on how human material loses its “humanness” through the process of decomposition. The power of the stanza comes from the relationship of the human body with the earth, evoking a literary and literal rendition of the biblical adage that “for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19) that is invoked in the Latin epigraph “*Dies irae, dies illa.*”⁴ The first three lines read: “Yo miré después caer la tierra sobre su cuerpo/y la infinita sed del polvo/cobijando amorosamente su desnudez” (37). These lines clarify the title of the poem: the body of the dead poet, lying in the earth to be buried. The dust from the second stanza returns in the third stanza, *cobijando* the body into the earth, where the decomposition process will recycle the molecular bodily matter, returning that material to the earth. The opening lines of the third stanza function as the material (ex)change through natural cycles that environmental history emphasizes in the relationship between humans and nonhumans. The interaction between the earth and the human body continues to embrace the fierce passion of the previous stanzas as the poet’s body dissolves in the biological cycle of decomposition. The image of the dust falling with its *infinita sed* on the poet’s body to consume it

⁴ *Dies irae* is a medieval poem that deals with the Catholic notion of the Final Judgment. Given the themes surrounding death and rebirth in the poem, the poem borrows from Christian ideas of rebirth after the destruction of the apocalypse without focusing on religion itself, but rather on nonhuman agency in the act of renewal. See Gloria Guardia’s article “Pablo Antonio Cuadra: poeta y pensador Cristiano.”

exemplifies how particles absorb the human body into environmental history. The poet's body presents the earth as a site where biological cycles eliminate complicated notions of humanity and nature through biological cycles. The poet's body is neither human nor is it natural in this process, but matter passing through environmental history.

The recycling of human and nonhuman material forms the basis for Cuadra's politicization of biological cycles to produce "natural equality": "Vi sus manos/cogidas por las futuras madre selvas" (37). The honeysuckle that will sprout from the poet's dead body consumes the poet's hands, his instruments in writing poetry. As a body that leaves the realm of culturally defined humanity and is materially remade through death, the poet's hands continue to testify to the natural world's beauty and power by germinating flowers. In this way, the honeysuckle functions as a type of visual ecopoetry expressed/written by plant life as a continuation of the poet's writing. The message remains while the material form of the locus of enunciation and speaker decompose and then evolve. The material reality of decomposition and the reordering of material in new lifeforms is part of the "organic imagined community" that Cuadra reveals to the reader through the human body, now dead and losing its "humanness." The material reality of connection life may seem like a truism, but the logic of the extractivist capitalism of the Cold War abstracted humanity from nature and ignored material interconnectedness. The poetic voice exclaims: "¡Sería inútil arrancarlo/de su poderosa posesión!" (37). These two lines reiterate that despite any effort to retain the division of life into humans or nonhumans, biological cycles will ground humans in the material reality, ignoring any cultural value or commodification of human and human products.

After the poetic voice articulates this initial scene of decomposition and recycling, the next stanza describes the consequences of taking the body back into the confines of the earth. The fourth stanza of the poem finalizes the decomposition process as the moment that the material human body becomes more-than-human:

Así lo llevaron.
 Así lo incorporaron a su cólera.
 Le amaron hasta reducirlo a la substancia
 iluminada y sutil de los rosales.
 “Ven – le habían dicho –,
 asimílate a la tierra,
 congrégate a la esperanza de las cosas,
 precipitaremos la consumación.
 ¡Derribaremos! (37)

Returning to the urgency and passion expressed in the opening parts of the poem, the penultimate stanza of the poem describes the natural world and its history as a place where the poet is able to embrace enlightenment, love, and hope. This comes in direct response to the last lines of the previous stanza that describe the poet as “un hombre [que] duele” for having spent humanity conditioned as something apart from natural cycles and history. The poem suggests that the poet is lacking spiritually or “naturally” until he or she can be consumed, metaphorically, by the whole earth and return to environmental history.

“El poeta muerto” ends with a statement akin to a protest anthem. In this unusual phrasing for the poem, its politics are revealed. Nature, through natural cycles, will overcome or overthrow the hierarchical oppression that humanity has arbitrarily imposed on nonhumans. However, nature as described in the poem, supposes itself to be kind, implying that a return to nature, natural cycles and natural history will alleviate humanity of its own destructive design. Through decomposition and humanity’s acceptance of

being a part of nature will, as does the dead poet in the poem, “congrega[r al poeta] a la esperanza de las cosas” (37).

Cuadra does not necessarily break down the nature/culture divide even though the poem explores the arbitrary division of human and natural history. In the poem, nature is still defined through the romantic notions of an all-powerful, all-consuming system that strives to be harmonious with all life through the material recycling inherent of biological cycles. Neither is the poem married to the notion that nature is an omnipotent material system that defines humanity as “unnatural.” Instead, the poem finds a compromise in environmental history, where humans and nonhumans have agency and both simultaneously construct and remake material connections. This results in the critique of the culture/nature dichotomy that despite humanity’s best efforts to create their own anthropocentric timeline demarcated by the progression and evolution of *homo sapiens*, humans are still entangled in a more-than-human history.

Another poem from *La tierra prometida*, titled “Himno nacional,” presents environmentalism based on the idea of a natural equality derived from a more-than-human history that directly challenges extractivist capitalism and the exploitation of nature. “Himno nacional” ties in the human community at large with the natural community, imagining an equal society of humans and nonhumans in politics based on “natural equality.” Towards the end of the first stanza, the poetic voice places humans and nonhumans on the same more-than-human historical plane:

Mi pequeño país, entre tantos, va historiando sus flores,
la difícil biografía de la golondrina,
fechas de ceibos, de conejos,
historias de hombres rebeldes, otros destinos
en una fuente, en una comarca apenas designada. (32)

These lines begin with “mi pequeño país,” alluding to the imagined community of the nation-state that Anderson theorizes and that White uses as a frame of reference for understanding the biotic community as a whole. By the end of the stanza, however, Cuadra effectively undermines any national reading of the text. The clause “entre tantos,” evoking a similarity between “mi pequeño país” and others, erases any uniqueness or exclusivity that the notion of nation-state can attribute to the small country’s ecology. The comparison between “[su] pequeño país, entre tantos” solely based on the national level would be problematic since it does not allow for natural equality between humans and nonhumans to be established. By comparing his country in terms of a nation to other nations, the poetic voice would be looking at the human governmental structure that defines a system of politics for a certain people without considering nonhumans. “Mi pequeño país” narrates its unique history, not the history of the whole region. The poem avoids any comparison between nations because nationhood and citizenship historically have been exclusive to humans and have reinforced the passive and submissive role of nonhumans as resources for humans. Political ecology based on anthropocentric politics prioritizes the well-being of humans over the well-being of nonhumans even when carried out in the name of environmentalism and necessitates an alternate route to representing nature’s well-being in politics.⁵ Though White’s reading permits an understanding of a more-than-human community, it ultimately neglects to recognize the

⁵ Other routes have been trailblazed outside of the binary of nature/culture. Most famously is perhaps Bruno Latour’s *Politics of Nature* (2004), in which Latour argues for the reverse of what Cuadra, Cardenal and other Latin American writers propose. Latour says that if nature is incorporated into politics through the sciences, then nature can be defended within the realm of human debate, whereas ecologically-minded Central American authors in the 1950s believe that the inequality that humanity produces can be eliminated by turning to the “natural equality” found in nature.

notions of a more-than-human history that form the basis of the poem's argument for an environmentalism. The poem's avoidance of national rhetoric shifts its focus to the land's biography explained in the landscape and nonhuman activity and develops this perspective in the remaining stanzas as a type of "natural equality."

Like "Un poeta muerto," "Himno nacional" proposes a sense of "natural equality" between humans and nonhumans through the redefinition of history as more-than-human. The poetic voice's "pequeño país," though not much of a nation-state because it is ultimately "una comarca apenas designada," reduces all notable human and nonhuman events into one history because the "historias de hombres rebeldes" are written into history the same way that "flores/fechas de ceibos, de conejos" create a natural calendar that is inscribed in one source.

The more-than-human history present in the poem, in which both humans and nonhumans are written into the earth's cycles, is interrupted in the poem by criticizing the monetary valuing of nature. This interference contributes to the broader discussion and movement of environmentalism during the Cold War. The poem critiques capitalism and posits the possibility of a thriving human and nonhuman community in spite of capitalism through "natural equality":

Aquí hemos criado olvidos elementales para ser comunes,
vegetaciones insistentes para cubrir a tiempo nuestras huellas.
Y existe un ángel que repudia nuestras oportunidades
– ¡cierra con insolencia las sórdidas ventanas de los mercaderes! –
y viene urgiendo una palabra más, un canto más
en la pobre aldea que no trasciende,
donde habita ese niño pálido que nosotros desconocimos. (33)

The first two lines of this stanza reiterate the same ethos of a more-than-human history in order to prepare the condemnation of capitalism that the angel makes in the rest of the

stanza. The context of the poem suggests that “*olvidos elementales*” are natural resources found in the earth. This phrasing fosters an ecologically-based anti-capitalist definition of mining. Mining, according to the poem, is the processes of extracting obscure materials with the purpose of commodifying those elements for human consumption. Implicit in this definition is the critique of the ontological separation of humans and nonhumans and of how capitalism converts nonhumans into commodities.

The poem introduces further critiques of mining in the following lines of the stanza. The word *insistentes* describes *vegetaciones*, not as a continuation of the cultivation of plant life that the humans have done, but instead expresses the vegetation’s agency. The second and third lines solidify the interpretation of the first line as mining or another extractivist process because “*vegetaciones insistentes*” always recycles material, even if humanity has disrupted the natural cycles and processes of an ecosystem. This happens because nature, despite human-based environmental degradation, is still able to *cubrir* humanity’s impact on the landscape through biological cycles that reintegrate human material into the earth or from nonhuman population increases.

Beyond nature’s control of humanity, the poem takes a striking turn with the introduction of an angel. While much has been written on the Christian themes in Cuadra’s poetry, for the case of Cuadra’s historical notion of natural equality, the mention of the angel represents an authoritarian figure that presents a distinct politics in relation to history, nature, and the economy. The angel functions like a personified biological cycle that ignores any cultural separation between nature and humans and advocates for the uninterrupted recycling of matter in nature. The angel is not passive or romanticized, but instead condemns the market. These lines of repudiation introduce a

sudden Marxist posture in the poem. The “olvidos elementales” are mined and transported to the marketplace window through the process of becoming commodities. Selling them abstracts them from their natural state. This image is emblematic of the abstraction of nature and the process by which capitalism commodifies and creates natural resources. The language of the angel ambiguously demands that the reader and/or poetic voice “– ¡cierra con insolencia las sórdidas ventanas de los mercaderes!” (33). “[E]n la pobre aldea que no trasciende” represents the rural place that is oppressed under capitalist economic policies. Cida S. Chase, when analyzing “Poema del momento extranjero en la selva,” a poem from Cuadra’s 1933 version of *Poemas nicaraguenses*, provides an interpretation that can be applied to the final lines of “Himno nacional” that discuss the atrocities the North American invasion committed against the rural poor:

El poeta presenta la reacción de la fauna mediante la queja del sapo y acrecienta la tensión creada en los versos, haciendo hincapié en que las víctimas de esta invasión [norteamericana] en masa eran todos indígenas, cuyos pueblos habían sido previamente destruidos. Sin embargo el poeta, mediante un intrincado proceso de personificación, metonimia y una serie de metáforas, indica que la línea de contraataque y la misión de venganza están enteramente a cargo de las criaturas nocivas de la selva. (116)

The referenced *niño pálido* in “Himno nacional,” pale from malnutrition rather than an indication of race, functions metonymically to stress the widespread economic and environmental devastation incurred from repeated U.S. intervention in Nicaragua in the same way that Chase reads “Poema del momento extranjero en la selva.”

“Himno nacional” and “Poema del momento extranjero en la selva” are two poems that parallel each other and that illustrate the evolution of the Nicaraguan landscape as well as how Cuadra’s poetry, through figures like the angel, critique North American influence in Nicaragua. “Poema del momento extranjero en la selva” was first

published in the 1933 version of *Poemas nicaraguenses*, so while its critique of capitalism and North American economic intervention pertains to the pre-Cold War period, the poem introduces critiques of capitalism that would be elaborated later in *La tierra prometida*'s "Himno nacional." The opening lines of "Poema del momento extranjero en la selva" refer to the heart of Nicaragua's jungle: "En el corazón de nuestras montañas donde la vieja selva/devora los caminos como el guás las serpientes/donde Nicaragua levanta su bandera de ríos flameando" (25). The title of the poem plays on the expectation that humans are "extranjeros" in the jungle. Beyond the nature/culture division that the title alludes to, the image of the snakes waving the Nicaraguan flag indicates that nonhumans, snakes in this case, are citizens of Nicaragua. Ricardo Llopesa, in his analysis of these lines, interprets this poem to be "una denuncia contra la intervención militar norteamericana que padeció Nicaragua, en 1926, cuando la voz de Sandino se levantó en armas" (874). The "extranjero" from the poem is not the human, but the foreigner. While "Poema del momento extranjero en la selva" uses the term "extranjero" to designate a human from a different nation, "Himno nacional" leans more on the "organic imagined community" to organize a political ecology in the Cold War era. The poem's seemingly innocent praise of the Nicaraguan jungle becomes politicized throughout the remainder of the poem as it scrutinizes foreign intervention. Vincent Spina comments on the text's dual use of time as a way of underlining the foreignness of North American intervention, interpreting the poem as a prophecy of history repeating itself: "El poema no niega la posibilidad de otra intrusión del tiempo lineal; es decir, desgraciadamente, otra invasión norteamericana" (108). In this poem from the 1933 iteration of *Poemas nicaraguenses*, the groundwork is laid for the 1952 version and the

poem “Himno nacional” to elaborate on economic foreign intervention in the Cold War, emphasizing nonhuman agency, not only the human reaction to the United States.

Chase, Llopesa, and Spina reveal the depth of this intervention and its subsequent environmental impact in “Poema del momento extranjero en al selva,” which opens up “Himno nacional” to a reading of the agency of nature as humans abuse nature in the context of Cold War capitalism. Returning to the phrasing of insistent vegetation from the previously mentioned stanza from “Himno nacional,” the poetic voice recognizes that nature corrects the extractivist behaviors of humans. Insistent vegetation attempts to swallow up humanity and its activities “in time,” not to erase humans but an in effort to maintain balance among species rather than the dichotomization of humans from nature.

In “Himno nacional,” the insistent vegetation counters the destruction of the land by industries like mining. Scott DeVries discusses Latin American texts that react in a similar way, noting the widespread environmental destruction that mining has on human and nonhuman populations (224). Although the works that DeVries cites do not refer to a divine presence to decry the negative consequences of mining, the indigenista novels that he cites do refer to an authority that suggests a change in politics that blames capitalism for human and nonhuman decimation. Like those other authority figures, the angel who speaks out against capitalism and the commodification of nature is an environmentally conscious angel, one that speaks on behalf of both humans and nature through the preservation of nature and elimination of the market. Jennifer L. French explains the power that culture has on abstracting the environment and nonhumans into a “Nature” that remains out of reach of humanity:

As human activity, and economic activity in particular, shapes environmental conditions, it also conditions a group or individual’s ability

to perceive environments in particular ways: as hostile, Edenic, endangered, sacred, national, “natural,” public or private spaces. Such environmental imaginings are linked to perceptions of other humans, some of which are subtle enough to escape day-to-day awareness, and negotiations of economic and political power often include attempts to establish or alter the symbolic meaning of particular landscapes. (French, 160)

French’s critique of how negotiating economic and political power impacts the environment is precisely what much of what Cuadra’s poetry alludes to. Human culture creates a hierarchy between humans and nonhumans, therefore forming the basis of the justified exploitation and abuse of nature through commodification. The poem’s critique of capitalism suggests that a focus on environmental history resolves the issues created from ideologically separating humans from nature.

For the rest of the poem, the angel takes precedence as the poetic voice that encourages humans to interact with nonhumans. In the clearest example of human and nonhuman collaboration, the angel declares to a Martín Zepeda, “Martín Zepeda, pues vas de caminante, arrea/estos pájaros. Dales canto o diles/lo que sabes del pan y la guitarra” (33). The angel’s command differs from the others in the poem because it moves beyond the Christian notion of environmental stewardship to the realm of human and nonhuman interaction. Birds are associated with the ability to sing songs. Martín Zepeda would not be instructing the birds to sing through this interaction, but rather a process of epistemological exchange takes place. This communication is emphasized when the angel clarifies and says that Martín should explain what he knows about bread and guitar. While bread carries with it a multitude of meanings, the guitar fits in with the theme of music in these lines. By bringing a guitar to a musical interchange with a bird, Martín Zepeda goes beyond the notion of cultivating nature in a unidirectional

relationship by looking to learn from and teach a nonhuman. These interactions between humans and nonhumans exemplify moments in which humans recognize their existence with nonhumans in an environmental history.

The environmental implications of humans acknowledging their place in a material reality shared with nonhumans in environmental history cannot be understated, especially in the historical context in which *La tierra prometida*, as a version of *Poems nicaragüenses*, was published. Jonathan Bate emphasizes how a pre-political history, similar to environmental history, allows for the categories of humans and nonhumans to be renegotiated through new interactions between *homo sapiens* and other species: “For this reason, the controlling myth of eco-poetics is a myth of the pre-political, the prehistoric: it is a Rousseauesque story about imagining a state of nature prior to the fall into property, into inequality and into the city” (266). Bate takes the pre-historic or ahistorical notions of eco-poetics and defines the external reality of nature as an existing, phenomenological world of equality. True to the ideological warfare of the Cold War, this natural equality becomes understood as a type of *a priori* anti-capitalism for many ecologically conscious Central American writers, including Cuadra and Cardenal. As these poets read the underlying equality of more-than-human history as anti-capitalist, they politicize their eco-poetics as an ideological tool to fight against imperialist capitalism, not only against the arbitrary dichotomization of humans against nonhumans. Cuadra’s “El poeta muerto” explores the notion of nature as a series of material networks and processes such as decomposition in order to reveal nature as it is “prior to the fall into property, into inequality.” “El poeta muerto,” as an investigation into the material relationship and interconnectedness between humans and nonhumans, lays the

groundwork for other poems to explore how ecocentric writers and politics can achieve a decolonial state in which political leaders are cognizant of the material reality of humans and nonhumans and create policies that recognize and protect the agency of nonhumans. Their politics, however, stop there and do not build upon this foundation in human government.

Revolutionizing Nature: Nicaraguan Environmentalist Politics in Mid-century Poetry by Ernesto Cardenal and Lizandro Chávez

Other Nicaraguan poets attempt to bridge the theoretical notions of “natural “quality” with human politics. Ernesto Cardenal published “La hora cero” in 1952 and 1962. “La hora cero” recounts the human history of United States’ intervention in Nicaragua since the founding of the infamous United Fruit Company and its operations in Central America.⁶ While the poem centers on the exploitation of the poor in his criticism of U.S. interventionism and capitalism, he relies on his understanding of a more-than-human history in order to bring an environmentalist edge to his argument advocating for the poor. Despite his criticism of the upper class and economic system, Cardenal writes humanity into more-than-human history with optimism. The image that best represents this optimism is one of the crop fields burned in April to prepare them for sowing during the rainy season. For the poem, the crop cycle is emblematic of nature’s resilience to regrow in May despite the burning the month before, which symbolizes the careless destruction of the environment for profit.

⁶ In this analysis I have chosen the 1952 version because it coincides with Cuadra’s *La tierra prometida*.

The epigraph, a verse taken from the book of Isaiah from the Old Testament, invokes the role of the poet as a prophet that foretells the ruin of empires: “¡Centinela! ¿Qué hora es de la noche?/¡Centinela! ¿Qué hora es de la noche? (9). The allusion to a biblical authority figure provides a similar authoritarian position like the angel does in Cuadra’s poetry. This epigraph is also essential to understand Cardenal’s environmental position because of how it relates to the following description of the Central American landscape. Before Cardenal takes the reader through the anthropocentric history of imperialism in Central America, the poetic voice conjures a scenic view of nature in contrast with the oppressive dictatorship of Guatemala’s Jorge Ubico:

Noches Tropicales de Centroamérica,
con lagunas y volcanes bajo la luna
y luces de palacios presidenciales,
cuarteles y tristes toques de queda. (9)

The juxtaposition between the two scenes is stark; the lagoons and the volcanoes are illuminated by the moon, representing characteristic landscapes that define Central America’s geography, and the electronic lights used by the police state of the Ubico dictatorship illuminate the cities under watch. While both scenes communicate a type of silence, the images present two radically different scenes. The first scene depicts a quiet night in which the tranquility of nature abounds while the second produces a silence that is tense with the fear of potential violence. The conjunction binds the first image with the second image creates a more-than-human historical context through its seamless connection of both places despite their different atmospheres. Central America houses both the tranquil places of nature and the hostile places of oppression. The conjunction suggests that these two places exist simultaneously in one history; both are “Tropical Central American Nights.” The rest of the stanza, evoking the epigraph’s alarm, provides

fewer images of the natural settings in which the military repression occurs, but still condemns the militarized government and its endorsement of capitalism and its compliance with foreign intervention.

The poetic voice establishes its political and economic ideology in the next stanza by explaining how farmers, before U.S. intervention, were not abstracted from their labor and the commodities they cultivated. Starting with the case of Honduras at the turn of the nineteenth century, the poem examines the environmental history of Central America as a region:

Los campesinos hondureños traían el dinero en el sombrero
cuando los campesinos sembraban sus siembras
y los hondureños eran dueños de su tierra.
Cuando había dinero.
Y no había empréstitos extranjeros
ni los impuestos eran para Pierport Morgan & Cía.
y la compañía frutera no competía con el pequeño cosechero. (10)

The poem paints the history of Honduras before the arrival of U.S. business as a peaceful moment in history, in which capital circulated within Honduras, rather than to the United States. By referring to this time period before the intervention of the United States in Honduras, Cardenal refers to the vastly different nineteenth century economic relationship between the United States and Central America, in which the United States had much more limited economic control over Central American nations and economies. In his book on the environmental history of Latin America, Shawn William Miller explains the transition between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that Cardenal writes about in “La hora cero”:

Over the course of the nineteenth century a variety of newly endowed technologies – steam engines, railways, steamships – powered their way into the region. Fueled by fossil plants, they could do the work of thousands of men... These new, mobile wonders of the world proved

essential to the success of Latin America's export-led development model. Their primary role was to conquer time and space, that is, the geographic, distances and topographic obstacles that stood in the way of extending the tentacles of globalization beyond the seaports. (139)

Miller identifies the discovery of fossil fuels as the key moment in which a shift in power moves from nature to culture (137-38). This change refers to the power with which electricity, vehicles, and technologies give culture momentum, and is paralleled in the shift of economic and social power that the poem criticizes. The poem mentions the Hondurans who "eran dueños de su tierra" as subjects of nineteenth century technology, economy and ecology, prior to the discovery and use of fossil fuels. While the poetry focuses on money rather than technology, Miller's quote helps connect the capital that the poem is critiquing with inventions that ultimately belonged to foreign businesses that invested in developments of agricultural, mining, and industrial practices in the twentieth century that depended on fossil fuels. Cardenal's mention of the Pierport Morgan & Co., a company based in the United States, owned the International Harvester company, which operated in Latin American during the Cold War period. As Miller mentions, the twentieth century ushered in new technologies from foreign businesses that caused the growth of export development, ultimately rewriting the paths and hierarchies of globalization in the Western hemisphere. The poem's critique of the impact of fossil fuels and the implementation of foreign technology is that Hondurans in the twentieth century are no longer able to enjoy the economic freedom of the nineteenth century because of U.S. economic intervention.

Cardenal's "La hora cero" and Miller both understand the turn of the century as a moment in which "cultures empowered by these new, prehistoric fuels have quickened history's pace. History is cultural time, and it was at this point that our cultural clock

began to outpace earth's biological clock" (Miller 138). Miller's definition of history as cultural time, or as time measured by humanity's developments, is contrasted with nature's ability through biological cycles to regenerate and recycle matter effectively. Miller's explanation of history suggests that natural history is composed of chronological events in geological time. By arguing that peasants in the nineteenth century had sufficient means to live contentedly, the poetic voice advocates for a return to economic models that focus on local economies which will benefit the land as much as the rural Honduran. Cardenal published "La hora cero" in the early 1950s, when Honduras had been experiencing economic turmoil and unstable governments. This section of the poem, when taking the historical context into account, denounces the capitalist policies that led Honduras into financial ruin and compares the then current state of Honduras with the relative stability of the nineteenth century, implying that previous century's independence from capitalist economic models was a time in which Honduras enjoyed peace and could live happily. The poem's politics are clear in this stanza, defined by an idealization of the Honduran government in the nineteenth century that did not rely on capitalist extractivism as a case study to support a socialist and environmental-friendly government in Nicaragua.

"La hora cero" expresses hope that a return to an environmentally conscious government will bridle industrial agricultural and mass exportation and produce a widespread realization of the materially interconnectedness of humans and nonhumans in nature. The poet, in later stanzas, promotes revolution against modern human history, or the Somocista regime and U.S. intervention in this case, into the landscape itself. After a

stanza in which Cardenal writes about his own experience in the failed overthrow of Somoza in 1954, the poem makes a decisive turn toward the land's history:

Porque a veces nace un hombre en una tierra
 que es esta tierra.
 Y la tierra en que es enterrado ese hombre
 es ese hombre.
 Y los hombres que después nacen en esa tierra
 son ese hombre.
 Y Adolfo Báez Bone era ese hombre. (22)

“La hora cero” introduces Adolfo Báez Bone, a revolutionary who fought against the Somocista regime, as a more-than-human and more-than-natural subject, because he is a composite of the instability of life reflected in the recycling of matter that indiscriminately moves from nonhuman to human and back; he is representative of both humanity and nature in different parts of his material timeline. This recycling indicates a more-than-human history that is rooted in the neocolonial environment that Ernesto Cardenal has laid out in the poem by reciting and criticizing the modern human history of exploitation in Central America. This stanza follows the general timeline of the material history of the Nicaraguan landscape and then focuses on Adolfo Báez Bone. In a general sense, as material ecocritics have argued, this can be said of any human being since humans are composed of the natural world and will return to the natural world, meaning that their sense of “being” or existing is always changing, and are therefore they always “becoming”. This remains true in the case of Adolfo Báez Bone in the strict material sense, but in addition to this, as a poetic figure, he carries the hybridity of the human and nonhuman as an entity is that always in the state of “becoming”. He functions as a symbol of resistance to the Somozas, infamous for the human rights violations and pollution practices that contaminated much of Nicaragua’s landscape.

Stephen Henighan comments on these same lines on Báez Bone in “La hora cero.” While Henighan pulls evidence from the poem to argue that Cardenal’s 1952 poem is more politically conservative than it is Marxist, Henighan does link the natural world with politics:

This citation represents the first appearance of what would become a powerful motif in Cardenal's later poetry: the body of the dead martyr or guerrilla saturating the earth in which it is buried with the political ideals that inspired his martyrdom. The man and "la tierra" - understood as both the soil and the nation - become intermingled. (342-43)

For Cardenal there is a connection between the earth and the body of a dead martyr, and these lines of the poem construct the relationship between the human body, politics, and the environment. For Henighan, the relationship ends with the burial, and he never goes as far as to think of the martyr as more-than-human or more-than-natural in a material sense, but only an embodiment of the revolution’s ideals. Given the multiple references to political and economic events that unify the collective history of all Central American nations, only reading Nicaraguan national history into this poem loses the impact that “La hora cero” has when understood as a poem that represents the landscape and a more-than-human history across Central America. This focus on Central America as a region as opposed to concentrating on the specific case and ecology of Nicaragua is the major political contrast between *La tierra prometida* and “La hora cero.” Because Cardenal includes other Central American nations into this poem and because he writes about the new human and nonhuman interactions in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala in addition to Nicaragua produced by economic intervention and warfare, “La hora cero” lends a productive poetic understanding of the more-than-human history of the region and advocates for a political liberation of humans and nonhumans for the entire isthmus.

Despite this desire for a reimagination of the whole region, the poem “La hora cero” does not advocate for a new Central American federation, but rather the poem supplants nationhood for a region-wide “organic imagined community.” Báez Bone emerges as a being who comes from a more-than-human and more-than-natural history and combats Somoza who metonymically stands in for the anthropocentric notion of history as exclusive to humanity and nature as commodity.

The poem counters this version of history by claiming that the material consequences of human and nonhuman actions are more accurate than historical texts: “La gloria no es la que enseñan los textos de historia:/es una zopilotea en un campo y un gran hedor” (23). This statement on glory pits the written word against the natural cycles that recycle life through the decomposition process of death. The definition that Cardenal gives of death contrasts images of studying a textbook and the aftermath of violence. “La hora cero” functions as a medium through which humans can become aware of nonhumans and performs differently than the history book from the poem. Jonathan Bate describes how ecopoetics reveal the connection between humans and nonhumans:

The poet’s way of articulating the relationship between humankind and environment, person and place, is peculiar because it is experiential, not descriptive. Whereas the biologist, the geographer, and the Green activist have *narratives* of dwelling, a poem may be a *revelation* of dwelling.
(266)

“La hora cero” focuses on the lived experience of the interactions and nonhumans, particularly in the way that it defines what glory is. According to the poem, glory cannot be found in a written history that describes events, but in the nature that lived the history. Cardenal, instead of describing a field of corpses, chooses instead to focus on a flock of vultures and the smell produced from the battle’s aftermath as a scene of glory. This

emphasis on animals marks another way in which the poem understands a more-than-human history beyond the molecular exchanges that happen in decomposition. Material exchanges occur between larger organisms through consumption like with the birds eating the flesh of humans. While the exchanges are not immediate, like in the imagery of Cuadra's "Himno nacional" and the musician and birds singing together, vultures and the stink of death come are both intimately tied to the human notion of battle and are recognized as a result of war. The smell of cadavers, an indication of the decomposition process, and the vultures eating the corpses both represent ways in which the materiality of human bodies is tied to natural history. While the battle itself makes its way into the history book's text, the material reality of the human bodies makes its way into nature through biological cycles. The bodies that dot the battlefield change the landscape by contributing to the strength of vulture populations, by altering the soil composition, and by producing breeding grounds for bacteria, insects, and other, nonhuman life. Glory, for the poem, exists in the lived experience, in "becoming." Glory is made in the interaction of humans and nonhumans in a more-than-human history, not documented by the historian in a book.

Cardenal returns to the more-than-human history as it is affected by war in the closing stanza of "La hora cero." These two lines function as a powerful contrast between two images with the effect of evoking a more-than-human history. Cardenal writes: "Pero el héroe nace cuando muere/y la hierba verde renace de los carbones" (27). Cardenal, by evoking the persona of Adolfo Bález Bone in the earlier stanza, equates the hero of the first line of this final stanza with the heroes of war. This is vital to consider in the context of the Cold War broadly, as it challenges how heroes are made and how nations construct

their legacies. By presenting Báez Bone as a hero, the poem links this revolutionary figure that is remade in nature as the eventual victor in the Cold War because his heroism never dies with the death of his human body, but reemerges with nature in new forms that combat the destruction caused by the Cold War.

In a comparison between Ezra Pound and Ernesto Cardenal, Steven White reflects on Cardenal's position as a writer when confronting politics, especially politics behind exploitative economics, and poetry that has a distinct ethical edge:

Both poets are acutely aware of how political and economic developments have the power to condition all aspects of life. Furthermore, both poets realize that solutions to the exploitative situation in which humanity finds itself must be, above all, ethical. (White, *Modern* 170)

Cardenal's poem advocates for more than a politics that considers the well-being of nature. The poem's call for an ethical treatment of nonhumans differentiates this poem's politics from most environmentalisms that aim to moderate humanity's consumption of natural resources. The poem's insistence on the material connection of humans and nonhumans encourages an ethics that goes beyond the capitalist relationship of the human consumer and the consumed nonhuman. By insisting on what humans and nonhumans share in common as lifeforms that exchange material through biological cycles, the poem asks its readers to consider how nonhumans shape human existence as co-contributors to an environmental history.

Nicaraguan writer activist Lizandro Chávez Alfaro's 1950 collection of poetry, *Hay una selva en mi voz*, while similar to Cardenal's "La hora cero," functions as a type of anti-capitalist and environmentalist manifesto with clearer political goals. The book, particularly the prologue-poem, suggests an ethos by which the Nicaraguan nation can re-politicize a return to nature rather than depoliticize it. *Hay una selva en mi voz* suggests a

prototypical environmentalism that emerges from a postcolonial context. The poetic voice assigns subjectivity to humans and nonhumans and advocates for a liberation of both humans and nonhumans from the neocolonization of Nicaragua in the twentieth century. In this way Chávez' collection combats allegorical or figurative readings of nature from the first half of the twentieth century with a literal sense of nonhuman agency.

In the prologue to the collection of poetry, the poetic subject declares its locus of enunciation: “Yo no vengo a cantar/ni a una especie/ni a una raza” (10). This opening line establishes how the poetic subject relies on decolonial and environmental discourse to promote equality between species and races, prioritizing this relationship over the discourse of modernity. The prologue immediately distinguishes from other literature from this chapter by suggesting that nonhumans can understand and act on what the poetic subject has to say. The poetic voice, one that is inseparable from the jungle through a type of metamorphosis, criticizes the extractivist capitalist and anthropocentric relationship between humans and nonhumans that inherent from colonization:

Ya no castigues la selva
 con tus espolones y tu machete,
 hulero,
 que los hulares lloran glóbulos blancos
 por su propia muerte.
 Oye el grito de tu hermano engañado
 que perdió sus brazos o piernas
 en el frente de batalla
 y tú robas glóbulos blancos a la selva
 para que se las pongan de caucho. (24)

The poem recasts the act of harvesting latex from rubber trees into an act of violence.

Latex is extracted from rubber trees through a series of cuts in the rubber tree, where it is collected in a bucket. From a capitalist perspective, this is routine agricultural work. The

poetic subject speaks on behalf of the rubber trees, presenting a vegetable perspective of the as they watch their *hermanos* appear and mutilate their arboreal bodies. The term *hermano* ties humans and plant life together in a material and imagined sense. In this section of the poem, the poetic voice attempts to mediate the relationship between humans and nonhumans, objecting to the way that capitalist agricultural practices are exploiting nonhumans. The adjective *engañado* elaborates on the current relationship between the workers and the rubber trees. The division of humans and nature works as a general way of understanding humanity's deception of nature as it continually ignores and marginalizes nonhumans. The plant's weeping is the moment of *desengaño*, or realization that this rubber plantation worker is violently exploiting the rubber tree. From this connection, Chávez is suggesting that both the rural plantation worker and the rubber tree are trapped in the same exploitative economic system, but to make matters worse, the human plantation worker is ignorant of their own hypocrisy when exploiting the rubber tree for profit. The hallmark image of exploitation for the poem is the depiction of one exploited being blindly exploits another. The last two lines that evoke the frontline of war are critical for the poem's understanding of nature and environmentalism since they operate on what are largely considered exclusively human revolutionary ideals.

In the remaining lines of the stanza, the poetic voice narrates how profit-driven agribusiness does more than harm domesticated flora but also species that may not be beneficial or necessary to human survival:

Tus piernas, tus manos
serán envenenadas
por las víboras sublevadas
contra la guerra. (24)

The threat of snakes biting and poisoning rural workers is a common image in Central American literature, particularly in the “banana social protest” novels like *Flor de banana* by Joaquín Beleño (54). As workers were ordered to cut down more forests to clear land for plantation, their contact with venomous snakes increased and many of these workers died from the bites. In this stanza, however, snakes are understood as subjects, not biting out of instinct or threat, but as combatants on the frontline of war. The poetic subject acts as the voice of warning, saying that the snakes will revolt not out of a mechanical fear, but out of agency, choosing to attack the laborers that destroy their homes in favor of economic enterprise. The poem depicts the rural worker as a hypocrite willing to fight against human systems of economy and exploitation without recognizing how nonhumans have their own political agendas and are equally resisting oppression.

Hay una selva en mi voz goes beyond pointing out the hypocrisy of anthropocentric social justice movements. The prologue constructs an environmentalism that advocates for humans and nonhumans alike. In the concluding stanza, Chávez writes that “Mi voz es tanto para el jornalero/como para el presidente,/... Abarca desde sistemas solares/hasta las moléculas del pólen” (10). The poetic voice’s basis for environmental advocacy depends on the material connection between all biotic entities. The poetic voice speaks to the whole of humanity and nature as one a network or system of subjects that are created from the same cosmic material. The voice’s message is directed to the microscopic units that construct the fabric of life in order to put that materiality of life to undo the divisions of species, race, class, etc.

While the collection doubles down on the environmental legacy of colonization and innovates attitudes toward the environment, it reflects the persistent issues of racism

during the twentieth century despite its focus on the material network that supposedly equalizes all living beings. In their introduction to a collection of essays on postcolonial ecologies, Elizabeth Deloughrey and George Handley discuss the possibility for postcolonial ecologies, such as the one that Chávez describes throughout the collection, to use displacement as the basis from which poetry can rewrite political ecologies: “biotic and political ecologies are materially and imaginatively intertwined, and one vital aspect of postcolonial ecology is to reimagine this displacement between people and place through poetics” (13). The context of colonization opens a space in which the material relationship between humans and land can be reimaged or analyzed. Colonization causes a rupture between the pre-colonial relationship between humans and land and the colonial relationship between humans and land. In that rupture, as Deloughrey and Handley suggest, a poetics can emerge that details not only a displacement between people and place, but also, I argue, an environmentalism that equally prioritizes human and nonhuman life and subjectivity that potentially allows for a non-racist ecological ethos. But the poem “III” from the section “Luna” of *Hay una selva en mi voz* illustrates how the poetic voice still associates blackness with a primitive relationship with the jungle:

Hay una voz en la selva
que en los huesos y en las hojas
va evocando la humedad;
voz de los congos,
voz de los brujos morenos
que cantan flores tan grandes (48)

The collection’s main theme of voices speaking from the jungle celebrates nonhuman subjectivity at the cost of animalizing non-white voices. This stanza exemplifies moments throughout the book in which black voices are represented through congo drums or

witchcraft as means of communication with the natural world in an effort to promote the subjectivity inherent in the jungle.

This results in the nonhumanization of black people instead of an anti-racist environmentalism. In the poem “III” from the section “Maquengue,” sympathizes with people of African descent and the colonial legacy of slavery but contextualizes dark skinned people as superstitious:

Pobre negro supersticioso,
 quiso comprar cinco millas de viento
 y le dieron el boreas
 con látigo quebradizo;
 látigo y rayo de pino
 que azuza la histeria morada
 del Caribe, (21)

The paternalistic tone of this stanza inaugurated with the adjective “pobre,” invoking pity, and the description of black slaves as superstitious produces a patronizing and racist perspective of black people in Central America. While the study of postcolonial ecologies focuses on the historical trajectory of the material and imagined relationship of human and nonhumans, moments such as these in *Hay una selva en mi voz* complicate how the racialization of humans are renegotiated as part of the political transformation of a nation into a decolonial state.

Chávez’s 1950 publication exemplifies an early shift in ecological consciousness rare for the middle of the twentieth century that addresses notions of liberty and equality although unable to develop them without retaining racist attitudes. The work responds to the totalitarian policies by challenging traditional ideas about nature and rethinking politics that recognize nonhuman subjectivity.

Conclusion

The poetry examined in this chapter exemplifies the complex intersection of Cold War history with nonhumans and politics in Central America in the 1950s, where writers grappled with failed revolutions and new ways of thinking about nature. Folgar's *Isla de novilunios* illustrates how new environmentalisms initiated in Cold War conditions. The publication date of this collection, 1954, marked a significant turning point in Guatemala's democratic and environmentalist history towards civil war. The nostalgic overtones of her poetry highlight the drastic ecological changes that Guatemala witnessed in the 1950s. Cuadra's "El poeta muerto" and "Himno nacional," with their focus on the material exchange of molecules in biological cycles, complement Cardenal's militant retelling of Cold War history in Nicaragua in which Sandinismo develops a politics that recognize the rights of nonhumans. *La tierra prometida* relies on the regenerative characteristic of nature in order to present nature as an active history in which humans and nonhumans interact constantly. The book of poems subverts the speciesist notion of humanity's superiority over the more-than-human world, but remains within the binary of nature/culture, nonetheless. The volume describes more-than-human processes that envelop all life on earth in one ecosystem in which matter at the atomic scale is in constant flux but still understands humans as the only species capable of government and governing, thereby leaving nonhumans without political voice. In *La tierra prometida*, there still exists the anthropocentric need to understand life through the discipline of history. Despite never abandoning the nature/culture dichotomy, Cuadra's book confronts anthropocentric politics and ideologies by recognizing the vital connection between humans and nonhumans.

Chávez's poetry contains similar rhetoric to Cuadra's "La hora cero." The poem relies on Cardenal's characteristic exteriorism by implementing historical documented events facts, integrating a critique of written history and violence against humans and nonhumans. Chávez's work is less concrete but equally insistent on political rights and avenues for revolutionary change in Nicaragua. "La hora cero" describes the material connection between Sandinista revolutionaries with nature and natural processes, contrasting the Somoza dictatorship as anthropocentric antagonist that has attempted to alienate humanity from nature, disconnecting human history from nonhuman history. Chávez's imagery and non-anthropomorphic intentionality of nonhumans agents challenge this alienation by showcasing nonhuman subjectivities with their own political agendas. Cardenal's poem operates through an almost scientific-poetic perspective, emphasizing humanity's part in biological cycles as bodies that decompose and are reborn in order for humanity to return to nature on the molecular level. The ecologically conscious moments of this poetry deconstruct human history and counter the economic and political structures of capitalism and Cold War politics that maintain a separation of humans and nonhumans.

Elizabeth Deloughrey's explanation of the decolonial implications of what Latin American literature clarifies how these Central American poets' collections politicize the "organic imagined community." Deloughrey expands on Lawrence Buell's theory of "environmentally oriented work":

Lawrence Buell's definition of an 'environmentally oriented work', which demonstrates that 'the nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history', might be expanded in a context where colonization, plantation slavery and green imperialism have already rendered an obvious connection between human and 'natural history' (65).

The works by Folgar, Chávez, Cuadra, and Cardenal I analyze reiterate this “obvious connection” between human and natural history that Deloughrey describes and tailors this connection to their particular Cold War context. Inheriting the exploitative legacy of colonialism, U.S. economic intervention in Cold War Central America subjugated both humans and nonhumans under imperial rule. The poems present decolonial politics as intrinsically environmentalist.

These texts present nonhumans as agents that respond to politic institutions and law instead of as passive objects. By depicting nonhumans in this way, the poetry takes an ethical position towards nonhumans that implies a moral responsibility to them. This Central American literature proposes that from a more-than-human history that establishes that humans and nonhumans are materially the same there exists some brand of equality that is inherent to natural cycles and systems of which humans are a part. The poetry does not suggest a politics based on evolutionary biology leading to a Central American Darwinism or deep ecology.⁷ Instead they compel readers to understand that both humans and nonhumans equally have a right to life, a right to exist on their own terms and outside of colonial rule.

These authors write about the regenerative characteristic of nature and its cycles to highlight capitalism’s exploitation and lack of sustainability. In discussing the antecedents for Western exploitation of nature, Santiago Castro Gómez’ conclusion that colonialism is applicable in the context of the U.S. capitalist influence in Cold War Central America: “[Colonialism] was not only about physically repressing the dominated

⁷ Greg Garrard concisely summarizes deep ecology as an environmental philosophy that advocates for nature as having intrinsic worth and that the human population must decrease in order to respect nature. Read further on deep ecology in Garrard’s book, *Ecocriticism*.

populations, it was about getting them to naturalize the European cultural imaginary as a way of relating to nature, the social world, and their own subjectivity” (Castro Gómez 281). By referring to natural history and by placing humanity within nature, Cuadra and Cardenal’s collections oppose dichotomies that separate nature and humans as well as (neo)colonial economic structures that perpetuated the subjection and exploitation of humans from colonial period to the twentieth century. Both books denaturalize the U.S. cultural imaginary as a way of relating to nature through a decolonial politics anchored in environmental history.

Chapter 2: The War on Nature: Marxism and Slow Violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua

During the Cold War, many Central American writers accused U.S. corporations and capitalism more broadly of having waged war on nature. Central American literature testified of both indirect and direct attacks on nature in which nonhumans were casualties or victims through scorched earth campaigns and deliberate pollution. The notion of war on nature suggests that a group of people declare war on plant and animal life. Defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, war is the state of armed conflict between two countries or groups within one country. This bare-bones definition supposes a conflict motivated by ideology or politics alone but does not suggest that the armed conflict recognizes the environment a network of human and nonhuman subjects that are enemy, friendly, or neutral. Instead, war is understood as an anthropocentric conflict, in which humans on one side fire at the other. American cinema's love affair with Cold War Latin America under the Reagan Administration produced a film that depicts what a war on nature may look like. John McTiernan's *Predator* (1987) takes place in an undisclosed Central American jungle, where a squad of commandos led by "Dutch" Schaefer (Arnold Schwarzenegger) attempts to escape from an invisible alien warrior. Soon after the predator has claimed the life of one of the commandos, another one yells, "Contact!" and opens fire in the general direction of the creature. The next ninety seconds are filled with shots of "Dutch" and company walking to their comrade's side as they all brandish an assortment of automatic rifles, firing hundreds of rounds into the trees. Leaves, branches, and tree trunks split and fall to the ground in a flurry of violence as the squad carves out

an opening in the otherwise dense jungle growth. In this scene, they never hit their target, the elusive predator, only the vegetation within range of their guns.

While the scene superficially is not much more than a Hollywood portrayal of masculine violence, it provides insight into how the civil wars, counterinsurgency operations, and military violence produced nonhuman casualties during the Cold War. The jungle scene is composed of plant life that was gunned down without provocation, the attackers never paused to consider the consequences of their violence on the jungle because they were focused on the elusive alien. Likewise, many of the tactics used by the CIA and Central American militaries inflicted devastating harm onto the landscape as a result of their violent actions towards humans. Central American writers responded to this violence by emphasizing that the casualties of war are both human and nonhuman inhabitants of the environment. This reaction echoes what environmental historian Daniel Faber bleakly concluded about Cold War Central American armed conflicts: “The military strategy of counterinsurgency is thus one of ecocide and genocide: to isolate and destroy the environment and traditional Indian communities that support the revolutionary movement” (214). In the armed conflicts of Central America’s Cold War, the military assaulted nonhumans assuming that they had partial political allegiance. Ecologically engaged Central American literature typically does not focus on the military’s perspective of the environment, only the outcomes it produced. This omission results in critiques of capitalist environmental damage that indirectly targeted nonhumans. The military’s assumption that nonhumans would align with insurgent groups allows for a nonhuman subjectivity that ironically originates from the abstraction of humanity from nature. That is to say, although military groups carried out the violent

enforcement of Cold War capitalist ideals, by directly targeting nonhumans as potential participants in revolutionary politics, military operatives treated nonhumans and the environment at large as entities that engaged in human politics. This would change in the Sandinista government when some Nicaraguan poets inscribed nonhumans into revolutionary politics.

Ecologically conscious Central American authors participate in the complex Cold War dialogue that balances potential nonhuman subjectivity with the development of environmentalisms in the face of state-sponsored environmental injustices. The first section of this chapter relies on Erika Beckman's conceptualization of capital fictions to illustrate how authors merged anti-capitalism and environmentalism. Beckman's 2013 book, *Capital Fictions*, provides terminology that elucidates how Central American authors reacted to capitalism broadly through environmental discourse. Beckman uses the titular term "capital fiction" to describe how the promise of modernization that capitalism makes is never realized. In the introduction to the book, she describes the evolution of economic thought from the nineteenth to the twentieth century and how that impacts environmentalism. Beckman explains the fiction of capitalism through some of Latin America's most famous and revered thinkers, such as José Martí. According to Beckman:

Martí conjures a beautiful vision of rich agrarian landscapes, self-sustaining growth, and mutual cooperation between plantation owners, European investors, and indigenous workers. Yet these fantasies – which reached their democratic and inclusive height with Martí – would always be undermined by the material logic of export-led modernization, which tended to privilege the creation of privately owned surplus value over the needs of citizens. (xxiv)

Beckman's research addresses the early twentieth century, when U.S. companies had entrenched themselves into Central America's landscape and economy. However, the

same discourse of modernization existed throughout the Cold War period in Central America as the elite classes and foreign businessmen still argued that their industries would benefit whole nations, not just the top fraction of wealthy landowners. Beckman's interpretation of Martí does not fit with capitalism in the latter half of the twentieth century. During the Cold War, this same economic plan existed, guided by the political elite interested in reinforcing North American economic and cultural ideals. In contrast to Martí, these elite shifted their political focus from bolstering lower and rural classes to increasing the wealth of the upper classes. The discourse of modernization remained a foundational ideology in the second half of the twentieth century. In this chapter, I argue that physical war waged throughout this period and its impact on the environment changed how writers responded to the promises of modernization for both human and nonhumans populations in Central America.

Not all writers from the region reacted to this shift in the political elite's attitude in the same way. Several prominent isthmus writers that primarily come from lower or rural classes but are educated write poetry with a distinct literary militancy, reflecting the immediate violence of warfare. Guatemalan poets Alenka Bermúdez and Anaima Café and Salvadorans Luis Luna and Martivón Galindo are writers who represent this perspective and are examples of how writers reveal the fictitious character of capitalism's promise of modernization. I would also classify writers such as Daisy Zamora, Joaquín Beleño, Roque Dalton and Otto René Castillo as part of this vein of critique because their works reflects personal and local experiences related to Cold War violence and dialogue with Marxism in varying degrees. The second section of this chapter is defined by well-educated writers from higher classes who develop more philosophical and ideological

perspectives towards the environment and describe environmental damage in regional and national terms. These writers draw connections between Cold War politics, North American economic imperialism, and environmental damage by criticizing the United States' aggressive capitalist agribusiness model that profited off of the Central American rural poor at the cost of environmental degradation. In this section, I focus on Pablo Antonio Cuadra and Ernesto Cardenal, but understand Claribel Alegría, Joaquín Beleño, and Romelia Alarcón de Folgar to fit into this category as well. I reexamine Cuadra's and Cardenal's poetry in this chapter to illustrate how their own environmental ethos changed as politics and government shifted in the 1970s and 1980s.

Both sections clarify how environmentalism did not develop uniformly in Central American literature despite Mesoamerican nations sharing similar histories of North American economic and environmental intervention. The first section reflects grassroots environmentalisms that borrow from local experience and Marxism. This literature champions a politics that emphasizes that, in Marxist terms, the abstraction of labor creates an abstraction of humanity from nature. These Central American writers consider the conservation of nature as one viable option against extractivist capitalism, arguing that through an anti-capitalist politics humanity can be reconciled with nature. The second section also examines rural environmental degradation but participates more holistically in Cold War ideological debates. The authors from this section define capitalism, specifically agribusiness, as a type of latent war on nature. The underlying assumption in this corpus of writing that I engage associates slow violence with foreign-owned businesses that took advantage of weak enforcement of environmental legislation in Central America to knowingly dispose of hazardous waste irresponsibly in order to

profit. Their poetry relies on imagery of the physical repercussions of contamination in humans and nonhumans in order to construct the idea of pollution as a type of warfare. They considered contamination as a tangible result of the ideological frontline of the Cold War between capitalism and other economic systems. When these authors' perspectives are placed in a linear timeframe, Central American environmental history, pollution emerges as one of the principle consequences of Cold War capitalism. This chapter teases out a poetics of environmental thought emerges in Central American politics, particularly in the Sandinista revolution.

Facing the Fiction: Case Studies of Environmental Degradation as a Byproduct of Capitalism in 1980s Guatemalan and Salvadoran Poetry

The 1980s were a pivotal moment in the Cold War in Central America. New voices, like the crucial *testimonio* that Rigoberta Menchu wrote with Elizabeth Burgos, gained international attention detailing the horrors that Cold War politics kept hidden. In the 1987 anthology of Central American women's poetry, *Ixok amar go*, Zoë Anglesey compiles poetry that criticizes the period's politics of war and opens up possibilities for peaceful solutions: "This book is an act. An action, a work for peace... Peace is not the theme of these poems because peace is not part of the reality in Central America" (xxv). One of the contributions to *Ixok amar go* by the lesser-known Guatemalan writer Alenka Bermúdez, "Guatemala, tu sangre," exemplifies the women's and rural perspective from the anthology that critically engages with environmental injustices. "Guatemala, tu sangre" is a free form piece with a militant style that is common in the anthology. Her poem questions the complex legacies and consequences of colonialism and Cold War

extractivist capitalism on the rural poor and the environment. Bermúdez begins her poem with an epigraph derived from “Explico algunas cosas” by Pablo Neruda: “Por qué su poesía/no nos habla del sueño, de las hojas/de los grandes volcanes de su país natal?/Venid a ver la sangre por las calles” (128). While Neruda’s poem refers to events in Spain, the epigraph links the bloodshed and thwarted democracy of the Spanish Civil War with similar circumstances in Guatemala. The Mayan genocide of the early 1980s, one theme in “Guatemala, tu sangre,” was evidence of the interrupted democracy of Central American military dictatorships that enjoyed U.S. support under the Reagan Administration.

For Bermúdez and many other poets, it did not make sense to think of nature as an abstract, idealized wilderness since that was not their lived reality. As in the case of many environmentalist movements, Bermúdez writes from her local lived experience, from a specific place that has been altered to the point that she recognizes changes in the landscape and human well-being:

y cuando se depredan las raíces se cambian de curso
 los ríos y se inundan los cauces de veneno y todo
 se muere todo se muere
 cuando la savia se ve amenazada acorralada escondida
 maniatada aniquilada a qué participio acudir (128)

The poet’s portrayal of the landscape as a polluted, destroyed, and violent reality notes specific ways that humans altered the environment. The lines “se depredan las raíces se cambian de curso/los ríos” points to some of the larger infrastructural projects in Guatemala and other Central American countries during the Cold War. Hydroelectric projects built during the Cold War in Guatemala required the rerouting of rivers in order to be built. Their construction resulted in the massive destruction of nonhuman habitats as

well as unprecedented massacres of indigenous villages and communities that corresponded with the images in this poem. The government of Guatemala also completed construction on several dams from the 1960s through the 1990s, two of which were finished in the early 1980s contemporaneously with Bermúdez's poem. The Chixoy dam, completed in 1983, was one of the largest dams in the country. This project in particular was mentioned in a report to the World Bank written by two Lead Environmental Specialists near the end of the Cold War. The specialists note that the dam's construction displaced 3,445 people (Ledec and Quintero 22). However, further investigation shows that those displaced were from the Río Negro indigenous community. The construction of the hydroelectric project led to the Río Negro massacre in which historians suspect that the government sent troops to kill thousands of indigenous people. This is reflected in Bermúdez's image of the parentless, starving child in later stanzas. Nathan Einbinder reports that the government labeled the Río Negro indigenous community, alongside 23 other indigenous groups, as "guerrillas" after refusing to leave the projected dam site (15). Einbinder describes the purpose of the dam as a type of First World environmentalist endeavor that reflects Western ecological priorities instead of being a source of renewable energy that addressed local needs. The dam would generate energy for the growing industrial bourgeoisie despite the construction company's promise that these dams would serve the rural populations in the surrounding area (16).

The construction of the Chixoy dam and the subsequent removal and massacre of indigenous groups exemplifies how financial institutions that are heavily influenced by the United States prioritize production and wealth for business owners and urban elite over the well-being of rural humans and nonhumans. Bermúdez illustrates the

consequences of war, highlighting how projects like the Chixoy dam that were funded by the World Bank led to the murder of thousands of marginalized people in the name of development and environmentalism in Guatemala. The report that George Ledec and Juan David Quintero wrote distinguished between “good” and “bad” dams, examining the impact of different dams that the World Bank had funded in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

The authors explicitly state the reason for such a report:

Large hydroelectric dams... have been the focus of much criticism of the World Bank. Defenders of large dams note that they are often the economically least cost-effective course of electric power available, especially to large urban centers; they are a renewable electricity source, and most other power generation technologies also imply significant adverse environmental impacts. (1)

Ledec and Quintero later list sixteen common harmful ways that large dams have affected people and the environment in Latin America, each with a paragraph-long suggestion on how to mitigate the problems caused. Several of these harmful consequences Bermúdez mentions in her poem: the changed course of rivers, polluted water, increased poverty in and alienation of marginalized groups. The World Bank, founded in 1945 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., is representative of the shift in the global market towards American capitalist economic practices with countries focusing on development and the generation of capital. While in the 1970s and 1980s the World Bank promoted the construction of dams under the guise of sustainability, it did so without taking into consideration the environmental damage and cost of human life required to complete large hydroelectric projects. Ledec and Quintero reiterate that these projects were expected to ignore the communities where hydroelectric infrastructure was to be built in the first paragraph on the first page of their report, when they say that dams provide energy “especially to large urban centers” (1). The hydroelectric projects that the World

Bank funded essentially create an energy infrastructure for the elite, heightening class disparity at the cost of indigenous lives. “Guatemala, tu sangre” criticizes this by deconstructing the capital fiction of work and wealth for marginalized groups.

Another stanza of Bermúdez’s poem links the destruction of the environment more directly with the living conditions of marginalized groups by addressing the military’s genocidal campaign against indigenous peoples. The poem details how the human inhabitants near the construction site of the dams were killed by the military. The poetic voice recreates the living conditions of rural Guatemalans that, as promised through the fictions of capitalism, are supposed to be benefiting from extractivist industries:

como describir la mesa vacía los ojos abismales
pequeños vientres abultados frentes deformadas
de mecapan carga incesante por los siglos
horizontes de humo incendiados petates
comales ausentes poquedad en la olla sobria a fuerza de poquedad – (128)

Bermúdez’s imagery conjures a scene of poverty and the deliberate military attack of a community. In this stanza, the focus is on hungry and displaced children that as a metonym for the legacy of environmental and genocidal injustices that indigenous groups have suffered for centuries. The images of poverty that Bermúdez presents reflect the scenes of destruction caused by the extractivist industries that are responsible for the pollution of the rivers and the construction of dams. The “frentes deformadas de mecapan” carrying the “carga incesante por los siglos” alludes to the centuries of unjust labor conditions that indigenous peoples have been burdened with in service of foreign oppressors. The *mecapan*, a type of backpack whose main strap runs across the forehead, would only deform the forehead when the pack is consistently too heavy. While the

mecapal has been used for carrying loads in pre-colonial times, the image of the deformed forehead in this stanza hints at the continued repressive economic structure that enslaved and overworked indigenous groups since colonization and throughout the Cold War. The poetic image of the “incendiados petates” was a common image of villages that the military razed under the assumption that indigenous and rural groups were supporting guerrilla fighters. The Río Negro massacre was only one of many massacres in the 1980s. State-sponsored violence culminated in a counterinsurgency campaign that murdered and disappeared over 200,000 Mayan people (Holocaust Museum Houston). This stanza, and the image of the scorched villages show an aftermath of those attacks that the government actively overlooked.

These projects had innumerable consequences on the nonhuman populations of rural Guatemala. Guatemalan writer and translator Anaima Café, whose son was killed in a military raid, offers an environmental critique of nonhuman population decreases in rural Guatemala. In the fifth entry of a selection titled “Seis poemas,” also included in the *Ixok amar go* anthology, the poetic voice laments the incalculable effect of constructions like dams and overharvesting in the form of deforestation:

Se están extinguiendo
 especies
 vertiginosamente
 El Agua Sagrada
 se fue de los ríos
 y del cielo
 En aquel valle
 de fuentes y árboles
 donde
 la sonrisa
 se apaga
 amargada (142)

This is one section of a poem divided into six parts that provides a backdrop to the projects like the Chixoy dam and Río Negro massacre that emphasizes the environmental consequences of large-scale human development. The whole poem is enveloped in a series of poems that relies heavily on the poetic voice's nostalgia for "el canto/que llama al agua/desde mi niñez" (142). "Seis poemas" proposes a latent nostalgia in its environmentalist tone. The poetic voice remembers how the landscape was in the past, which enables it to witness the destruction that happens years later. This part of the fifth poem tangentially refers to either hydroelectric projects or other forms of development that alter preexisting watersheds. The loss of water "en aquel valle" of the poetic voice's childhood is in part responsible for the extinction of nonhuman populations at the cost of uneven development for the local community compared to urban and wealthy parts of the country.

The images of the environmental degradation and destroyed communities reflect the physical repercussions of the Cold War ideology behind the 1980s counterinsurgency campaign in Guatemala. The poetic voice does not differentiate between indigenous groups and their political affiliations, but as Einbinder explains in his report of the Río Negro massacre surrounding the controversial Chixoy dam, the counterinsurgency campaign assumed that all indigenous communities supported the revolutionary movement. The Guatemalan government relied on this generalization to justify the violent removal of indigenous groups from projects like dams that would benefit non-indigenous majority groups. The text provides anecdotal evidence of governmental actions based on this broad misconception of indigenous and rural populations as enemies of the state.

While Bermúdez criticizes the environmental impact of capitalism on local environments through images that evoke scenes of recurring, concentrated attacks on local environments and humans, other writers focus on the ideology that motivates such attacks rather than their effects. Luis Luna exemplifies poetry that does not shy away from Marxist rhetoric when criticizing the ecocide and genocide that counterinsurgency strategies promoted. Similar to Anaima Café and Alenka Bermúdez, Luna is a lesser-known poet whose works are only found in anthologies. His poems in Roque Dalton's collection, *Poemas clandestinos*, are emblematic of young Salvadoran writers who followed in Dalton's footsteps while elaborating on his politics. Luna's poetry evolves from his literary influences by putting ecology and Marxism into dialogue. I analyze Luna's version of environmentalism retroactively through more contemporary readings of Marx's theories of nature. Luna's poetic voice presents an ideology that engages the relationship between environmentalism and Marxism with the notion that most environmental movements are actually social justice campaigns in disguise. Naomi Klein, in her book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, poses the question upfront: "And perhaps [the environmental movement] shouldn't even be referred to as an environmental movement at all, since it is primarily driven by a desire for a deeper form of democracy, one that provides communities with real control over those resources that are most critical to collective survival" (295).

Luna addresses how his poetry indicates that the environmental movement is more than a social justice movement, opening up the possibility of an environmentalism that is not just concerned with human needs. Klein's suggestion that environmental movements are in reality more concerned about human welfare further ignores the needs

of nonhumans. This reduces debates about the environment to a one-sided discussion about humans and their need to survive. Luna's poetry portrays an environmentalism that is concerned with the well-being of nature and suggests conserving green space. John Bellamy Foster's book, *Marx's Ecology*, connects Marxist thought with concerns about the environment, not just the anthropocentric consumption of natural resources. Foster relates the notion the liberation of nature from capitalism from one critical quote from Marx: "The view of nature which has grown up under the regime of private property and of money is an actual contempt for the practical degradation of nature" (20). From there, Foster concludes that:

The domination of the earth itself, for Marx, took on a complex, dialectical meaning derived from his concept of alienation. It meant both the domination of the earth *by* those who monopolized land and hence the elemental powers of nature, and also the domination of the earth and of dead matter (representing the power of landlord and capitalist) *over* the vast majority of human beings... In this sense Thomas Müntzer declares it intolerable that 'all creatures have been made into property, the fish in the water, the birds in the air, the plants on the earth – all living things must also become free'. (74)

The creation of property and the commodification of labor, for Marx and Foster, reinforce the human/nature binary. The endorsement of this ontological separation of humanity from nature explains how capitalism alienated nonhumans in order to profit. Luna's work hinges on what capitalism has done to the environment after alienating humanity from nature. The concept of property, as Foster iterates in his citation of Thomas Müntzer, is key in Luna's poetry as well because the label of property given to land ultimately relegates nature to capitalism's control. Through conservation, Luna argues, nature can be liberated from the oppression of capitalism and by extension from the United States' influence.

One of Luna's poems clarifies how anti-capitalism through conservation can function as more than a social justice movement. His poem "Sobre modernas ciencias aplicadas" lays the groundwork for an environmentalism that is concerned for nature on its own terms while denouncing capitalism's impact on the environment. Luna does this by taking an approach that evokes the Latourian advice of throwing out "ecology:" "La ecologia es el eco/producido por el estruendo/con que el capitalismo destruye el mundo" (81). The poem begins with a bold proposition, suggesting that ecology as a scientific study is related to the destruction that capitalism produces. The *estruendo* caused by capitalism is both literal and figurative. The volume of noise alone that the majority of capitalist projects produce, whether they are manufacturing, harvesting, or construction, damages and displaces animal and insect populations from the work site. Extractivist capitalism in particular, as it physically reshapes landscapes, reflects "el estruendo/con que el capitalismo destruye el mundo" (81). The poem asserts that the ecology echoes the sound of destruction that capitalism produces. As a metaphorical reverberation and not the true source of that echo, for Luna, the science of ecology emanates from the devastation that comes from extracting resources and environmental damage. The scientific pursuit of ecology has environmentalist goals but, according the poem, cannot escape its dependency on capitalism's ecological consequences.

The second stanza of the poem elaborates on the notion of ecology as a system of knowledge that is tied to capitalism: "Pues, independientemente de lo que diga la Universidad,/la ecologia es más que una ciencia es/un discreto velo" (81). In this line of the poem, ecology becomes an indirect capital fiction due to its reliance on capitalism. Luna's work specifically trivializes academic institutions and their definition of ecology.

This line in the poem positions non-academic knowledge about the environment against institutionalized education and marks how anti-capitalist poetry develops an environmentalism that differs from an institutionalized definition of ecology. According to the poetic voice, academic ecology is a “discreto velo” that cannot conceal its own hypocritical attachment to capitalism. The poetic voice implies that the university system is involved with capitalism in the same way that academically defined ecology is a “discreto velo.” Universities are associated with progressive thinking and have often been the site for the development of anti-capitalist thinking. By dismissing the university’s ability to produce ecology without it being hypocritical, the poem suggests that educational institutions contradict themselves with production of self-defeating knowledge. In this way the poem indirectly assumes that universities, despite their rejection of capitalism, are entangled in capitalist economics.

Luna’s alleged hypocrisy of ecology resonates with David Harvey’s theoretical framework surrounding capitalism’s ability to profit from ecological crises. David Harvey explains how ecology can facilitate capitalist enterprise when natural disasters take place, despite the assumption that companies will lose money and resources:

Capital in fact thrives upon and evolves through the volatility of localized environmental disasters. Not only do these create new business opportunities, they also provide a convenient mask to hide capital’s own failings: it is that unpredictable, capricious and willful shrew ‘mother nature’ who is to blame for the misfortunes that are largely of capital’s making. (255)

Harvey suggests that capitalism reproduces the human/nature divide while encouraging the discourse of ecology as a way of sustaining economic inequality. The label “ecology” substantiates the assertion that “mother nature” is power, but Harvey’s critique targets companies that profit from governmental funds, charities, and other organizations that

pay for the reconstruction of devastated cities, often initiating gentrification and displacing people. The poem follows a similar logic in later stanzas: “la unica posibilidad de ser importante/que tiene la ecologia/es seguir siendo un negocio” (81). That is to say, ecology is a business that is rooted in capitalism’s discourse of development. The text’s asserts that academic ecology is only profitable, in the monetary and the environmentalist sense, in a capitalist economic system. The poem clarifies the connection between the science of ecology and capitalism’s business model in the same stanza of the poem: “De su validez y eficacia puede decirse/que... la destrucción capitalista/siga produciendo ganancias a los dueños del mundo (81). Whatever façade “la destrucción capitalista” employs, pollution, natural disaster, or otherwise, for the poetic voice there is a direct connection between it and profit for wealthy elites. This attitude reflects Harvey’s assessment of capitalism’s reliance on the human/nature dichotomy:

Nature is necessarily viewed by capital – and I must stress that it may be and is viewed very differently within capitalism as a whole – as nothing more than a vast shore of potential use values – of processes and things – that can be used directly or indirectly (through technologies) in the production and realization of commodity values. (250)

Luna’s “Sobre modernas ciencias aplicadas” is in line with Harvey’s assessment of capitalism’s relationship to nature. The poem suggests a non-scientific, anti-capitalist environmentalist response to extractivist capitalism as long as capitalist destruction remains “más importante que la conservación ambiental” (81). The poem does not detail how conservation of the environment operates or functions, although it does suggest that nature has its own worth outside of a capitalist system. Luna places conservation directly opposite capitalist destruction of the environment for profit.

This kind of ecological protection contrasts with other national environmentalist movements produced around the globe in the twentieth century that have partitioned land to protect it. Much of the environmentalist movements of the early and mid-twentieth century in the United States, for example, hoped to create national parks so that campers, hikers, birdwatchers, and other nature enthusiasts could enjoy nature. Americans John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and David Brower all fought for landscapes to be preserved, but not left alone. Luna's poem advocates for environmental conservation without any capitalist ties suggests the creation of ecological reserves that remain completely outside of human exploitation, including human pleasure. Luna also differs from contemporary poets who merge Marxist critique with environmentalism. Martivón Galindo's poem from the *Ixok amar go* anthology, "Amo mi país... ¿Es ése un delito?" reflects on environmentalist attitudes that are more concerned with global health rather than local circumstance. In the first few stanzas of the poem, the poetic voice describes class disparity between the wealthy elite who benefit from capitalism and the lower classes obligated to participate in capitalism under their direction:

Yo, arquitecta de los ricos,
 creadora de suntuosas mansiones arrancadas a las faldas de los cerros
 de jardines con piscinas, de cocinas con pisos de azulejos importados,
 de baños con mármoles de Italia recargados. (184)

Galindo's work differs from Luna's by dialoguing with the global economy of the wealthy. Their mansions were "arrancadas a las faldas de los cerros" from not only El Salvador, but from Italy and other nations that export tiles, suggesting that mining companies created local and global quarries, effectively multiplying the ecological crises around the world to build mansions. The poetic voice mockingly speaks for the wealthy

that reside in El Salvador, critiquing their participation in environmental destruction worldwide.

Galindo's poem shifts in tone in the following stanzas, focusing on how the environment responds to economic projects for foreign business, even ecotourism:

Amo a mis volcanes que blasfeman rabia y lava,
y más que nada al que le silbó la vieja
al hotel de montaña con terraza al frente,
y no aventó ya nunca más su llama
para ser fotografiado por turistas gringos. (186)

For the poetic voice, the volcanoes are exercising agency and refuse to erupt for the tourist's pleasure. They defy the lucrative resort built to attract foreign nature-viewers for revenue, making them anti-capitalist landscapes. Ursula Heise, when talking about U.S. environmentalism and the push for the creation of national parks, describes an uneven distribution of privileges of encounters with nature that fall along race and class lines, leaving only white people who could afford privileged encounters with nature to go out and experience the "wilderness" (30). Galindo's poem similarly critiques the stratification latent in socioeconomic class disparity that allows wealthier people to enjoy "wilderness," but expresses this criticism through the voice of the volcano itself: "no aventó ya nunca más su llama para ser fotografiado por turistas gringos" (186). This stanza in particular questions the idea of conservation for humanity's benefit, as does Luna's notion of conservation. Neither Luna's nor Galindo's poem elaborates on any method to best protect the environment, but both understand nature and environmentalism as means to promote anti-capitalist policy. The poem does not advocate for the creation of parks. Rather, the poem presents a relationship between humans and nonhumans of love and resistance against the commodification of nature,

whether that is the development and construction for the wealthy or ecotourism for the foreigner. “Sobre modernas ciencias aplicadas” focuses on local environmental and economic issues without offering an idealized nature as the place to become one with the world, to escape and find solace such as in the pastoral mode in the search of “wilderness” as Arcadia, or as a means of protecting indigenous communities. The lack of description or elaboration in both poems on conservation as a type of anti-capitalist environmentalism appears deliberate in the same way that the accusations the poetic voices level against capitalism and educational institutions are calculated.

The poem’s disdain of ecology as a science is unique for any Western environmentalism. Bruno Latour, in *Politics of Nature*, argues that political ecology still alienates nonhuman nature from humanity despite its best effort in bringing nature into human politics. Latour advocates for science, suggesting that scientific inquiry and study can bring nonhumans into human politics. While they are not perfect spokespeople for nature, they translate nonhuman existence in such a way that humans can comprehend other species. For Latour, after scientists perform this translation, they speak on behalf of nature so that nature’s interests become part of the political debate. “Sobre modernas ciencias aplicadas,” however, sees science as a tool of capitalism. The poem in question takes the science of ecology to task, believing ecology to be a “velo discreto”, but also an “ungüento lubricante” that keeps the capitalist machine running. The poem’s approach recognizes nature’s right to life and politicizes that right to resist capitalism instead of promoting a democratic and scientific relationship between humans and nonhumans. This notion of conservation as anti-capitalist contrasts Latour’s idea of recruiting scientists as spokespeople for nonhuman species in order to create an avenue for nonhuman

participation in human politics. By advocating for conservation, the text asserts that nature has its own inherent value. Conservation effectively thwarts capitalism's destruction of nature by halting or controlling resource extraction. Luna's poem arrives at the same conclusion Foster does without stating it in explicitly Marxist terms: "that alienation is at one and the same time the estrangement of humanity from its own laboring activity and from its active role in the transformation of nature" (Foster 73).

In my view, the works from Bermúdez, Café, Galindo, and Luna respond similarly to war on the Central American landscape. These poets examine how the Cold War was fought on a variety of fronts, ranging from decimated villages, toxic waste polluting rivers, to ideological warfare. What unites these Central American authors is their attack on the fiction that capitalism brings modernity, development, technology, peace, and wealth to all citizens of a nation. Bermúdez and Luna are quick to rebut this fiction albeit from different angles. Bermúdez and Café reference the tangible repercussions of capitalism and war on the land in general, humans and nonhumans, while Luna and Galindo take a pointedly ideological approach, focusing on the processes behind capitalism that accelerate destruction of the landscape. All of the literature that I analyze in this chapter emphasizes the need to understand local environments in their own contemporary contexts as evidence of Cold War politics unfolding in Central American landscapes.

Living in Slow Violence: The Promise of a New Ecology in Sandinista Nicaragua

While Bermudez' and Café's work emanates from specific, rural examples of the war on nature and Luna's and Galindo's poetry broadly engage capitalist discussions

surrounding Central American landscapes, none of the poets participate in a clearly defined and implemented environmentalism. Instead, they compile evidence of extractivism and counterinsurgency campaigns and synthesize it in their poetry. Their works distill their observation of social and environmental changes and contribute to the creation of environmentalist thought in literature in their respective countries. The Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua was a distinct moment in Central American Cold War history that reflects a unique environmentalism in the making what would later be incorporated into the Sandinista government of the 1980s. Celebrated Nicaraguan poets Pablo Antonio Cuadra and Ernesto Cardenal, while playing different roles in the Sandinista Revolution, have publications that trace the history of pollution in Nicaragua at the height of the Cold War. In this section, I examine how their writing mirrors the formation of a Sandinista and Nicaraguan environmentalism. Both Nicaraguan poets refer to the toxic byproducts of capitalism, responding to the same capital fiction that Bermúdez dismantles in her poem “Guatemala, tu sangre.” The case of Sandinista Nicaragua provides a unique insight to ecological issues from the time period because of the successful implementation of national environmentalist policies during the Cold War that includes overtly anti-capitalist rhetoric.

In the thirty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly held in 1979, Daniel Ortega, spokesperson for the new Sandinista government of Nicaragua, defined his country’s future in the context of the Cold War’s past in Nicaragua:

In our country the people, united and led by the Sandinist Front for National Liberation, defeated in an unequal battle the occupation troops which North American intervention had left behind after assassinating Sandino. In Nicaragua, we always saw in Somoza and his so-called National Guard the exemplification of foreign aggression. Only thus can

one understand the great unity of the people and the barbaric nature of the Somoza regime. (251)

Ortega's portrayal of Nicaragua's political and economic entanglements with North American intervention and support of Somoza throughout the twentieth century defines Sandinismo as the victim of the United States' aggressive foreign policy. For Ortega, Somoza's government is synonymous with North American imperialism as it played out during the Cold War. This association is fundamental for my analysis of Nicaraguan environmental history in the second half of the twentieth century. The foreign aggression that Ortega refers to is more than the U.S.-supported military attacks on democracy throughout Central America. North American intervention penetrated economic and environmental spheres through business agreements that benefited the Central American elite and U.S. ideological interests at the cost of the environment and marginalized rural classes. By 1979, the new Sandinista government faced the reality of massive ecological damage caused by decades of unchecked extraction policy during the Somocista regime. Published in the years leading up to the 1979 revolution, Cuadra's *Cantos de Cifar y del Mar Dulce* functions as an environmental and poetic history that recounts the health of Nicaragua's rural lake ecosystems during the decades of Somocista rule. Cardenal's *Vuelos de victoria*, his first publication after the Sandinista victory, contains poems that explain how the Sandinista government valued nonhumans and included them in the Revolution.

Capital Fictions by Erika Beckman examines the role of capitalism and its fictions of modernity in the first half of the twentieth century that would lay the foundation for environmentalisms to develop despite new iterations of capitalism during the Cold War. For Beckman, capitalism's fictions have tangible repercussions:

But what passes as impeccable logic today is rooted in a *fiction*, raised to previously unimaginable heights: that natural resources, together with human creativity and labor, “exist” only so that they might become alienable commodities. In the form lived today, under the hypercommoditized logic of neoliberalism, these fictions allow us to believe that the end of human existence is the market, not that the market exists to serve human needs. (viii-ix)

I understand Cuadra’s and Cardenal’s work published during the Cold War as literature that challenges the ideological foundations of capitalism that modern ontologies have accepted, particularly the category of “natural resources.” Their poetry blames the Somocista government’s contradictory stance towards watersheds and lakes. Beckman’s notion of capital fictions is apparent in these contradictions, where bodies of water were simultaneously a dumping ground for toxic waste and the main source of water for urban populations. Cuadra’s work depicts how Nicaragua’s lakes suffered by presenting the landscape as one that has surpassed the safe threshold of toxins, resulting in the death of waterfowl. After the Sandinista revolution, Cardenal’s poems challenge the relationship between nature and the market, recasting the human/nature dichotomy with a concern for the well-being of nonhumans as well as their inclusion in the revolutionary government. Not only does their poetry allude to the hypercommoditized logic of neoliberalism and how capitalism damages the environment, but it also traces an environmental history of Nicaragua that creates space for the agency of nonhumans to be translated into literature. The 1970s and 1980s in Nicaragua are pivotal in literary and environmental histories in how ecologically engaged publications debunk the myths of modernity that capitalism assures. These decades also impact environmentalism, and North/South relations for the remainder of the twentieth century.

The Sandinista government's environmentally friendly policies encouraged literary discussion on the ecological health of Nicaragua. When checking the condition of Lake Managua, the governmental organization over the environment, IRENA (Institute of Natural Resources), found that lake water contained hazardous levels of toxicity. By the time IRENA had evaluated the water, it was estimated that the city of Managua consistently dumped over 70,000 pounds of sewage a day into the lake, while the U.S. company Pennwalt had deposited about 40 tons of mercury in the same water between 1968 and 1981 (Faber 168-69). Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence links the constant pollution of the environment over several decades with written works that advocate for nature. He argues that literature can bring slow violence into the foreground of public awareness. Nixon explains that when slow violence is discovered, it is so far removed from its inception that it is often impossible to detect or combat:

In the long arc between the emergence of slow violence and its delayed effects, both the causes and the memory of catastrophe readily fade from view as the casualties incurred typically pass untallied and unremembered. Such discounting in turn makes it far more difficult to secure effective legal measure for prevention, restitution, and redress. Casualties from slow violence are, moreover, out of sync not only with our narrative and media expectations but also with the shifting seasons of electoral change. (8-9)

Nicaraguan poetry produced during the 1970s and after the Sandinista victory documents the casualties of slow violence perpetuated by capital fiction. Works from this era exemplify how environmental destruction produced human and nonhuman casualties. Cuadra and Cardenal show commitment to a sense of place in local ecologies. Slow violence, in conjunction with the fictions of capitalism, elucidates how Cuadra's and Cardenal's poetry historicizes slow violence's impact on the landscape and human/nonhuman network. Close readings of Cuadra and Cardenal elaborate on Nixon's

concept of slow violence through their portrayal of the accumulation of toxins in the Nicaraguan environment. Their poetry's imagery of environmental deterioration creates the locus from which capital fictions, slow violence, and Nicaraguan environmental history all converge in a literary history that critiques the ecology of Cold War capitalism.

Pablo Antonio Cuadra's *Cantos de Cifar y del mar dulce* is a collection of poetry functions as a compilation of ecological evidence accumulated throughout the history of a rural community situated on a fictionalized version of Nicaragua's great lakes. Authors and critics contemporary to Cuadra as well as present-day scholars often compare the book's oral narrative of the sailor Cifar to *The Odyssey*. Each poem, loosely in chronological order, outlines the history of Cifar and his many adventures out on the lake. Published in 1971, *Cantos de Cifar* has several poems that exhibit how slow violence manifests itself in the environment without identifying how the phenomenon that occurs. My reading of *Cantos de Cifar* goes against Nixon's assertion that the writer be necessarily a writer-activist. The collection details the life and health of lake ecosystems before IRENA revealed the level of hazardous waste in Nicaragua's lakes and watersheds. Cuadra's collection is a witness to slow violence based on a poetic voice whose sense of place accurately describes the deterioration of the lake's ecosystem without naming it, forming anecdotal evidence of pollution in rural Nicaragua. This collection, even without the author's intention to do so, connects toxic dumping from extractivist capitalist industries accumulated to the levels of contamination that IRENA found throughout Cifar's lifespan on the lake. Each time that slow violence reaches a tipping point, the poetry translates those physical repercussions to reflect different ways

that the rural communities of Nicaraguan lakes are connected to the conflicts of more immediate violence in urban communities and the general conflicts that the Cold War provoked in Central America.

Towards the end of the volume, the poem “El caballo ahogado” produces a decisive turn in the storytelling. Up until “El caballo ahogado,” the poems in their majority deal with the daily routine of rural human and nonhuman life on the lake and imagery of masculine sailors on the water. There are moments throughout the book in which the human and nonhuman relationship presented in the poems challenges the traditional modern dichotomy of culture versus nature. These instances in the poetry reflect the rural community’s ontology rather than critique modernity’s and capitalism’s ideological separation of humanity from nature. The book’s narrative refers to the lake community’s relative isolation throughout the collection, emphasizing its resilience to global or national influence.⁸ There is no clash of ontologies or ideologies representative of the Cold War and environmental degradation in Nicaragua until the poem “El caballo ahogado,” when the ecological connection between the rural community with outside ecosystems is compromised upon the arrival of a dead horse:

Después de la borrasca
en el oscuro silencio
miraron sobre las aguas
flotando
el caballo muerto. (131)

The first stanza ends with the image of the dead horse which is unusual for the volume. Storms are commonplace in the book, but the dead horse is evidence that the particular

⁸ Many poems from the beginning of the collection establish the ontologically and politically isolated environment for the rest of the book such as “El nacimiento de Cifar,” “Dijo Cifar;,” “La llamada,” and “Rapto.”

rainstorm in “El caballo ahogado” originated from outside of the lake community. Typically, horses are the symbolic companion animals of the rural worker, but for a human settlement that is based on the lake’s ecosystem, the horse is out of place. Boats instead function as a symbol of humankind’s adaption to their surroundings and how humans flourish in freshwater environments. By utilizing images of boats throughout the text, the poem differentiates between rural Nicaraguan communities and their own unique relationships with the environment.

Despite the collection’s focus on a sense of place, the localized environment of the lake is penetrated by an outside influence. I find utility in the phrase “sense of place” in the way that Ursula Heise defines it when she recounts the disillusionment of poet Robert Hass seeing his students struggle to identify characteristics of the local environment. She explains Hass’ interpretation of the phrase: “in order to reconnect with the natural world, individuals need to develop a “sense of place” by getting to know the details of the ecosystems that immediately surround them” (28). While her overall argument is against this “sense of place,” I modify this use of the term with Rob Nixon’s construction of a sense of place in order to examine how *Cantos de Cifar* illustrates a precise awareness of the changes in a local landscape over time that assumes the individual’s desire to develop a relationship with nature. Having a sense of place does not rely on human isolation in an environment, but rather on humanity’s knowledge of how an ecosystem operates. This inherent wish to “reconnect” with nature implies that humans are disconnected from nature and that there exists the possibility of reengaging with nature. A writer who possess this type of sense of place, according to Rob Nixon, will be ideally aware of the symptoms of slow violence surfacing in an ecosystem:

To confront slow violence requires, then, that we plot and give figurative shape to formless threats whose fatal repercussions are dispersed across space and time. The representational challenges are acute, requiring creative ways of drawing public attention to catastrophic acts that are low in instant spectacle but high in long-term effects. To intervene representationally entails devising iconic symbols that embody amorphous calamities as well as narrative forms that infuse those symbols with dramatic urgency. (10)

Central American writers address some of these representational challenges by witnessing environmental degradation manifest in a variety of ways, from the decrease of a species' population over time or sickness in human and nonhumans. Evidence of slow violence becomes visible in art when the writer describes how the accumulation of toxins in an ecosystem crosses the threshold of tolerance and the ecosystem cannot dispose of or filter out toxins.

While writers are equipped to reveal slow violence in localized communities when they produce literature with a sense of place, I argue that the introduction of the dead horse challenges the illusion of isolation that a sense of place creates. The river connects the lake ecosystem with the greater watershed network and shows how the community cannot exist in true isolation. The drowned horse is explained in the final stanza as a type of foreshadowing for the fate of the humans and nonhumans that live on the lake:

Sintieron
 como un extraño
 presagio
 y vieron
 una corona
 de gaviotas blancas
 en el viento. (131)

The indentation in the third line tilts like a camera, moving the reader's attention the same way as the sailor's, first looking at the horse then the birds in the sky. The shift in

the poetic gaze is accentuated by a line that describes the horse's eye as "abierto,/fijo su asombro en el cielo." (131). The poetic gaze becomes the vision of death looking at the horse and the birds and the horse's line of sight connects the two species as if the horse is watching the birds. The omen of the horse corpse signals how an outside influence will eventually pollute and corrupt the lake ecosystem, just as invasive species or contamination are able to alter whole ecologies and push out endemic species. In the case of the poem, the horse's cause of death is unknown. Rather than limiting the reader's understanding of the poem, the untold reason for the horse's death in conjunction with its figure as an omen reinforces its role as a type of embodied slow violence. The horse's condition will be passed on to the birds in the same way that the pollutants that are transmitted in rivers will spread into other organisms.

A few poems after "El caballo ahogado," "El cementerio de los pájaros" exemplifies the point in which the lake's ecosystem can no longer tolerate or filter out the eventual destruction that the horse represents. In "El cementerio de los pájaros" bird populations suddenly decrease inexplicably. Cuadra begins the poem narrating the arrival of Cifar to one of the many islands in Nicaragua's great lakes:

Arribé al islote
 enfermo
 fatigado el remo
 buscando
 el descanso de un árbol
 no vi tierra
 sino huesos.
 De orilla a orilla
 huesos
 y esqueletos de aves,
 plumas calcinadas,
 hedor
 de muerte,
 moribundos

pájaros marinos (135)

The unexplained cause of death of the birds intensifies the sense of mystery behind the image of dead and dying birds. The poem presents evidence that the death of the flock was unnatural, meaning that the lake's ecosystem was disturbed by some environmentally incompatible variable. The enjambment of the adjective *enfermo* in the second line of the poem is the first indicator that the birds suffered slow violence. The word *enfermo* is positioned such that it can describe one of two subjects of the poem: the island or the rower. Since enjambment is used to emphasize how multiple aspects of the poem are related, in the poem both the rower and the island are sick.

The concept of slow violence explains how the sickness and death of the island of birds is unexpected and unforeseeable. The problem with slow violence is its lack of immediacy, but this is not to say that there are not tangible repercussions that cannot be measured or otherwise quantified before the term existed. The image of the sick island and the devastated flock of birds function as a tipping point of slow violence. This is the threshold in which an animal or vegetable body can no longer filter out enough contaminants in order to keep its body healthy. This feeling of mystery in the poem differs from what Nixon says about confronting slow violence. *Cantos de Cifar y del mar dulce* is a collection that reveals a destruction that for Cifar is nameless by relying solely on a hyperaware sense of place of rural Nicaragua.

The image of the desolate island also represents what happened to the ecosystem of Nicaraguan lakes at large. *Cantos de Cifar* is a book that is concerned with one particular place, but that place is metonymic of similar ecosystems that are equally affected by slow violence. The cause of fatal contamination of the water in the lake-based

ecosystem where the rower and the birds live is likely the overuse of pesticides during the Somocista regime. Shawn William Miller's conclusions on Somocista Nicaragua state that: "Most river and aquifers were contaminated, and Nicaraguans suffered the highest number of pesticide poisonings of any nation per capita, 400 of which resulted in death each year" (208). The Somozas imported pesticides from U.S. companies. The majority of the insecticides used during the dictatorship were prohibited for use in the United States because of their profound impact on human and environmental health. Connecting slow violence with the notion of attritional catastrophes, Jorge Marcone describes how slow violence resembles a type of war in environmentalist documentaries about different Latin American environmental crises:

Rather, slow violence implies attritional catastrophes that overspill clear boundaries in time and space. It should include too, I would argue in the light of these documentaries, the war of attrition carried out by transnational corporations and even national governments against the resistance by locals and their transnational allies. (210)

The willful pollution of local environments is emblematic of the war against nonhumans in the context of the Cold War. The defense of capitalism and the freedom it championed was the principal ideological frontline for the United States during the Cold War. The development of unregulated industries located in Central America and funded through U.S. businesses left physical, toxic consequences in the environment that created casualties of war. To embrace damaging capitalist industry in support of businesses that favor U.S. economic practices is to accept environmental destruction.

"El cementerio de los pájaros" also nuances Nixon's concept of slow violence by centering its imagery on the birds themselves. In most cases of contamination, the first victims are smaller plants and animals that are unable to adapt to the influx of toxins.

Their deaths may go largely unnoticed, but ultimately make ecological issues more visible to humans that know how to read the landscape and have a sense of place. The poem foregrounds how polluted ecosystems impact nonhuman health instead of human well-being. The focus on birds shifts the inherent anthropocentric priority common in twentieth century environmentalism, illustrating key moments in the lake's collective, environmental history. Despite this change in ecological priority, I am not arguing that Nixon theorizes slow violence in an anthropocentric way. "El cementerio de los pájaros," although narrated through the human gaze, portrays the environment as a community with its own inherent value. Starting from the line "De orilla a orilla" after the first indents in the first stanza, a third person poetic voice takes over, holistically describing the devastation of the island and its avian inhabitants. When the poetic voice describes the island as sick, this is not metaphorical, but literal.

The final stanza of the poem more directly indicates that this sickness has infected the rower. Upon seeing the island, which the poetic "I" has dubbed "[a] cemetery/for song," the rower decides to turn away:

Con débil brazo
 moví los remos
 y di la espalda
 al cementerio
 del canto. (135)

In this last stanza, the poem returns to the first person singular and Cifar oddly describes himself as "weak." Throughout the book, the narrative and poetic voices rarely portray sailors in this way. The poems present the seamen as masculine figures with interminable strength and will to face danger and risk. The poems position masculinity against the catastrophic perils of nature in images of storms and other threats in order to celebrate men and their strength over the natural world. The use of the adjective "weak" may be to

imply a sense of defeat when faced with such awful desolation. However, when the “weak” arms are understood in the context of the ambiguous use of the adjective “sick” in the beginning of the poem, this final stanza implies a material and non-literary sense of sickness that overcomes Cifar. Just as the dead horse foreshadows the death of the birds, this poem’s image of the decimated avian population foretells the fate of the sailors on the lake.

After a violent storm seizes the boat in which Cifar is riding, the poem “Pescador” that announces the fate of Cifar: “Un remo flotante/sobre las aguas/fue tu solo epitafio” (137). Although Cifar’s death ultimately is caused by the contamination of the lake and other areas upstream, his passing represents the symbolic extinction of the community’s livelihood. The second person poetic voice in this poem is the only witness to Cifar’s death. I interpret this use of “tu” to be the lake addressing him. The environment incorporated Cifar into the ecosystem and recognizes “el remo flotante” as human tool that connected him to the lake. The disappearance of Cifar’s body completes the cycle of mystery of the dead horse’s origin. Just as the horse appears from nowhere and shows up in the lake community, Cifar’s body disappears only to potentially reappear in the same way that the dead horse did. Francisco Lasarte explains how this kind of corruption seeps through rural Nicaragua: “something else which threatens the Mar Dulce’s idyllic nature is the arrival of “civilization” and its attendant evils, social and economic injustice” (185). Lasarte focuses more on the threat of modernization broadly, citing socioeconomic inequalities, but one of the “attendant evils” that contributes to the injustice leveled against the rural residents of the lake is environmental injustice. Slow violence frequently occurs in poor, rural, and non-white regions and rarely do the communities that live in

these areas have enough legal representation even after enough evidence they have compiled to indicate that outside pollution is poisoning the area. The poem's subtle depiction of environmental injustice is a reality that unmasks the capital fiction of prosperity through modernization. With contamination and other outside influences disrupting the lake's ecosystem, Cifar's death and the conclusion of the volume of poetry are a swan song of rural Nicaraguan lake culture and the other lake-based species that die from pollution. In Cuadra's poetry, the image of the island that is home to the dead and dying birds poetically communicates the decimation of the ecosystem of Nicaraguan lakes at large.

The Sandinista revolution and victory that ushered in the 1980s in Nicaragua promised to rectify all injustices that people like Cifar and nonhumans like the flock of birds suffered, whether those injustices were environmental or otherwise. In his address to the United Nations in 1979, the then leader of Vietnam, Phan Hein, referred to a turn in Latin American politics, including how Nicaragua and other socialist countries were planning to reverse ecological damage:

In Latin America, the glorious victory of the Sandinist fighters and the heroic people of Nicaragua over the Somoza dictatorship has opened up a new page in the history of that nation... The Latin American countries, including those of the Caribbean region, are waging a tenacious struggle to consolidate their political and economic independence, to recover and preserve their natural resources and to promote their multifaceted co-operation. (Hein 261)

The Sandinista revolution was a response to the capital fictions that Somocismo promoted. The revolution would gain footing through a literary revival that equaled the ambition that Ortega advocated for in his speech. As Minister of Culture in the new Sandinista government, Ernesto Cardenal published *Vuelos de victoria* in 1983. The book

pays homage to the Sandinista victory and celebrates achievements made in the government's first four years. The collection covers the same political goals that Hein outlines in his speech, but specifically the poem "Nueva ecología" is emblematic of the Sandinista government's perception of the environment and ecological recovery after the revolution. This poem enumerates all of the environmental damage permitted by the Somocista regime and ends by advocating for human and nonhuman liberation from oppression through policies enacted by the Sandinista government.

Cardenal's *Vuelos de victoria* reflects a significant moment in the literary history of Latin American ecologically engaged writing. The book as a whole exemplifies how works from the second half of the twentieth century abandon allegorical readings of nature and nationalism common in *novelas de la tierra* and *novelas de la selva*. *Vuelos de victoria* responds to the reality of capitalism and its impact on the environment within the nation-state by relying on an objective, scientific, and anti-capitalist poetic style. Erika Beckman, when discussing José Eustasio Rivera's *La vorágine*, comments on the novel's implicit critique of poetry's "failure... to represent the economy in which the novel as a whole inserts itself" (179). The difference between *La vorágine* and "Nueva ecología" is the latter's recognition of capitalism's flaws. Rivera's novel is rooted in capitalism despite the protagonist's attempt to escape it; he continually comes up against and participates in capitalism. "Nueva ecología" grounds itself in the physical reality of the environment before and after the Sandinista revolution. By foregrounding ecological concerns and politics over allegorical readings of nature, *Vuelos de victoria* and "Nueva ecología" highlight a shift towards a kind of environmental realism in Central American literature produced during the Cold War. I understand Central American environmental

poetry during the Cold War, especially in the 1970s and on, to incorporate substantive anecdotal, observational, and scientific evidence in their imagery in order to produce a sense of realism. Cardenal's *Vuelos de victoria* employs this type of imagery in order to support Sandinismo and environmentalism in Nicaragua.

Cardenal opens "Nueva ecología" with several lines that emphasize the resilience of the natural world. The poet foregrounds the poem with optimism and presents the environment as a landscape recovering under Sandinismo. The image of the first stanza insists that nonhumans were able to remain hidden from or survive the persistent slow violence of the Somocista regime:

En septiembre por san Ubaldo se vinieron más coyotes.
 Más cuajipates, a poco del triunfo,
 en los ríos, allá por san Ubaldo.
 En la carretera, más conejos, culumucos...
 la población de pájaros se ha triplicado, nos dicen, (31)

The poem presents the revolutionary nation's environmental policies as though their impact were instantaneous. IRENA, as the principle investigative environmental branch of the government, was measuring the environmental damage left by the Somozas and the poem reflects their findings. The verse "la población de pájaros se ha triplicado" in the context of IRENA's findings is less of a literary exaggeration and more indicative of data sampling of bird populations. Adrian Taylor Kane reiterates the factual character of the poem by describing Cardenal's literary technique of exteriorism: "The aesthetics of 'Nueva ecología' are derived from the technique of exteriorism, which Cardenal defines as 'objective poetry, narrative and anecdotal, made with elements of real life and with concrete things, with proper names, details, date, statistic, facts and quotations'" (270). The subject and indirect object pronoun in "nos dicen" imply a plural poetic voice that is

well informed of the environment's recovery. Given the government's creation of IRENA and concern for the environment, and Cardenal's role in the revolutionary administration, it follows that Cardenal's use of exteriorism gives the poem a scientific and governmental authority and that the poetic voice is the collective voice of state officials and scientists gathering data. The poem leverages science as validation for the Sandinismo's environmental intervention, following up on the government's promise to "recover and preserve natural resources" (Ortega 261). Despite the objectivity that exteriorism offers, "Nueva ecología" is limited by its own human basis, resulting in the poem's assessment of nature through the nature/culture dichotomy. Scientific data collection and interpretation in "Nueva ecología" is an anthropocentric endeavor for classifying life in an ecosystem.

The following stanzas rely on exteriorism to condemn the unregulated accumulation of toxins during the Somoza regime. Cardenal begins by listing all of the rivers that have either been diverted for irrigation or the construction of dams or rivers that were the dumpsite for toxic waste:

Los somocistas también destruían los lagos, ríos, y montañas.
Desviaban el curso de los ríos para sus fincas.
...
El Río Grande de Matagalpa, secado, durante la guerra,
allá por los llanos de Sébaco.
Dos represas pusieron al Ochomogo,
y los desechos químicos capitalistas
caían en el Ochomogo y los pescados andaban como borrachos.
El río de Boaco con aguas negras. (31)

The Ochomogo and the Boaca rivers in this stanza are environmental histories embedded in a landscape shaped by slow violence. As rivers cut through landscape, they carve physical changes into the environment through erosion, flooding, and the transportation

of sediment from mountain watersheds to oceans. Ecologically conscious writers read river histories by observing how rivers evolve over time. When waterways are polluted, they transmit the legacy of slow violence through a landscape as the contaminants travel to other destinations and wash up on shores or plants absorb them. “Nueva ecología” relies on the Sandinista government’s sense of place acquired through scientific evaluation in order to inscribe the contaminated environmental history into poetry via exteriorism. In this way “Nueva ecología” is a poem that uniquely occupies a literary crossroads in Cardenal’s literary history in which scientific and governmental authority, evidence, and objectivity are paramount to the poetic style. The work retains Cardenal’s characteristic anti-capitalism. Kane concludes that the use of exteriorism in the poem is ultimately a critique of capitalism: “Indeed, the overall effect of the rivers in ‘Ecología’ is to portray a country sucked dry by greed and contaminated by a corrupt form of capitalism” (271).

The example of the Río Grande river in “Nueva ecología” depicts an ecological ruin that has even greater implications in the context of the Cold War. By declaring that the river was dried up “durante la guerra,” the poem identifies the time and space of slow violence within the 1970s. By placing the drying up of the Río Grande river in the chronology of the war, the poem reveals that the conflict produced nonhuman casualties. The text’s use of exteriorism in these lines about the rivers becomes politicized in the context of policy change towards nature in the new government. “Nueva ecología” goes beyond the Sandinista government’s use of science to assess environmental damage and suggests that the government can reverse that damage: “(Hay que verlo otra vez bonito y claro cantando hacia el mar)” (Cardenal 32). The parenthesis that encapsulates the line

removes the reader from the content of the poem in order to provide more political context for the poem's rhetoric. Kane's assessment of exteriorism in the poem is viable for much of the content of the poem, but just as scientific data is objective but biased in its presentation, the poem offers a deliberate politics behind that data that is subjective.

The Sandinista's response to capitalism's ecology is secular in "Nueva ecología" until the last stanzas of the poem. The poetic voice sidesteps its familiar exteriorist style and alludes to socialist Nicaragua as a type of Eden that challenges capitalist ecology. Although analyzing *El estrecho dudoso* (1966), Cardenal's epic on the colonization of the Americas, Stephen Henighan's examination of Cardenal's brand of liberation theology equally applies to how "Nueva ecología" treats Eden: "The Eden proposed by Cardenal in this Canto is not that of nature in its virgin state, but of settlements developing in a Christian-influenced harmony with nature" (118). By referring to the idealized version of Nicaragua as an Eden, Henighan connects Cardenal's religious leanings to his poetry. This suggests a theological component to the state-sponsored environmentalism developed in Cardenal's poetry, melding secular and non-secular constructions of nature. While I do not dispute this in a broad analysis of Cardenal's poetry, in "Nueva ecología" and other poems from *Vuelos de victoria*, religious themes are used in more generic ways to connect Sandinista policy with environmental concerns. In "Tortugas," also from *Vuelos de victoria*, the poetic voice ponders on how turtles multiply as a species and how Christianity and communism play into reproductive cycles:

el mismo acto en el mar por millones de años
 por amor
 a la especie humana
 y a su culminación
 el comunismo.
 El acto que se ha venido haciendo desde el principio del mundo.

y pienso en Mateo 19, 12:
 también esta el que no se casa
 por amor al reino de los cielos, al comunismo
 como una tortuga sola en mitad del Pacífico
 sola bajo el cielo
 desposada con el cielo. (57)

The scripture that the poetic voice cites is uncommonly referenced. The verse consists of a conversation that Jesus Christ has with disciples in which he praises those who choose to be eunuchs in order to build the kingdom of God. “Tortugas” reinterprets this biblical teaching by equating communism and nonhumans’ reproduction to the “amor al reino de los cielos” (57). This poem understands nature to be an ecosystem in which making love and procreation are expressions of the love that Christianity preaches.

For the poetic voice, communism is the highest expression of this love for humanity and celibate-like devotion to communist politics counters the abstraction of humanity from nature that capitalism and modernization proclaim. Capitalism’s promise of modernity and national wealth translates human and nonhuman life into potential use values for commodification (Harvey 250). This defines nature as a network of potential resources that accommodate basic human needs for survival. Capitalism’s ecology is a food chain of potential use value that perpetuates a notion of nature as an infinite production mode that sustains human population growth and stability. “Tortugas” suggests that God created nature as a source and reminder of His love, not for profit. The poem does not engage with Christian theology beyond this anti-capitalist characterization of religion, despite its reliance on its understanding of God’s Kingdom to be inseparable from nature and communism. I argue that “Nueva ecología” constructs a unique version of Eden. The notion that Cardenal conceives of nature in *Vuelos de victoria* as a type of Eden is emphasized in the last stanza of “Nueva ecología”:

Los cusucos andan muy contentos con este gobierno.
 Recuperaremos los bosques, ríos, lagunas.
 Vamos a descontaminar el lago de Managua.
 La liberación no solo la ansiaban los humanos.
 Toda la ecología gemía. La revolución
 es también de lagos, ríos, árboles, animales. (32)

“Nueva ecología” does not propose that this Eden-like imagination of Nicaragua be a theocracy. Rather, the poem echoes Henighan’s conclusion about *El estrecho dudoso* that an edenic landscape in Central America offers a type of harmonious land in which humans and nonhumans coexist peacefully. Sandinismo, according to the poem, can and is already providing for the environment by implementing policy that will clean up the environment. While not a necessarily productive strategy, for the poetic voice, Eden is ultimately a motivator for environmental restoration. Elizabeth Deloughrey and George Handley in their introduction to their collection of essays on postcolonial ecologies describe the role that nostalgia plays in edenic rhetoric: “the nostalgia for a lost Eden, an idealized space outside of human time, is closely connected to displacing the ways that colonial violence disrupted human ecologies” (12-13). The poem champions anti-capitalist rhetoric through its socialist campaign promises rather than focusing on colonial legacies that permeated Somocista Nicaragua. The role of Eden as Deloughrey and Handley suggest still applies in the context of Nicaragua in the twentieth century, but more as a critique of capitalism’s and Somocismo’s construction of an unjust economic and social circumstances for Nicaraguan humans and nonhumans.

This assessment grounds the poem in the ideological debate that is central to the Cold War. Given the Sandinista’s position in this international conflict and the celebratory character of Cardenal’s *Vuelos de victoria*, “Nueva ecología” functions as a rebuttal to capital fiction, detailing with scientific authority, why capitalism is more

harmful than beneficial to the environment. “Nueva ecología” evokes images of polluted rivers and destroyed landscapes in the context of “capitalist chemicals” that indicate that the Sandinista government and socialism in general are better to and more inclusive of the nonhuman world.

These final lines of the poem suppose a harmonious relationship between humanity and nonhumans that emerges from a healthy ecosystem, restored from the consequences of slow violence. The poem previous to “Nueva ecología” in *Vuelos de victoria*, titled “La mañanita,” refers to a Christian-influenced harmony: “la verdad es que estamos en el cielo y no lo sabemos” (30). When reading “La mañanita” and “Nueva ecología” in the context of the section of *Vuelos de victoria* titled “Después de la victoria,” both poems express nature as a type of heaven or paradise. In “Nueva ecología,” the poetic voice speaks as if knowing that he or she was already living in a kind of paradise after the Sandinista victory. However, the implicit message of the poem is that slow violence has corrupted this paradise and that the Sandinista government is the only path back to an edenic Nicaragua: “Vamos a descontaminar el lago de Managua” (32). This statement reinforces the idea of restoring Nicaragua to an Eden-like paradise that Nicaragua was previously. The poetic voice maintains its optimism, suggesting that slow violence can be stopped and reversed when ecological restoration is implemented and articulated through the religious notion of Eden. The poem’s confidence in Sandinismo hinges on the idealization of an edenic Nicaragua as a motivating factor for environmental mitigation.

The final stanza of “Nueva ecología” indicates that the Sandinista Revolution not only appealed to Christian theology for environmental change, but also assigned

nonhumans agency to renegotiate their relationship with humans: “Los cusucos andan muy contentos con este gobierno” (32). Cardenal’s use of exteriorism does not allow for nonhuman subjectivities to express themselves in the poem without mediation. However the exteriorist technique relying on data and objective observation as the basis of the poem’s style does utilize scientific quantification to account for how animals and plants recover from decades of slow violence. The poem’s description of the “muy contentos” armadillos is not a case of irresponsible anthropomorphism since the armadillos are understood as indicators of the environmentalist policies enacted by the Sandinista government. It follows that animal and plant life would be satisfied with a human government that does not regularly suppress population growth with the life-threatening policies that the Somocista government enacted. The reference to the armadillos is also an expression of nonhuman approval of the Sandinista government. In this interpretation of the armadillo, animal life is being spoken for rather than speaking for itself, and the armadillo is a propagandistic use of anthropomorphism. The armadillo reads as an image that represents the Sandinista government’s attempt to reconcile nonhuman oppression under Somocismo without conceding true subjectivity to nonhumans.

In the last few lines of the poem, the way that nonhumans and humans shift their relationship becomes central to the poem’s environmentalism. Another literary technique in “Nueva ecología,” in addition to exteriorism, foregrounds the potential for nonhuman subjectivity and political activity in the new government. The poetic voice shifts to the plural to include nonhumans voices and agency in the Sandinista revolution. The verse “Recuperaremos los bosques, ríos, lagunas,” after the line about the armadillos being content with the Sandinista government, allows the first person plural conjugation of the

verb “recuperar” to link nonhuman agency with government policies on the environment (32). This connection between humans and nonhumans admits that humans alone are unable to rejuvenate the landscape, and the poem recognizes this by asserting in the opening stanza that nature is resilient. The poetic voice is still operating within a framework where humans and nonhumans are categorically different, recognizing that all species are interdependent and share the same community. By using the first person plural verb conjugation loosely in the line “Recuperaremos los bosques, ríos, lagunas,” the poetic voice includes nonhumans as potential saviors of the environment.

The poems suggest that a collaborative effort to construct a new, non-capitalist ecology that combats slow violence and the capital fictions of Somocismo and the Cold War will rescue the Nicaraguan landscape: “La liberación no solo la ansiaban los humanos” (32). This line of the poem is the principal moment in which the poetic voice recognizes nonhuman agency and their possible awareness of Cold War politics that inform the Somocismo and Sandinismo ideological camps as well as nature’s position in that ideological conflict. The poem reveals that the government believed that nonhumans comprehended their situation as oppressed beings under Somocismo and that there existed a possible avenue of escape in the Sandinista revolution. Beyond assigning nonhumans awareness, the last full sentence of the poem makes nonhumans participants in the Sandinista revolution: “La revolución/es también de lagos, ríos, árboles, animales” (32). The poetic voice claims that: “Toda la ecología gemía,” recognizing that nonhumans responded to the slow violence that was contaminating nature under the Somocista regime. Cardenal’s poem opens up the possibility of nonhuman agency, but never fully commits to that agency to the extent that the poem or government eliminate

the categorical separation of humans from nonhumans. “Nueva ecología,” first published in Spanish some thirteen years after the publication of *Cantos de Cifar y del mar dulce*, functions as an unveiling of the mystery of slow violence that is subtle yet evident in Cuadra’s poetry. Both poems work in tandem, showing how slow violence precipitated and reached tipping points of toxicity in the 1970s and then in the 1980s, with the Sandinista victory, the government promised to decontaminate the land for the sake of humans and nonhumans.

Conclusion

The environmental damage that Central America suffered during the Cold War is in many ways the result of targeting marginalized humans and ignoring how war would impact nonhuman life. More broadly contributing to the war on nature were the capitalist ideologies that encouraged the unchecked use of potent pesticides, the rerouting of rivers, and dumping of toxic waste into bodies of water. Cuadra’s and Cardenal’s poetry provides testimony of and ideological rebuttals to the oppressive economic structure that foreign business accelerated and promoted. Cuadra’s sense of place and Cardenal’s exteriorism elaborate a poetic style that incorporates ecological realism as way to reveal ecological destruction during the Cold War.

In the Cold War period, as writers focus on nature as something that exists outside of the market, something that can exist on its own terms; they see the fiction for its own falsehood. David Harvey explains how integrating environmentalist policy in government leads to anti-capitalist politics:

Capital cannot, unfortunately, change the way it slices and dices nature up into commodity forms and private property rights. To challenge this would

be to challenge the functioning of the economic rationality to social life. This is why the environmental movement, when it goes beyond a merely cosmetic or ameliorative politics, must become anti-capital. (252)

Many Central American writers such as the poets I discussed in this chapter in the Cold War period would agree with Harvey. While not all writers propose the same method of dismantling capitalist infrastructure in their government and economy, they do share in common an anti-capitalist response to environmental degradation. Ecologically minded writers pinpointed capitalism as the primary cause of economic and environmental woes. This does not mean that their environmentalist or social justice campaigns are anti-development. These authors decry the fiction of capitalist development rather than development itself. Many ecologically minded writers hope to liberate their economies, landscapes, and people from imperialist structures of power with the hope that non-capitalist economic systems will benefit humans and nonhumans alike.

The Cold War, largely defined by two opposing economic and governmental philosophies, was waged on environmental fronts as well as ideological and physical battlefields. Central American writers point out how the Cold War trickled down into the environment. These writers show concern for nonhuman life because they witnessed how both capitalism and governmental brutality enforced capitalist practices that actively harmed the environment while at the same time oppressing or killing human beings. While their environmentalist writings were not entirely concerned with nonhumans as subjects, they write about nonhumans as having inherent value and as worthy of consideration in politics. By criticizing how foreign industry and governments recklessly polluted and by proposing environmental policy in new governments, Central American writers advocate for nonhumans and recognize that nonhumans are essential to the well-

being of the ecosystem. As the Cold War waged a literal war on nature, Central American authors construct an environmentalist counterstrike that hopes to broker peace for humans and nonhumans.

Chapter 3: Peace in the Land or Peace in the Graveyard: Indigenous Critiques of the Cold War in the Poetry of Víctor Montejo and Humberto Ak'abal

Diehard *Star Wars* fans have decried the subplot of episode VI, *Return of the Jedi*, for its inclusion of the teddy bear-like Ewok creatures. Most critiques lambast the subplot for being trite and unrelated to the overall development of the iconic sibling heroes Luke and Leia Skywalker and their gunslinging companion, Han Solo. Other critics and fans ridicule the Ewoks as unrelatable simpletons. In his comparison of Reagan's Cold War politics to the beloved American sci-fi trilogy, Alan Nadel draws parallels between the galactic politics of the *Star Wars* universe with the politics of the Cold War:

When [the Ewok's] service to the Rebel Alliance incorporates them within its sphere of influence, they participate with their primitive weapons, celebrate with songs, and dance to a roughly calypso beat. It is hard to pinpoint, however, exactly what the Ewoks are celebrating, in that they did not seem to be in danger from the "Evil Empire," nor did the "Evil Empire" seem interested in duping them into worshipping false idols. (205)

Nadel questions the patriotic assumption that the American audience will identify with the Rebel Alliance. The portrayal of the protagonists of *Star Wars* reiterates the rose-tinted history of the Founding Fathers as an underdog team of freedom fighters that overcomes insurmountable odds by beating the Evil (British) Empire. Nadel implies that the Rebel Alliance is the political group that brought war and violence to the Ewoks, not the "Evil Empire," suggesting that the Rebel Alliance represents the United States in the Cold War context as the imperial force that implicated indigenous peoples unwittingly in global politics for the United States' economic benefit. In *Star Wars*, it is the Rebel Alliance that instigates the battle of Endor in which they plan to disable a shield protecting the Death Star, the Empire's planet-annihilating weapon. The battle of Endor

symbolizes the many surrogate wars that the United States fought during the Cold War in third world countries. Within Nadel's analysis, the inhabitants of the forest moon of Endor represent the reductionist Western stereotype of indigenous groups that are relegated to the role of minor characters:

Importantly, both the Rebel Alliance and the "Evil Empire" are run by the same species, the only group from which the masters of the universe can come. The other species are ancillary and subordinate, whether unruly and troublesome or loyal and cooperative. (Nadel 204)

Such is the case for the Ewoks, who are initially "unruly and troublesome" but later become "loyal and cooperative" supporters of the Rebel Alliance, sacrificing themselves for a cause that is never fully explained to them. There is no scene in which the "Evil Empire" antagonizes the Ewoks, whether that is through colonization, warfare, or any other means prior to the arrival of the Rebel troops. What Nadel tangentially exposes and what many retellings of the Cold War exclude is the voice of the implicated third-party actor. But what does the Ewok have to say? Víctor Montejo, a Guatemalan Mayan writer, asks a similar question in regard to indigenous peoples during the Cold War:

¿Qué saben los niños recién nacidos
de los misiles y artefactos nucleares;
el Star War criminal
entre Oriente y Occidente? (21-22)

Central American indigenous groups, the real world example of the politically affected Ewoks from *Return of the Jedi* during the Cold War, were not only robbed of their political rights, but were victims of genocide motivated by racism, often characterized in the same inferior terms as the Ewoks. In many ways, the counterinsurgency in Guatemala was a war founded on racism, leveraging environmental racism in order to eliminate Mayan groups. In the case of Central America in the latter half of the twentieth century,

the indigenous response to Cold War politics clarifies exactly how the international conflict of ideology impacted modern environmentalist thought produced by educated, middle-class male writers and indigenous cosmology and livelihood.

Colloquial retellings of the Cold War more often than not reduce the conflict to a dichotomy with several designations: East versus West, the United States versus Russia, Capitalism versus Communism, etc. The fictional example of the Ewoks illustrates the potential for indigenous groups outside of these dichotomies to easily disrupt reductionist histories of the Cold War. Many of the environmentalist or ecologically minded writers from Central America approach the Cold War on the same terms as “protagonist” characters from *Star Wars* due to their higher economic freedom, lighter skin color than marginalized groups, and Western philosophies. In this chapter, I argue that literary voices that come from non-white and non-Western cultures not only question environmental destruction but also the binary understanding of the Cold War, which commonly removes marginalized groups from national and international discourse. Indigenous authors come from a locus of enunciation that takes into account the environmental impact of the Cold War that reproduced colonizing policies that limited their social mobility and omitted their human rights. The internal Cold War rhetoric of Central American nation-states, particularly Guatemala, condemned native groups, classifying every rural indigenous community incorrectly as communist sympathizers. Despite this generalization, Mayan writers had their own agenda and staked their own political claims during the Cold War, critiquing everything from their own governments’ hand in environmental disasters to cultural phenomena like *Star Wars* and the implicit colonial and exclusionary politics they embodied.

I read and understand this poetry through the theoretical framework that Amazonian anthropologists Eduardo Kohn and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro have developed in regard to indigenous relationships with nonhumans due to their insights on how intra-species networks and relationships reveal nonhuman subjectivity. I do not reference them often throughout the chapter, however, because their focus is on Amazonian groups and their conclusions do not always apply to Mayan indigenous thought. Castro nuances Claude Lévi-Strauss's claim that there exists a fundamental ontological pan-indigenous notion of the nonhuman: "Amerindian thought holds that, having been human, animals must still be human, albeit in an unapparent way" (465). This chapter is designed to refute the idea of a homogenous indigenous ontology or literature that expresses how indigenous people understand nonhumans in the face of Cold War conflict. I mention Kohn and Viveiros de Castro because of their contributions to understanding indigenous ontologies and while I do not agree with them entirely, their research founds the basis of my literary analysis throughout the chapter.

Despite the ontological similarities between authors Víctor Montejo and Humberto Ak'abal, whose work I will analyze in this chapter, neither writer completely encapsulates the entire Guatemalan indigenous experience. Víctor Montejo, a prominent Jakalteq Mayan writer, published the bilingual publication *Sculpted Stones*, a book in which the majority of the poems critique the East/West binary of the Cold War and substitute that vision with an emphasis on the natural world's well-being. This collection of poetry, published originally in 1995, summarizes how the Cold War unfolded in Central America in indigenous territories throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. While the direct conflict between Russia and the United States ended in 1991 with the fall of the

Berlin wall and the dissolution of the USSR, the impact of the Cold War in Central America last for several years afterwards. *Sculpted Stones* demonstrates how by 1995, one year before the Guatemalan Civil War ended, indigenous groups were still dealing with repercussions from the Cold War. The Guatemalan Civil War shared much of its ideological conflict with the prevailing disputes emblematic of the Cold War, and throughout the chapter both terms are used somewhat interchangeably only to reflect how Cold War-era capitalism operated on a global scale, often designed to benefit the United States' economic and political goals at the cost of state-sponsored violence and exploitation in Central American nations. Montejo's *Sculpted Stones* is representative of Jakaltek Mayan practices, which is a subgroup of the greater Mayan ethnicity, in its discussion of and reference to indigenous cosmology as an alternative to Cold War ideology. This collection describes the relationship between humans and nonhumans as a harmonious interaction between both groups.

I put Montejo's and Humberto Ak'abal's poetry into dialogue in order to represent a spectrum of indigenous responses to the Cold War. In Montejo's writing, indigenous poetry dialogues with international cultural phenomena. By contrast, Ak'abal's books *Lluvia de luna en la cipresalada* (1996) and *Guardián de la caída de agua* (1994), which I will analyze in the second section of this chapter, concentrate on local ontological struggles and the legacy of colonialism as it transformed into neocolonialism during the Cold War. Montejo's 1995 collection, *Sculpted Stones*, voices basic questions about the goals of the Cold War by juxtaposing the abstract ideologies of the Cold War with the physical reality of the environment. *Sculpted Stones* is Montejo's first published work of poetry and was originally printed as a bilingual edition in English

and Spanish with English translations by Víctor Perera. Curbstone Press, an American company that primarily published translations of famous and contemporary Latin American writers from the 1980s and 1990s, handled the translations. While scholars have discussed the use of Mayan language in Montejo's work, I will examine how his poetry engages with the prevalent ideologies of Cold War. Montejo's poem "Las cinco direcciones" contests the East/West divide that reductively defines the Cold War by citing Mayan astronomers to explain each of the five directions:

Estas son las cinco direcciones
según los astrónomos mayas:
El rojo amanecer del día (oriente),
el negro atardecer agónico (occidente),
el blanco del norte friolento
el poder amarillo en el sur
y en el centro del mundo
el verdeazul intenso
del trópico. (21)

The poetic subject pairs each color with one of the four cardinal directions, with the exception of the verdeazul that is linked to a non-Western orientation. The color and direction associations, Mayan astronomers assign, notably marries the East with the color red and the "amanecer del día" and the West as the "negro atardecer agónico." Instead of placing both East and West in parenthesis, the poem could have presented the directions as nouns as the poetic voice did with North and South. The parenthetical phrases contribute to the description of the East and West by defining how Mayan ontology equates the East and West to the "rojo amanecer" and the "negro atardecer." When taking into account the context of the colors and the rest of the poem, the words in parentheses make the East and West directions stand out from the other three directions. More than simple coincidence, the "Red East" is a common pairing of color and geography in the

Cold War that symbolized Soviet Russia, China, and any country or politics influenced by communism. While the United States or the West in general is not usually paired with the color black, the poetic voice utilizes this color emphasize the *agónico* character of supposed advocates of freedom. The concepts of the Red East and the Black West are further developed later in the poem:

Yo creo en el ave luz
 en el centro de América
 que saluda el bello amanecer del día
 en el oriente
 y que sabe despedir la tarde oscura
 del occidente. (22)

Rather than indicating that the poetic voice accepts Communism as promised by the Red East and realize the Cold War fears of North American politics, the poetic subject chooses the avian light over the East and the West. The center *verdeazul intenso* is a direction that is neither East nor West, neither North nor South, neither is it influenced or shaped by any of the four cardinal directions, but emanates from “el centro de América” or Central America itself. The poetic voice, however, also comfortably chooses a relationship with the East over one with the West. During the height of the Cold War in the 1980s, multiple Latin American countries shifted their economic ties from the United States to Soviet Russia, forging new alliances that threatened the Reagan Administration. The poetic voice identifies the West’s influence over Latin America as a waning light, like daylight diminishing before the dark evening.

By selecting center blue-green light and the Mayan perception of the world in five directions over the East/West division into two, the poem indirectly questions why the world should be split into two halves. “Las cinco direcciones” focuses on the beauty of the world as one singular place rather than two opposing sides making enemies of each

other, evoking nonhumans and their perspective of the world in order to combat the short-sightedness of the Cold War and particularly Western constructions of the world:

Hermoso, es, ver el mundo
 con sus cinco direcciones
 a través del prisma Maya.
 ¿Aprenderán ésto los occidentales
 que ven el mundo solo en blanco y negro:
 Oriente y Occidente? (21)

Another indication of the criticism of the of the West and a passive acceptance or acknowledgement of Eastern/non-capitalist ideologies is the fact that the poetic voice points out that it is Westerners and not Easterners who only see the world in the East/West. For the poem, there exists the possibility for Westerners to see beyond the traditional Cold War binary and understand the world through the fifth orientation.

The poetic voice suggests that if Westerners learn how to comprehend the world beyond the Cold War dichotomy, through five different cardinal directions, they will be able to participate in Mayan ontology. Most cultures are not entirely closed, allowing for people from outside of one cosmology to adopt it, but I caution in my analysis of “Las cinco direcciones” against reducing Montejo’s poetry and Mayan cosmology to the one dimensional “eco-friendly Indian” when non-indigenous readers look for environmentalist similarities in Montejo’s work that they wish to adopt. The “eco-friendly Indian” is a stereotypical trope that reinforces the division of first world countries with so-called “fourth world” indigenous communities. This term reduces native groups to a culturally static condition that is often used to refute first world pollution, but at the cost of reinforcing the perception of indigenous groups as backward and animalistic. In his analysis of Montejo, Emilio Escalante de Valle skirts an “eco-friendly Indian” interpretation of Montejo’s poetry and his understanding of “Maya

authenticity”: “Maya authors suggest that it is in the rural areas where one finds a Maya subject that is uncontaminated, distant from modernity and who practices ‘Maya traditions’ we can emulate. Their authenticity lies upon access to and a relationship with the land” (30). Escalante de Valle’s suggestion that “a Maya subject that is uncontaminated” can only be found in rural areas, “distant from modernity,” reduces Montejo’s portrayal of a multi-dimensional Mayan subject to the “eco-friendly Indian.” The poetic voice in “Las cinco direcciones” is equally aware of the beauty of the world defined by the cosmology of five cardinal directions and of global cultural phenomena.

Montejo’s poem “Los Mayas se van,” from the same collection, sarcastically deconstructs static and essentialist stereotypes, like the “eco-friendly Indian,” that further isolate marginalized indigenous groups from the public sphere and hide violence committed against them. The middle of the poem, which is one long stanza, portrays Mayans as static time in which their colonial past and historical present of the Cold War are interpreted through Western anthropology that describes Mayan cultures as animalistic and violent, sacrificing their own people to gods. The poetic voice, with a deadpan tone, predicts how future generations will interpret the mass graves of Mayans emerging during the Cold War as a result of religious sacrifice and not acts of genocide:

Se creará la hipótesis, por supuesto,
 si es que estos absortos mayanistas
 no toman apuntes en sus listas
 de que estos muertos incontables
 son producto de las grandes masacres
 de los adiestrados kaibiles
 y de los comandos Atlacatl (44)

The poetic voice emphasizes that the indigenous groups that defended themselves against the *Kaibiles* and the Atlacatl Brigade did so with their own weapons and lives, and “no

con galiles israelíes/ni con M-16, gringos” (46). The poetic voice names the specific aggressors towards Mayan groups in rural Guatemala, the *Kaibilies* and the Atlacatl Brigade, military groups trained and sponsored by Israeli militia or American troops. These lines show a remarkable attention to the historical nuance of the Guatemalan Civil War and its place in the global context of the Cold War. This is why the poetic voice emphasizes the weapons used against indigenous people: Galiles and the M-16, an Israeli and an American gun, respectively. “Los Mayas se van” counters the notion of indigenous groups that ignore global circumstances and who only prioritize “authenticity,” isolation, or attachment to the land. Instead, the stanza illustrates the awareness of indigenous writers as they navigate the global politics of the Cold War imposed on them through foreign-aided genocide.

I understand “Las cinco direcciones” as a poem that focuses on how any person can understand nature as a network of living beings, not an infinite mass of resources, instead of the non-indigenous projection of indigenous “authenticity.” The poetic voice in “Las cinco direcciones” is capable of understanding and critiquing the global political climate and asserts that the Mayan cosmology is as significant as any other in the international conflict. In the same stanza, the poetic voice asks a series of questions that puts key pillars of environmental thought and Cold War fears into dialogue:

¿Qué les importan a las aves
de melodioso canto
las carreras armamentistas
entre Oriente y Occidente?
¿Qué saben los venados saltadores,
símbolos de la buena suerte,
de los odios diplomáticos
entre Oriente y Occidente?
¿Qué saben los niños recién nacidos
de los misiles y artefactos nucleares;

el Star War criminal
entre Oriente y Occidente? (21-22)

The first two rhetorical questions that the poetic voice asks of the reader are patterned similarly, emphasizing the ideological distance between the lived reality of nonhumans and the world as constructed in Cold War terms. Rather than understanding nonhumans, metonymically represented by “las aves” and “los venados,” as unintelligent beings, the birds and deer are subjects within the five Mayan cardinal directions that understand the same lived reality as humans but with a different perception. Even though they may be as innocent as “recién nacidos,” I do not characterize this innocence as naiveté or lack of awareness. The poem presents animals in the first two questions as “uncultured,” which I understand to mean that while animals may have assigned human cultural meaning to them, such as the deer being symbols of good luck, they do not define themselves by human culture. Mayan cosmology understands but does not subscribe to the Western ontological separation of humans and nonhumans. These rhetorical questions and images cast doubt on the prioritization of the arms race by juxtaposing the nature/culture divide that produced Cold War strife with the relevant peaceful lives of nonhumans.

The third question ends with an allusion to the global cultural phenomenon *Star Wars*. The first film of the trilogy was released in 1979, with the following installments coming out in 1982 and 1985, key years of the escalation of Cold War tensions. The poetic voice alludes to *Star Wars* blaming both the East and the West as real-life versions of the Galactic Empire, the tyrannical and oppressive government ruling the fictionalized galaxy. For the poetic voice, the “Star War” is criminal, having done more to oppress indigenous groups and damage the environment by supporting capitalist dictatorships than promote well-being, freedom, and peace. Montejo’s reference to *Star Wars* also

coincides with the space race between Russia and the United States. In the context of both countries both developing technologies that extend their presence beyond the atmosphere, the mention of *Star Wars* refers to Ronald Reagan's 1983 speech. In this televised address, nicknamed the "Star Wars speech," Reagan proposed that tax dollars be spent on a national defense plan that included the development and construction of lasers mounted in space capable of intercepting enemy missiles before they could strike American soil. By including this allusion to *Star Wars* and the space race, Montejo's poem juxtaposes imperialism's prioritization of the militarization and politicization of space over the needs of humans and nonhumans on Earth. The defense plan was critiqued by Reagan's detractors as a waste of money and so outlandish that it belonged more to science-fiction than it did American politics, hence the nickname. Montejo's inclusion of animals and newborn children in his poem contrasts human life on Earth with the poem's perceived "science-fiction" character of Reagan's proposal, highlighting the need to protect the environment and the future of all species instead of focusing on space defense or offense.

Despite the layered criticism of Cold War politics, the core message in "Las cinco direcciones" is focused more on humanity's relationship to nature than it is on debating the ideologies in conflict during the Cold War. The final stanza insists that humans are not acting like humans by dividing the world into binaries:

Cuando aprendamos, así, a ver el mundo
como seres humanos y hermanos;
descubriremos que la vida es muy bella
como una flor abierta
que no retoñará dos veces. (22)

For the poem, the rational and logical relationship between humans and nonhumans is a fraternal one in which humans must recognize their impact on the natural world. The first sentence of this stanza clearly defines the cosmology of the poetic voice. For the poem, the category of “the human” still exists and is not problematic as a descriptor. This last stanza refers to how humans must act in order to prevent ecological crisis in a way that resonates with contemporary, non-indigenous environmentalisms. This invitation to assemble as indigenous and non-indigenous humans critiques non-indigenous value systems that place humanity above nonhumans in a speciesist hierarchy, thereby suggesting that the categories that modern ontologies have created are value-laden, and morally dubious. Mayan cosmology suggests that modern ontologies that remove humanity from nature into its own independent group create a category of species that is no longer human. In order for the human species to be “human,” the classification of “the human” as *homo sapiens* must remain categorically connected to the natural world.

To examine the final stanza’s return to Mayan cosmology, I employ theoretical academic definitions of the ontological categories of “the human” and “the nonhuman” that do not pertain to Mayan beliefs to dissect a specifically indigenous environmentalist warning. This does not mean that the poem encourages only fellow indigenous groups that may subscribe to a similar cosmology to learn to see the world as a beautiful, living, and finite resource. The poetic voice addresses those who have modern ontologies, specifically those who remove humanity from nature through the verb “aprendamos.” The verb is conjugated in the first personal plural, including non-indigenous cosmologies to participate in Mayan ontology, inviting them to learn how to see nonhumans as

siblings. This marks a particular turn in the poem, moving away from criticism and towards optimism. The poetic voice hopes to collaborate with humans of all ontologies and nonhumans in order to preserve the beauty and liveliness (the sense of the “flor que no retoñará dos veces”) of the Earth. This implies that there exists a natural harmony between all living beings rather than a natural competition, such as a Darwinian explanation of the world. The poetic voice is cognizant of what is at stake in Cold War politics and that American capitalism decimated Central American humans and nonhumans alike which is why the poem’s optimism is limited. When the last stanza refers to the “flor abierta,” which I understand to be a symbol of the Earth’s capacity to sustain life, it states that it will only bloom once. Any notion that the Earth is infinite or that it has infinite resources is an illusion. While the poem advocates for the preservation and care of the natural world through an ontological and categorical reconceptualization of what “the human” is, “Las cinco direcciones” posits that the Earth is fragile, suggesting that modern ontologies ignore this fragility at the cost of self-harm. Despite the poem’s optimism and hope that humanity can recognize its place as a species equal to all others, there is a latent worry underneath this stanza’s positive outlook that if modern ontologies continue to treat nonhumans as inferior and behaving as if the world has infinite resources, that “la flor [...] retoñará dos veces,” then both humans and nonhumans are headed for global environmental disaster.

The poem “El Chinchintor” from the same collection, replaces the cautious optimism of “Las cinco direcciones” with dark, post-apocalyptic imagery, exemplifying the “what-if” scenario that the last stanza of “Las cinco direcciones” suggests. “El Chinchintor” is divided into two stanzas. The first details what has become of the Mayan

people after centuries of oppression and the second concentrates on the mythic two-headed serpent, “El Chinchintor.” The poetic voice describes Mayan groups after “siglos perversos llenos de sangre” as:

apenas sombras,
malheridos espantajos
que no espantan nada
ni a nadie (48)

The stanza presents a clear image of the vulnerable state of Mayan groups after centuries of oppression that reduces people to shadows. While *sombras* functions to communicate the bleak circumstances in which Mayan groups find themselves, the second stanza contrasts these *sombras* with the death of “los mercenarios que morirán/sin su sombra/y sin si sombrero” (50). The Mayan peoples’ “sombras” resist centuries of oppression and resist “el chinchintor.” Through this resilience Mayan people are able to survive in hostile environments while “el chinchintor” roams the planet’s surface:

Pero sabemos
que cuando los valles
se cubran otra vez
de cieno y pantanos,
de vómitos y porquerías;
volverán, lo sabemos,
los chinchintores (48)

Even through this passage from the second stanza, there has been no explicit reference to the Cold War or non-indigenous groups threatening indigenous livelihood. The imagery and subjects in the poem are general enough to consider Mayan culture broadly. The description of a post-apocalyptic earth is one that is not new to Mayan mythology. The verb “sabemos,” repeated twice, emphasizes how the notion of apocalypse has been transmitted throughout the centuries. The poetic voice knows that the *chinchintores* will reappear because they returned previously when similar conditions existed and many

groups survived those circumstances in order to pass on that history. The Mayan notion of cyclical time underscores this text, giving the poetic voice the surety that the *chinchintores* will come back as soon as the valleys are laid waste with “vómitos y porquerías.” This image is the first instance in the poem that evokes the landscape. Despite the devastated appearance of the landscape, swamps and mud are sites of recycling for dead organic matter. Instead of understanding this scene to be one of complete annihilation, it reflects the resilience of ecosystems to recycle matter and shows that nature is in the process of rebuilding life from unorganized matter. The phrase “vómitos y porquerías” evokes the body’s ability to break down matter into digestible parts and the waste generated from consumption. Referring to these processes in conjunction with a swamp and mud constructs a parallel between individual biological entities, such as humans and animals, as the environment that processes death in biological cycles. Although the Mayan people are “malheridos espantajos,” they still exist as *sombras* able to recover and avoid extinction just like nature revives itself through biological cycles. In this poem, something identifiably Mayan persists, despite possible permutations through these cycles.

The latter half of the second stanza contextualizes Mayan resilience in the context of the Cold War. The poetic voice makes an unusual comparison between *chinchintores* and the arcade icon Pac-Man:

Vendrán los chinchintores
 lo sabemos,
 los que caminan sigilosos
 bajo la tierra
 al mismo ritmo que los pasos
 y siempre hambrientos
 como los bichos del PACMAN (48)

Pac-Man, originally released as Puck Man in Japan in 1980, was a cultural and commercial tour-de-force that symbolized global culture in the 1980s. The yellow circle eats pellets that make the four ghost antagonists, Blinky, Pink, Inky, and Clyde, consumable. Pac-Man and the *chinchintores* both have an insatiable hunger, a quality that resonates with the global capitalist and materialist attitude of the 1980s. Given the enormous commercial success of Pac-Man across the globe, the poem's allusion to Pac-Man juxtaposes the wealth and consumerism of videogames with the poverty and oppression that indigenous people faced in Central America. Despite the comparison the poem makes between the *chinchintores* and Pac-Man, the key distinction between the two is their motivation behind their appetite for consumption. They both represent consumerism in different experiences and conditions in the Cold War that are related to the descriptor *sombras* from the first stanza. While the four ghosts in Pac-Man can cause the main character to lose a life upon contact, during moments of vulnerability, Pac-Man can consume them the same way in which the "chinchintores" eventually consume the Mayan peoples' antagonists:

Así se arrastrarán hambrientos
al compás de los pasos
comiéndose la sombra
de los mercenarios que morirán
sin su sombra
y sin su sombrero. (50)

The *chinchintores* sift the mercenaries from the Mayan people, slowly eliminating them in this post-apocalyptic scene. Mercenaries were common in Guatemala's Civil War during the Cold War and were alluded to in the poem "Los Mayan se van" as North American and Israeli soldiers either fought with or trained the Guatemalan military to fight guerillas (Grandin 13). The result of this Civil War was the Mayan genocide in the

Guatemalan highlands which culminated in scenes such as the bleak depiction of Mayan people in the first stanza of “El Chinchintor.” While the mercenaries are those responsible for the destruction of Mayan heritage during the Cold War, the poem foretells justice for Mayan people through *los chinchintores*. The poem does not explicitly state that they will eat the mercenaries, nor destroy them through other violent means. The poetic voice states that *los chinchintores* will eat the mercenaries’ *sombras* so that the mercenaries die without their “sombras/y sin su sombrero.” This distinction refers to the resilience of the Mayan people in the first stanza of the poem who, despite the tragedies they have suffered over the course of centuries, were able to persevere, even if only as *sombras*.

Los chinchintores will not eat the *sombras* of the Mayan people, only those of the mercenaries. They distinguish between the two people by the temporary nature of the mercenaries and their unwillingness to understand local people, cultures, and cosmologies. They are foreign and hostile, and nothing they do will protect them from the mythological snakes or prevent them and their legacy from disappearing. As mentioned before, the repeated “sabemos” acknowledges an existing relationship between Mayan people and *chinchintores*, changing the tone of the poem in the second stanza to a tone of warning for the mercenaries and a lack of fear for the indigenous groups. The poetic voice presents the main distinguishing feature of mercenaries that separates them categorically from Mayan people as their profession. Mercenaries by definition are hired guns, often in service of a foreign military, making them by default outsiders and uninformed of the locale in which they fight. The *chinchintores* will consume their shadows and not the Mayan peoples’ shadows because of their actions: the destruction of

the environment, the genocide of Mayan people and the consequent attempted extinction of their culture. Michela Craveri explains how Mayan identity would facilitate the survival of the mercenaries should they understand how to live in the world through her definition of Mayan identity: “Podemos decir que la identidad indígena es más un proceso que un resultado, es una categoría incluyente, más que una dicotomía, es una manera de vivir en el mundo, más que un dato genético, social o económico” (4). Had the mercenaries adapted Mayan cosmology and known that the *chinchintores* would come after widespread environmental destruction, the mercenaries would retain their shadows from not destroying the environment or killing Mayan people. The poetic voice also states that those mercenaries will not only die “sin su sombra” but also without “su sombrero.” I understand this reference to hats as a more literal reference to something that produces shade or shadows due to the suffix “ero” adding the meaning to *sombra* as a producer of shadows. Not only will mercenaries die without a shadow, or the resilience to survive because of their ignorance, but they will lose any technology or apparatus that produces a shadow as well. This is not a critique of modern technology, per se, but it does emphasize how technology cannot impede the environment from responding to human politics.

The poem also functions as a striking allegory of how indigenous texts interact with non-indigenous literature. Paul Worley’s insight elaborates on how indigenous knowledge competes with Western knowledge through literature, not just ontologically:

Montejo’s poems mobilize Latin letters and Western literary categories for the articulation of a distinctly non-Western project that privileges communal knowledge and performatic traditions that cannot, by definition, be fully captured by any one particular written manifestation.
(11)

Though partly due to the difficulties of translation, the word *chinchintores* never appears in the poem without a Spanish equivalent. Given the content of the poem, the reader that does not know how to read Mayan finds this word to be a linguistic and ontological barrier in the same way that the mercenaries in the poem cannot be saved due to their ontological ignorance of what a *chinchintor* is and how they are at risk of losing their shadows. “Los chinchintores” is a poem that straddles a linguistic, literary, and ontological border through which indigenous critique is translated but also preserved.

In the poem “La fuente seca,” the poetic voice is more transparent in how it translates indigenous ontology by tracing how Western practices harm the environment and Mayan peoples. The poem’s focus is the well-being of the natural world, whereas other poems have centered on ontological debates between indigenous and (neo)colonialist conflicts. “La fuente seca” takes an alternative approach to its critique of how capitalism damages the environment, focusing on how the environment’s response is interpreted in Mayan ontology. The poem begins by condemning the exploitation of nature for profit:

Los recursos naturales
 en el seno de la tierra
 son más espléndidos
 que convertidos en billetes
 en las sucias manos
 de los cuarenta ladrones
 disperos en el mundo. (52)

The imagery of the first several lines of the poem is straightforward, it advocates for the recognition of nature as the source of life rather than a source of consumption, which resonates with other poems from this collection and contemporary non-indigenous Central American writers. The poetic voice takes issue with natural resources turning into

profit in the global economy. The rest of the poem explains the repercussions of the exploitation of natural resources, particularly what happens to sources of water:

Dicen los mayas, mis ancestros,
 que las fuentes
 son los *tonales* de los ricos,
 y que cuando
 un hombre arranca la vida natural
 no por necesidad
 sino por acumular,
 una fuente de agua fresca
 se seca
 allá en la montaña. (52)

The lines go beyond the common critiques of capitalism as an exploitative economic system by drawing a spiritual connection between water and humans. The first part of the poem is framed within the capitalist/modern rhetoric of “natural resources,” a phrase that defines nature as other to humanity with the purpose of sustaining the human species. Starting in the latter half of the poem, it becomes clear that the phrase “natural resources” does not pertain to the poetic voice’s cosmology, but rather serves as an introduction of common ground to the content of the second half of the poem. The poetic voice introduces *tonales*, which are a type of alter ego that associates a human with a nonhuman. The *tonal* defines the human/nonhuman relationship as a non-speciesist relationship in which commonality and basic necessity for survival take precedent over capital gain.

For the poetic voice, there is nothing inherently wrong with wealth or with people who have wealth, although the poem does not specify whether wealth should be defined as monetary profit. Given that the first part of the poem does reference capitalist and modern categories of human and nature, wealth is implied to be money. What violates the *tonal* relationship between a natural spring and a wealthy person, is the specific desire to

acquire additional, unnecessary wealth that jeopardizes their relationship and interconnectedness with nonhumans. When the threshold from necessity to superfluity is crossed, the corresponding *tonal*, a freshwater mountain spring, dries up. This image of the empty spring represents both the extractivist capitalist abuse of “natural resources” as well as the moment in which the human/nonhuman non-speciesist relationship in Mayan cosmology is breached through specieist treachery.

Montejo’s collection also examines the clash of ontological understanding of the environment beyond critiques of capitalism. Much of *Sculpted Stones* comments on the genocide campaign against Mayan groups in the highlands of Guatemala. In the poem “Hablar de la libertad,” Montejo recreates imagery and dialogue that recounts the routine violence that the Guatemalan civil guard organized. The first stanza contrasts the opposing ontologies:

Aleteos de quetzal
 en el corazón del pueblo
 mientras en la mente vil
 del borracho general
 hay traqueteos de fusil
 para matar al pueblo. (74)

The image in this stanza suggests that the Mayan people have an amicable relationship with the environment, symbolized in the first two lines of the poem that evoke the freedom of the quetzal. Birds commonly symbolize freedom because of their ability to fly, and the first line of “Hablar de la libertad,” although referencing a Mayan ontology, is not exempt from this. Michael Owen in his book *The Maya Book of Life: Understanding the Xultun Tarot* confirms that the quetzal represents liberty “because a quetzal will die in captivity” as well as symbolizing wealth, given how Mayan leaders would adorn themselves with Quetzal feathers (423). The relationship between humans

and the quetzal, in contrast with the images of violence later in the stanza, also indicate that the Mayan respect and encourage life. The heart of the people is juxtaposed with the mind of the general, drunk on violence. The poetic voice further distinguishes Mayan thought from the general by stating that the Mayan people form their relationship from the heart, and that the military use their mind. The key difference between the Mayan people and the military is their relationship with other living beings outside of themselves. The Mayan people, through their heart, are cognizant of even the small but regular movements of the natural world, associating the freedom that flight brings with the movement of nature. Arturo Arias's explanation of how the Mayan people are aware of their relationship with the environment in Montejo's narrative identifies how Mayas view nonhumans:

However, when the Guatemalan army invaded his region in 1982, besides massacring countless villagers, they used buzzards for target practice, thus breaking one more connection in the Mayas' holistic understanding of how the environment, the world itself, is shared by all subjectivities, regardless of the nature of their species. (185)

The military, on the other hand, has no relationship with the environment, let alone other members of the human species. The poem repeats the phrase "el pueblo" two times: the first when talking about where the "aleteos de quetzal" reside, which is in the heart of "el pueblo" as well as in the final line in which "el pueblo" is identified as the target of violence. The poetic voice states that the goal of the military is to kill "el pueblo," and by doing so would have indirectly attacked the quetzal within the Mayan people's heart. This functions as an apt metonym for the consequential violence leveled against the environment as well as indigenous people, with the poetic voice emphasizing the reckless character of widespread oppression in Guatemala.

“Hablar de la libertad” makes more direct references to peace and the land in the second stanza. The poetic voice simulates the mocking attitude of military leader:

El general de turno
le dice así al mundo
entre risas y serio:
¿Quién dice que no hay paz
en la tierra del quetzal? (74)

Addressing the world, the general embodies the inherent contradiction of using the military and oppression in order to institute peace “en la tierra del quetzal.” The general asks “¿Quién dice que no hay paz/en la tierra del quetzal?” in a mocking tone, yet with enough seriousness to challenge any person who would dispute the military’s *modus operandi*. The irony is unmistakable, and the poetic voice uses this obvious contradiction in the rhetorical question to defy the government’s sanctioned use of violence in order to commit genocide in the name of peace. The military leader’s question, however, does not even mention indigenous groups but rather empties the land of Mayan people in a way that mirrors the military campaign to commit genocide against them. Instead, the question alludes to a depiction of nature that falls into the modern dichotomy of nature/culture, positing that nature be a peaceful wilderness that belongs to nonhumans alone, in this instance represented metonymically by the quetzal. The poem’s second reference to the quetzal directly defies the general’s division of nature and humanity. For the poetic voice, the “tierra del quetzal” belongs to the quetzal as much as it does to the Mayan groups, despite the military’s goal to eliminate Mayans from the Guatemalan highlands. In a tangible sense, the general and by extension the Guatemalan government is enforcing the nature/culture divide through physical force, killing indigenous people that do not

conform to the government's oppressive, capitalist politics in order to promote modern capitalism and exploitation of natural resources.

The third and final stanza of the poem returns to the idea of freedom and for whom freedom is attainable. "Hablar de la libertad" takes on a straightforward, deadpan tone, emphasizing the terrifying and serious character of genocide:

Luego, el viejo chacal
se ríe con sus asesores:
Paz, mucha paz hay señores,
la paz del cementerio
para los que hablan de la libertad. (74)

The military's true motive is revealed in a dark joke that has been foreshadowed throughout the poem. The poetic voice's characterization of the general as a "viejo chacal" is curious since much of Montejo's poetry discusses animals positively, rarely using stereotypical anthropomorphism as a method of criticizing human activity. What is notable about the jackal, as opposed to other predatory canines, is that it is not endemic to Central America. It is commonly associated with menacing laughter, which could be the primary reason that the general is referred to as one. The poem could have equally benefited from a number of predators to make the point that the military is bloodthirsty but instead relies on a sense of foreignness to portray the general. The possibility that the general is not Guatemalan, or at least is trained by foreign mercenaries, keeps with previous poems in *Sculpted Stones* that repeatedly draw attention to foreign intervention in Central America and the character of surrogate wars during the Cold War. He could even be so far removed from indigenous culture and the reality of Guatemala as a multiethnic nation that he has become foreign to the inhabitants of his native country.

“Hablar de la libertad” emphasizes the ideological cornerstone for genocide that the Cold War promoted; that peace is only attainable through violence, and that the death of marginalized voices resting in a cemetery is how the military makes indigenous territory peaceful. The poetic voice clearly empathizes with the plight of Mayans in an effort to highlight the absurdity of enforcing peace through death. A significant part of this empathy lies in the references to nonhumans and Mayan ontology behind the critique of state-sanctioned violence in the poem, emphasizing the clash of ontologies motivated by racism that come with the Cold War. Leerom Medovoi explains the parallel between surrogate wars and racism:

The Cold War itself became understood as a politico-cultural surrogate for race war, because the “enemy” represented an ideological and terror-driven movement, not itself human, that in the “second world” created vast, dehumanized zones of life. Biological racism was repudiated, yet the idea of an enemy population inferior in its subhuman political organization was retained. (167)

“Hablar de la libertad,” as well as the other poems in *Sculpted Stones*, asserts that the surrogate wars created not only “dehumanized zones of life” but entire environments that were attacked. “Hablar de la libertad” specifically calls into question the political status of Mayans in Guatemala, providing evidence for Medovoi’s conclusion that Cold War surrogate wars targeted certain races. The collection as a whole comments on the place of Guatemala in the greater narrative of the Cold War and how Mayan voices and ontologies can contribute to a debate on the global scale. *Sculpted Stones* participates in this conversation by showcasing tangible, local examples of the impact of the Cold War on the environment and human and nonhuman relationships in Guatemala and Mayan ontologies.

“(En) la voz”: Writing Nonhuman Voices and Language in Humberto Ak’abal’s Poetry from the 1990s

Humberto Ak’abal’s poetry, equally steeped in Mayan ontologies, focuses more specifically on the relationship between humans and nonhumans, indirectly commenting on the political marginalization of Mayan groups in Guatemala. Ak’abal’s poetry advocates more for the beauty of nature and the subjects within nature rather than Montejo’s clear linking of local Guatemalan and Mayan contexts and environments with the global scale of the Cold War. The metapoetic strategies that Ak’abal’s works employs explain how the poems inherently critique the global dynamics of the Cold War. I will begin with Ak’abal’s book of poetry, *Lluvia de luna en la cipresalada* (1996), before examining his 1994 book *Guardián de la caída de agua*, because *Lluvia de luna en la cipresalada* operates well as a way of understanding how Ak’abal’s poetry articulates the human/nonhuman relationship. His 1994 volume better connects the ontological foundation of Mayan human/nonhuman interaction in the context of the Cold War. In the prologue to Ak’abal’s *Lluvia de luna en la cipresalada*, Haroldo de Campos provides insight into the *contraconquista* character of the 1996 publication:

Ak’abal practica un arte poético de “contraconquista” (para usar de un concepto ya célebre, derivado de la Expresión Americana de Lezama Lima)... Compone su poesía desde el trasfondo de una lengua a-gráfica, que no se apoya en la escritura, y que se enarbola como una planta indomable nutrida por su vetusta tradición oral: maya-quiche. (1)

The simple existence of Ak’abal’s poetry in any of his collections, either in bilingual editions such as the publication of *Lluvia de luna en la cipresalada*, or translated from maya-quiche, challenges Spanish as a dominant literary language that represents lettered culture in Latin America. Layered in his work is Mayan ontology, specifically how

Mayan groups understand their relationship with nonhumans. One of the earlier poems of the collection, “Hojas,” deconstructs language and the naming of objects:

Las hojas caídas
no recuerdan
hojas de qué árbol fueron;

ni siquiera
que fueron hojas.⁹ (4)

The poem challenges the adamic naming of natural life. The first stanza sets up the premise of language’s anthropocentric shortcomings with the use of the verb “recuerdan” and its tie through enjambment with the repeated word “hojas.” The fallen leaves are the subject of the first stanza, actively not remembering other leaves/themselves and where they had come from. The poem never suggests that the leaves are incapable of remembering, just that they did not remember their existence in anthropocentric terms. The word *recuerdan* and the embedded question surrounding the identity of the leaves evoke the biological relationship and categorization of trees and leaves through science. The second stanza, however, indicates that the leaves reject the notion of their status as leaves. The poetic voice refers to leaves as fallen leaves, not dead leaves. This distinction marks an ontological difference in Mayan-quiché thought that posits biological cycles as a recycling of life that retains subjectivity and utility. After falling from the tree, the leaves still retain their identity and their capacity to remember; dead leaves would imply that they had lost their subjectivity. “Hojas” exemplifies how Ak’abal’s poetry emphasizes a *contraconquista* environmentalist critique of non-indigenous literature and ontology because it challenges categories of nature and the semiotic characterization of the natural world. The poem, in its simple form, strips away the ideological baggage of

⁹ All of Ak’abal’s poetry is presented here with the same typography of the volume.

the “worlded” world, to use German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s phrasing, in order to reveal Mayan ontology despite the imposition of a colonial language, Spanish. As much as “Hojas” counters modern and scientific categories of nature, the poem also linguistically challenges Spanish and how the Spanish language colonized Mayan people, thought, and ontology.

The second stanza in particular denies the word “hojas” from functioning as signifier. For the poem, “hojas” never existed, at least not in the way that the classificatory nature of the word implies. For Mayan-quiche, “esa lengua llena de onomatopeyas y cargada de concretud, hace doblar el castellano, hácelo someterse a la magia telúrica de ese idioma encantado por su contigüidad umbilical respecto al reino de la naturaleza” (Haroldo de Campos 1). The onomatopoeia in particular is a linguistic site that blurs the line between signifier and signified. While in Spanish the onomatopoeic language originating from Mayan-quiché does not have exact semiotic equivalents, Ak’abal’s poetry alludes to the word-sounds that permeate the Spanish language. Marcela Saldivia-Berglund explains that: “Desde el punto de vista fonético, la sonoridad onomateopéyica que Ak’abal despliega en sus poemas remite a voces mayas aunque escritas en español” (65). Onomatopoeia by definition reflects the physical production of sound outside of language that is later incorporated into human language. In the poem “Ch’ik” from *Guardián de la caída de agua*, the poetic voice uses a markedly explanatory tone for the reader:

Ch’ik Ch’ik Ch’ik

(está llamando al agua)

Ch’ik es su canto.

Ch’ik es su nombre.

For one who speaks the language and subscribes to the ontology, these lines would not be striking or new. Production of sound represented in onomatopoeia, like the word/name/bird “Ch’ik,” is not only a literary trope, nor is it just a physical but physiological representation of nonhuman subjectivities. Eduardo Kohn explains onomatopoeia through Peircean semiotics to arrive at the idea that “life-forms represent the world in some way or another, and the representations are intrinsic to their being.” (9). The poem “Ch’ik” is a poetic and linguistic explanation of how nonhuman communication functions within the ontological perspective of a “ch’ik.” The poetic voice has taken upon itself the responsibility of mediating how the “Ch’ik” expresses itself to audiences that impose their own ethnocentric or ontological-centric modes of classification and communication onto nonhumans. The poem “En la voz” from *Lluvia de luna en la cipresalada* elaborates on how sounds converted into written language are non-literary and should not be classified as examples of onomatopoeia:

En las voces
de los árboles viejos
reconozco las de mis abuelos.

Veladores de siglos.
Su sueño está en las raíces. (11)

The poem “En la voz” immediately nuances the notion of singularity versus plurality in conjunction with sound and speaking, beginning with the contrast between the title and the opening line. The content of the poem focuses on the union of the trees’ and the poetic voice’s ancestors’ voices. Despite those voices being identifiably different for the poetic voice, they all seem to emanate from the same source: the trees. “En la voz” does not showcase any linguistic sites like onomatopoeia in which the boundary between

signifier and signified is distorted, but the fact that the trees are able to produce voices evidences how nonhuman subjects express themselves in some form of communication that is not necessarily linguistic. The poetic voice can hear the trees' voices, more evidence that the trees' language is more than a literary device in the poem, but rather that communication is happening among the trees and the poetic voice's ancestors.

Like "Hojas," "En la voz" challenges Spanish as a colonizing language unwilling to recognize or transmit nonhuman subjectivity. In addition to its implicit critique of Spanish, "En la voz" intertwines human and nonhuman subjectivities in the environment, outlining the Mayan understanding of communication between humans and nonhumans across time. The poem treats the arboreal voices as legitimate sources of knowledge production and subjectivity. Marie-Louise Olle provides insight on how Ak'abal's poetry engages with voices from all species and circumstance:

Ak'abal celebra las voces indígenas del hoy y del ayer recordando a quien lo lee que no se puede amordazar la Voz de la Vida. Voces de la naturaleza y voces de los hombres unidas y confundidas. Voces de la sabiduría y de la cordura ancestral. Voces silenciadas por el Otro o gritos de miedo o de odio. Lo más notable es la vehemencia del grito que señala paradójicamente con mayor intensidad al dolor callado, al dolor silenciado que soterra toda la obra del poeta. (91-92)

The poem subverts the "dolor silenciado" that came as a product of Spanish colonization by choosing to use Spanish despite its ontological limitations when communicating nonhuman subjectivity. The first line of the second stanza ambiguously describes both the *árboles viejos* as well as *mis abuelos* as "veladores de siglo." Not only are both human and nonhuman voices speaking, but both trees and human ancestors exist, speaking to those living in the present. This demonstrates a specific environmental and

oral history of Guatemala's landscape interpreted through the lens of Mayan-quiché ontology.

Another poem from *Lluvia de luna en la cipresalada*, "La voz," expands on the intersection of Mayan environmental history with colonial history that is present in "En la voz":

Sobre las montañas
las piedras para nuestros rituales.

Las oraciones se hacen en libertad.

Desde allí se contempla el cielo
y el viento se lleva la palabra.

En los templos
no hay cielo
sólo voz encarcelada. (6)

The first three stanzas encapsulate an unfettered relationship between the Maya-quiché and their environment and a free expression of their religious practices in the Guatemalan highlands. These stanzas trace interactions with the landscape across time in which the Maya-quiché interact with the environment. The line "las piedras para nuestros rituales" harkens to the short poem, "Piedras," in the same collection that reveals an essential animist principle: "No es que las piedras sean mudas:/solo guardan silencio" (13). For the poetic voice, the stones on the mountaintop are not ornamental, but an integral part of the rituals. Beyond the individual detail of religious practices, the crux of these stanzas is the openness that the poem evokes in its imagery and format. The clear view of the mountain's summit and the wind-filled sky are vast landscapes in which humans and nonhumans express themselves freely. The deliberate spacing of the stanzas, particularly around the line "las oraciones se hacen en libertad" emphasizes the open spaces in the

environment that the Maya-quiché value. The use of the impersonal use of “se” and the present tense evokes a temporal openness that pertained to the pre-colonial era before the colonial imposition of language and religion that intended to redefine the human/nonhuman relationship are nonexistent. The allusion to the saying in Spanish “el viento se lleva la palabra” complements the landscape described in this stanza by emphasizing the ephemeral character of language.

These three stanzas set up a sharp turn with the closing verses. The poetic voice condemns temples that incarcerate religious expression. The poem levels these critiques in two significant ways. The first critique relates to the physical structure of worship. Religious houses of worship are enclosed structures. This directly opposes the open character of the mountaintops and environment generally that welcome nonhuman influence in worship. The third stanza reiterates that “el viento se lleva la palabra,” thereby carrying the word to the recipient of the prayer. For the poetic voice, prayers are unable to be received when offered in a structure because there is no way the air can transport that prayer from the devotee’s mouth to the intended recipient. The poetic voice says “no hay cielo” in order to describe colonial religion as asphyxiating structures that are more of a barrier than a catalyst for people to access the divine, let alone the natural world. The line “no hay cielo” encompasses the second main critique of this stanza. This line has its own twofold meaning in that “cielo” means both heaven and sky. Not only does the poem comment upon the architecture of worship and how that impedes the open relationship between humans, nonhumans, and religious entities, but it directly challenges the Christian notion of heaven. The last stanza refers to the religious suffocation of colonization in the Americas, and this poem lambasts the colonial imposition of Christian

belief on indigenous communities by defying the ultimate reward for devout Christian worship: a life in heaven. The poem plays with the Spanish language, manipulating its colonial legacy in order to signal the flaws of colonization. For the poetic voice, the “cielo” that matters is the sky, not the foreign concept of “heaven,” which does not figure into Mayan-quiché cosmology or religion. The final stanza signals a breach in pre-colonial history and the transition into the oppressive colonial history that sought to annihilate indigenous history through genocide and conversion.

The two poems “En la voz” and “La voz” work in tandem to illustrate indigenous expression, locus of enunciation, and ontology. The voice referred to in each title is the voice of the indigenous speaker. When read together, the two titles present the historical trajectory of the expression of Mayan-quiché people in colonial history and the neocolonial history of the Guatemalan Civil War. The preposition “en” from “En la voz” describes the internal structure of Mayan ontology and how that can be expressed openly in dialogues that transcend time and species. The poem “En la voz” explores the unadulterated indigenous voice, while the poem “La voz” recognizes the ontologies outside of the indigenous expression that would otherize indigenous expression. “En la voz” showcases the potential of indigenous expression and the open character of Mayan ontology that permits dialogue between human and nonhuman voices, while “La voz” focuses attention on the ontological battleground of colonization in the Americas. Both poems hint at a sense of belonging and connection to the past in *Lluvia* that becomes fully realized in later poems. This sense of nostalgia does not create a one-dimensional trope for indigenous literature or people. Jean Frances clarifies the tricky position indigenous writers find themselves in when navigating the complexities of expression since

colonization and Western imperialism have easily mistaken Mayan connection to the past and their ancestors for primitive behavior:

No hay ningun deseo de “congelar” la cultura indigena en un pasado glorioso, sino que se busca encontrar un espacio donde se reconozca su aporte. Sobre todo, se quiere enfatizar que esta voz difiere de la voz no-indigena, pero no es menos válida. (215)

The poem “Alguna seña” places a poetic voice at the forefront that is aware of the environmental, ontological, and colonial histories that “En la voz,” “La voz,” and “Hojas” all reference. The poetic voice of “Alguna seña” has difficulty finding its current place in Guatemalan history due to the colonial and neocolonial conflicts that ravaged indigenous livelihood for thirty years:

Entre piedras,
 en cortezas de árboles,
 en noches estrelladas,
 en barrancos,
 en caminos,
 en sueños,
 en el viento,
 en el agua...

Yo busco
 alguna seña de otro tiempo,

algo que me lleve
 a la perdida voz de mis mayores. (34)

Unlike “En la voz,” the poetic voice in “Alguna seña” is disconnected from past indigenous expression. “Alguna seña” is concerned with maintaining a relationship with the past and with the environment, which are one and the same, and features the same Mayan-quiché ontology. The main difference between these two poems is the inability to locate the “perdida voz de mis mayores.” The poetic subject in “Alguna seña,” just like the poetic voice in “En la voz,” knows that the voice of their ancestors should be in the

environment. The disconnect goes beyond a question of ontology or ability to interact with the environment and to respond to nonhuman or ancestral subjectivities. For the poetic voice, there is no sign from the past that allows him or her to maintain the temporally cyclical relationship with their ancestors. The arboreal voices that were in dialogue in “En la voz” are absent in “Alguna seña,” yet the same nonhumans are still present in the first stanza’s list of natural subjects. The poetic voice in “Alguna seña,” while implementing the same ontological approach as the subject in “En la voz,” searches for a nonhuman to act as a communicative medium rather than searching for their ancestors’ voices among nonhumans voices. Both poetic voices understand the environment as a space in which the past can communicate with the present, but the poem “Alguna seña” underscores how colonialism and neocolonialism over time marginalize and stunt indigenous ontologies. However, the poetic voices may not be entirely at fault for their inability to find their ancestors’ voices. The massacres and mass burials that came with the genocide during the Guatemalan Civil War silenced indigenous voices that were not properly integrated into the environment and therefore could not be heard by those who survived. Either of these explanations could determine why the poetic voice in “Alguna seña” is unable to explain why he or she cannot communicate with the ancestors.

One poem from the collection grounds the framework of poems “Alguna seña,” “En la voz,” and “La voz” in the Cold War dispelling this uncertainty. Most of the poems are difficult to pin down historically since they can be critiques of colonialism generally or of one specific experience. The poem “Trabajo” is a dialogue between the two major ideological and economic philosophies in debate during the Cold War:

- ¿Qué tal de trabajo?
- Muy bien.

¿Estás haciendo pista?
- El trabajo no es para eso,
trabajar es estar ocupado
para tener limpia la cabeza. (33)

The dialogue featured in the poem hinges on the question: “¿Estás haciendo pista?” The end goal of capitalism is to keep generating profit, even at the cost of consuming all resources, whether they be environmental, human, etc. This mentality creates social and economic strata between humans, resulting in social hierarchies. The cited question from one speaker to another is loaded with the capitalist attitude of profitability and the desire for wealth. However, the response in the poem ignores the question’s capitalist overtones. The result is pedagogical for the reader. The question “¿Estás haciendo pista?” is asked in colloquial terms, presenting the question as a normalized definition of work as a means to be financially successful. The poetic subject challenges this idea of work not only for the inquiring poetic subject, but to inform the reader that this definition of work is incorrect, implying that work for capital gain is unhealthy and lacks self-purpose. The first stanza is a common conversation between acquaintances and for the responding person work is going very well. The conflict between the two speakers is entirely based on the attitude toward work.

This response does not espouse communist or socialist economic structures that are commonly pitted against capitalism in the framework of the Cold War. The poem denies the categorization of indigenous cultures and beliefs within Cold War dichotomies, opening up space for indigenous voices to express themselves in their own right and from their own locus of enunciation. “Trabajo” defies the Cold War myth that

indigenous groups in Guatemala's highlands were by default supporters of the Ejército Guerillero de los Pobres (EGP). Mayan writers and thinkers after the overthrow of President Jacobo Arbenz's tenure in office had, to varying degrees adopted Marxism, communism, and other anti-capitalist ideologies, and joined the ranks of several major organizations, but not enough to justify the generalization by the Guatemalan military about all indigenous groups in Guatemala (Grandin 128-29). Indigenous groups' opinions, political views, and ontologies all vary, as I have demonstrated even within Humberto Ak'abal's and Víctor Montejo's work.

Ak'abal's 1994 collection of poetry, *Guardián de la caída de agua*, presents the same themes as his 1996 book, *Lluvia de luna en la cipresalada*, but with added emphasis on the Cold War politics. *Guardián de la caída de agua* does not connect Mayan awareness of global pop culture with the Cold War, as does Víctor Montejo's poetry, but rather several of its poems highlight watershed moments in Cold War Guatemalan history that underscore the environmental impact of the Cold War. The poem "El árbol aquel" situates much of the collection's critique of Western ontology's attack on indigenous peoples and beliefs in the twentieth century:

En el paraíso terrenal
estaba el árbol de la vida.

No había pecado,
no había muerte.

Sus hojas no caían,
no se marchitaban.

Yo creo
que este árbol
era de plástico. (37)

The description of the Tree of Life from in the Garden of Eden that would grant eternal life to Adam and Eve as a plastic tree grounds the poem in the twentieth century, when the use of plastics would multiply and become commonplace. The poetic voice takes the Christian creation myth and logically concludes that a tree that does not behave like natural trees must be unnatural. This criticism associates plastic as the source of life for Christian, Western ontologies, asserting that Christian and Western people value inorganic material over organic material and extend that view to suggest that humans can survive from plastic. This notion supplants any relationship between humans, nonhumans, and the environment, highlighting the absurd notion, from the Mayan-quiche point of view, that there exists a religious relationship between humanity and an inorganic simulacrum of a nonhuman. Between the lines, the poem recognizes Mayan indigenous ontologies in which humans are dependent on nonhumans in order to survive.

Towards the end of the collection, the poem “Oración de maíz” produces images alongside rhetorical questions in order to highlight the fickle nature of capitalism. In its last two stanzas, the poem examines how capitalism impoverishes and ensnares peasants into an economic and religious system of exploitation:

Campesino hermano
 con qué amor
 regás tu sudor sobre la tierra
 para arrancarle
 sus cantos de maíz y frijol...

Y tu jornal
 apenas si puede comprarlo. (136)

The last stanza of “El árbol aquel” recontextualizes the religious tension of the poem in terms of capitalism. The poetic voice asserts that none of the farmhand’s prayers will matter without recognizing that “la tierra y yo somos iguales” and that kneeling to pray is

misguided because “la reverencia/no está en el cuerpo/sino en el alma” (136). Aside the religious distinction between humans and nonhumans, the poem goes beyond the metaphysical and to the tangible when it critiques the inability of the farmhand to purchase the food that he tills. The interactions between the farmhand and the crops are defined by capitalism and the need to extract resources for profit. Despite this restriction, the poetic voice envisions a relationship between humans and nonhumans in which the earth’s “cantos de maíz y frijol” are sung and heard by the farmhand. This line evokes the previous poems in which nonhumans express their own voice and dialogue with humans across time.

This interspecies communication is pivotal to Ak’abal’s poetry, and as the poetry cited so far demonstrates. Historical processes as ubiquitous and consuming as colonization and those as individual as the interactions between peasant and soil, impact communication between all species. The poem “Cerro de los muertos” touches on the Mayan genocide and how that impacted the Mayan-quiche human/nonhuman relationship. The beginning stanzas return to the motif of the nonhuman voice speaking:

El aire viene otra vez:
 ha venido muchas veces.
 ¿Cuántas más vendrá...
 con olor a sangre? (137)

Unlike previous poems where the nonhuman voice’s words are not written down or they cannot be interpreted, in “Cerro de los muertos” the poetic voice is able to comprehend the nonhuman voice and react to its message. The air’s voice, tainted with blood, causes the poetic subject to mourn the bloodshed taking place in indigenous communities. The

remaining three stanzas create a dark parallel of the poem “En la voz” from *Lluvia de luna en la cipresalada*:

Cerro de los muertos:
 qué tristes están los pájaros
 en las ramas
 de los viejos cipreses.

Tal vez
 son los espíritus
 de nuestros antepasados.

Y lloran
 cuando creemos que cantan,
 porque ellos también
 son indios. (137)

Like “En la voz,” the poem “Cerro de los muertos” hinges on the communication between human and nonhuman voices. The tone shifts in “Cerro de los muertos” in which the poetic voice is not dialoguing with the bird voices, but rather hearing the mourning of the birds as they lament the loss of other indigenous lives. The poetic subject has not experienced the violence alluded to in the stanzas in which the air’s voice speaks. “Cerro de los muertos” is ambiguous in that the blood spilled could have been human or nonhuman blood. On one hand, the poetic voice recognizes that as siblings in Maya-quiche ontology, that nonhumans have lost their lives to the armed conflict in Guatemala. The mourning birds are also announcing the news of bloodshed in other parts of the region. “Cerro de los muertos” imagines the environmental impact of the Cold War as it is understood through humans and nonhuman in Maya-quiche ontology, but still presents the violence of the Cold War at a distance, keeping the communication between humans and nonhumans central to its message.

The poem “Santiago Atitlán (Diciembre 1990)” contrasts much of *Guardián de la caída de agua* by using an historical event as its focal point. By concentrating on the massacre of indigenous protestors at the town of Santiago, which borders Lake Atitlán, the poem takes on a straightforward and anthemic tone. The second and final stanzas historicize the event as the turning point in the Guatemalan Civil War in which indigenous groups retaliate:

Abriste la brecha
con llanto y sangre,
y diste el primer caitazo
con los güevos bien puestos.

¡Ojalá los demás pueblos
te sigan!
Amén.

Historians who specialize in Guatemalan history unanimously consider the event that took place in Santiago Atitán on December 2nd, 1990 to be a massacre in which fourteen people died and twenty-one more were injured, so the second stanza is an unusual description of the violence in Santiago. The poetic voice addresses the town in the second person, hailing the day as the moment in which indigenous groups fought back. Indigenous groups did not fight on equal terms. The poem calls their retaliation a “caitazo,” when the *Guardia civil* fired guns into the crowded streets of Santiago. The poem offers insight to the Cold War rhetoric of indigenous voices that suffered state-sponsored violence throughout Guatemala’s civil war. “Santiago Atitlán (Diciembre 1990)” indicates that one indigenous perspective was to respond “con los güevos bien puestos.” This gendered response underscores the notion that not all indigenous literature is representative of all indigenous peoples, even within a single Mayan group. While this poem and others ground themselves in the Cold War and present an indigenous response

to the Guatemalan Civil War as well as the environmental and ontological impact of Cold War ideological struggles, they historicize internationally recognized events through specific political, gendered, and cultural agendas.

Conclusion

Humberto Ak'abal's two collections, *Guardián de la caída de agua* and *Lluvia de luna en la cipresalada*, contrast with Montejo's *Sculpted Stones* by focusing entirely on an indigenous perspective within the Cold War debate that puts communication between humans and nonhumans at the center of the poetry. Brian Gollnick warns against "analyz[ing indigenous writers] critically or absorb[ing] their meaning into a broader social debate," and while he rightly acknowledges that indigenous literary and literary expression have their own agendas that should be respected, this does not mean that indigenous writers do not engage with non-indigenous literature or global issues. Ak'abal's and Montejo's books, published in the 1990s, reflect the turning tide of the Guatemalan Civil War, the decade in which American foreign policy shifted during the Clinton administration. *Sculpted Stones*, *Guardián de la caída de agua* and *Lluvia de luna en la cipresalada* exemplify the nuanced and heterogeneous character of indigenous poetry that contributes to the discussion of conflicts that result in the massacre of an incalculable number of indigenous humans and nonhumans.

The 1990s marked a shift in United States policies towards Central America. The global community began to listen more to indigenous voices and, starting primarily with Rigoberta Menchú's powerful testimony, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983), more and more countries decried the United States' willingness to

overlook human rights violations in Central America. Montejo's *Sculpted Stones* dovetailed with the international community's attention by incorporating references to pop culture references and critiquing them. Both poets emanated from Maya groups and ontologies, but between the two writers, there remains a distinction in perspective and political agenda, as well as method in which they confronted Cold War politics, North American intervention, and environmental degradation. Both Montejo and Ak'abal are emblematic of the complex integration of indigenous poetry into the global literary community. Their collections represent different outlooks on the problems that the Cold War exacerbated in Central America, and their writing in Spanish ultimately brought their literary style and environmental concern to readers on an international level through their multilingual publications. This new level of attention potentially exposes indigenous writing to another colonization, this time literary:

El problema radica en la concepción de la categoría de literatura, que según la tradición occidental, es independiente de otros fines comunicativos, como el ritual, el histórico, el político y el legal. Para las culturas mesoamericanas, en cambio, es la presencia de un referente sagrado lo que implica el uso de un lenguaje retóricamente marcado y es lo que proporciona la ocasión para una reflexión profunda de la realidad. (Craveri 2)

This concern highlights the potential for another neocolonialism going into the twenty-first century that is akin to the neocolonial efforts present through the Cold War.

Testimonio literature revealed the economically and politically neocolonial structures of Cold War governments in Central America. I did not address Rigoberta Menchú's seminal testimony of the Guatemalan's oppression of Mayan peoples, because it was published over ten years prior to the works I examine in this chapter and does not grapple with the legacy of the Mayan genocide as the Cold War waned, global environmentalisms

grew, and new indigenous writers were gaining international attention. Similar to the evolving relationship between the United States and Latin America in the 1990s, neocolonialism changes forms when writers like Víctor Montejo and Humberto Ak'abal enter the international literary and academic communities. The literary expression found in their poetry shows a concern for the well-being of nonhumans because the Mayan ontologies that guide the poetic voices do not categorically separate humans from nonhumans. For non-indigenous readers, this is revelatory. For indigenous readers who subscribe to the ontologies from which this poetry is written, this is redundant. Craveri's observation on the Western definition of literature is validated through Montejo's and Ak'abal's questioning of colonial language (Spanish) and colonial ontologies that are recreated through Cold War imperial tactics.

Securing Latin American Environments: The Ecological Evolution of Cold War Fears into the Twenty-First Century

“Sadly, it looks like Mexico’s Police and Military are unable to stop the Caravan heading to the Southern Border of the United States. Criminals and unknown Middle Easterners are mixed in. I have alerted Border Patrol and Military that this is a National Emergency. Must change laws! (sic)” – Donald Trump, October 22nd, 2018 in reference to the so-called Caravan of three thousand Central Americans seeking asylum in the United States.

“My fellow Americans, there can be no mistake about this vote: It is up or down for Central America. It is win or lose for peace and freedom. It is yes or no to America’s national security... Our policy makers must focus on the key regional problems that affect us - immigration, drugs, debt and economic growth.” – Ronald Reagan, February 2nd, 1988 in reference to a vote in Congress to allot more funding for the Contra War in Honduras.

The U.S. Cold War fears of Central America as a lawless region of criminals never dissipated with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Over the thirty years that span the Reagan Administration to Donald Trump’s presidency, this image of Central America as a threat to U.S. security evolved to accommodate North American economic intervention through conservative politics. After compiling ecologically engaged works in a rough timeline of environmentalist thought in Central America during the Cold War, I believe that the nexus of these Cold War critiques of Northern American discourses on security is the relationship between (anti-)capitalism and the environment.

The North-South generalization of security that Trump and Reagan both refer to reflect a superficial concern for economic and national risks that masks a greater capitalist anxiety of financial sustainability for the global North. In his 2016 book, *Endangered City*, Austin Ziederman discusses the case of Bogotá throughout the late twentieth century and how the notions of risk and security change as governments shift

from the politics of provision to the politics of protection. The role of government in the politics of provision enacts policies that provide services to its citizens, such as nationalized healthcare. Through the politics of protection the government prioritizes spending on programs that mitigate risks of security, for example, increasing the national defense budget. In global conflicts, national concerns for security tend to further ostracize marginalized nations and peoples from development and access to wealth:

If the status of cities of the global South is fixed, and the cities of the global North foresee in them their own future, then hopes of development in the former morph into fears of degeneration in the latter. As evidenced by immigration anxieties in the United States and Europe, as well as by the fortification of national borders, this dystopian vision of the global urban future stimulates technologies of fortressing and exclusion. (Zeiderman 201)

Zeiderman's research operates within the context of major cities and urban growth in the global South. I borrow his notion of security and engage it in the circumstances of the Cold War and how it evolved into the War on Drugs, and then again into contemporary xenophobic reactions to immigration. Ultimately, Trump and Reagan's concerns for national security are inseparable from economic growth in the United States at the cost of environmental degradation and economic oppression in the United States and Latin America.

Similar to how Cold War military operations in Latin America became a frontline for problems caused by the Global North and their concerns for national security, the War on Drugs produced environmental crisis for Latin America: "As is characteristic of the treadmill of destruction, still another risk is transferred to the Global South: to protect the U.S. population from "unsafe" drugs, the people of Colombia are being subjected to environmental dislocation and heightened health impairment" (Smith, Hooks, and

Lengefeld 196). Supporters of The Drug War is billed it as a short-term conflict that will benefit North and South America by curbing the consumption of drugs, but ultimately addresses the economic concerns of a select group of North American agricultural businesses at the cost of human and nonhuman health in South America. Cold War rhetoric mixed with discourse about the drugs began with Reagan in the 1980s. In a speech in which he asked for more funding for the Contras in the late 1980s: “The Sandinistas have been involved themselves in the international drug trade. I know every American parent concerned about the drug problem will be outraged to learn that top Nicaraguan Government officials are deeply involved in drug trafficking” (12). Since the Cold War, North American rhetoric maintained a discourse of security that reflects how U.S. involvement manifested in Latin American affairs altered considerably, projecting influence through elections and economic pressure before the War on Drugs (Grandin 1). The majority of Cold War historians agree that beginning in the 1980s, U.S. rhetoric towards Latin America shifted away from anti-communist discourse and moved toward anti-drug policy. Michelle Denise Reeves describes how the term “narcoterrorism,” coined in the mid-1980s, functioned as a turning point in U.S.-Latin American relations:

Because of rising public concern over drug abuse (and particularly the media blitz surrounding the “crack epidemic”), which coincided with the drawdown of Cold War hostilities and the resulting search for a mission within the Defense Department, U.S. officials declared that drugs were a national security threat by linking narcotics trafficking with international terrorism. (282)

The concept of narcoterrorism reimagined how foreign interpretations of economic risk in Latin America reshaped the notion of international security while reinforcing American involvement across the globe. For Latin American environments, this meant that specific plant species became the primary enemy in the Drug War. Narcoterrorism

blames nonhumans and substances produced from them as the principle cause for degeneration in the global North.

The ecological cost of the Contra War at the Honduran-Nicaraguan border is documented in Daniel Faber's study on ecological crises provoked by U.S. interventions in Central America. Faber concludes that the joint military maneuvers resulted in the destruction of 10% of the forested land between Honduras and Nicaragua, forcing out rural coffee workers who slash-and-burned another 111,150 acres of rainforest in an attempt to recover their livelihood (Faber 199-200). Reagan's discourse of national security ignored the human and ecological consequences of the Contra War, leaving Honduras with environmental precarity for the majority of its rural population near the Nicaraguan border. I did not include Honduran responses to environmental destruction in this project due to the unique character of Cold War Honduran history in this regard. The government cooperated with U.S. imperialism in an effort to quell Sandinismo and merits its own chapter of analysis in a future study.

These tactics and their consequences are not entirely unique to the War on Drugs, but they do reflect changes in U.S. biopolitical intervention in Latin America by shifting their focus to destroying undesirable plant life. Throughout the Cold War Central American environments suffered from ecologically harmful military operations inherited from the Vietnam War and North American extractivist capitalism. A 1990 newspaper article from Guatemalan media outlet *La hora* summarized how unchecked pesticides, including Agent Orange, were measured in rural Guatemalan areas (32). The article cites local and global environmental and health agencies' research on the widespread effect of agricultural chemicals on all resident species of rural Guatemala. There is no significant

difference in the resulting disease between the amount of accumulated pollution cited by *La hora* in 1990 and the anti-drug fumigation of plants in later decades, meaning that although the motive changed, the pesticides and their effects did not. By shifting the rhetoric from an anti-communist to an anti-drug discourse, the United States sidestepped the international criticism of human rights violations that the global community accused the United States of supporting during Cold War struggles in Latin America. For the U.S. presidential administrations in the 1980s and 1990s that propagated the War on Drugs as Cold War anxieties diminished, the notion of security remained the justification for continued intervention in Latin America at the cost of extensive environmental damage and major health concerns for Latin American people.

These fears have recently resurfaced in Brazil, where the sudden news of the massive wildfire in the Amazon has drawn international and environmental attention to the Brazilian President, Jair Bolsonaro. Alexander Zaitchik, with help from reporter Mauro Toledo Rodrigues, discusses how Bolsonaro's environmental politics reflect decades of authoritarian governments' exploitation of nature for profit at the cost of human and nonhuman lives:

Bolsonaro, an ex-army captain, had campaigned on nostalgia for the scorched-earth policies and torture basements of the dictatorship. In villages like Kamarapa, where the junta is remembered for a regional program that amounted to a de facto extermination campaign, the news landed like a formal declaration of war. (1)

The president's emboldened strategy to fell the Amazon jungle and develop the land underneath is strikingly similar to the Guatemalan government's genocidal campaign in the 1980s, in addition to Brazil's own bloody history. While this dissertation does not cover Brazil's history, the historical moments that I analyze and argue that served as

catalysts for the shift in environmental attitudes are replicated in Bolsonaro's current actions. Scorched earth campaigns in Latin America are military mobilizations that assign nonhumans enemy status under the assumption that the targeted people utilize their landscape for subversive activity. In this way the attack on the Amazon and indigenous groups currently is similar to past nationalist movements from far-right leaders:

“Bolsonaro continues a far-right political tradition in Brazil that predates the 1964 dictatorship. It merges authoritarianism and panic over the perceived vulnerability of the Amazon to foreign conquest — or in its modern iteration, ‘internationalization’”

(Zaitchik 1). Bolsonaro's fear of “internationalization” is similar to Reagan's and Trump's fear of immigrants and global cooperation. All three conservative leaders found their xenophobia on a nativism that ironically excludes indigenous groups and on an obsession with economic and national security at the expense of environmental health. As much as they have decried the international economy, all of their policies have fomented the residues of capitalism, be they pollution, deforestation, allocation of wealth, or attacks on indigenous rights throughout the world. Environmentalist thinkers have already retaliated against these residues, renegotiating humanity's relationship with nonhumans and the role of government in mediating that interaction just like Central American writers adjusted to the context of the Cold War.

Other faces of environmentalism that developed during the twentieth century are as relevant to the Amazon fires, the Bolsonaro administration, and ecological crisis today. Although the chapters in this project signal which prominent environmentalisms surfaced during the Cold War and how some of those environmental thinkers evolved over the course of the second half of the twentieth century, this project is not entirely

comprehensive. Women authors are cited in the second chapter, but they are notably absent in the rest of the dissertation and merit their own study analyzing the nuances they employ in the development of literary environmentalism. Zoë Anglesey's anthology *Ixok Amar Go*, which I often cite in throughout this dissertation, marks a significant shift in the 1980s in Central American literature in which literary audiences and critics give women writers attention. The anthology was published with the goal to unite women writers in three languages Ixok (Mayan), Amar (Spanish), and Go (English). Prominent Central American authors such as Claribel Alegría, Daisy Zamora, Gioconda Belli, and Carmen Naranjo, whose poetry is featured in *Ixok Amar Go*, are a cohort of writers whose poetry and narrative often link environmental issues with feminist concerns. Much of their ecologically conscious writing goes beyond Alenka Bermúdez's "Guatemala, tu sangre," in which the poetic voice does not distinguish the sex of the victims. Belli's 1994 science fiction novel, *Waslala*, is a forward-thinking book that scrutinizes green initiatives that became more popular in the 1980s and 1990s, such as recycling, alongside sexism in a fictionalized version of Central America. These writers expanded environmentalist thought by analyzing how environmentalism can contribute to feminist causes and vice versa.

There is much more literature beyond the poetry featured in Anglesey's book, despite the book's extensive scope from the 1980s and into the 1990s. Women authors penned works that evolved parallel with the discourse of security and the environment across the twenty-first century. Anacristina Rossi's *La loca de Gandoca*, published in 1991, shifts critiques away from general Cold War politics despite their relevancy in Central America in the 1990s and confronts issues ecotourism and conservation produce.

The novel describes how European tourism companies purchase beachfront in Costa Rica, building luxury hotels with the promise of stable work for local Costa Ricans. Instead, the waste from the hotels contaminates the shoreline and workers are unfairly compensated. The protagonist, Daniela, battles against lawmakers and foreign entrepreneurs in order to ensure that the beach that is supposed to be protected by law remains undeveloped. Rossi is writing about the Costa Rican experience, which does not share the same Cold War experience as Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, but nonetheless represents a change in Central American environmentalisms and the rhetoric towards economic and national security generally. Rather than exposing corrupt, unbalanced economic deals on the battlefield, the book marks the shift to clandestine economic intervention based on the same capital fictions that Beckman examines from a century ago. For the government and the foreign companies, the discourse revolves around economic security via capitalism that ignores its potential environmental impact. Her novel exemplifies how literature authored by women writers in the 1980s laid the foundation for environmentalisms to expand in new directions in subsequent years.

In the twenty-first century, the late Honduran activist Berta Cáceres handled similar environmentalist and feminist issues. The documentary on her life, activism, and assassination, *Berta vive*, is one example of a cultural production that ties contemporary environmentalist and feminist issues into the continued and evolving discourse of security. The film examines hydroelectric projects through an indigenous perspective. In some of the earliest shots of the film, indigenous children are playing in the shallows of a river that was slated to be dammed by a foreign company. While I discuss the ecological damage that hydroelectric projects caused in chapter 2 and their repercussions on the

indigenous community in events like the Río Negro massacre, this documentary exemplifies how post-Cold War indigenous groups' activism is farther reaching than before. Rigoberta Menchú created a platform for women indigenous voices to be heard, directly benefiting activists like Berta Cáceres and those women whom she has inspired in the twenty first century. After the scene that shows the funeral procession for Berta Cáceres, the documentary shifts to interviews with other women inspired by Berta who advocate for indigenous and environmental rights in the face of government-backed economic pressure. In the second half of *Berta vive*, the documentary focuses on the role of women in farming and cooking and how their position shifts when large agribusiness companies raise prices of crops without compensating their workers. Several of the women interviewed respond to issues of food security, a discourse that I have not seen in poetry produced from the Cold War. The increased scarcity of resources drove many of rural Hondurans to protest the companies. *Berta vive* showcases how foreign justification for controlling Latin American environments evolved from Cold War violence into a discourse that primarily advocates for economic security, even in "green" industries such as sustainable energy and food production.

As we have seen, Central American writers established literary environmentalisms that challenged the West's Cold War ideological East versus West dichotomy by contesting the politics of security. The desire to secure the natural world for economic stability is founded on the separation of humanity and nature. Throughout my dissertation, I have utilized a variety of poetic examples to illustrate how Central American environmentalisms have reevaluated this dichotomy during the Cold War through national and cultural interests that are not concerned with North American

nationalism or security. The poetry by Pablo Antonio Cuadra, Romelia Alarcón de Folgar, Lizandro Chávez, and Ernesto Cardenal illustrate how Nicaragua's history grappled with environmental crises and when the Sandinista government assessed the damage they changed their relationship with the landscape by prioritizing environmentalist policy. As Nicaragua's democracy and environmentalism grew in the 1970s and 1980s, in Guatemala and El Salvador civil wars prompted writers to reconsider the role of governments and ordinary citizens and their relationship with nature. Luis Luna, Marviton Galindo, Alenka Bermúdez and Anaima Café contested increasing class disparity and indigenous genocide and raised questions about rural zones of Central American countries and their significance for national economies and international discourses of security. Indigenous writers, especially Víctor Montejo and Humberto Ak'abal from Guatemala, penned their own, unique responses to local ecological degradation and prevailing Cold War ideologies. Their writings dismantle binary conceptions of nature and the Cold War while illustrating how empty the rhetoric of national security was for indigenous communities.

The literature that I have examined engages Cold War discourse of security through literary depictions of state-sponsored violence and aggressive capitalism that devastates human and nonhuman communities. The majority of these artistic works prioritize community and environmental well-being over financial security as a political means of dismantling the capital fictions that Cold War capitalist touted as a way of protecting the global North. One of the principle tactics in Trump's, Reagan's, and Bolsonaro's rhetoric surrounding freedom, nationalist self-interest, and economic stability has been to stoke fears of immigration as justification for intervention whether

that be through warfare or economic policy. The intervention that they champion has been necessarily ecological, as their financial interests behind the Cold War, the War on Drugs, and today rely on cheap extraction of raw materials from Latin America and poorly regulated pollution policies to minimize expenses and investment costs. The local populations that suffer from these oppressive economic practices are at the forefront of environmental change and renegotiate how humans value other living beings. Their efforts have the potential to snowball into large-scale change, such as in Sandinista Nicaragua, and are likely to occur in Brazil, other parts of Latin America, and the United States today.

Works Cited

- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open: Man and Animal*. Stanford U P, 2004.
- Ak'abal, Humberto. *Lluvia de luna en la cipresalada*. Litografías Modernas S.A., 1996.
- . *Guardián de la caída de agua*. Litografías Modernas S.A., 1996.
- Alarcón Folgar, Romelia. *Isla de novilunios*. Casa Editora, 1954.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. Verso, 1983.
- Anderson, Mark D. *Disaster Writing: The Cultural Politics of Catastrophe in Latin America*. U of Virginia P, 2011.
- Anderson, Mark D. and Zélia M. Bora. *Ecological Crisis and Cultural Representation in Latin America: Ecocritical Perspectives on Art, Film, and Literature*. Lexington Books, 2016.
- Bate, Jonathan. *Song of the Earth*. Harvard U P, 2002.
- Beckman, Erika. *Capital Fictions: The Literature of Latin America's Export Age*. U of Minnesota P, 2013.
- Becker, Bernie. "Six Questions for Greg Grandin on Che's Legacy." *Harper's Magazine* interview. September 30th, 2007.
- Beleño, Joaquín. *Flor de banana*. Mansfer, 1965.
- Bermúdez, Alenka. "Guatemala, tu sangre." *Ixok amar go* ed. Zoë Anglesey, Granite P, 1987.
- The Bible*. Authorized King James Version, Oxford UP, 1998
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005
- Café, Anaima. "Seis poemas." *Ixok amar go* ed. Zoë Anglesey, Granite P, 1987.
- de Campo, Haroldo. "Prologo" *Lluvia de luna en la cipresalada*. Litografías Modernas S.A., 1996.
- Cardenal, Ernesto. *La hora cero y otros poemas*. El Bardo, 1971.
- . *Vuelos de victoria*. Visor Madrid, 1983.
- Castro-Gómez, Santiago. "(Post)coloniality for Dummies: Latin American Perspectives on Modernity, Coloniality, and the Geopolitics of Knowledge." *Coloniality at Large*, eds. Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui, pp. 259-85, Duke U P, 2008.
- Chase, Cida S. "Pablo Antonio Cuadra: su vanguardismo y la magnificación de lo humano." *"Riega la luz dormida": Actas del II Simposio Internacional de Poesía Nicaraguense del Siglo XX (Homenaje a Azarías H. Pallais)* ed. Jorge Chen Sham, Editorial Universitaria UNAN-León, 2009.
- Chávez, Lisandro Alfaró. *Hay una selva en mi voz*. Mexico, 1950.
- Craveri, Michela. "Movimientos indígenas y culturalización maya." *Revista virtual de estudios literarios y culturales centroamericanos*, 27.7, pp. 1-17, 2014.
- Cuadra, Pablo Antonio. *La tierra prometida*. El hilo azul, 1952.
- . *Cantos de Cifar y del Mar Dulce*. Libro libre, 1983.
- . *Songs of Cifar and the Sweet Sea, Selections from "Songs of Cifar, 1967-1977."* Translated by Grace, Schulman and Ann McCarthy de Zavala, Columbia U P, 1979.
- . *Tierra que habla: antología de cantos nicaraguenses*. Editorial Universitaria centroamericana. 1971.
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth. "Quantum Landscapes." *Interventions*, 9.1, pp. 62-82, 2007.

- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth M., and George B. Handley. *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*. Oxford U P, 2011.
- DeVries, Scott. *A History of Ecology and Environmentalism in Spanish American Literature*. Bucknell U P, 2013.
- Faber, Daniel. *Environment Under Fire: Imperialism and the Ecological Crisis in Central America*. Monthly Review P, 1993.
- Finzer, Erin. "Grafting the Maya World Tree: Cosmic Conservation in Romelia Alarcón de Folgar's *Llamaradas* (Guatemala, 1938)." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, pp. 1-23, 2014.
- Foster, John Bellamy. *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*. Monthly Review P, 2000.
- French, L. Jennifer. "Voices in the Wilderness: Environment, Colonialism, and Coloniality in Latin American Literature." *Latin American Literature Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*. 42.2, pp. 157-66, 2012.
- Frances, Jean. "Para demostrar que podemos aportar algo al país: La poesía de Humberto Ak'abal y la nueva nación guatemalteca." *Ilustres autores guatemaltecos del siglo XIX y XX*, 1.1, pp. 211-26, 2004.
- French, L. Jennifer. "Voices in the Wilderness: Environment, Colonialism, and Coloniality in Latin American Literature." *Latin American Literature Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*. 42.2, pp. 157-166, 2012.
- Fuentes Aburto, Moisés Elías. "Pablo Antonio Cuadra y Ernesto Cardenal: mito y épica de la nicaraguanidad." *Cuadernos Americanos*, 115.1, pp. 169-79, 2006.
- Gagini, Carlos. *El árbol enfermo*. Editorial Costa Rica, 1995.
- Galindo, Martivón. "Amo mi país... ¿Es ése un delito?" *Ixok amar go* ed. Zoë Anglesey, Granite P, 1987.
- Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. Routledge, 2004.
- Gollnick, Brian. *Reinventing the Lacadón*. U of Arizona P. 2008.
- Grandin, Greg. *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*. U of Chicago P. 2004.
- Guardia, Gloria. "Pablo Antonio Cuadra: poeta y pensador Cristiano." *Cuadernos Americanos*, 96.1, pp. 146-64, 2002.
- Handley, George B. "Hemispheric History as Natural History." *New World Poetics: Nature and the Adamic Imagination of Whitman, Neruda, and Walcott*. U of Georgia P, 2007.
- Harvey, David. *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*. Oxford U P, 2014.
- Heise, Ursula. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* Oxford U P, 2008.
- Henighan, Stephen. "An Ordered Eden: The Ideal Administration in Ernesto Cardenal's *El estrecho dudoso*." *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 89.1, pp. 105-24, 2012.
- . "Ernesto Cardenal's 'Hora 0': A Conservative National Epic." *Revista canadiense de estudios hispanicos*, 35.2, pp. 329-50, 2011.
- Holocaust Museum Houston. "Genocide in Guatemala." *Holocaust Museum Houston*, www.hmh.org/library/research/genocide-in-guatemala-guide/
- Kane, Adrian Taylor. "The Nicaraguan Canal and the Shifting Currents of Sandinista Environmental Policy." *Ecological Crisis and Cultural Representation in Latin America*, eds. Mark Anderson and Zélia M. Bora, Lexington Books, 2016.

- Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*. Simon & Schuster, 2014.
- Kohn, Eduardo. *How Forests Think*. U of California P, 2013.
- Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. James H Nichols Jr., Gallimard, 1979.
- Latour, Bruno. *Politics of Nature*. Harvard U P, 2004.
- Lasarte, Francisco. "Cuadra's "Mar Dulce"." *Essays on Hispanic Literature*. Tamesis Books, 1983.
- Ledec, George and Juan David Quintero. "Good Dams and Bad Dams: Environmental Criteria for Site Selection of Hydroelectric Projects." *Latin America and Caribbean Region Sustainable Development Working Paper 16*, The World Bank, 2003.
- Lindsay-Poland, John. *Emperors in the Jungle: The Hidden History of the U.S. in Panama*. Duke U P, 2003.
- Llopesa, Ricardo. "La poesía de Pablo Antonio Cuadra." *Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana*, 28, pp. 867-889, 1999.
- Luna, Luis. "Sobre modernas ciencias aplicadas." *Poemas clandestinos* ed. by Roque Dalton, Comité peruano de la solidaridad con el pueblo salvadoreño, 1982.
- Marcone, Jorge. "Filming the Emergence of Popular Environmentalism in Latin American: Postcolonialism and Buen Vivir." *Global Ecologies and The Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches*, Routledge, 2015.
- Marx, Karl. *On the Jewish Question*. Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, 1844.
- Medovoi, Leerom. "The Race War Within: The Biopolitics of the Long Cold War." *American Literature and Culture in an Age of Cold War*, eds. Steven Belletto and Daniel Grausam, U of Iowa P, pp. 163-186, 2012.
- Miller, Shawn William. *An Environmental History of Latin America*. Cambridge U P, 2007.
- Montejo, Víctor. *Sculpted Stones*. trans. Victor Perera, Curbstone P, 2005.
- Müntzer, Thomas. *Collected Works*. T & T Clark, 1988.
- Nadel, Alan. "The Empire Strikes Out: Star Wars (IV, V, and VI) and the Advent of Reaganism." *American Literature and Culture in an Age of Cold War*, eds. Steven Belletto and Daniel Grausam, U of Iowa P, pp. 187-208, 2012.
- Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard U P, 2011.
- Ollé, Marie-Louise. "Voces literarias y sujeto maya (Guatemala – Siglo 21)." *Centroamericana*. 19, pp. 89-105, 2010.
- Owen, Michael. *The Maya Book of Life: Understanding the Zultun Tarot*. Kahurangi P, 2010.
- Predator*. Directed by John McTiernan, Twentieth Century Fox, 1987.
- Rama, Angel. *La ciudad letrada*. Duke U P, 1996
- Reagan, Ronald. Transcript of the President's Speech. March 17th, 1986, The New York Times. Page A00012.
- . Transcript of the President's Speech. February 3rd, 1988. The New York Times. Page A00010.
- @realDonaldTrump. "Sadly, it looks like Mexico's Police and Military are unable to stop the Caravan heading to the Southern Border of the United States. Criminals and unknown Middle Easterners are mixed in. I have alerted Border Patrol and

- Military that this is a National Emergency. Must change laws!" *Twitter*, 22 Oct. 2018, 7:37am.
- Reeves, Michelle Denise. "The Evolution of "Narcoterrorism": From the Cold War to the War on Drugs." *Beyond the Eagle's Shadow: New Histories of Latin America's Cold War*, eds. Virginia Garrard-Burnett, Mark Atwood Lawrence, and Julio E. Moreno, U of New Mexico, pp. 281-306, 2013.
- Rodríguez, Ana Patricia. *Dividing the Isthmus: Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures, and Cultures*. U of Texas P, 2009.
- Ruiz-Pérez, Ignacio. "Geografía de la poesía chiapaneca reciente (1991-2004)." *Revista de la literatura mexicana contemporánea*, 28.1, pp. 19-28, 2006.
- Saldivia-Berglund, Marcela. "Representación y etnicidad: hacia una interpretación de la poesía maya actual en Guatemala (*Ajkem Tzij, tejedor de palabra* de Humberto Ak'abal)." *Latin American Indian Literatures Journal*, 19.1, pp. 49-83, 2003.
- Smith, Chad, Hook, Gregory, and Michael Lengefeld. "The War on Drugs in Colombia: The Environment, the Treadmill of Destruction and Risk-Transfer Militarism." *American Sociological Association*, 20.0, pp. 185-206, 2014.
- Spina, Vincent. "La dualidad en "Poema del momento extranjero en la selva", "La mitología del jaguar" y "El nacimiento de Cifar" por Pablo Antonio Cuadra." *Volver... a la fuente del cuanto: Actas del I Simposio Internacional de Poesía Nicaragüense del Siglo XX* (homenaje a Pablo Antonio Cuadra), 1.1, pp. 99-115, 2005.
- Sternbach, Nancy Saporta. "Re-membering the Dead: Latin American Women's Testimonial Discourse." *Latin American Perspectives* 18.3, pp. 91-102, 1991
- The Naked Jungle*. Directed by Byron Haskin, performances by Charlton Heston, Eleanor Parker, Abraham Sofaer, Paramount Pictures, 1954.
- United Nations. *General Debate*. 34th session, 13th plen. mtg., Agenda item 9, 28 Sept. 1979.
- del Valle Escalante, Emilio. "The Discursive Economy of Maya *Culturales* in Guatemala." *Hispanófila*, 157, pp. 25-8, 2009
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. "Exchanging Perspectives: The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies." *Common Knowledge*, 10.3, pp. 463-84, 2004.
- White, Steven F. "Poemas nicaragüenses: Mapa eco-poético de una comunidad imaginada." *El mundo más que humano en la poesía de Pablo Antonio Cuadra: un estudio ecocrítico*. Multimpresos Nicaragüenses, 2002.
- . *Modern Nicaraguan Poetry. Dialogues with France and the United States*. Bucknell U P, 1993.
- . "Poetry is the Plenitude of Humanity's Word: An Interview with Pablo Antonio Cuadra." *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*, 36.27, pp. 28-31, 2012.
- Wolloch, Nathaniel. "Animals in Enlightenment Historiography" *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 75.1, pp. 53-68, 2012.
- Worley, Paul. "Pan-Maya and "Trans-Indigenous": The Living Voice of the Chilam Balam in Victor Montejo and Leslie Marmon Silko." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, 28.1, pp. 1-20, 2016.
- Wright, Will. "The Empire Bites the Dust." *Social Text*, 6.2, pp. 12-125, 1982.

Zaitchik, Alexander. "Rainforest on Fire: On the Front Lines of Bolsonaro's War on the Amazon, Brazil's Forest Communities Fight Against Climate Catastrophe" *The Intercept*, 6 July 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/07/06/brazil-amazon-rainforest-indigenous-conservation-agribusiness-ranching/>, Accessed 30 Aug. 2019.

Zeiderman, Austin. *Endangered City: The Politics of Security and Risk in Bogota*. Duke UP, 2016.